



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Volume 28 Number 1

Fargo ND/Moorhead MN

January 2011

PLEASE NOTE OUR MAILING ADDRESS ON THE BACK PAGE
REGULAR MEETING: 7:30 P.M. SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

This month's meeting is on January 13th

Next month's meeting is on February 10th

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH - 127 2ND AVE E - WEST FARGO, ND

Please enter on the West side (Elevator entrance). Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

April 1-2, 2011 Regional Conference in Omaha, Nebraska

July 15-17, 2011 - 34th National Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota

If you have topic ideas for future meetings, please let us know.

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Phone number: 877-969-0010 - E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org - Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org

Website for the Fargo/Moorhead Chapter - www.tcffargomoorhead.org

If you have any pictures, stories, or poems of your child/grandchild/sibling that you would like to share on our website, please submit them to Sheryl Cvijanovich at sherylc13@msn.com or mail them to the PO box listed on the back of the Newsletter. Anything sent to the PO Box will be scanned for the website and returned.

Help us save money and paper.....

To receive the newsletters via email in a pdf format, please send an email to the newsletter editor, Nancy Teeuwen at FMTCFNLTR@LIVE.COM. Please be sure to include your name in the email. Also add this email address to your contacts, so when the newsletter is sent to you, it does not go to your junk mail.

*****JANUARY LOVE GIFTS*****

Diane Fenske & Family in memory of their son, Nathan John Anderson 9/1977 - 1/2001

George & Patti Pratt in memory of their daughter, Nancy Elizabeth Pratt Coach 1/1959 - 3/2004

Mike, Sheryl & Dan Cvijanovich in memory of their son, Matthew Isaac Cvijanovich 11/1981 - 1/2005

Mary Hockert in memory of her son, Leland A Hockert 3/1951 - 11/2009

Paul, Kara, Ashley & Kyle Bailey in memory of their son/brother, Nicholas Lee Bailey 1/1993 - 9/2009

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.

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

For information on other chapters: TCF National Office.....877-969-0010

The 2011 Compassionate Friends National Conference is being held in Minneapolis. We are thinking about renting a bus so that local families can participate in the walk there, which will be held on Sunday, July 17, 2011. If you think you may be interested in joining us, please contact John Milligan. For more information on the TCF National Conference go to www.compassionatefriends.org.

*Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow.
Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.
One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow,
or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,
and want more than all the world for your return. ~
~ Mary Jean Irion*

*At times our own light goes out
and is rekindled by a spark from another person.
Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude
of those who have lighted the flame within us. ~
~ Albert Schweitzer*

"HOPE FOR THE DAY" from SilentGrief.com January 2, 2006

A new year holds personal meaning for everyone. Usually, a lot of time is taken for some inner reflection. As the old year ends and a new year begins, most people set new goals with lots of enthusiasm and a true spirit of wanting to do better. There is an honest attempt to forget past failures and focus on the future with feelings of bright hope.

When grief has been part of your daily life, it is a real challenge to be hopeful for a brighter new year. How do you heal broken relationships? How do you make a more secure financial future when beginning the new year without a job? How do you set lofty goals when you are sinking in a sea of depression? How do you begin to fill the hole in your heart that has been left when your child died?

A new year does not end all past pain.
A new year does not make every wrong thing right.
A new year will not restore broken dreams.
But, a new year is just that-new. It is the marking of an opportunity to begin again.

It takes great courage to look for a miracle when your dreams have been shattered. Every person alive has a seed of hope planted within the heart that is ready to come alive if given the opportunity. Look at the new year taking it one day at a time. With the breaking of each new dawn, claim one new promise of hope. When you do, your miracle will begin to happen!

"Every new day has the potential to give you a miracle!"

by Clara Hinton

What Do I Do With My Child's Things?

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved. Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his or her toys brings us comfort. Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes one month, books another, and perhaps toys a few months later. Some of us find that as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after awhile, we may realize that if our child were still alive, he/she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it may be easier to give them away. Or he/she would have graduated college this year and would therefore no longer be using a study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence. The important thing is to not let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make these types of decisions and equally important not to let others rush us into something we are not yet ready to do. When the time is right, we will know what to do.

Nancy Mower, TCF/Honolulu, HI

"You once did something for me more meaningful than the greatest of deeds;
you held me in your arms and let me cry."

Bonnie Jison, TCF/Topeka, KS

RESOLUTIONS FOR BEREAVED PARENTS:

I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

I will not blame myself for my child's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.

I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel compelled to explain this communication to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

I will try to eat, sleep and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

I will know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process. I know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.

I will let myself heal and not feel guilty about feeling better.

I will remind myself that the grief process is circuitous – that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

I will try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.

I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression. Even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

~ Nancy A. Mower, TCF/Honolulu, HI

The New Year

With the holidays past, we're off on another 365 now. Some of you, I know, wonder if you can make it. That's such an enormous amount of time to contemplate all at once, isn't it? You may have some of your "firsts" coming in the months ahead, and the normal impulse seems to be to lump all those days together and start dreading them concurrently, like a prisoner serving several life sentences.

