

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF's National Office P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook IL 60522 Toll-free (877) 969-0010 www.compassionatefriends.org

F-M Area Chapter P.O. Box 10686 Fargo ND 58106 www.tcffargomoorhead.org February 2014

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Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen (701)730-0805

The F-M Area Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd
Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
127 2ND AVE E
WEST FARGO, ND
Please enter on the West side. Our
meeting is in the Fellowship Hall lower level, west side.

Upcoming Meetings February 13th March 13th

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on February 27th @ Fry'n Pan TCF National Conference -Chicago, IL July 11-13, 2014 August 2, 2014 - Fargo Chapter's 8th Annual WALK TO REMEMBER

LOVE GIFTS

Robert Roel in memory of his son, Joseph Roel Bob & Gloria Sackman in memory of their son, Robert Sackman John & Jill Gaffney in memory of their son, Matthew J Gaffney Ed & Elsie Fossin memory of their son, Brian Foss Larry & Lois Gangnes in memory of their son, Brent M. Gangnes John & Kylene Milligan in memory of their son, Matthew Milligan-Olson We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month. Our chapter and all chapters, are financed solely through your Love Gifts. Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible. Thank you for your tax deductible gifts.

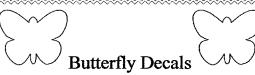
OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007

"Some say you're too painful to remember. I say you're too precious to forget."

Our Mom's group has been meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn' Pan Restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo. Our gatherings are informal as we come together to talk about our children, books that we've read, recipes we've tried, our jobs and whatever else comes up during the course of the evening. We all have times where the listening heart of another mom or grandma is welcome (and necessary). Please join us this month on Thursday February 27th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-235-8158 or sherylcv13@msn.com.



Our trailer is beginning to look like a butterfly garden! The trailer was purchased in order to transport materials to our chapter activities but it has also helped make our local chapter better known in the Fargo-Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our precious children.

Butterflies are still available in all five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost for 1 butterfly is \$25, 3 butterflies are \$65 and 4 butterflies are \$80. If you wish to purchase more than 4, please contact our chapter leader, John Milligan. Butterfly orders should include the child's name and color of the butterfly. Checks should be made payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead and the order mailed to PO Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

You can see pictures of the trailer with butterflies on our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourtrailer.html.

THE SECRET OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

The secret of The Compassionate Friends' success is simple: there is no line between being a helper and being helped. In the early months of peoples' membership in TCF, it seems that most of the time is spent absorbing ideas, crying and letting the grief flow, and "learning the ropes" of being a bereaved parent. The next step is reaching out to others and helping them. It is not a big step, for listening to another person sort out his life helps us to sort out our lives, too. But it is an important step, because it is the first point at which the movement is reversed. All the energy had been going inward. We had been feeling so empty inside that we kept withdrawing into ourselves. But the point when we turn around is the point when we first listen to another, speak the words of comfort and hope, share our pain instead of just feeling our pain. At that time the real healing has started.

> ~ By Dennis Klass, Ph.D. Reprinted from TCF, MN website



A Love Story

The mention of my child's name,
may bring tears to my eyes.
But it never fails to bring music to my ears.
If you really *are* my friend,

please don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music. It soothes my broken heart, and fills my soul with love. ~ Nancy Williams, TCF/Central New Jersey

The Winds Of Change

The wind of change blows through our lives, bringing many changes

The North wind blows icy winds, and our lives it rearranges.

The East winds blows turmoil, bringing unsettled emotions to bear

The West wind blows moisture, with many tears to share.

But the South wind blows warm, a healing to our life Easing up the pain of a broken heart of strife.

Wind from all direction brings a mixture into our lives, blowing on the wind of change

Some are gaunt and icy, some warm and healing, they come in every range.

If the North wind blows upon your life today Hold on, a wind of change is coming, waiting to blow healing gentle winds your way.

Hoping gentle breezes for your day

Sheila Simmons

GETTING ON WITH IT

It's taken me over three years to figure it out! When people would say to me, "Get on with your life," what they really meant was: Live life just as you did before - as though nothing traumatic has happened to you, and you haven't changed. Obviously, they couldn't tell that I was doing exactly what they were telling me to do. I was getting on with my life.

MY life! And my life included (and still includes) living with the horrible fact that my daughter is dead forever, adjusting to my grief - transformed husband; trying to be a supportive, not too protective, nor distant, mother to my son; maintaining relationships with my non - bereaved family and friends; and figuring out this "new me". This is a lot to get on with! So, if anyone ever again tells me, "Get on with your life," I'll know what to say: "I am!"

