

# **The Compassionate Friends**

## **Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter**

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

TCF's National Office  
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[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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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  
November 13th  
December 11th

**Dates to Remember**  
Mom's meeting - 7 pm on November 20th @ Fry'n Pan  
For November & December Mom's meeting will be the 3rd Thursday  
TCF National Conference - Dallas, TX July 10-12, 2015

"Some say you're too painful to remember. I say you're too precious to forget."

Our Mom's group has been meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fry'n Pan Restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo.

Due to holidays in November and December, the Mom's meeting will held on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Our gatherings are informal as we come together to talk about our children, books that we've read, recipes we've tried, our jobs and whatever else comes up during the course of the evening. We all have times where the listening heart of another mom or grandma is welcome (and necessary). Please join us this month on Thursday November 20th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-235-8158 or [sherylc13@msn.com](mailto:sherylc13@msn.com).

#### **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**

#### **LOVE GIFTS**

Connie & Barry Rongen in memory of their granddaughter, Chloe Grace Rongen  
Clare & Richard Elless in memory of their daughter, Tari Lee Elless Heller  
Mike & Sheryl Cvijanovich in memory of their son, Matthew Isaac Cvijanovich  
Neil & Kathleen Prochnow in memory of their son, Reed Joel Prochnow

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.

#### **Worldwide Candle Lighting**

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

**Worldwide Candle Lighting®**  
... that their light may always shine.

**Sunday, December 14, 2014**  
**7 PM Around the Globe**

### **Temporarily out to Lunch**

We look, but we don't see.  
We talk, but we don't hear.  
We reach, but we don't touch.  
We need, but we don't admit.  
You look, but were not the same.  
You talk, but we don't respond.  
You reach, but we can't feel you.  
You need, but we can't provide.  
We need your recognition.  
We need your conversation.  
We need your touch and feelings.  
We need your patience.  
We need time.  
Will we ever again be normal?  
Will we regain our senses?  
Will we feel again, physically and emotionally?  
Yes, with your help, patience and understanding.  
~ Charles Brown, Reprinted from Survivors of Suicide

### **Trusting Me, Trusting You**

Four deer ran by me  
in the woods today.  
They stopped and turned,  
watching me.  
I slowed my pace  
until I stopped.  
And turned, watching them,  
watching me  
I won't hurt you, I said.  
And after a while  
I bowed to them  
And said thank you  
for trusting me.  
Trusting me.  
Is that what you were doing?  
When you let me sit by your side  
as you lay dying?  
Trusting me to be watching you.  
To be loving you.  
Trusting me to hold your hand,  
moisten your lips  
and stroke your hair.  
To tell you it was safe,  
that you could go.  
To say a prayer and listen to  
the sound of your breath  
until it was no more.  
Is that what you were doing?  
Because now  
when I close my eyes,  
That is what I am doing.  
I am trusting you.  
To be watching me.  
To be loving me.  
By Anne L. Lanier

Reprinted with permission from Bereavement Publishing, Inc

### **INNER TEMPEST STILLED**

Sometimes I sense a little flutter.  
Like a shadow swiftly slipping by.  
Or I hear a silent, gentle murmur.  
Like a soft whisper from out the sky.  
Sometimes... I hear you call my name,  
Or clearly see your face before me.  
And I feel that you are with me still.  
Then peacefully... I come to know  
As I am thinking happy thoughts of you  
You, my son, are thinking of me too.  
Loving memories fill my aching heart.  
As dreaming dreams of what could be.  
Or might have been, if you were here.  
Until the piercing pain of losing you  
Comes tumbling down on trembling fear.  
And clearly once again I hear you say,  
"But Mom... What if I had never been.  
You could not then in LOVE remember me."  
~ Beenie Legato

