

The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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F-M Area Chapter
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Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen (701)730-0805

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 10th
December 8th

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on November 17th @ Fry'n Pan
For November the Mom's meeting will be the 3rd Thursday
Angel of Hope Memorial Service
December 6th @ 7 pm at Fargo's
Angel of Hope in Island Park
TCF National Conference - Orlando, Florida July 28-30, 2017

LOVE GIFTS

Allan & Marlene Ochsner in memory of their son, Jacob Allan Ochsner
Persys Piersall in memory of her son, Rand I. Piersall
Neil & Kathleen Prochnow in memory of their son, Reed Joel Prochnow
Jerry & Yvonne Nelson in memory of their son, Kyle Irvin Nelson
Mike & Sheryl Cvijanovich in memory of their son, Matthew Isaac Cvijanovich
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

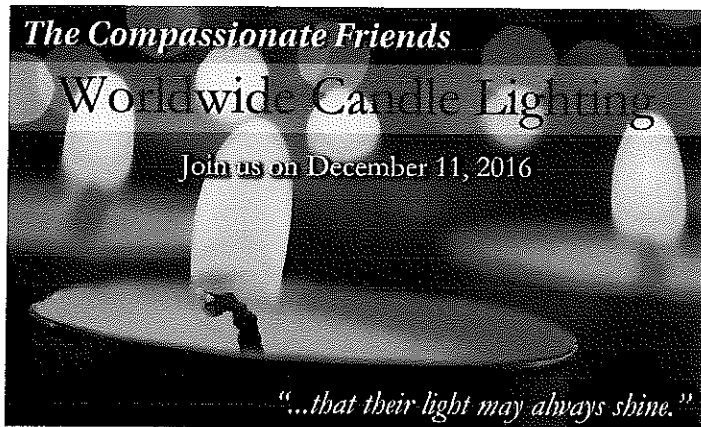
"When our special sadness comes to call, when we remember more than we can bear, when courage falters – shadows everywhere: Then let us reach and touch and share, we, who are friends." ~ Sascha Wagner

Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fry'n 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. Due to Thanksgiving, please join us on Thursday November 17th, which is the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or sherylev13@msn.com.

ANGEL OF HOPE MEMORIAL SERVICE



The Angel of Hope will be holding an annual Candlelight Memorial on Tuesday, December 6th at 7:00 p.m. The Angel of Hope in Fargo was dedicated in 2005, and serves as a place for healing and love for all who have lost children. The Angel of Hope is located on the north in Island Park off of 1st Avenue South between 4th and 7th Streets. Attendees are invited to bring a white flower to place at the base of the statue in memory of loved ones. Refreshments will be served at Hanson Runsvold Funeral Home following the service.



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.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread

throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into our chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know- because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends – that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that first step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel." We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.

~ Karen Schendel, TCF/Houston, TX

GRIEF: OUR ACT OF LOVE

"I had a child who died." How simple these words are, yet how painful they are to say. The death of a child is the harshest blow life has to offer; it destroys our trust in the world at the most basic level. Grief is our total response to the death of a child; our body, mind, emotions and spirit all react to the loss. While many of us wish to stop the intense grief work we are doing, we find it impossible for many reasons.

First, grief is an act of love, not a lack of strength or faith. The more we loved our child, the greater will be our grief. The more integrated our lives were with the life of our child, the more we will miss his or her very presence. The intensity of our grief is often representative of our love.

Second, grief is a necessary process that we must go through in order to maintain our wholeness and sanity. If we do not grieve, we will not heal. One of the earliest and hardest lessons we bereaved parents learn is that men and women grieve differently; women, in general, grieve more openly than do men, and women, on the whole, are more comfortable verbally expressing their feelings of loss. While segments of our culture indicate it is more "manly" not to cry, we know this is not true.

Grief work also helps us to complete unfinished business with our child and close the past relationship that we had. We will never "get over" the loss of our child, nor would we ever really want to. We are who we are partly because of our relationship to that child. Our lives will always be influenced by our son or daughter, but most of us will eventually learn to live a meaningful life, despite our tragedy. Our child will always be with us in spirit and in love, and we often feel a need to hold on to tangible items, such as toys or clothes, to maintain that feeling of closeness. But, intense grief work allows us to let go of the relationship we had and create a new relationship with our child. Our remembrances, love and feelings of oneness with our child can never be destroyed. I cannot see nor touch my Philip, but I vividly remember him. I have completed earthly mothering, but I still have an intense mother-child relationship with my son.

Grief over the death of a child is the hardest work that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve intensely because we loved intensely. It is unrealistic to expect that grief to ever totally go away, because the love we have for our child will never go away. Our grief is an act of love and is nothing for which we should be ashamed.

