

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

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on January 26th @ Fry'n Pan
TCF National Conference - Orlando, Florida July 28-30, 2017

LOVE GIFTS

Carol & Dan Winter in memory of their son, Matthew Allen Winter
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.

Where is the aisle marked
HAPPINESS?

~Darcie D Sims "Footsteps
Through the Valley"

FOR THE NEW YEAR

Where there is pain,
let there be softening
Where there is bitterness,
let there be acceptance
Where there is silence,
let there be communication
Where there is loneliness,
let there be friendships
Where there is despair,
let there be hope

~ Ruth Eiseman, TCF/Louisville, KY

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

Holiday Angels that were not listed in December's Newsletter

<u>Given By</u>	<u>In Memory of</u>
Russ & Sharon Lalum	Carmen Lalum
Todd & Suzie Kapaun.....	Dillon Kapaun
Richard & Denise Eskildsen	Jason Eskildsen
Lynette Myrold	David William Hallman
Arlen & Julie Kotta.....	Benjamin Kotta

Hanson-Runsvold Funeral Home

"When our special sadness comes to call, when we remember more than we can bear, when courage falters – shadows everywhere: Then let us reach and touch and share, we, who are friends." ~ Sascha Wagner

Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn' Pan restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday January 26th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or sherylev13@msn.com.

"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

Blessings Inside Sorrow

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told. I am not sure I always agree. At times I can see the gifts I have been given. Love...without measure...fills my heart when I think of you. But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart. And I miss you now. The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by any blessings I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still, I wonder. Are there blessings? Would I have known how much I cared for you...for your brothers, for your Dad, were it not for your coming, and so suddenly, softly, leaving, without a good-bye? Would I treasure life I have remaining if it weren't for your loss? Certainly I loved and treasured before you left, but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that love and to treasure more highly those around me? I KNOW I can't take for granted they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me... still was there not a glimmer of hope? That life would go on, somehow, we would survive and build on the ashes of our broken hearts. Building somehow in spite of our pain. Mixing the cement of our love with tears, we bound ourselves together even more tightly than ever before. And our love grows stronger. And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson! And still, the emptiness will never be filled. There yet remains a hole in my heart...and in all our hearts. Dear son, we will never forget you. The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in our fabric of our lives. It remains open, a testament that you mattered, and that your coming and soft going made a difference. And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow.

We were blessed to have held you for a time, even though you could not stay. And even through our tears, we smile at the memories. And we know that you are not completely alone. You shadow our lives, affecting them in big ways and small. And though I would trade blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms, I am indeed grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

~ Lisa Sculley, TCF/Jacksonville, Orange Park Chapter

A New Year's Resolution

Now the holidays are over, and once again a new year faces us—for some, the first one without that precious loved one—for others, another one of many. The loss is still remembered, no matter how many others we have faced.

What will we do in the coming months? Each hour seems so long and the days seem to stretch ahead forever, as if another year cannot possibly ever come to an end. But friends, it will and we will survive. The road at times is hard and the pain is so hard to bear, but each year we realize that the pain has eased. We never will be totally without this pain of love and shattered dreams, but we will be able to live. This love that is stored in us for our missed child can be spread out to others to help us to ease their pain.

So, in this New Year, let's make a new resolution—that our love for our dead child will be brought out of our hearts and given with our best effort to others to help them ease their pain. In so doing, we will find our pain is eased also.

~ Thelma Richardson, TCF/Mesa County, AZ

And when we have remembered everything,
we grow afraid of what we may forget.

A face, a voice, a smile? A birthday? An anniversary?
No need to fear forgetting – the heart remembers always...

~ Sascha Wagner

FOR THE NEW YEAR

Where there is pain,
let there be softening
Where there is bitterness,
let there be acceptance
Where there is silence,
let there be communication
Where there is loneliness,
let there be friendships
Where there is despair,
let there be hope

~ Ruth Eiseman, TCF/Louisville, KY

WHEN A LIFE BREAKS

After suicide, the first commandment is kindness, both toward the life that has broken and toward ourselves. We need to beware of using against ourselves some preconceived notions about suicide.

If our child has taken his or her own life, many people feel compelled to comment that the dead sufferer should not have hurt THAT much. Moreover, the religious community removes grace, the social community judges character, the medical community pronounces insanity. If the concept of unbearable pain is admitted at all, we are told that either (1) the suicide's faith was weak, or (2) her/his expectations were immodest, or (3) she/he was mean and selfish. It must have been a weakling who said: Every person has his or her breaking point: - right? WRONG!

