



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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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
January 12th
February 9th

My apologies to the family of Zachary R. Scufsa. In December's birthdays it listed that he would have been 7 which was incorrect. It would have been Zachery's 27th birthday.

Dates to Remember in 2012
July 20-22 in Costa Mesa, CA - 35th TCF/USA Natl Conference; 5th International Gathering
Regional Conferences
February 17-18 in Overland, KS
March 23-24 in Frankfort, KY
April 20-21 in Meadville, PA

If you have any pictures, stories, or poems of your child, grandchild or sibling that you would like to share on our website, please submit them to Sheryl Cvijanovich at SHERYLCV13@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 FMTCFNWLTR@LIVE.COM. Please be sure to include your name in the email.

Reminder - Our monthly meeting now begins at 7 p.m.

AUTHORIZATION FORM

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year to ensure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. We have enclosed an authorization form with this newsletter. Please complete and return the form, in order to remain on our mailing list.

Thank you, Nancy Teeuwen, Newsletter Editor

LOVE GIFTS

Stacy & Aaron Birch in memory of their son, Aksel James Birch
George & Patti Pratt in memory of their daughter, Nancy Pratt Coash
Chris & Dawn Cantler in memory of their granddaughter, Kirstin Elizabeth Cantler-Booke

Monte Scott in memory of his son, Dustin Scott
Paul, Kara, Ashley & Kyle Bailey in memory of their son/brother, Nick Bailey
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

*Memories are like threads of gold,
they never tarnish or grow old.*

Holiday Angels that were not listed in December's Newsletter

Given By

Wallace & Sonia Wateland
Frank & Jayne Thompson
Loy & Ruth Jelinek Family
Debby Facey

Chris & Dawn Cantler
Harold & Irene Schenck
Robert & Mary Saunders
Thomas & Audrey Richmond
Gary & Kathy Karlgaard
Peter & Christine Murch
Sandi & Bob Roel
Dale & Marilyn Larson

In Memory of

Mark Wateland
Gabriel "Gabe" Thompson
Jeremiah Jelinek
Dana Keblar
Fred Finch
Kirstin Elizabeth Cantler-Booke
Doug Schenk
Matthew Robert Saunders
Ray Richmond
Mark Karlgaard
Valerie Murch
Joseph Roel
Sue Ellen Jane Larson
Gail Diane Larson
Joseph Larson
Amy Larson
Eric Larson

The Holidays are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb - a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

~Marie Andres, TCF So. MD Chap., MD

The Gate to Tomorrow

There is a gate that each of us has unknowingly passed through. This gate opens only one way... once we have passed through this gate we cannot return to the other side. Each of us stepped through the gate at a different time and in a different way. This gate opens to the world of parents whose children have died; it is their gate to every tomorrow.

There is no other place that compares with life in this world beyond the gate; there is no sorrow like the sorrow inside the gate. The numbing pain and perpetual agony we experience when first stepping through this gate are so overwhelming that we often don't immediately realize that there will be no return. But we will never return to life before the gate.

The new world inside the gate is populated with friends who are strangers and strangers who are friends.

Our perspective on life has changed forever. Few of our friends from life before the gate will linger with us now; these people are now the strangers. Our pain is all encompassing; they have lives to live, things to do, plans to make, happiness to capture. We are no longer part of their picture. Rare is the friend who stands by us inside the gate.....stands by us until one of us dies and leaves the world inside the gate.

The strangers who are now friends live inside the gate with us. Some have just come through the gate; others have been here a long, long time. But these strangers who are now friends share our experience; they understand our need to talk about our children, each life and each death. They applaud our tiny advances toward acceptance and serenity and peace. Although we can never go back to life before the gate, we now have our compassionate friends.....once strangers but now kindred souls who share our lives and our world.

Life will not be the same again, yet life can be good again. Inside the gate we will each find ourselves with the help of our compassionate friends. They listen carefully to stories about our child. They know our child's name better than they know our name. And that's how we want it to be....remember our children. Remember with us.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX ... In memory of Todd Mennen

INFANT DEATH

A family was gathered in the hospital where a couple's twelve-hour-old infant daughter had died. The sister of this couple said, "It's so hard to hold her, it makes it all so real." She had spent only hours with her niece and already was feeling the impact of this child's death. If it takes only hours for an aunt to feel the loss, how can we begin to explain the impact on the parents?

Miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death are not thought to be significant because the parents didn't really know the baby. Even with a loss early in pregnancy, the parents know the baby. Once a pregnancy is confirmed, the parents think about the baby all the time. This child is a party of their daily lives. They form a mental picture of the baby and plan what college he or she will attend. Names are chosen and rooms are decorated. In the book, *Swimmer in the Secret Sea*, a couple walks through the woods and pretends the baby has already been born and is swinging along between them holding onto their hands. After their son is stillborn the doctor says, "The baby looks perfectly normal. There's no reason why you can't have another child." Laski (the father) listened numbly. "He thinks that's what has been at stake, our wish for a child, any child, not this particular child who swung down the road between us. They can't know how special he is. The point to the future. But we're here, forever, now."

Parents are sometimes encouraged to have another baby as soon as possible in the belief that they will then forget about the baby that died. Most parents do go on to have another child, if able, simply because they are in the family-building part of their lives. They know it will not take away the pain or replace the child that died.

Some parents need to get pregnant again right away, & others want to wait for a while. As long as the mother is healed physically, whenever the parents feel ready for another pregnancy is the right time.

Occasionally parents experience some difficulty getting pregnant again, and it takes longer than it did before. Others have no difficulty achieving a pregnancy, but find even a few months a stressful wait.

Getting through the next pregnancy can be an emotional roller coaster. On one hand is joy and hope for the new baby; on the other hand is vulnerability and fear that what happened before may happen again. However, because they feel so exposed, parents now worry about everything that could happen, not only what caused the previous loss.

There is little support for parents who experience an infant death. Because many people see infant loss as insignificant and easily forgotten, they offer either no support or support only in the first few days or weeks. After that time parents are assumed to have healed and forgotten. If there are other children in the family, it is seen as being easier. "At least you have other children," is what these parents are told, as if that makes the loss easier. Since grief is overwhelming and takes so much energy, parents with other children may need extra help with caretaking. If no one offers, frequently parents find it difficult to ask for the help they need.

Parents need to know that it is okay to ask for help or to take life easy and be good to themselves. Remember, grief can heal only if you let it.

~ JoAnne Matzke, TCF/ Hinsdale, IL

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards. ~ Soren Kierkegaard.

PARENTS.....

.....OF A SAINT

A little bit of Heaven

Came to both of you one day,
Then soon this little breath of God
Was suddenly snatched away;
The joy you built within your hearts
Has now turned into grief,
You feel that nothing found in life
Could ever bring relief.

Nay, parents, if you'll meditate

You'll find it otherwise,
The grief you have is really
But a blessing in disguise;
The waters of eternal life,
Have freed your babe of taint,
'Twas meant by God that you
Should be the parents of a saint.

~ Sr. Kathleen Gibbons, O.S.F. Breckenridge, MN
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HUGGING

Friends, I'm not a doctor, but I've got some very good news.
I've got a new prescription for getting rid of the blues.

What you need is a great big hug from a relative, lover or friend.

It may seem strange at first, but you'll feel better in the end.
Everybody needs hugging - child, woman or man.
It give you something your body needs and does it like nothing else can.

It warms your heart and touches something in you that's very rare.

It makes you feel secure and give you a feeling that someone cares.

Hugging is a two-way street, as you give you shall receive,
So fill your hugs with genuine love, don't fake it, don't deceive.

Every human being has a basic need to touch.

So pass you hugs around generously, you just can't hug too much.

So make today a hugging day and hug the next person you see,
and just in case I miss you, hug someone for me,

And I will do the very same and hug someone for you,
till hugging spreads throughout the land, and no one's ever blue.

~ Ernie Scott, Prairie View, IL

A Day

A laugh a day keeps the heart pumping,

A tear a day keeps the mind clear.

A smile a day gives joy to others,

A hug a day gives the hopeless hope.