It's possible to do it that way, but that's the hard way. Getting through this day may take all the energy you can muster. Why try to handle March or May or July (or whenever your special days are) now? You can't really, and you end up by the trying only defeating yourself in your effort to effectively survive this day. When this day is past, March or May or July will still be there, trying to defeat your tomorrow - but only if you let them!

Get past this day - and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. By the time March, May or July gets here you will have improved your coping skills. You can better handle your special days with more practice.

I encourage you to know you can and will be better. Use this New Year constructively to facilitate that end, and utilize the help that is available to you through your compassionate friends.

~ Mary Cleckly, TCF/Atlanta GA

THANKS

Thanks to the friend who did know the right words to say: "There is a group in town who might help you."

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about "that group"

Thanks to the Mother who went to that first meeting knowing that it would really hurt to talk – and talked.

Thanks to the Dad who said, after that first meeting, he could never come back – but did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said: "They can really help."

Thanks to the Mom who, for the first time, was able to bake cookies for her "compassionate friends."

Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people – who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men – and didn't say he was sorry.

Because of you we will be able to help someone we don't even know – next month.

~ John DeBoer, TCF/ Greater Omaha Chapter, NE

"Be nice and smile to everyone you meet. You don't know what they are going through, and they may need that smile, and treasure it.

~ Christine M. Huppert

SIBLING PAGE

On Sibling Grief From a Grieving Sibling

I am a surviving sibling. Fifteen months ago I was not even familiar with the term...now I am one! How am I doing? What are the guidelines to measure my progress? Why can't I remember when I was told of my brother's death...or the days following the accident for that matter? Did I go crazy? Was it yesterday, or was it over a year ago? Did I laugh just today when I never thought I would laugh again? What is this peaceful feeling that I feel from time to time? Is it healing?

Lee, 29, was my little brother. I remember trying to alternately protect or tease him, make him laugh or make him cry. He was like having a real live baby doll to play with since I was 10 years older than he. (Our Mother said he was the cleanest little boy in the neighborhood. I guess having 3 older sisters is the reason for that!!!)

How can I explain the pain I felt on learning of his accident. I wanted to go to him right away to see that he was OK, but our cousin, Judy, said that wasn't possible. I guess that was when I was told that he was dead...but I don't remember that. I only remember screaming.

When was it that I began to heal? Probably at the same time that I thought I was going totally, certifiably crazy! Then, someone told me about The Compassionate Friends and what they did. I wondered if they could help me but doubted that they could. After all, how could they understand how much I hurt at having lost my precious baby brother or how close we had always been and how he always helped me. Why should they even care about me? But, you know what...they did help. With the help and support of this group of wonderful caring people, I am alive today and working toward a fruitful life. I will never be the same as I was before June 18, 1992, but I truly believe I have become a better person.

While Lee's life taught me so much, his death taught me some invaluable lessons. I have learned to become more aware of life and my own mortality and am more attuned to other needs. I no longer take anything for granted. I miss him terribly but take solace in the belief that he is happy in his new world and that one day we will be reunited.

Sibling grief takes a tremendous amount of time and work. Sometimes just thinking of my brother, looking at his picture, or hearing his favorite song, "God Bless America," reduces me to a teary mess. Sometimes these same things make me smile. But, I am surviving and have developed a new perspective on life. I am closer to and cherish my family more than ever and realize how very important they are. I am dedicated to helping other surviving siblings work through their grief. I pray daily for peace, not only for myself and my family, but for everyone making this journey through grief.

One thing that I have found to be most helpful during the past fifteen months of grief work has been to talk about and

to be honest about my feelings. I encourage siblings (and parents) to try to hook up with a support group such as The Compassionate Friends to talk out your feelings and concerns. After all, we've already paid an extremely high price to join this group...the life of our loved one...so why not take advantage of what they have to offer.

You may even find yourself helping someone else (even though you might not believe that now.)

Sunday Lee Stanton, Wyoming Valley, PA

REFLECTIONS

With the death of my sister come some painful realizations; that life isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness. Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all, I have been given the gift of time – time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schanberger

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who dies. Anger does not mean you loved them less, it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

This Healing Journey
An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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MISSION STATEMENT:
 The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.



THE
 COMPASSIONATE
 FRIENDS

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 Milligan.....701-282-4794	Secretary-Treasurer	Sheryl Cvijanovich..... 701-235-8158
Librarian		Initial Contact	Kylene Milligan 701-282-4794
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen701-730-0805	Newsletter Database	Mike Cvijanovich.....701-235-8158
Newsletter Printing	Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join

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

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:

John Milligan (son, 25 - car accident).....701-282-4794
 Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning) 701-437-2507
 Cheri Eraker (son, 23 - accident)701-451-0045
 Carol Nelson (son , 13 - leukemia)218-346-3854
 Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness).....701-730-0805
 Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage & son, 35 - accident).....701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____