



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
March 8th
April 12th

Dates to Remember in 2012
July 20-22 in Costa Mesa, CA - 35th
TCF/USA Natl Conference; 5th
International Gathering
Regional Conferences
March 23-24 in Frankfort, KY
April 20-21 in Meadville, PA
July 28, 2012 - Fargo Chapter's
6th Annual WALK TO
REMEMBER

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 meetings now begin at 7 p.m.

LOVE GIFTS

Jim & Jody Kutter in memory of their daughter, Michelle Kay Kutter
John & Kelly Borgen in memory of their daughter, Kari Rae Borgen
Thomas Audrey Richmond in memory of his son, Roy Richmond
Rita Clancy in memory of her son, Jeffrey C Hansen
Chloris Steidl in memory of her daughter, Charlene Crommett
Jack & June Volk in memory of their son, David J. Volk
Shandra Malheim & Billy Olafson in memory of their son, Zayne William
Malheim Olafson

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

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is the hospital where my broken bones were reset and my wounds cared for and dressed with healing ointment. My fears were eased. Now I have been thrust into the hurting and wounded, and I find the grace is there to touch, to hug, to dress a wound. I want to say "thank you" my compassionate friends.

~ Kathi Barnhill

Our Logo — Its Mystery and Its History

By Joyce Andrews ~ TCF Sugar Land - SW Houston Chapter

Are the hands reaching out or letting go? Are they the hands of one person or two? These are questions often heard from new members...so we asked the people who know.

Much of the beauty of our logo lies in the fact that there are no definitive answers to its symbolism. At first glance its meaning seems obvious; yet as you look more closely, these questions may arise.

The hands represent different things to us at different periods in our grief journeys. To the newly bereaved, the hands reach out toward him or her, offering comfort and support. Later in our grief journeys, they may symbolize the process of letting go, of coming to terms with the child's death, of acknowledging that the child is no longer a part of our earthly existence.

Still later in our grief journeys, we begin to reinvest in life and reach out toward others. Then our hands become the hands which are extended to the newly bereaved.

The circle is complete: a circle of friends, a circle of love and understanding, with the child at the center.

Thanks to the efforts of TCF historian Helen Robinson of the Tuscaloosa AL Chapter, the origin of our logo has now been documented. Helen has been in touch with Joe Lawley, Founder-Chairman of The Society of The Compassionate Friends. Joe supplied details on how the logo came about, as well as a copy of a letter which John and Maggie Fisher of Coventry, England, wrote on February 12, 1975.

In his letter, John says that their daughter Clare "was killed on November 17th last, aged 8 1/2. By chance we met someone, who knew someone who had heard of the Friends, who lived in Watford, some twenty or thirty miles from our home, and as a consequence Mrs. Joan Wills wrote to us and subsequently came to our home.... Although we still feel our loss greatly we both know that we are now ready to assist the Friends ourselves.

"Our help would also include the services of my own company (John Fisher Design & Marketing, Ltd.), which include Advertising, Design, Marketing and Public Relations activities.... We are mobile, immediately available, and ready, both physically and spiritually, to begin work for the Friends. Please use us."

Joe tells us that "Its first appearance was on the June 1975 Newsletter and is recorded on that occasion as being 'in a bright emerald green' subsequently however settling into the generally universal color of royal blue and white from 1977 on."

(This article first appeared in the Spring, 1998 issue of Friends, Caring and Sharing, which at the time was The Compassionate Friends' in-house newsletter for chapter leaders and steering committee members.)

"I've learned- that no matter how bad your heart is broken, the world doesn't stop for your grief"

~ Author Unknown

My Grief Rights

1. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE MY OWN UNIQUE FEELINGS ABOUT THE DEATH. - I may feel mad, sad, lonely, scared or relieved. I may be numb or sometimes nothing at all.
2. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT MY GRIEF WHENEVER I FEEL LIKE TALKING. I will find someone who will care and listen. If I don't want to talk, that's ok too.
3. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SHOW MY FEELINGS OF GRIEF IN MY OWN WAY. I may get mad and scream, or I might cry. I might want time alone.
4. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO NEED OTHER PEOPLE TO HELP ME WITH MY GRIEF, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT ME. Please pay attention to me, to what I am saying and feeling. Love me no matter what.
5. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET UPSET ABOUT NORMAL, EVERYDAY PROBLEMS. I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others.
6. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE "GRIEFBURSTS". These are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me even long after the death; these feelings can be very strong.
7. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE MY BELIEFS ABOUT MY GOD TO HELP ME DEAL WITH MY FEELINGS OF GRIEF. Praying might make me feel better, closer to the person who died.
8. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHY THE PERSON I LOVE DIED. It's okay if I don't find the answer.
9. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT MY MEMORIES OF THE PERSON WHO DIED. Memories might be happy or they might be sad. Either way, these will keep alive my love for the person who died.
10. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO MOVE TOWARD AND FEEL MY GRIEF AND, OVER TIME TO HEAL. I'll go on to live a happy life, but the life and breath of the person who died will always be a part of me.