A thought a day brings loved ones near,

A memory a day brings you closer to me.

Laughs, tears, smiles, hugs

Stitched with thoughts and memories -

They're all in my days without you.

~ Pam Burden, TCF/Augusta, GA

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



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



AUTHORIZATION FORM

Please read and return **no later than March 31, 2012** to: **The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area**
P.O. Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues. To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If you wish to continue to receive our newsletter, please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____ Cause of Death: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

By mail.

By email.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving the newsletter. (Newsletters are posted monthly on our Web site.)

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF F-M Area Website. (www.tcffargomoorhead.org)

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____
Please make check payable to "TCF of Fargo-Moorhead"

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents. **We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter, Web site or any other TCF event.** 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.
PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM NO LATER THAN March 31, 2012

Date: _____

(Signature)

Please return completed form to:
The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area
P.O. Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106

You may copy, paste and fill out in your word program.

Email to: fmtcfnwltr@live.com

SIBLING PAGE

Find Someone to Talk With About Your Grief

Written by Mary A. Paulson, Ph.D.

Finding someone to talk with following the death of your sister or brother may be one of the best ways to cope with the loss. It really doesn't matter who that person is, as long as you can be open and honest in conveying your feelings.

It would be terrific if this person could be a parent or a surviving brother or sister because sharing your loss and going through the grief process together can make you stronger as a family. But often other members of the family are facing their own struggles with the grief process and may not be able to open up with you.

Sometimes it is difficult to share your own feelings with other family members because of the emotions this can bring on. Tears are often difficult for us to handle because, as surviving siblings, we may feel guilty for causing someone else to have a bad day. We may interpret the other person's tears to mean that our deceased sibling is more important than we are, or that we must compete with them for our parent's attention. If you can't talk with your parents or a surviving, talking with another person who has experienced the death of a sister or brother may be the next best thing.

One of the hardest things to do after a sibling dies is to create a life for yourself that will not include your sister or brother. You have to continue going to work or school; fight back the tears when that special favorite song comes on the radio; run to the phone to call your sister or brother only to realize no one will answer; thinking you see your sibling in a crowd; and, answering for the first time the question "how many sisters and brothers do you have?"

Others around you may not understand these things, but someone who has had a sister or brother die knows what this is like. They have sat at a red light, crying their eyes out. They, too, may wear their sibling's clothes. They, too, may look to date someone who knew their sister or brother.

Although no one can know exactly what you are going through (because no one will have the same relationship you had with your sister or brother), someone whose sibling died has probably gone through many of the same experiences you are going through. It helps to hear that what you're going through is "normal". It helps to talk about your sibling and his or her death. It helps to talk about what's going on in your life now.

The Compassionate Friends provides you with unique opportunities to do just that - to talk with someone who has had a sister or brother die. Your local chapter may have a surviving siblings group. If not, you may want to consider joining the Compassionate Friends Sibling Pen Pals which matches you with someone in your age bracket whose sister or brother died in a similar way to yours.

"It's so curious: one can resist tears and 'behave' very well in the hardest hours of grief. But then someone makes you a friendly sign behind a window, or one notices that a flower that was in bud only yesterday has suddenly blossomed, or a letter slips from a drawer—and everything collapses." ~ Colette

MEMORIES

As I watched her leave

There is a place

That we call Memory.

A province by itself
which, though unseen,

is home and haven
to the heart.

and there,

in peace and beauty
waiting,

are those with whom

we shared our yesterdays.

~Nancy Cassel, TCF/Holmdel, NJ

My Sister, My Friend

Within our hearts

You will always be.

Our minds will be filled

With sweet memories.

Your spirit and love

Will never be gone

For each life you touched

Will carry them on.

~ Catherine Hall, TCF, Hinsdale IL

A PART OF ME

YOU were not just my brother, but YOU were my friend.

YOU were supposed to be here always, or till the world came to an end.

I know that we argued and seemed to disagree, but

I could always count on you to be there for me.

YOU may be gone from this world I see, but you will always be a part of me.