~ Melinda Siegel, TCF/Contra Costa, CA

You Were On My Mind

When I woke up this morning... You were on my mind. You were on my mind. You with that genuine enthusiasm, like a kid with his first bicycle. You with the curiosity and excitement that dads love to be there for. There's so much of you still with me. Still with us! It's not fair that we feel cheated or that we won't share your ways anymore. But in reality, after all the tears and inner feelings of pain and sadness pass We will have joy and great happiness because we shared your days. Your laughter. You. And when I wake up each morning It will be OK that you were on my mind... You are on my mind. That's a special place for you to be, because it will be forever. ~ Michael Tyler, TCF/Lewes, DE

A Special Valentine

A touch of your hand;
A smile on your face
Another time, another place.
You were my girl
I was your Mom
Together we met the world head on.
Death cannot dim
the memories so fine
Your place is there
this world is mine.
But you will always be
My SPECIAL VALENTINE!
Arlene Burroughs, TCF/Pikes Peak, CO

THE VULNERABILITY FACTOR

A friend of mine sent me a video of a lecture by a social worker, Brene Brown, a researcher who set out to "measure" happiness and the qualities found in happy people who she referred to as whole - hearted. Her goal was to spend a year, figure out and "measure" how vulnerability worked and affected happiness and authenticity. It took her six years and required her to allow herself to become vulnerable.

She is an effective speaker, a story teller. Her presentation was interesting, humorous and gave me much to think about. Specifically the quality of vulnerability as it has affected and still affects my grief, although she didn't talk about grief per se. She found what whole - hearted people had in common was a sense of courage, which she defined as telling the story of who you are with your whole heart. They had the courage to be kind to themselves first and then to others. They made connections as a result of authenticity. They were willing to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they were. And they fully embraced vulnerability. They were willing to do something when there were no guarantees – to breathe through a crisis when they didn't know the outcome. Although she found vulnerability was the core of shame and fear and our struggle for worthiness, it was also the birthplace of joy, of creativity, of belonging and of love.

She found that we numb vulnerability. We don't want to ask for help or show our feelings. The problem is we can't selectively numb emotions. When you numb one you numb them all, she said, even the good ones like joy, gratitude and happiness wind up stuck in misery. The more afraid we are the more vulnerable we are and the more afraid we are. It's a vicious cycle. Her presentation spoke to me on a level I didn't at first understand. I had to watch the video several times and digest it for days.

When my son was killed I felt robbed, and, yes, vulnerable. At first I could not numb the pain even though I wanted to. All I could do was breathe in, breathe out and keep breathing. The more grief I felt the more vulnerable I felt, the more grief I felt. I could feel nothing else. Eventually I would force myself to visualize a happy time with my son, feel the initial deep pain and then the brief time of relief the memory brought me. Was I numbing the pain? And was my other main coping strategy, going back to work and keeping busy, another method of numbing? I did spend time grieving – an abundance of time. I would look at his picture, listen to a tape I had of him singing "My Way", write out my feelings, scream and talk to myself when I was driving my car. While I yearned for my boy constantly, I fluctuated between being with the pain of grief and numbing it. I also didn't want to ask for help, or seem vulnerable. I was a Hospice nurse, I knew about grief. NOT.

Coming to my first TCF meeting was a big step for me. Soon after I walked into the meeting I felt at home. I felt understood. I thought it was the shared pain of child loss, and it was, but it was also the willingness of everyone there, including me, to be vulnerable. It was a safe place to listen, to feel, to share and to accept each other "where we were."

I don't think I was completely wrong about the way I "handled" my grief initially. Child loss is so deeply painful, and the way grief processes is an individual thing. I did what I had to do to survive. I was vulnerable, and over time allowed myself to admit and share that fact, albeit selectively. I don't think it is either realistic or wise to empty your heart to everyone in every situation. The important thing is to be authentic with yourself and to find one or more persons who will listen when you share deeply. Honest prayer helped before and after I opened up to people.

Does it take vulnerability and expressing the pain to begin to heal? Yes, I think it does. To bury those feelings is to plant a time bomb that will eventually explode. But I think it also takes achieving a balance. It takes finding and hanging on to a hope of eventually feeling joy again; giving yourself permission as time passes to laugh, to enjoy music, to be willing to feel good feelings as well as the pain. To be good to yourself so you can reach out and be good to others, to see yourself and let yourself be seen, seek support and give it, to find and be a compassionate friend. A tall order, but repairing a broken heart takes time — and a willingness to be authentic and breathe through it.

Breathe in – breathe out, you are not alone.