~ Alan D. Wolfelt 1995

Coquitlam Chapter newsletter July/August 1996

His Room

Sun splinters through
The stained-glass unicorn Still on the sill
Splattering black walls with color
Few things are as forlorn as a vacant room
Furniture gone, awaiting definition
Bare, yet there on the carpet
Imprints of chair and waterbed
And there is the hole he
Accidentally shot through the wall
And there and there and there
Nail holes that held pictures and posters
And eight-point antlers
And there... God, how can a place
So empty, be so full?

~ Richard Dew - From *Rachel's Cry A Journey Through Grief*

SUGGESTIONS TO AID MARRIAGE

1. Don't expect spouse to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief
2. Be sensitive to your spouse's personality style. In general he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. It may be very private, very open and sharing or someplace in between.
3. Find a "sympathetic ear" (not necessarily our mate's) ~ someone who cares and will listen.
4. Do talk about your child with your spouse. If necessary set up a time to talk about the child.
5. Seek the help of a counselor if depression, grief or problems in your marriage are getting out of hand.
6. Do not overlook or ignore anger causing situations. It is like adding fuel to a fire. Eventually there is an explosion. Deal with things as they occur.
7. Remember you loved your spouse enough to marry. Try to keep your marriage alive: go out for dinner or an ice cream cone; take a walk; go on a vacation.
8. Be gentle with yourself and your mate.
9. Join a support group for bereaved parents. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not make it a pressure on your spouse to attend with you if it is not his/her preference.
10. Join a mutually agreeable community betterment project
11. Do not blame yourself or mate for what you were powerless to prevent. If you blame your spouse or personally feel responsible for your child's death seek immediate counseling help for yourself and your marriage.
12. Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved parents. In 2 1/2 years our mailing list has grown from 50 parents to over 700 parents.
13. Choose to believe again in the goodness of God and of life. Search for you and laughter.
14. Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to tendency to take things personally.
15. Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved parents.
16. Take your time with decisions about child's things, change of residence, etc.
17. Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your mate.
18. Remember there is no timetable. Everyone goes through grief differently, even parents of the same child.
19. Try to remember that your spouse is doing the best he or she can.
20. Marital friction is normal in any marriage. Don't blow it out of proportion.
21. Try not to let little everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient.
22. Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your spouse as well as yourself. Sometimes it is important to compromise.
23. It is very important to keep the lines of communication open.
24. Work on your grief instead of wishing that your spouse would handle his/her grief differently. You will find that you will have enough just handling your own grief. Remember when you help yourself cope with grief, it indirectly helps your spouse.
25. As Harriet Schiff states, "Value your marriage. You have lost enough."
26. Hold on to HOPE. With time, work and support, you will survive. It will never be the same but you can learn again to appreciate life and the people in your life.

BORROWED FROM THE GREENSBORO CHAPTER

GRIEVING IS A LONELY JOB

I don't care what anybody says, grieving is a very lonely job. Friends and family try to help in their own way, but, sometimes it's almost too much effort to try to explain how you feel inside.

In fact, I'm not so sure that there are words to describe the feeling. It isn't "physical pain," and I don't know if "emotional pain" is any more descriptive. It's just a feeling that's always there. The sadness, the loneliness, the helplessness. On the outside, of course, no one would know. From the beginning people would always tell me how great I looked or how well I was doing. What did they expect? Sometimes I'm tempted to ask, "Well, how do you expect me to look?" But I don't. They mean well. They just don't know what else to say.

Oh, it's true, the last 15 months since my 17 year old son, Shane was killed in a motorcycle accident with his friend., I've come a long way. Life is good, and I have much to look forward to each day. A challenging job, terrific friends, a great family including Shane's 14 year old brother, Zachary. But there are days when it's just not enough.

It's interesting how your entire perspective about life changes when you're forced to endure a personal tragedy. I call it my "Big Deal Scale". Losing Shane was the "biggest deal" I've ever experienced. It gives me a tool in which to measure the trivial ups and downs of life. We all have the strength to endure a tremendous amount of pain. We just have to get it in perspective.

It doesn't come easy. I consciously work at it every day. I wonder if it will ever go away. Sometimes I hope it doesn't. I guess it's my way of remembering,,, holding on.

My biggest source of strength comes from Zachary, though. My heart aches for him; knowing how close he was to Shane. The first few days after the accident, he said, "Shane was my idol. He always helped me and taught me things." It's hard for me to imagine what it must be like for him. Still sleeping in the same room that they shared for 13 years. Although, now he sleeps in Shane's bed, and does his homework at Shane's desk. He says he likes it like that. I guess it's just his way of remembering. Of holding on.

Months ago when Zachary asked when the "hurt" would stop, I didn't have an instant answer. Grieving is a lonely job. To be done in individual time frames. But what I did tell him was, "Trust me. The pain will eventually fade but, the memories will last a lifetime." And just the other day he said to me, "You're right, Mom, The hurt is much better." I can see it in his face, in his eyes. He has matured so much this last year. It seems like he was a baby when all this happened. Now, I can see so much of Shane in him. And, I know that if he can do this "job", he can handle anything. And so can I.

~ Susan Hedlund, TCF/Portland, OR

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



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



THE TOP TEN GIFTS

HUGS....to someone who is lonely

LOVE....to someone who has nothing to give in return

PATIENCE....to someone who is struggling with life.

FREEDOM....to someone drifting in a sea of anxiety

UNDERSTANDING....to someone who is confused

TOLERANCE....to someone who doesn't see things as you do

KINDNESS....to someone in pain

FORGIVENESS....to someone you feel has harmed you

SOFTNESS....to someone who has not yet removed his hard shell.

Lifted with Love from the TCF Fox Valley Newsletter

LAUGH THERAPY

I have a bitter/sweet, funny/sad story to tell about my little girl, JENNY She was born with a heart defect, had operation at five months of age and a second one at 2 1/2 years. She died 8 hours after the second operation. I believed in life after death, so I knew her spirit would survive. It was a comfort when I sensed her spirit presence and others saw her impish form after death, but I was still in intense pain. One of the hardest challenges of life is to bury a child and still keep sane.

One day, a couple months after her death, I was reading a self-help book which encouraged the reader to try to find for "an element of fun, fantasy, absurdity or even a relieving silliness" in any distressing situation. I was still much suffering from Jenny's death so I thought I would try to follow these instructions.

With eyes closed. I asked aloud "is it possible for me to laugh about Jennifer's death?" I promptly burst into tears at the idea, but as the tears rolled down my cheeks, in my mind's eye, I could see Jenny hovering over me and resting on my left arm, trying to lift what seemed like a lead weight. I heard her say, "That's the idea, Mom. Cheer up!"

Was that for real? It felt real to me. I've had other experiences of communicating with her spirit as well as that and I don't think I'm crazy (not certifiably so, anyway). So I take that interchange as her way of encouraging me to recover from her death and to let humor brighten any dark corner of my existence.

- Anna Olson, TCF/Winnipeg, Canada
TCF/WPG Nov-Dec 1993



SIBLING PAGE

REST, MY BROTHER

Rest, my brother, you now have peace.
The wars within you all have ceased,
And with the rising sun each day,
Upon the heaven you will play.
Until that day we meet again,
Know I love you, my brother, my friend.
~ Sandra Evans, TCF/Kearsarge, NH

"AFTER"

As the world around me gets brighter,
And the darkness fades away,
The weight I carry gets lighter
Because I know she'll be near one day.
My life is no longer as lonely,
As when it was when she left.
I know she wasn't trying to hurt me,
But for a while I couldn't catch my breath.
Each day the pain gets easier
And the memories aren't so sad.
I'm finally able to smile for her,
As I think of the time we had.
Now when I'm feeling alone,
And ask for her embrace,
I close my eyes and she warms me,
And her spirit kisses my face.
Sarah Yoder in memory of her sister Morgan

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know:

You need to rip up sheets to make a kite that flies.
That you cannot build a fort without a tree with Y's.
That matchbox cars run better when they are full of
paint.
Or, if you hold your breath too long, you probably will
faint.

Did you know:

A baseball bat makes a terrific gun.
And, yes, an egg can really fry when left out in the sun.
And cardboard boxes seem to make the most terrific
trains.
And you can swim in puddles after gentle summer
rains.

Did you know:

That baseball cards clipped upon your bike will make
the awful clicking noise that parents never like.
A crab trap can be used to catch the most exquisite
birds.
And pig Latin serves to provide a private world of
words.
And did you know my brothers?
They died a few years back.
They taught me all these marvelous things
That sometimes sisters lack.

Kathi Guthrie, TCF/Cape May County NJ

Please Don't Overlook Me!

I know my size is smaller
my hands are littler my legs are shorter,
but my HEART can hurt just like yours.
I'm a CHILD
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!
I know my vocabulary isn't the greatest
my attention span lacks longevity
my logic sometimes seems irrational,
But my MIND can question death just like yours can.
I'm a TEENAGER
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!
I know my needs seem less important
my feelings seem less controlled
my actions are hard to understand.
But my BODY needs a hug just like yours does.
I'm YOUNGER
You're older.
Please don't overlook me!
I know tears are hard to show
fears are difficult to face,
death means not coming back,
But my SOUL searches for reassurance just like yours
does.
I'm HURTING
And you're hurting too...
Please don't overlook me!
~ TCF Sibling Page Carson City, NV

People Think

People think we're fine, you know.
They say, "Oh, siblings heal so fast."
But they don't know the empty feelings,
or our longing for the past.
People think we're fine, you know.
"Look, how they've resumed their lives." they say.
But they don't know of our troubled hearts
or the loneliness from day to day.
People think we're fine, you know.
"See how they're getting over it?" they surmise.
But they don't know that we've learned to laugh and
smile,
Only to complete our broken heart's disguise.
~ Mary Matthews, TCF/Ft. Lauderdale, FL

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

KISSES TO HEAVEN

Today I sent a kiss to heaven
I'm encouraging all of you to try
For if I have shared this with you
You have had a child die
This kiss came from down deep inside
And I know that it truly was received
Right after I had sent my kiss
A calming breeze surrounded me
Not only that, a wind chime rang
From where I do not know
But I felt my child smile at me
And say he loved me so
Take a kiss within your hands
And look up at the sky
Release that kiss with loving care
Now please try not to cry
Once the kiss is off to them
To Heavens gate above
Just look for any single sign
Of your child's precious love
I felt my kiss returned to me
And yours will do the same
It might not be from the breeze or chimes
but in the trees, the sun or rain
Now smile up to your child
In the clouds way up above
But most importantly tell
Your child, that they are always loved

~ Author Unknown

Any Child's Death Diminishes Me

What difference does it make whether a child is stillborn after some years of life? She spoke of the lack of joy because her child was stillborn. He commented on deep pain brought by those very memories which are one of what is lost!
When it comes to a child's death, does the type of death make a murder worse than an accident? Suicide worse than chronic illness? Teenage worse than the older adults? Or worse than teenage?
I tried to be thankful that Jeanie wasn't murdered. She did not commit suicide. That she and those dear to her not linger, comatose. Or die from prolonged illness could not find thankfulness though I have sought joy for it within my deepest being!
The death of a child, whatever the age or circumstances, is its own guilt and anger. Its own despair and suffering. Any child's death diminishes the parents who lost that child. And, for those bereaved parents, that death is the worst. Their grief the most severe!

Robert F. Gloor, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL

"Are those rare people who ask how we are and wait to hear the answer." -Ed Cunningham

Masques

In idle conversation you ask me about my children
You are an acquaintance.
I do not know you well and so I don a masque.
I speak happily of mischief, but I do not speak of death.
I do not want to see the shadow of uncertainty pass your face.
And feel the awkward silence that falls like a curtain between us.
I do not want to say,
"it's okay, that was a long time ago"
It will never be quite "okay"
and sometimes it seems like yesterday.
And so I take my masque along with me through life like a perpetual Halloween Night,
to hide just a bit from people and to preserve my strength.
For mourning is tiring and each time I recount that day of death, I am a little wearied.
I would much rather speak of the joys of his life than the sorrows of his death,
to strangers who absently ask of children.
Yet tragedy is more universal than ever I had known before it touched my life.
And so at time I wonder who else looks out from behind a masque

~ Karen Nelson, TCF/Box Elder County Chapter

SPRING'S TEARS

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent blue
A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.
Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.
It is this vow of nature's of resurgence in the spring
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my suffering.
For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.
For nature has no power over death that holds you still,
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.
Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.
Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are done?
Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new dawn
And feel the warmth of sunshine relish in the greening earth...
To open arms, embracing life, why can't it be YOUR birth?
You were so young, your life so new when death crept in the door,
And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes 'round each year
Yet in your grave you're silent still, and I condemned am here.
Remembering Tracey, always

~ Sally Migliaccio, TCF/Babylon, NY

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**THE
 COMPASSIONATE
 FRIENDS**
 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 _____