~ Donna Montville, TCF/Gardner, MA

LITTLE BROTHER

Someone took you away from me

And I wonder if they cared

About the ones' they left behind

And the pain that each must bear

Why did you have to leave me

When there was so much left to do

I'm not sure if I can go on

If I have to go on without you.

But life dictates the rules

There are things that I can't change

When you left, my heart was torn in two

My life got rearranged.

I have to believe I'll see you again

It keeps the hope alive and new

So until we meet again, little brother

Never forget that I love you.

~ Jenny, TCF/ Indianapolis, IN

Resolutions for Bereaved Parents

I will grieve as much as and for as long as I feel like grieving, and I will not let others put a timetable 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 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 ashamed or afraid 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 I won't feel compelled to explain this communication to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

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.

Even though my child has died, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

~ Nancy Mower , TCF/Honolulu, Hawaii

Grief is not truly a process unless
There is an EXIT as well as an ENTRY.

Grief has a beginning.

Does it also have an ending?

"Footsteps Through the Valley" By Darcie D Sims

WHEN....

when we finally realize that you
are always going to be smiling
and dancing in our hearts,
then, our pain shall turn to joy.

~ Bob Walters, TCF/South Lake Tahoe, CA

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones
taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place
clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers
inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish
their hearts desiring
what they cannot have--
to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held--
to all the fathers who leave a part
of their hearts at the stones
may breezes underneath trees of time
ease their pain
as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

~ Alice J. Wisler

For David, in memory of our son Daniel (1992 -1997)

GRIEF FOLLOWS NO SCHEDULE

Society has a tendency to limit the time of mourning that is considered acceptable. That time may be 3 days, 3 weeks, or 3 months. But sooner or later the grieving person gets the message that it is time to stop grieving and start living. People become uncomfortable with the grieving person. They grow weary of hearing of the pain over and over. This is natural. People not in grief don't want to be reminded of death. They want to get back to their lives and happier thoughts. The grieving person, however, needs to tell their story over and over. There is no timetable for grief. Each person grieves in his or her own way and takes the time needed to resolve the grief.

What then is the grieving process? Grief counselors state that raw grief (uncontrolled sobbing at least once a day) may last months. This is the time of overwhelming emotions. The grieving person has sleeplessness, loss of appetite or overeating, often physical pain in the stomach or heart area, inability to concentrate, feelings of confusion, numbness or anger.

Later, and the time will vary from person to person, the heaviness of grief will lessen. There will still be difficult days, sometimes for no reason at all, but there will also be some "good" days. This is the time for "reinvesting" where the grieving person begins to build a new life. Sadness still continues and there may be crying, but more and more energy is devoted to getting on with living. That shift is one that happens naturally and cannot be forced. The timetable of grief is an individual one, requiring love and patience.

~The Bear House Chronicles, The Dougy Center, Portland, OR

TELL + LISTEN = HEALING

The fastest way through grief is to *tell* your story many times and *listen* to many others tell their story. Do these two things and you will begin to heal.

Ah, but you say, "People don't want to hear my story again. They look away when they see me coming." What do you think our Compassionate Friends meetings are for? Come tell your story over and over. We will listen.

A Year of Memories

While I was delivering mail on my route today, I saw a teenager who looked like you. When I saw him, I cried. I came home and looked at your website pictures again. You were seventeen when you left, and you've been gone almost four years now.

Many occasions throughout each year remind me of you. In January I think of you when snow falls. You loved playing in the snow—riding sleds, participating in snowball fights, making snowmen, cutting circles in a vehicle with your friend or brother or dad.

February brings Valentine's Day and the memory of the many times I heard you say the Valentine words, "I love you." Sometimes you would leave me sticky notes on the kitchen counter, and they always ended with "Love you, Samuel."

March is the month of your birthday. You were the fifth child born on the fifth day of the month. I've heard many Bible scholars and preachers say that the number five is God's number of grace. You were definitely my child of grace. You asked me a couple of times in your short life if you were an accident. I told you that you were an unexpected blessing. You always grinned when I said that.