### **Thanks for a little while**

Thank you for life, for its good times and bad.  
Thank you for love, even when I can't feel it.  
Thank you for the love (we used to share)  
For the arms that held me tight.  
Thank you for my family  
In faraway places,  
In different times.  
Thank you for the songs we sang,  
For the dreams we saved,  
For the smiles we shared.  
Thank you for the strength that eludes me just now.  
Thank you for the weakness that sends me to  
my knees.  
Thank you for the searching, the reaching, the hoping.  
Thank you for the bonds of memory that hold me  
in place,  
Even when I don't believe in it anymore,  
Or...forget what it is all about.  
Thank you most of all,  
For having been blessed with the love I have known,  
Even now when I fear I will forget it.  
Thank you for memory and  
For filling it full measure for me.  
It wasn't nearly long enough, but it will have to do.  
Thanks for the moments we danced.  
Thanks for the little while.  
~ Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D

A life is like a song we write in  
our own tone and key  
Each life we touch reflects a note  
that forms the melody  
We choose the theme and chorus  
of the song to bear our name.  
And each will have a special sound,  
no two can be the same.  
So when someone we love departs,  
in memory we find  
Their song plays on within

## On the Death of a Child

When a child dies, a light goes out in the world, never to be replaced. We are overcome by pain and heartbreak which is beyond measurement, and completely unable to comprehend any meaning behind such a tragedy. The loss of such a young life, the finality of it, can hardly be fathomed. We search in vain for an answer to why a life so full of promise and unfulfilled potential has been torn away so prematurely.

Our grief and anguish is unrelenting and unyielding in its intensity. Although we know that death can come quickly, with no warning to any living creature, never in our wildest dreams did any of us imagine that one of our children should be taken—a reversal of the natural order.

At first it seems as if our lives, our souls, the very innermost substance of our being have been shattered, never to be resurrected again. Our tears, our anguish, conceal any legacy that remains of the child's existence. It is as if we are enveloped in a cloud of darkness and deep despair. The reality of the death is as unforgiving as the sky, the sea, the earth and all eternity.

The inevitability of birth, life and death blankets us with a feeling of futility about the uselessness of it all. It is hard to remember that during the child's short and transitory time on earth, he or she contributed a unique essence of life, imprinting an image on all those who were touched. Therein lies the child's legacy—the only bridge connecting the chasm between the living and the dead. For each of us the legacies left by our children differ in detail, yet at the same time are similar with respect to the precious memories, which are all that remain to provide comfort.

At first we are inconsolable, but gradually the reaching out of heart and hand by those who understand and can respond to such a loss touches the soul, helps soothe the unbearable pain and intense suffering. Only a parent who has lost a child can give such a gift to another bereaved parent.

As in any event, there is a lesson to be learned. An opportunity emerges from the sorrow—an opportunity to sort out trivia, old resentments, to perceive with clear vision that in our lives which is truly important. The tragedy we have experienced somehow enables us to establish new and more meaningful priorities, to love and to value those who are close with a renewed sense of appreciation and awareness. If any meaning is ever again to exist in our lives, it will develop as a result of newly found sensitivity, love and compassion for others.

~ Chris Moon, TCF/ Rio Linda, CO

## Just Say "I'm Sorry"

You don't know how I feel — please don't tell me that you do  
There's just one way to know — have you lost a child too?  
"You'll have another child" — must I hear this each day?  
Can I get another mother too, if mine should pass away?  
Don't say it was "God's will" — that's not the God I know.  
Would God on purpose break my heart, then watch while my tears flow?  
"You have an angel in heaven — a precious child above."  
But, tell me, to whom on earth shall I give this love?  
"Aren't you better yet?" Is that what I heard you say?  
No! A part of my heart aches — I'll always feel some pain.  
You think that silence is kind, but it hurts me even more.  
I want to talk about my child who has gone through death's door.  
Don't say these things to me, although you do mean well.  
They do not take my pain away — I must go through the hell.  
I will get better slow but sure — and it helps to have you near.  
But a simple "I'm sorry you lost your child" is all I need to hear.

~ Gail Fasoloe, TCF/St Albert, AB  
Cape Cod and the Islands Chapter  
July-August 2010

## SHARED THOUGHTS OF CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain is with us every moment.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our whole family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Not being honest can give false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members frequently think they know what is always best for us. Their advice may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can.