The truth is that most of us have wondered about ending it all – because life does SEEM unmanageable at times. And we acknowledge the possibility that life IS unmanageable for long stretches. Who is to say that we are always obliged or able to meet an overwhelming darkness with the strength and/or the will of a heroic supersaint? We are all vulnerable, we can all feel lost and frightened and without hope. It is arrogant to assume that everyone is equipped to overcome even the most extreme challenge (whether real or imaginary) with fortitude, mastery and success.

Some of us are angry after suicide has happened close to us. Most of us are incredibly hurt and helpless. We feel betrayed, we feel abandoned, even punished. We often blame ourselves for some carelessness, some omission, some selfishness, some cruelty, which caused that fatal break of life..... It can be a long time before there comes a small and unexpected comfort when reality reminds us that the suicide was, as it were, bigger than life.

Western society has little love for those who take their own life, nor for those who are left behind. But we CAN cross the boundaries of misguided opinion, and we can try to see beyond the camouflage of traditional superstitions.

Yes, the first (through not the easiest) commandment is kindness. Be good to yourself. Give love and honor to the memory of that broken life.

Sascha Wagner, from *The Sorrow and The Light* (Sascha's daughter, Eve, died of suicide)

If tears could build a stairway,
And memories a lane,
I'd walk right up to Heaven
And bring you home again.
~Author Unknown

THOUGHTS ON WINTER

January...February...so cold, so crisp, so leafless. Beginning a year...a new year...A NEW BEGINNING. You never lived in this year, and that is new. Sometimes new is painful. January is also the month of resolutions and the only resolution we must make is that we must learn to live without our child. What a profound sadness that is! To love them so deeply, so passionately, so completely...only to have us part.

My child, did I ever tell you enough how much I loved you? I've wondered. Do we tell those we love how very much their life has meant to us? Probably we do not. Somehow we just arrogantly believe that time goes on forever. It does. It's just the people do not. We fail to recognize how entirely too brief some lives can be. You were not supposed to die. Death is reserved for others. How could you have disappointed me? Didn't you know that I had such plans for you? I didn't want to face my own mortality. How cruel life was...using you to prove to me that we do indeed come to an end.

I don't want to accept your death...but what choice have I left? Have you any idea how angry that makes me? Oh, I'll mend...although mending sometimes means forgetting. I cannot put you aside, but already memories of you are fading.

You know what I like best? When I'm given little tidbits of your life by those that knew you. What a bittersweet delight!

Each piece of my jigsaw puzzle life will eventually fit together. You will be the only missing piece.

~ Dorothy Worrel, TCF/Palo Alto, CA

A Father Returns to Work

After Kathy died, I, of course, went back to work. Some of my co-workers made the stop at my desk to express their sympathy. I know I turned them off, as my pain and my denial were so great. I could not talk about what had happened and how I felt. I thanked them. Although nobody ever talked to me about it, that was okay as my pain was such, I thought, I could not bear to talk. I threw myself into my work and on occasion was confused because I could not make the kind of decisions I had been making for years. I never made the connection that this inability to concentrate was part of my grief and was normal.

Lunch was the worst time. My habit was to eat with my associates, but often in the middle of the meal I would just have to get up and walk away. Although nobody ever said anything to me about this odd behavior, I do thank them at least for their tolerance. Slowly I readjusted (I thought) and in time (a long time) I was able to perform well again. But I never really grieved until I found THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS and it was here that people helped me to talk. It was almost twelve years before I found TCF as there was no such organization in 1967. My friends, let TCF help you...don't wait twelve years to talk!

~ Bill Errnatinger, TCF/Baltimore. MD

Grief Tip – A Fresh Start

The New Year can bring a feeling of fresh start after loss. It's a time to make an effort to heal your grief going forward. Think about the kind of life you want to be living and the kind of people you want to be around you. Make an effort to surround yourself with hope by joining a support or education group. Engage in activity. It can change you from being lonely to being willing to become social again. Now is the time to begin again.

From the Southern Piedmont/Charlotte Chapter, TCF
Newsletter, Jan-Feb 2012

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

Decide What You Want to Do from You Can Become Whole Again

by Yolanda Miller

There is much more you can do with grief than just survive it. Being able to "take it" and endure life in spite of your loss may seem the brave thing to do, or even the only choice you have when tragedy comes.

But these two assumptions are wrong. Unhealthy too. Such stoical endurance is in reality false courage. It takes no courage to avoid dealing with the unpleasant things that happen in life. Any coward can do that. But it does require the highest kind of courage to continue experiencing life, whatever the circumstance, and that's the other choice you have.

Which do you opt for? The alternative that seems the easiest – carrying on in spite of your loss? Or the one that seems most difficult, but is in fact the most profitable in the long run – growing as a person because of your loss?