April brings memories of your prom four years ago. That was your finest hour and I didn't know it. I was so blessed by God to be at your date's home when you arrived to pick her up and to be able to take pictures. You were so beautiful (I hope you forgive my mother talk. I'm sure you'd rather be called handsome or "cool" or a "hottie"). As your mom, it was a breathtaking experience to watch you walk across the yard to her door that evening. As I watched, a strange, unexplained feeling overtook me, but I wasn't sure what the feeling meant. Maybe that's how you might look on your wedding day in a few years, I thought.

That same feeling returned when you put your arm around me that night to take our photo together. Little did I know those very pictures would be placed in a memorial display at the visitation before your funeral. One would also be placed on your headstone. But I thank God so much for allowing me to be there that day in your presence. It is my own personal memorial video that I can replay in my mind anytime.

On sunny, warm May afternoons, the sight and scent of honeysuckle blooms bring back precious memories of you. When you were two, I picked you up and carried you around our honeysuckle-covered backyard fence. I showed you how to enjoy the sweet fragrance and to pull the little center out of the honeysuckle bloom to get a drop of nectar for your tongue.

May is Mother's Day month, and naturally my Mother's Day is bittersweet now that you're gone. Although your one brother and three sisters always manage to brighten my day, there's one portion of my heart that only you can fill. After church this past Mother's Day, I rode to your gravesite and brushed the grass off the base of your tombstone. Not my preferred choice of ways to spend Mother's Day afternoon. I'd rather receive a hug from you and an "I love you, Mama."

On Memorial Day, within a few weeks of your accident, you and your sister went with your dad to the graveyard where your paternal grandparents are buried. While walking through the graveyard, you were amazed at all the different ages of people buried there. You saw a tombstone with the deceased person's picture on it. You told your sister that you wanted your picture on your tombstone when you died. Unbeknownst to you, that request would all too soon be honored. More really great photos were made of you on that Memorial Day. How precious pictures become after someone passes away.

I guess June is the saddest month. One beautiful sunny and hot June morning, you went with your brother-in-law and a friend to wade and fish in the river. You never returned home. You stepped off into a sinkhole and the current pulled you under. They tried their best to find you before it was too late. But that was not to be.

July reminds me of you because you loved celebrating the Fourth. You would always ask me to take you to buy fireworks. As a teenage boy, setting off fireworks was a Fourth of July tradition for you and your friends.

August and September bring school memories and buses full of teenagers and children of all ages. But one student is missing from the crowd. You were still in high school at the time of your death. The September after your death, we set up a small memorial for you at a riverside park. It contained poems about your death with religious tracts attached. Your picture was also on the front of the little memorial stand. Over three hundred of these poems were taken from the memorial.

October and November remind me of you because of hunting season. You loved hunting and shooting your own rifle. On the last Thanksgiving that you lived you shot your first and last buck deer. It was an 8-pointer and you were so proud. You took it to have it mounted. The November after you died I went to the taxidermist to pick it up. After he heard your story, he wouldn't charge me anything for his services.

December is my birthday month and Christmas. We had some good family pictures made that last Christmas before you left us. I have a last Christmas picture of you sitting on my living room floor. You look so alive in that picture. But you have on the sweater you wore in the casket.

On holiday occasions we expect to be visited by memories. But sometimes memories are like uninvited visitors. We never know when they will arrive. They come at unexpected moments and catch us off guard.

But I am so thankful for all the memories of you, Samuel; even if they make me cry sometimes. I am eternally grateful for all the good memories you and I made together. So many more good than bad. Thank you, Samuel. I love you, and I can't wait to see you again in heaven. Thank you, Lord, for unexpected blessings. Samuel was surely one of those.

~ Bettie V. Steelman

Bettie V. Steelman's son Samuel Theon Steelman was 17 years old when he died in a drowning accident. In 2005, when this story was published, she was a rural mail carrier in Lewisville, NC, and a beginning freelance writer.

We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.
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Though life is not as it was before,
And never will be again,
Our memories are much richer,
Than if love had never been."
-- Author Unknown

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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**THE
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FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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.

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 Teeuwen 701-730-0805	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 _____