It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of upcoming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. Ask friends to accept your decision. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to our seasonal celebrations.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourselves to grieve and cry, it is very healing.

There are no shortcuts to get through our grief. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel and hope you will also have this blessing one day. God Bless,

~ Marie Hofinockel, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor loss of faith. It is the price of love.

~ Author Unknown

# OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED

## BIRTHDAYS

### CHILD

MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH .....	33 .....	MICHAEL & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
MICHAEL W CZICHOTZKI.....	43 .....	MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
COLE HALLAND .....	29 .....	STEVEN & JOAN HALLAND
KYLE KASSMAN .....	29 .....	TOM & NANCY KASSMAN
RYAN DEAN NELSON .....	34 .....	BECKY NELSON
REED JOEL PROCHNOW .....	39 .....	NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN .....	3 .....	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (Grandparents)
MICHAEL ROBERT SACKMAN.....	40 .....	ROBERT & GLORIA SACKMAN
KINLEY SNYDER.....	4 .....	JEREMY & TERI SNYDER
AMANDA JO SWANSON .....	24 .....	CURT & CHRISTI SWANSON
TYLER JAMES THOEMKE.....	23 .....	JAMIE & SHERI THOEMKE

### PARENTS

## ANNIVERSARIES

### CHILD

LUCAS ALLMENDINGER.....	5 .....	DEAN & JO ALLMENDINGER
BRIAN BJERKEN.....	8 .....	DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
MICHAEL W CZICHOTZKI.....	7 .....	MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
RILEY MARK DAHLBERG .....	8 .....	BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG
MICHAEL L HANSON .....	6 .....	LARRY & MARY HANSON
HEIDI HELLAND.....	3 .....	JOHN & TERRI HELLAND
TARI L HELLER .....	7 .....	RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS.....	7 .....	LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
BRANDON KUCK .....	1 .....	CRAIG & TARA KUCK
ERIC C LARSON.....	12 .....	CRAIG & BARB LARSON
JAMIE DION MARK.....	22 .....	JAMES E MARK
JACOB ALLEN OCHSNER .....	4 .....	ALLAN & MARLENE OCHSNER
SOPHIA GREY-LYDIA PERRINE.....	7 .....	LACEY PIKE
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN .....	3 .....	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (Grandparents)
KAREN SEIFERT .....	20 .....	HAROLD & ARLYS BULAND
AMANDA JO SWANSON .....	8 .....	CURT & CHRISTI SWANSON
THOMAS LEE THOEMKE.....	4 .....	JEAN & BILL THOEMKE
MARK ALAN WATELAND.....	13 .....	SONIA WATELAND

### PARENTS

### Take Time to Grieve

If your child's birthday or death date is approaching, TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE. The restlessness, the endless searching, the lack of concentration, the persistent gnawing pain deep in your gut; the arms that ache in agony to hold a child—or hug him just once more; the unswallowable lump—like a silent scream, stuck in your throat—this is all a part of your grief.

You cannot run away, for it goes with you. You cannot go around it, or under it, or over it. You must go through it. TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE, to feel the pain, to relive the most important experience of your life—your child's life.

Attend to your "unfinished business." If you are "stuck," find out how to get beyond it. Do you need to go back to the hospital? The doctor? The autopsy report? Do you need to pour your feelings out on paper? Or write your final goodbye in a letter? Or tell that child all the things you never had the chance to say?

Remember, grief cannot be hurried, but it can be delayed. Time alone does not heal—it is what we do with that time! TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE. We do not measure our grief in months or years. We measure it in small steps of positive resolution!

~ Shirley Melin, TCF/Aurora, IL

## SIBLING PAGE

### BOYS

Boys

bats, both winged and wood  
bugs, beehives  
dinosaurs

balls of every size, color  
some hard, some soft

bikes, big wheels then ten speeds  
baseball cards and bubble gum  
barber hair cuts

Bert and Ernie lunch boxes  
Batman and Robin, G-I Joe  
but butterflies

cannon balls into the pool  
jack knives, and belly flops  
sun burns, sneakers  
and lost towels

buck teeth, then braces  
bait, worms or bacon  
burps and farts

black-eyes, blisters,  
bruises and scabs  
but butterflies

and then always  
good-byes.