~ Elaine Grier, TCF/Atlanta, GA
In Memory of my son, Philip

The Mender Heart

The heart is oh so fragile; although the muscle is strong. It goes on beating even though continued life seems wrong. When devastation makes its mark and chisels in the pain, It seems as though the heart will not ever know joy again.

Good news! The heart will mend itself, but not just like before, Remember, like a broken bone, the original is no more. There is a tender spot in both where once the gap was wide. The beating heart that gives us life has courage on its side.

And as the broken bone may ache because of rain and cold, the heart may ache with longing for the one whose bell has tolled. There is no guarantee that life will ever be the same, but when you do find joy in life, the heart should feel no shame.

~ Karen Longbrake, TCF/Ada, OH

THANKS

- ~ Thanks to the friend who did know the right words to say; "There is a group in town that might help you."
- ~ Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about "that group."
- ~ Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk – and talked.
- ~ Thanks to the dad who said after the first meeting that he could never come back – but did.
- ~ Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said, "They really can help."
- ~ Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was again able to bake cookies – for her "Compassionate Friends."
- ~ Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people – who became a facilitator.
- ~ Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men – and didn't say he was sorry.
- ~ Because of you, we will be able to help someone we don't even know – next month.

TCF

Heavenly Snow

I thought you might like to know
And I have it on good authority,
That in heaven there is snow.
God, Himself, ordered it to be.

Snow swept by gentle winds,
That drifts by the stirring,
Of gossamer angels' wings,
That sound like kittens purring.

Snow forever crystal clean,
Just waiting to be molded
By little angel hands unseen
By those whose arms they once enfolded.

Snow angels are a common sight
And snowmen of every size...
They're all there beyond the light,
Where nothing ever dies.

Where our angels play,
There is no pain or tears.
Only joy fills their days,
Only laughter fills their ears.

High above the azure skies
A glorious wonderland gleams.
This beautiful Heavenly spot...
Created to fulfill our angels' dreams.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny

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Borrowed Hope

Lend me your hope for a while
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Loss and the hopeless feelings accompany me daily.
Pain and confusion are my companions.
I know not where to turn.
Looking ahead to the future times
Does not bring forth images of renewed hope.
I see mirthless times, pain filled days, and more tragedy.
Lend me your hope for a while.
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Hold my hand and hug me.
Listen to all my ramblings.
I need to unleash the pain and let it tumble out.
Recovery seems so far distant.
The road to healing, a long and lonely one.
Stand by me. Offer me your presence.
Your ears and your love.
Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present.
I am overwhelmed
With sad and conflicting thoughts.
Lend me your hope for a while.
A time will come when I will heal.
And I will lend my renewed hope to others.

~ Eloise Cole, TCF/Phoenix, AZ

THANKSGIVING ISN'T WHAT IT ONCE WAS

We realize it is so hard for some of us to be Thankful for anything when our child has died. But we hope we can all say a prayer of Thanks for the very precious time we were allotted to spend with our child because it was the most important time of our lives. Their lives here, gave our lives meaning. If we had not had them at all, we would not have known the true joy of living. They were a precious gift from Heaven, and they had so much to give and blessed our lives. The love between parents and children just goes on and on. THEY TAUGHT US THAT! So let us lift up our eyes and our hearts and say THANK YOU this Thanksgiving!

~ Lee and Verna Smith, TCF/Fort Worth, TX

For All Our Lost Children

I will see you again, in the fullness of time,
You will reach out your hand, I will take it in mine.
As together we walk, all the sorrow-filled years
Will dissolve in a cloud, in the midst of our tears.

I will see you again, we will laugh as before,
I will kiss your dear face, as I pass through the door
To a place where you are, and a bright shining sun
Will assure my glad heart that my life has begun.

I will see you again, though the journey be long,
I will try, for your sake, to sing some kind of song.
And for you, I'll endeavor to live through my pain,
'Til the moment, dear child, when I see you again.

~ Betty Kenna, TCF/UK



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH.....	35	MICHAEL & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
MICHAEL W CZICHOTZKI	45	MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
COLE HALLAND.....	31	STEVEN & JOAN HALLAND
JAY JOHNSON.....	51	BRUCE & BEV JOHNSON
KYLE KASSMAN.....	31	TOM & NANCY KASSMAN
RAYELLE KATHLEEN KLOSTERMAN.....	2	TYLER KLOSTERMAN & CRYSTAL LUOMA
JODIE MANSTON	54	DELORIS BURNS
RYAN DEAN NELSON	36	BECKY NELSON
RAND LOREN PIERSALL.....	61	PERSYS PIERSALL
REED JOEL PROCHNOW.....	41	NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN.....	5	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (grandparents)
MICHAEL ROBERT SACKMAN	42	ROBERT & GLORIA SACKMAN
ANDREW SADEK	23	JOHN & TAMMY SADEK
KINLEY SNYDER	6	JEREMY & TERI SNYDER
KATHY STRAND.....	68	MURIEL LYONS
AMANDA JO SWANSON.....	26	CURT & CHRISTI SWANSON
TYLER JAMES THOEMKE.....	25	JAMIE & SHERI THOEMKE