Only you can decide. Only you can want to stagnate in sorrow, or grow, as you heal, in understanding more about life and death through grief. Don't say the choice depends upon what you can or cannot do. It's not a matter of "can" or "can't" but of "will" or "won't."

That lays the responsibility for how you fare solely on your shoulders, doesn't it? Accept the fact, my friend, for that's exactly where responsibility for your recovery rests.

**OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED
BIRTHDAYS**

CHILD

PARENTS

BENJAMIN GORDON ASHER	31	JERRY & BONNIE ASHER
NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY	24	PAUL & KARA BAILEY
KIRSTIN ELIZABETH CANTLER-BOOKE	8	CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER (Grandparents)
KONNIE JEAN CHAFFEE.....	44	MARK & JEAN CHAFFEE
NANCY PRATT COASH	58	PATRICIA PRATT
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER.....	6	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
MATTHEW R HOLLAND	21	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
DANA DAWN KEBLAR.....	39	DEBORAH FACEY
TARA LEA KELLAR	38	CATHY & GREG GRONLAND
DAVID VICTOR LAMBRECHT	55	VICTOR & LORETTA LAMBRECHT
MICHAEL L LIVDAHL	23	ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
CHRISTIANA N SANDSTROM.....	4	ANDREW & SHAYNA SANDSTROM
MATTHEW AARON THIBEDEAU	43	MARY & GALEN SCHROEDER
THOMAS LEE THOEMKE.....	41	JEAN & BILL THOEMKE
GABRIEL "GABE" THOMPSON	36	FRANK & JANE THOMPSON
MATTHEW ALLEN WINTER.....	30	CAROL & DAN WINTER

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD

PARENTS

NATHAN ANDERSON	16	DIANE & JAY FENSKE
SHERI PETERSON BJORGAN	17	DEWAYNE & ARLENE PETERSON
ANDREW HOWARD BRAUN	11	CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
SANDRA DIANE CASELLA.....	5	RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
ZACHARY COLE.....	5	JERRY & DEB COLE
MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH	12	MICHAEL & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
TYLER JUSTIN EICHOLTZ.....	14	STEVE & LISA EICHOLTZ
WADE HAAKE.....	8	RANDIE HAAKE
CORRINE HOEPKER.....	14	MARY VASECKA
MATTHEW R HOLLAND	2	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
WENDY KUEHL	7	KEITH KUEHL
WENDY KUEHL	7	LAURA KUEHL
DAVID VICTOR LAMBRECHT	55	VICTOR & LORETTA LAMBRECHT
CHRISTOPHER LOE	4	MARGARET "MUGS" LOE
JESSICA FAYE MOEN	1	BRAD & JACKIE MOEN
SONYA L NANKIVEL.....	2	DELORES COOPER
DEETTA LOUISE NICHOLS.....	3	RAMONA A KADOUN
ERIC JOHN SCHAFER	2	BILL & LOIS SCHAFER
GARRETT JOSEPH SCHWAN.....	13	JENNA BJORNSTAD
BRUCE C THORNBY	8	JANET & HOWARD GALLAGHER
KATHRYN (KATIE) ELIZABETH WHELTL.....	2	SHARON & MARK WHELTL
CHAD WOLD	1	TOM & BONNIE WOLD

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 tcfl313@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

SIBLING PAGE

Awake

(Birds, crickets. Wind in the trees. I finally hear these things)

For two years I was asleep. Asleep, like the long shadows outside my cloudy house, where the sounds of laughter fell silent against the drenched walls. My senses were frozen: no taste, smell, feeling, or noise could penetrate the safe, bulletproof wall I built around myself. My life had become a perpetual winter. Numbness was all I felt. Smells, like flowers blooming in the spring, freshly-cut grass in the summer, apple pie cooking in the oven in the fall, and the smell of the newly decorated Christmas tree in the winter, were lost. I would stare out the bleeding windows, into the grey sunlight. Every day was the same as the day before. I was on a train speeding blankly through a storm; everything outside the window was a dark blur. I kept my head low, and dove forward into daily life, never really understanding what was going on around me. The storm lasted two years, and finally the sun breached the clouds. I no longer saw the flashing lights. I no longer heard the piercing sound of the heart monitor as her heart fell silent. I no longer felt the coldness of her skin and the rough hospital sheet. Instead, I began to see her smile. I saw the way her eyes would glow and widen when she smiled or laughed. I saw the look she made every time I hugged her spontaneously; rolling her eyes in a look of annoyance, but a smile appearing, erasing any of her unconvincing pretenses. I saw my sister. For the first time, I heard myself laugh. The curtains opened and allowed light and color to fill my life.