Taddy Dawson, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

### The Rose

Some say love it is a river  
that drowns the tender reed  
Some say love it is a razor  
that leaves your soul to bleed  
Some say love it is a hunger  
an endless aching need  
I say love it is a flower  
and you it's only seed

It's the heart afraid of breaking  
that never learns to dance  
It's the dream afraid of waking  
that never takes the chance  
It's the one who won't be taken  
who cannot seem to give  
and the soul afraid of dying  
that never learns to live

When the night has been too lonely  
and the road has been too long  
and you think that love is only  
for the lucky and the strong  
Just remember in the winter  
far beneath the bitter snows  
lies the seed that with the sun's love  
in the spring becomes the rose

I'll cry with you, she whispered,  
until we run out of tears.  
Even if it's forever.

We'll do it together.

There it was a simple promise of connection.  
The loving alliance of grief and hope that blesses  
both our breaking apart and our coming together  
again.

~ Molly Fumia

### Why ?

When my sister died, I asked what every surviving sibling most likely asks himself: Why? For quite awhile this question gave me something to strive for, a purpose to fight for. But what I soon realized was that there was no use in asking. That question is irrelevant; the point is moot. It no longer matters why she died. The fact remains that she died, and there is nothing I can do to change that, including finding the answer to "why?" There is no such answer.

If perchance God would speak to me, would that change anything? If he would say, "Trey, I took your sister because I want her up here in Heaven," what would that mean to me? I still lost her. I would still question God's decision. What it comes down to, however, and although it is hard, we who have lost a sibling must accept the fact that they are now gone. Put aside the fact of why or how they died, and remember that they once lived and they will always be alive in your memory and heart. Bypass the question of why they died, and instead concentrate on how we should now live. Remember, they would have wanted it that way.

~ Trey Martin, TCF/Hardin County, OH

*From This Healing Journey—An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings*

### An Essay On Love

Many things have affected my life during my short seventeen years. I have seen myself undergo several changes, and pass through different stages. However, the event that, without a doubt, has had the most profound effect on my life, was the death of my brother Doug on July 23, 1994. Because of this, I find myself to be a completely different person than I ever imagined I would be, and my entire outlook on life has changed.

At the time of Doug's death, he was only at the young age of 19. I was only five years younger at 14. Because I was at the age when I began to share many of the same interests as him, we had become closer than we had ever been. The memories of our playful wrestling-matches, and frequent games of softball or basketball, are forever implanted in my mind. He was more than just my brother; he was truly my best friend. There were so many things that I wanted to do with him, or anticipated to see him accomplish, and it all seems so unfair that he had to slip away just when we realized our special relationship.

Since Doug's death, I have come to realizations that some people take years to come to, and those that some people never will. The most important of these is that we must cherish every moment we have with those we love, because nobody is promised to be alive when they wake up. This may seem drastic, however, when I woke up at 1:00 in the morning and found out my brother was gone, it seemed anything but drastic. Looking back, I wish I could change words I spoke to him, and actions, which at the time seemed harmless. The only thing in life that I feel is necessary for everyone to learn is how to love without limits, and to appreciate what we have.

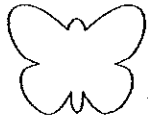
It has taken me much time, and many tears to accept this tragedy which has been placed so suddenly in my life. I fear, however, that I would never have been who I am now if the one I so dearly cherished had not fallen into God's grace. It is sad to realize that sometimes only a tragedy can change a person's heart forever.

~ Kari Brown, TCF/Warrington, PA

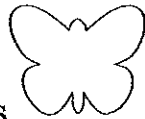
### DEATH

Death never comes when we are ready,  
Often it sneaks up silently like an ocean wave covering rocks and sand,  
Or as God's angels in the sky and wind.  
Other times it wanders around like wild tears running down your face.  
It doesn't seem to have very good feelings,  
Leaving us with night and lives to go on with.  
And yet it can be told quietly that death is memories and sadness.

- Linda Gayle Julian, age 11  
Bereavement & Kids.- Nov/Dec 1996



## Butterfly Decals



Our trailer is beginning to look like a butterfly garden! The trailer was purchased in order to transport materials to our chapter activities but it has also helped make our local chapter better known in the Fargo-Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our precious children.

Butterflies are still available in all five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost for 1 butterfly is \$25, 3 butterflies are \$65 and 4 butterflies are \$80. If you wish to purchase more than 4, please contact our chapter leader, John Milligan. Butterfly orders should include the child's name and 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](http://www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourtrailer.html).

## Feed the Cat?

My son is dead—and you expect me to feed the cat? Isn't it amazing how society is so rigid in their expectations? There are rules you know...steps we must all take..." Whoever set these standards obviously has never lost a child, the core of your heart and soul. It just doesn't work that way.

Simple every day tasks are impossible to complete. The only constant in your upside down world is pain, unlike any pain you have ever known. Shortly after your child's death, you are expected to return to your job, take care of your household, pay the bills, and yes, feed the cat! It has been a year for me, since I lost my son, and I still go blank mid act. I stand in a store with no idea what I came in for, or I cry over bananas because Lee loved them. I can go from laughter to tears in 1.1 seconds.

The Compassionate Friends has been a life saver (or perhaps a heart saver) for me. Only those who have experienced the same heartache will understand when you say I need to be alone, but I can't stand to be alone! Each grieving parent must heal in his or her own way, in his or her own time. One step forward, 15 back, spin around and start over, only to repeat the same progress, one step forward, 15 back, spin around... You get the picture. But you don't have to heal alone. You need not walk alone. Join us, we know you're not crazy—just a grieving parent. We do care.

~ Ann, TCF/Roseburg, OR

## AS LONG AS I CAN

As long as I can,  
I will look at the world for both of us.

As long as I can,  
I will laugh with the bird,  
I will sing with flowers,  
I will play to the stars,  
For both of us.

As long as I can,  
I will remember how many things

On this earth were your joy.

And I will live as well

As you would want me to live,

As long as I can.

~ Sascha Wagner, TCF/Des Moines

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children' ([www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html](http://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 [tcf1313@hotmail.com](mailto:tcf1313@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.

## FEELINGS

We feel sad,  
For what we have lost.  
We feel happy,  
For what we have had.  
We feel poor,  
For the empty spaces.  
We feel rich,  
For we have each other.  
We will cry,  
For what we can't have.  
We will laugh,  
For our memories abound.  
We will hurt,  
For the love we can't give.  
We will rejoice,  
For the love we have received.  
We will be restless,  
For our lives are not whole.  
We will be peaceful,  
For we know it is not forever.  
~ Annette Hamilton, TCF/Prince George, BC

## HOLIDAYS IN HEAVEN

The Holiday Season is just not the same,  
A smile is missing when saying one name.  
For parents who've lost a daughter or son,  
Nothing can bring back the delightful fun,  
Of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.  
The memories are all that we do have now,  
We do go on.....only God knows how.  
A New Year comes as midnight arrives,  
Our Angels still a big part of our lives.  
If only we could trade the presents we receive,  
For one more day with those whom we grieve!  
But nothing can bring back our beloved child,  
The one that laughed, cried, and often smiled.  
They are together in a much better place,  
Watching us cry.....touching our face!  
Although we miss them on Holidays to share,  
Be assured their loving presence fills the air,  
At home, in church, at New York's Times Square!  
So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do,  
But always remember they are thinking of you too,  
Wishing you happiness and showing their love,  
Not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!

~ Dan Bryl, TCF/Lawrenceville, GA  
In Memory of his daughter, Jessica

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

~ Maya Angelou

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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)

### **A Personal Evolution Through Grief**

I have been a bereaved parent now for three and half years. I have learned a few things during that time, and I have much to learn in the future. I am evolving. Evolving from what I once was.....a person who had reasonable expectations of a life that included my son, his children, graduations, holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Now I have become a person who has virtually no expectations that are similar to the ones I had before my son died.

I have evolved into a more sensitive person. I know what some people are thinking before they even say the words. I feel others' joy as if it were my own. I cheer for the success of others. I feel their sorrow, their failures, their missteps. I watch children play and remember my childhood, my son's childhood and I think of the joy that is childhood. I sit for hours watching birds at our feeders, marveling at the beauty of the natural world.

I have slowed down the pace. I no longer feel the pressure to be here or there, to do this or that, to call this one or that one, to wear certain clothes, to "put on the best face" for strangers. I have liberated myself from the mundane and the materialistic. Instead, I simply feel deeply about others. I have become extremely sensitive to all that surrounds me.

I believe the loss of my child has changed me in many different ways. I see this in the attitudes of those who are in the Compassionate Friends as well. While few of us will broach no nonsense in our lives because it is meaningless compared with our experiences, we will listen intently for long periods to the weeping, hysterical cries of a newly bereaved mother. Or we will nod quietly as a parent who is far into grief has a sudden flash of sorrow that is overwhelming. We have a heightened sensitivity to others through no choice of our own. It came with the loss of our beautiful children.

I wonder about what my son would think of events that have unfolded since his death. I have come to conclusions about others that aren't, quite frankly, flattering. Yet, he had come to these conclusions before he died. While I tried to mollify his perception of the dysfunctional people with whom he was burdened, he just said, "that's how it is, mom." And he was right. That's how it is. I have learned to accept people for what they are. If I can help, I will certainly do so. If I can't help, I accept that some things can't be changed, and some people won't change. There is no magic here. It's a simple fact of life. "That's how it is, mom."

I volunteer more these days. I give of myself, my knowledge, any wisdom I may have acquired on life's path to others who are in need. I give of my time, my talents and my labors to those who don't ask as well as those who do. I am comfortable with this. I have less appreciation for money than I once had. Perhaps that is the best thing to come out of this. What was I chasing? What was my son chasing? What was the point? Bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more. It's a shallow existence when one is so focused on the material things that one is defined by materialism. I have learned to let go of preconceptions, and in that letting go, I have been pleasantly surprised by many people.

How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It's as close to a near death experience as I can imagine. Instead of great epiphanies, there are moments of clarity. Instead of instant gratification, there is much work to achieve tiny steps forward. But the effort is well worth making. When I came out from the pits of hell, I realized that my reality was changed; I realized that I was a different person. I discovered that the world doesn't run on the dollar. I found that all people have a capacity for goodness, but that many will never use this capacity.

But most importantly, I discovered that after leaving the pits of hell, there is a road toward hope that is traveled by each of us. Some walk more quickly, some more slowly. But we each walk that road to hope. Hope represents a life that is tolerable once again. Hope represents the acceptance of our child's death and the acknowledgement that we will keep our children alive in our hearts for all eternity as we continue into our tomorrows. Hope is reconciling those two elements: yesterday and tomorrow.

I have learned to adjust to change, because change is inevitable. I have learned to stand up for what is right because that is our duty as human beings. I have learned much about the fears of others and even more about my own fears. I have conquered my phobias as a result of my son's death. Nothing my imagination could conjure would equal that gripping pain, the ache that hangs in my heart forever because my child has died.

But most of all, I have learned that my son was right. "That's the way it is, mom." Shortly before he died, he said he wanted to give me a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* He never had the opportunity. But I will read it. I have a feeling I know what it will say. Perhaps Todd gave me the plot line when he died. I'd like to think that he was subconsciously preparing me.

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

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OF THE F-M AREA  
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## ***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 ..... 701-235-8158	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich ..... 701-235-8158
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
Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning).....	701-437-2507
Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) .....	701-282-4083
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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.