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
LUCAS ALLMENDINGER.....	7	DEAN & JO ALLMENDINGER
BRIAN BJERKEN	10	DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
MICHAEL W CZICHOTZKI	9	MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
RILEY MARK DAHLBERG.....	10	BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG
MICHAEL L HANSON.....	8	LARRY & MARY HANSON
HEIDI HELLAND.....	5	JOHN & TERRI HELLAND
TARI L HELLER.....	9	RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS.....	9	LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
BRANDON KUCK.....	3	CRAIG & TARA KUCK
ERIC C LARSON.....	14	CRAIG & BARB LARSON
KYLE NELSON.....	2	JERRY & YVONNE NELSON
JACOB ALLEN OCHSNER.....	6	ALLAN & MARLENE OCHSNER
SOPHIA GREY-LYDIA PERRINE.....	9	LACEY PIKE
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN.....	5	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (grandparents)
TERRY STAIGER.....	4	CLARA STAIGER
AMANDA JO SWANSON.....	10	CURT & CHRISTI SWANSON
THOMAS LEE THOEMKE.....	6	JEAN & BILL THOEMKE
MARK ALAN WATELAND.....	15	SONIA WATELAND

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children'
(www.teffargomoorhead.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 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

ALIKE

As I look in the mirror,
I wonder if it's true,
Is it true when people say,
I look like you?
I know I have the pictures,
And I have movies, too,
But these do not help much,
So do I look like you?
I never got to know you,
I wonder if it's true,
When my friends and family say,
I look like you.
~ Kelly Maxwell, TCF/Pikes Peak, CO

Miss Me A Little, But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me.
I want no tears in a gloom filed room,
Why cry for a soul set free!
For this is a journey we all must take,
And each must go alone.
Miss me a little, but not for long,
And not with your head bowed low.
When you are lonely and sick of heart,
Go to the friends you know.
Bury your sorrows in doing good deeds,
Miss me a little, but let me go.

Author Unknown

It's the Music that Bonds the Souls

The room you once lived in,
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you,
Never mention your name.
The car you used to drive,
They may not make them anymore;
And all the things you once treasured,
Are boxed behind closet doors.
The clothes you set the trends by,
Are surely out of date.
The people you owed money to,
Have wiped away the slate.
Things have changed and changed again
since you went away,
But some things have remained the same
Each and every day ...
Like this aching in my heart,
A scar that just won't heal,
Or the way a special song,
Can change the way I feel.
Brother, you must know that the music
bonds us and will keep us close;
Because secretly I know deep in my heart;
It's the music you miss the most.
So let the world keep on turning,
And time can take its toll.
For as long as the music keeps playing
You'll be alive and dancing in my soul
~ Stacie Gilliam, TCF/N. Oklahoma City, OK

A Holiday To Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bittersweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst.

At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.
6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go--the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!
7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH -- it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.
10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

~ Amy Baker Ferry, TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter

This Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving and always,
Through the grief,
Through the tears,
Through the loneliness,
Through the fears,
WE ARE THANKFUL

WE HAD OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

~ Khaki Chambers, TCF/Pensacola, FL

Please stop saying Committed Suicide

I've been on this journey of mental health self-awareness for about 18 months now. In that time, I've learned a great deal about myself and the people I've chosen to surround myself with. I've been a little slow to learn about things like my disease and suicide, however. Don't get me wrong, I knew the numbers and statistics. I know where to find the depressing data on youth and veteran suicides.

But my most recent epiphany? Nobody commits suicide. We may die by our own hands, but we do not kill ourselves. Something pushes us to do it. If a cancer patient denies treatment, their cause of death is not listed as self-inflicted. It's listed as cancer. It is no different with mental illness or bullying.

I have friends who have attempted to end their lives. I stand by the assertion it wasn't a desire to end life that drove them to it. It was their disease, the voices in their head that pushed them to end their suffering, to see no other way out.

"He committed suicide" creates the false narrative that the victim was actively engaged in the decision. Often, the reality is the complete opposite. We are barely engaged in life, let alone our actions and behaviors. Trapped in the prison of our minds, the disease that locks us away takes over many of our day-to-day operations.

Imagine going through every day expending all of your effort to appear functional and coherent during shallow exercises. Business meetings, water cooler talk with coworkers and customers, grocery shopping and the morning commute are all things we manage in a barely conscious state. We have become actors portraying a life while not actively living it.

None of those scenarios require feelings or true engagement. Fast forward a few hours to family time and we may seem coarse, disengaged, angry or distant. We've simply no energy left to maintain a facade that requires us to behave in a deeper and more meaningful way. Breaking out of our minds prison, even for those you love, isn't an option. The disease does the talking and acting for us.

What about the kids, bullied for weeks, months or years on end? Do we blame them for having a hand in their own deaths? We shouldn't. The failure wasn't on them for not being strong enough to stand up against a daily torture.

Sitting here, drinking my tea and watching through the window at the birds coming and going from the new feeder on my deck, I am unable to think of an instance where the blame of suicide should fall to the victim.

No, suicide does not exist in my mind, and I will do my best to end the use of the term and how we use it.

In an era when we are working to end victim blaming, it's time to stop it in these instances as well. We can do better than we have, and I will take a stand, finally, for what I believe.

None of us exist in a bubble that keeps us from interacting with the outside world. Everything we do is the result of an interaction of factors, and assigning a death as simply a "suicide" implies a blame that doesn't belong. We need to start talking about what really caused the death, it wasn't me who wanted to pull the trigger that night a few years ago, it was the voice in my head created by my depression.

Until we find a way to reach out to more people and show them that ending one's own life isn't the selfish choice of a healthy mind, we'll never make any headway. We need a call to action, a group of us to stand up and say, "No more."

Where does that leave us now? We live in a time unlike any other in history. Technology has us advancing as a species quickly and unpredictably. With that, words become common vernacular quickly while others fade into memory. If a few of us stand up and speak out, we can change the conversation. We can, over time, stop the use of a word that often means the opposite of what it intends, and reframe the conversation so it is clear that those who are victim to mental illness or bullying are not to blame.

I will fight until the cause of death is never just "suicide," and we look further.

Shawn Henfling

When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

~ Nita Aasen, TCF/ St. Peter, Minnesota

In memory of my sons, Erik and David Aasen

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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 Holidays Are Coming!

"The Holidays are coming! The Holidays are coming! Most bereaved parents make that observation with the same sense of fear and dread that Chicken Little had when he announced, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" We view Christmas or Hanukkah differently than the rest of the world. In our minds they become great trials to be endured. In my opinion, this trial is tougher than birthdays or death anniversaries. This is the time when love abounds. The family (and extended family) all gather together, coming from near and far, to share in this love.

The only trouble with this happy scene is that our child is missing. He or she has traveled too far from us to come for the holidays! We can't buy gifts for a photograph or hug and kiss a memory. The emptiness that this creates in us cannot be filled, no matter how many relatives gather by our hearth.

To add to the pain, most well-meaning friends and relatives feel that the best way to handle the problem is to pretend that it doesn't exist. They never mention the one person that is on the minds and in the hearts of everyone. We found out early on that it is not possible to keep the presence" of our child out of a family gathering. Trying to do so makes everyone uncomfortable and causes us as parents to feel disloyal.

The first Christmas after our son died, we did it "their" way. Never again! Now we make sure that he is very much a part of our holiday. For starters, we decided once again to hang all three stockings. We don't fill them, but just seeing them all hanging together is right for us. The tree was very important to Blake. Every year he took the responsibility of stringing the lights for us. Now it is important to us to see that Blake has a tree. We have a very special one, about 3 feet tall, that we weight heavily at the bottom. We decorate it with weather-proof ornaments and place it at his grave.

We leave the tree there until spring so it can make the gravesite when the snows are deep. We also have a lovely candle that we bum on special days. This is our way of including our missing son in the family circle. But most important, we talk about him. We don't do it obsessively, but we don't hesitate to recall memories of him as often as we recall those of other children in the family. Because we talk of him in an easy and natural manner, the rest of the family has taken our cue. They now bring up his name naturally. It is all so much more comfortable than the way we tried to handle it that first year.

Another couple in our chapter had a wonderful idea for the first holiday after their daughter died. Their greatest fear was that no one would mention her, so they compiled an album of her pictures and casually left it out on the coffee table. It wasn't long before people were looking through it, recalling favorite memories of her, and the ice was broken.

There must be so many other ways that you can make your child a part of your holiday ways that seem right and comfortable for you. You may choose to keep your thoughts private rather than share them with others. But the most important thing to remember is that the choice is yours. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. If you follow the dictates of your heart and that gives you comfort, those around you will see that it is so and follow your lead.

~ Marge Frankenberg, TCF/Arlington Heights IL

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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.....	701-540-3287	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.