~ Jean Limongello In memory of my son, Duke



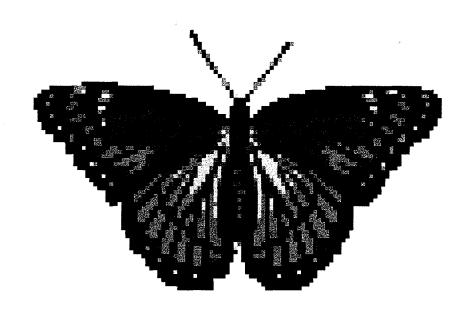
THE STORY OF THE SNOWFLAKE

It was 1885, more than a century ago, when Wilson Bentley acquired his fascination with snow. Mr. Bentley photographed snowflakes, so delicate and fine, and he began to realize each was different in design. But each snowflake served a purpose, in the vast sky above. Just as our precious children did—to us they gave their love. And with their love came happiness and precious memories, for us to cherish and treasure for all eternity! Although the snowflake fades away, it's memory lives on. Just like our precious children, who from this earth are gone. Each time you see a snowflake, so white that it is blue, open up your heart and smile, your angel is watching you!

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



Birthdays and Anniversaries have been removed from the Internet version of our newsletter for security purposes



SIBLING PAGE

Living Valentines

February is the month for valentines. We give valentines to our friends and family. The message on a valentine often says, "Dear Valentine, Be Mine!" Giving a valentine is a way of saying, you are my special friend, and I want to be your special friends, too."

Did you know that there is a way that you can give a valentine to a loved one who died? It is called a "Living Valentine." A "Living Valentine" is when you use your mind, your body, and your energy to do something that would make the person who died feel joy and love for you and what you did, if he or she were here now. It does not have to be something big. It only need to be something to show how much you love and enjoy life. It could be simply pitching in to share a household chore with someone in your family, such as doing the dishes together, and having fun with it. Or it might be putting out some food for birds on a cold wintry day, or caring for our life-giving world by recycling paper, cans or glass. Pick something that you know you can do.

One nine-year-old boy make his "Living Valentine" by being friendly to a new kid at school whom everyone had been picking on.

Making a "Living Valentine" leaves you with a good feeling in your heart. When this good feeling comes, imagine that the loved one who died is sharing that good feeling with you.

A good way to remember your "Living Valentine" and to honor the one who died, is to draw a picture of what you did. You might like to add a big heart-shaped frame around your "Living Valentine" picture. Share with others what you have done, by showing your picture and telling about your "Living Valentine" and what you imagine the one who died would have to say about it.

~ Yvonne Williams, Bereavement Magazine, Feb "92"

My Sister

If she's here,
Where is she?
Mom, where is she?
You said she's here.
So where is she?
We had fun together,
I remember that.
Oh, that's where she is,
In my memory
So even if I move,
I'll still be with her.

~ Sara Bundock, Cheshire, CT

A lot of time! A little space,
A kind of quiet resting place,
Are what I need at times like these,
A special spot where I can grieve.

~ Beth Pinion, TCF/Andalusia, AL

Grief is Not An Enemy

At my brother's funeral a Lady said" You seem to be doing so well." "No, I'm doing quite poorly thank you." I responded

She did not give up, and said, "Well you don't seem to be upset." I did not want to get into any discussion, but I had acted as if nothing had happened as long as I could and I reacted. "If I were doing so well with my grief I would be over in the corner curled up in a fetal position crying, not standing here acting as though no one had died."

We are doing well with our grief when we are grieving. Somehow we have it backwards. We think people are doing well when they aren't crying. Grief is a process of walking through some painful periods toward learning to cope again.

We do not walk this path without pain and tears. When we are in the most pain we are making the most progress. When the pain is less, we are coasting and resting for the next steps. People need to grieve. Grief is not an enemy to be avoided; it is a healing path to be walked.

~ Doug Manning, From: "The Gift Of Significance"

I'M MISSING YOU

I'm missing you All day, every day.
On a bright summer morning, or
When the moon is full.
In the golden days of fall,
As the storm clouds build and it's snowing
When the willows begin to turn green You are always with me,
In my mind and in my heart.
My brother, My Good Friend.
I'm missing you.
~ Kris Cunningham, TCF/Moro, IL

MY BROTHER'S EYES

I search for my brother's eyes in my son; and in me I see his smile.

With my offspring all around me; I hold on to him for

Although he died so long ago he continues to live still. In this one's laugh and that one's hand – I always feel a thrill.

My family laughs when I find the likeness – the features that remind.

They say I'm making it all up and that I must be blind. But I have memorized it all and find him in little ways. His eyes, his smile and gestures are still with me today.

> ~ Nina Danielson, Cape Cod, MA Dedicated to my brother Moss

That renewed energy and love become the memorials to our loved ones: not the grave markers we decorate, not the books we write, nor the speeches we make, but the LOVE we share and pass on.

~ by Darcie D Sims, "Footsteps through the Valley"

STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief, a tear would well up in my eyes, a lump would form in my throat, but you would not know—I would hide it, I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief, I would look ahead and see that wall that I had attempted to go around as an everpresent reminder of a wall yet unscaled. Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the strong will survive—and I am strong.

In the later years of my grief, I learned to climb over that wall—step by step—remembering, crying, grieving, and the tears flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over. The way was long, but I did make it.

Near the resolution of my grief, a tear will well up in my eyes, a lump will form in my throat, but I will let that tear fall—and you will see it. Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care, for I am strong.

~ Terry Jago, TCF/Regina, Canada

Life's Tapestry

It's said a splendid tapestry depicts Life's "grand design." Immense in its complexity, the threads all intertwine...to form a pattern illustrating with explicit weave the reason why our children die, and why we're left to grieve.

I've heard it called the "Master Plan," and there are those who say each thread's the story of a life, from birth to dying day—no death occurs that is not planned; some greater purpose served.

And some draw comfort from belief that fate cannot be swerved. If destiny holds all the cards then nothing would be changed, we would not alter tragedy- for death was prearranged. I do not know if I believe that fate decreed the day my life lost its illusions - disenchantment came to stay.

But I do know the path I'm on is one that's far less clear...I stumble through this dad mess praying light will reappear. Yet in my soul her light lives on; my love for her remains, with innocence she healed my heart and broke thru life's chains.

My daughter showed me how to trust, her needs taught me to fight, she planted seeds of caring about others and their plight.

If the tapestry depicts the life of all who walk the earth. The master weaver added my child's thread, and knew her worth. Her life, her death, my agony—are pushing me to find the reason for her years with me, and why I'm left behind.

I understand my path will stay in darkness 'til I see the means by which I'll utilize the gifts she gave to me. If I can find a way to share the caring I now feel it will honor her dear memory, and help my heart to heal.

~ Salty Miglioccio, TCF/Babylon, AT

Courage does not always roar.....

Sometimes it is in the small voice at night that says......

I will try again tomorrow.

THE FALLEN GOOSE

When you see geese heading south for the winter, you might wonder, as I have, why they fly in a vee formation. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates lift for its own flight but it also creates an updraft that benefits the birds that follow it closely at an angle. When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and it quickly gets back into formation. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the formation and another, more rested goose, flies up front. By flying in vee formations the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range, than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are trying to go more quickly and easily than when they try to travel the journey alone. Very much like the vee formations of geese, people can benefit from the uplifting energy of others. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed in the same direction as ourselves.

We can learn even more by studying flying geese. Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Also, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies, and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group. Support and encouragement is a principle upon which the Compassionate Friends stands. If we have the sense of a goose, we can more easily recognize the potential benefits of collaboration and integrated efforts.

Over the last year, I have felt much like the fallen goose. It is because of you, TCF members who were willing to break formation and come down with me and offer me encouragement and support that I was able to deal with the difficult ordeal I have been through. I am proud that you are all my friends. I would never have been able to make it without you. Thanks is such a small word, but I don't know what else I can say. Thanks for being there and for caring. Connie Buchanan, TCF/Medford, OR

There's a Valentine Waiting for You

There's a valentine waiting for you, that's different from all the others.

It's there every month at our meetings, of heartbroken fathers and mothers.

Its envelope is made of caring, the glue of understanding seals it tight.

This non-judgmental group who've "been there," help to take away your fear and fright.

So, come join with us together, read your loving message printed clear.

In not only this month's valentine, but all those throughout the year.

By Mary Cleckley, Lawrenceville, GA Bereaved Parents USA

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

Child's Name:		Relationship:	
Birth Date:	Death Date:		
		Date:	
(Signature)			
Please retur	n to: The Compassionate Friends of I	F-M Area, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106	
(Please note that	if you have already submitted a perm	ission slip, you do not need to submit another one)	

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children' (www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html). If you would like your child's picture and a poem or story posted on this page, please submit them to us at tcf1313@hotmail.com or mail them to our PO Box (listed on the back of the newsletter). Photos and poems/stories sent to the PO Box will be electronically scanned and then returned to you so please remember to include a return address.

A Valentine for Mom

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years....from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, hand made gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes give a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."

Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF/Katy, TX Written in memory of Todd Mennen

"As the rose-tree is composed of the sweetest flowers and the sharpest thorns, as the heavens are sometimes overcast ~ alternately tempestuous and serene ~ so is the life of man intermingled with hopes and fears, with joys and sorrows, with pleasure and pain."

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF THE F-M AREA PO BOX 10686 FARGO ND 58106

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT #1625 FARGO, ND



MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS...We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	John Milligan701-491-0364	Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805
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Initial Contact	Jamie Olson701-219-3865	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join
Librarian	Contact Us to Volunteer	_	

<u>LIBRARY INFORMATION:</u> We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Love gifts must be received by the 15 th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:							
Love gift given in Memory/Ho	nor of						
Name		 					
Address	•						
Relationship	Born	Died					
NOTE: By giving a love g	ift, you are giving us permission to in	lude your child(ren) in our monthly birth	ndays and anniversaries.				