It took two years to realize that after every freeze there is a thaw, after every winter there is a spring, after every ending there is a beginning. I found the glue to piece my life back together. I realized that even though the puzzle that connected my sister and me together was broken, it could still work.

A piece would always be missing, but the other half was capable of functioning and having fun. The grey shadows disappeared, and sunlight took its place. The occasional shadow would emerge, but I found ways to fight the shadows off and stay happy by keeping the warmth and light of the sun visible and strong. The numbness, like Novocain, wore off and I was able to realize that even though this huge part of my life was missing, everything would be ok, and things would get better. I found hope and strength.

My sister's death has been painful, but also encouraging. I have transformed into a person I am proud of. I have found who I am, and much of this has to do with the growth I experienced after her death. I have developed a sense of self and confidence, none of which I had before my sister died. This change and self-realization though, wasn't something that happened in a day. Slowly, I began to wake up. It could have been a number of events that spurred this change; whether it was excelling in school, getting my first horse, or celebrating traditions we had halted after her death, I realized things will get better, and everything will work out. I can't put a finger on what was the actual cause of this transformation. It happened gradually. I began to realize that there were plenty of things to look forward to, and it was possible to be happy and keep her in my heart. I also realized that even though she died, I still had an entire life to live. I decided to live this life for her. For the both of us. I will never have late night conversations under the covers with my sister, or sing incredibly ridiculous songs at the top of our lungs, but it will be these memories that carry me through life. No matter what happens in life, things will always get better, they may never be the same, but it will get better.

~ Amanda Geisinger, Mt. Vernon, N.H.

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

The Surviving Child

How hard it must be to physically lose your brother or sister and emotionally lose one or both of your parents. Yet, the surviving child deals with this most of the time. We, as parents, speak of how a part of use died and will never be the same. Who is more aware of this than our children, no matter what the age - even as an infant we can sense a difference in someone's touch or voice? Our children have spent most of their lives trying to "figure out" and "deal with" us. Now all of a sudden, they find they have lost all knowledge as to how we will show our emotions, interact with others, and, most important, relate to them. We cannot even be sure of our stability when grief strikes us; yet the surviving child must learn to adapt quickly.

Here are a few suggestions to help the surviving sibling cope with a world that has been changed sometimes in a matter of a few seconds.

A. Acknowledge the need for honesty - do not try to hide your grief from them.

B. Avoid the non-supportive who rob both adults and children of their right to grieve.

C. Provide a time when age appropriate release of grief can be experienced. Such as drawing, writing, playing with others, or simply acting out their emotions.

D. Provide good role models for them - other bereaved siblings.

One of the hardest things I have done in my life is to bury a child, but the next hardest thing has been to parent surviving siblings. I wish you patience and understanding while you are faced with this enormous job.

~ Andrea Simoni, TCF/Cumberland Co., NJ

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 awhile.
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

"Time can bring you down
Time can bend your knees
Time can break your heart
Have you begging please
...beyond the door
There's peace I'm sure
And I know there'll be
No more tears in heaven"
By Eric Clapton

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'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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You left us so quickly; there were no goodbyes.
How long this forever, your death and our lives.
The sadness, the anger, the loneliness of three,
preferring four always, how small, this new we.
Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

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.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)



Butterfly Decals



“Butterflies are the heaven sent kisses of an angel.” ~ Author Unknown

Butterfly decals are available to help personalize our trailer. The trailer is used to carry items to and from our Walk to Remember and other chapter events. It has also given us some visibility in the Fargo/Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our beloved children.

Butterflies are available in five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost is as follows: \$25 for 1 butterfly, \$50 for 2 butterflies, \$65 for 3 butterflies and \$80 for 4 butterflies. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies please contact John Milligan at 701-491-0364.

Butterfly orders should include the child's first and last name (middle name is optional) and the 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 New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help our selves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories...sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

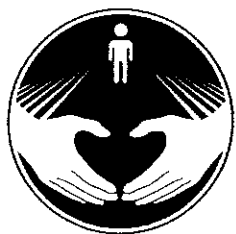
So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

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

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

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FARGO, ND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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 Milligan..... 701-491-0364	Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805
Meeting Facilitator	Paul & Kara Bailey..... 701-261-0668	Newsletter Database	Mike Cvijanovich 701-235-8158
Secretary	Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287
Treasurer	Chuck Klinkhammer 701-298-2929	Newsletter Printing	Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church
Initial Contact	Jamie Olson 701-219-3865	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join
Librarian	Contact Us to Volunteer		

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) 701-491-0364
Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) 701-282-4083
Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness) 701-730-0805
Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage, son, 35-accident & son, 45-cancer)... 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 _____

NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries.