



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Volume 28 Number 5

Fargo ND/Moorhead MN

May 2011

PLEASE NOTE OUR MAILING ADDRESS ON THE BACK PAGE
REGULAR MEETING: 7:30 P.M. SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
This month's meeting is on May 12th
Next month's meeting is on June 9th

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Help us save money and paper.....

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

*****MAY LOVE GIFTS*****

Lyle & Tammy Helgeson in memory of their son, Jared Helgeson 6/1983 - 5/2010

Jamie, Sheri & Mandy Thoemke in memory of their son/brother, Tyler James Thoemke 11/1991 - 6/2003

Joan & Steve Halland in memory of their son, Cole S Halland 11/1985 - 5/2010

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

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

DATES TO REMEMBER:

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

August 13, 2011 - Fargo Chapter's 5th Annual WALK TO REMEMBER

watch for more details in June & July newsletters

CHANGE OF DATE FOR JULY MEETING - meeting will be on July 21st instead of July 14th

A BEREAVED MOTHER IS...

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who stands at a grave wondering how she is going to live the rest of her life without this child.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who thinks she will spend the rest of her life with this horrendous feeling inside.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn how to live all over again.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who wishes they would take Mother's Day out of the calendar.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn to accept the loss of her beloved child and uses what she has learned to help others.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who can again learn to smile, to look forward to the future and get excited again, because her Compassionate Friends were there when she needed them.

- Zel, TCF/Atlanta, GA

A MOTHER'S DAY GIFT TO GOD

Lord today is Mother's Day, but our hearts are split in two
Half is with the child still here,
the other with the child that is there with you.

All the lovely presents are a nice surprise
But the one thing we want most is missing, and tears fill
our eyes.

We know when you sent them Lord, you didn't promise
how long they would stay,

All you said was to love them and treasure each and
every day.

But Lord it crushed our hearts, when you called for their
return

We feel like half a Mom, as we ache weep and yearn.
But Lord tell them we love them just as much as we did
before

And could you please make a window, so they can see
through heaven's floor.

Let them see that they are missed and thought of with
each breath

And that a Mother's love begins before life, and does not
end with death.

So on this Mother's Day the greatest gift we give to you
For Lord we know you missed them, and you love them
too.

- Sheila Simmons, TCF/Atlanta GA

And each day,
As I push forward,
I move a step ahead
And then back,
But still gaining
If even but a little

~ Mary Rapke, TCF/Grand Junction, CO

MOTHER'S DAY

Another Mother's Day!

But a different one this year.

For you see, I am a mother,
but my child isn't here.

I am a mother who is hurting
for this child who was so dear,
as I face this and other occasions,
each and every year.

I am a mother who feels an emptiness
over and over again,

because I miss THIS child
and all that could have been.

I am a mother who cared
as I watched my child grow,
and truly loved her more
than anyone will ever know.

I am a mother who has memories
and many tears to cry
over regrets I'll have to live with
until the day I die.

I am a mother who is thankful
for the miracle of birth,
and all my child has taught me
about life and my own self-worth.

I just can't stop being a mother
just because my child isn't here,
because the love we had for each other
will continue for years and years.

And so...

On this special "Mother's" Day,
I will feel pride, love and joy
which are the parts
that make me: who I am,
and what I'll always be - A MOTHER
just remember that - please?

By Judy A.

*(Borrowed from HOPE LINE, a newsletter published by
HOPE FOR BEREAVED, Syracuse, NY)*

SECOND SUNDAY OF MAY

Many happy memories

Linger in our hearts this day

As we each remember our child

Who has left this earthly plane.

The day is bittersweet for us,

The mothers who have lost so much,

For to remove all pain could well

Erase the precious life we touched.

Tears will trace the memories of

Other, happier Mother's Days,

As we dwell in a quiet reverie

This Second Sunday of May

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

May 2006

SIBLING PAGE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY LITTLE SISTER

I remember when mom brought you home that bright summer day, a beautiful bundle of joy. I looked at you and smiled, when I saw your sparkling eyes and smile that would light the darkest room. I was so proud to call you my little sister.

As the years went by, you grew up so fast. One day, I'm looking down to talk to you and the next, I'm fighting neck pains from looking up at you. For being the youngest, you looked to be the oldest. It was fun going to the mall and have people ask us, if we were twins, or almost argue with us that you were older than I.

Your hair grew long and turned the color of fire - your eyes large and bright. Every day, in every way, the closeness, that we shared, grew. And my love grew even more.

Every day I heard you sing, your voice like none I had ever heard before. I'd swear that I was listening to an angel sing. I could listen to you all day. Your voice was made of gold and sent shivers of joy down my spine.

The day, that you left to join a choir in the sky, is the hardest day to forget. I try so hard to be strong, because I don't want you to see my tears. It is hard not to cry. I try to remember how strong you were and tell myself to be too. I know that where you are, you are with people who love you, as much as I.

I sometimes look back over the years and smile at all of the wonderful memories that I have. I see your face in my mind and feel the happiness and joy that I felt the day that mom brought you home. As long as I live, so too shall you. Nothing will ever change the fact that you are and always will be my little sister.

~ Dawn Porter, TCF/Central Iowa

BROTHERS & SISTERS

Be it your brother or your sister,
their presence is taken for granted.

When together, you fight and argue.
But also together, you stand against all others.

Then, one day you stand alone.

Gone the friend, the confidante, the rock.

You regret the last fight.

You wish to hear the voice, share your secrets.

The memories are sweet -
remember the laughs and jokes.

They now await to be your guide.

~ John W. Hollinshead, Lockport, NY

"A sister is a gift from God, sent from above to make life worthwhile here below" - Author Unknown

INCONGRUITIES

Thoughts of you can bring a smile to my face . . .
and tears to my eyes.

Memories of you tug at my heart
filling it with love . . . and longing.

I feel so thankful for having had you in my life . . .
and yet so sad that you are gone.

I'm comforted by the sense of your presence
surrounding me at all times . . .

while loneliness overwhelms me.

My life is filled with incongruities;
they assure me I am healing . . .

and that I never will.

~ Gayle Block, TCF/Baytown, Texas

KITE MEMORIES

Brushed golden by the sun, a kite flies
free above a greening meadow.

Drifting lazily until it turns to catch the
motion of a flock of trumpeting geese
homeward bound.

Fragrance of early spring flowers
makes me giddy with the thought that
you too fly unfettered, to drift or chase

dreams beyond imagination,
unrestrained by life or expectations.

Now I cherish each kite that rises to
the wind, because it fills me with
memories of your gifts for love but -
only sometimes - I wonder whether
you remember, too.

~ Marchia Alig, TCF/Mercer Area Chapter, NJ

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

What do you do when someone dies?

Do you celebrate or do you cry?

Do you cry because you won't see them again?

Or do you celebrate knowing that they are in heaven?

What can you do, where can you go?

Somewhere, anywhere to just be alone!

It's ok to cry, it's ok to feel sad,

It's even ok to be a little mad.

Go to someone you trust or someone you love.

Cry with them, feel sad with them,

Yet feel good that the person is now

Watching over you from above.

How do I know this you're probably wondering why?

It happened to me; **I wish I could've said good-bye.**

~ Michael Oetken

- brother of Lisa Renae Oetken 5/8/84 - 9/27/02

WRITING...ONE WAY TOWARD HEALING

By Donald Hackett - TCF, Hingham, MA

What I write mirrors the pathways of my thoughts. It brings some order out of confusion. More than this, each line is a milepost. When all within is chaos, I read the path to re-discover where I have journeyed, hoping to avoid encountering again those hurts already confronted. (Written five months after Olin's death).

Sadly, for most of us, the time of grieving the loss of our children seems like forever, often encompassing years. It does not matter how our child has died. It is only the loss that is significant. We claim our children in both their living and dying. We own life and death in our own beings, living on as often-reluctant survivors.

Life is no longer the same. For a long while, we seem to move in slow motion, wrapped in a merciful cushion of shocked dullness, cocooning the mind and all sensibilities.

Most of us, when that time is over, begin to seek ways to help ourselves. We frequently feel lost and even the desire to live is muted. Yet life pressures us to proceed with its business, and family and friends usually find it impossible to help us find our way. We are on a lonely journey, with few companions or none, and we need to find the means to resolve some measure of our unremitting pain.

I know. My son and only child, Olin, died in 1982. I have felt the utter emptiness of life and walked in our own shadowed valley. What is offered here did not spare me the darkness. Nothing can do that. But I have found this to be one way to help govern what is happening inside at a time when we have been reminded that we have no real control over the most important elements in our lives.

It would probably be best if we all had at least one friend to help us bear our hurt and grief over a period of several years. But friends are few and we must recognize that, for them, life has suffered only a partial interruption.

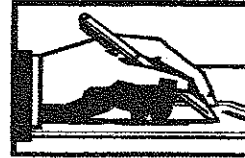
If we are able, we may see in ourselves the receptive friend we need, not to the exclusion of others, but in all the empty times we face. Through writing we can move feelings outside ourselves, onto paper, and in reading the work back to ourselves become the listener. We gain a perspective entirely apart from the echo chamber of our minds.

As long as one can write the word, 'I love you', externalizing feelings in this manner is possible. It becomes almost a problem solving method:

1. This feeling or thought is haunting my thinking.
2. In any words, series of sentences or phrases, record it.
3. Disregard spelling, grammar and structure.
4. Expand upon it if able. In the early months I could not do this. Just writing it down was enough.
5. Read it back out loud.
6. Change it if it doesn't sound right. It may not adequately express the feeling or the emotional content.
7. Read it aloud again to be certain that what is felt can be heard.
8. Even if it seems awkward or even a little absurd at first, continue and practice the method. It takes a while to perfect it, to become comfortable with it.
9. Share the writings or simply keep them. Do not throw the work away. At a future time this phase of grief may be confronted again. Knowing how it was handled before can help in working it out anew.

The compulsion to write is the visible desire of the mind to evaluate itself. From the page the mind can explore its own shallows and shoals, its depth and darkness. In writing the mind seeks its perspective...at once the tablet whereby thoughts may become clay and be re-written.

*



It has been five days since last I wrote and so eagerly does my hand and mind reach to paper, I now realize that all other methods of working this anguish through are secondary to the discipline of framing my thoughts, fears, guilts and loss in the structure of written expression. It is right for me and even as I record these words I sense a lessening of tension, rigidity and stress.

This act is almost as much process as it is expression. I am forced to categorize, concentrate and channel the chaos of my thoughts, thus increasing self-control. My inner atmosphere is altered and, for the time of writing, I am again empowered in this world where all my abilities to control have been shattered.

Today I need to say clearly that I have felt confined for five days. I have craved just a little freedom from the cell of my sorrow. Armed with pencil or pen I am capable of picking my prison's lock. Standing at last outside, the silent rush of words throws back my inner adversaries for but awhile, yet long enough to win another skirmish in this complex struggle to find hope and renewal on the battlefield that is now my life.

Where tongue has failed me, where tears leave me still unclean where mental wrestling leaves me spent and vanquished, the ability to write provides my release.

Thus, in grieving, this manner of externalizing grief has been absolutely essential. I could not deal with the confusion inside and had to find some way in which to work it out. On paper I could scream, cry, curse and flail against fate in any way I chose. It is vital to find a way to do this if only to seek enough sanity to live from day to day.

I began writing two days after Olin died, providing the eulogy for someone else to read. I waited a month before writing again. Since then I have written literally volumes of poems, short statements, letters to Olin, essays and many other things not even worthy of a name. Only a small portion of all this writing has ever been shared, because only this amount had any element of quality.

There is no magic in writing or in any other method. Nothing that we can write will alter the reality that our children are dead. In life as we know it, we will not hold or behold them again. Death is irrefutable, final and forever to all of our physical senses.

We will never think or live again with the same element of fullness. But we are alive and though living is harder, there can and should remain purpose. Our lives can carry the blessing of our child's love, its beauty enhancing our living, or we can let our personal diminishment be the only memorial we offer. The choice is our own.

Writing has provided me a vehicle to perceive the clarity. Through what I write, I can see where and what I am, the distance I have come and the direction I need to follow. I will continue to write. The road to recovery is long and there will always be moments of sadness. In recording these along with the

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



THE
 COMPASSIONATE
 FRIENDS

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

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	John Milligan.....701-282-4794	Secretary-Treasurer	Sheryl Cvijanovich..... 701-235-8158
Librarian		Initial Contact	Kylene Milligan 701-282-4794
Newsletter Editor	Nancy 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 _____