



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume XXXII **January 2019** Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Former President George Herbert Walker Bush died the evening of November 30. On December 3, a headline on the front page of USA Today read, "Hoping to see Robin: The loss that forever changed former president George H.W. Bush." The article goes on to read, "The illness and death of Pauline Robinson Bush would be threaded through the life of her father and her mother. The experience taught them a terrible lesson about the ways the innocent can be caught and crushed by life's unfairness. It left a stamp about what matters, and what doesn't. It fueled George Bush's determination to do something big in life, beyond the oil business he was building in Texas. After he became president decades later, it helped shape his policies toward the epidemic of HIV/AIDS. Robin's illness tested her parents' marriage, then strengthened it. The young couple's response to that crisis forged a template they followed through the ebbs and flows of their long union, at 73 years the longest of any president and first lady in U.S. history." I appreciated the many ways the press expressed the fact that Robin, who only lived three years, continued to permeate her parents' life and legacy. It was a reminder to the world that when a child dies, our child is indelibly part of who we are for the rest of our lives. It was an acknowledgment to those that would tell us to "get over it," or "move on," that we will never "get over it" and when we "move on", we will move on as changed people, hopefully with a better grasp of what is important and what is not, fueled by a desire to make a difference in the world as we honor the memory of our child.

Sincerely,
Jerry & Carol Webb

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What is *New* About the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending.

The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you," not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the

family we have right now.

Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way

to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

Dory Rooker
TCF/Upper Valley, Vermont



Please, Don't Forget About My Child

Please, don't forget about my child. This is my heartfelt plea. I know you love and care about my family. I know that you don't always understand nor do I expect you to. I know that you wouldn't want to cause more pain to our already aching hearts. So, you mention my child less for fear of stirring up the dust that has seemingly settled. The truth is, the idea that my child will one day be forgotten is one of my greatest fears.

The less you talk about him the more that fear feels like a reality. I don't expect him to be the topic of every conversation. I don't expect you to mention him every time I see you. Perhaps at one time or another, I wanted that. But time has taken me further and further away from the early days of deep, suffocating grief. Even though I am always reluctant to admit it, I know the world has carried on. But what I need and what I want now is just to know that he has not been forgotten.

Maybe that means the occasional, "I thought about him the other day..." but mostly it means I need you to remember the important day he was born and the day he died. You see my friend, I don't expect you to fix any of this. And really all I need is to know that his name can be mentioned without fear, without guilt, and without uncertainty. I need to know that he is remembered because at the very least, he deserves that. He does not deserve to be swept under a rug because you fear my tearful response. Or because you think that my grief has subsided. Or because you have moved on. Or because you have trouble talking about him.

He deserves better than to be forgotten or remain unmentioned. After all, he is still my child.

My child is a huge part of who I am now. You know this. His name and his face replay in my mind every single day. Even the days I smile or the days where joy washes over me. He is still at the heart of who I am now. And I need you to know that it's okay. It is okay to speak his name whether it is a good day, bad day, or a sad day. It's okay and it's what I need from time to time.

I need to be reassured that his life holds within it so much value, still. I need to know that his story is not over and his story has not been forgotten, even though he has been gone for some time now. I need to know that I do not remember him alone. And all it takes to remind me of these things is to say his precious name. I don't need gifts, I don't need flowers or cards. I just need you to say his name aloud, unapologetically, and unprovoked.

I need you to remember the significance of important days like his birthday. Because while they are normal average days to you, they are days that we remember, that we mourn. They are days that bring up extremely complicated feelings. It doesn't matter how many years have passed. These days are significant to my family. And they always will be.

So please, please don't forget about my child. The greatest gift you can give to my family is the gift of remembrance. It costs you nothing. It requires very little. Yet it is more precious than gold. Hearing my child's name is the greatest reminder that he has not been forgotten.

And there is nothing that I want more.

Jessi Snap – Still Standing.com

TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.



Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at

www.compassionatefriends.org.

It is also available to read online without charge.

e-Newsletter Now

Available! An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.



About The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Web site —

www.compassionatefriends.org

<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is 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.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	<p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter is also available from the National Office — to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
Grief Materials	<p>Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for — or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
Amazon.com	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
Alive Alone	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org</p>
Our Newsletter	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

THAT ANNIVERSARY

All our lives we've known about anniversaries. Our parents celebrated their Anniversary.

The school we attended marked its Anniversary. The company honored your Anniversary of when you started your career. The Lions Club held a gala to remember its Anniversary. But there is one Anniversary that we're never eager to recall. It's **THAT ANNIVERSARY**.

When a child dies we retain vivid memories of that fateful day. Time cannot rob us of the memory and the grief of that awful and confusingly sad day. Unlike your wedding date or your first day on the job or when you graduated from school, which may have become hazy over time, the circumstances and ticks of the clock of **That Anniversary** remain etched in our minds. Some of us do special "things" on **That Anniversary**. We pray. We cry. We grieve. Some make an effort to try to distract the intense sadness that **That Anniversary** brings. Some walk on the beach or take a ride in the country. We look at old photos or other memorabilia to remember and to ward off anything that might cloud the memory of our daughters and sons. Friends and relatives also remember **That Anniversary** and may send a card or ask you out to lunch or choose not to visit you showing respect for your need for solitude. Regardless of how you deal with **That Anniversary**, you cannot avoid it. Sometimes even the days leading up to **That Anniversary** bring apprehension and uneasiness. That's OK. **That Anniversary** will always come (and go) as will the days before and after, too. The Compassionate Friends understands that on **That Anniversary**, as when it occurred, your heart is heavy yet empty at the same time. It can be a confusing time. There may be guilt or remorse or simply confusion. But it is up to you to sort it out and move ahead because after **That Anniversary** there will be another and another. Surely your heart may not feel as heavy or as empty as time passes, but **That Anniversary** will always be there. How you face it, how you mark it, how you remember it and how you caress it is the key to moving forward and conditioning yourself for the next time **That Anniversary** occurs.

Michael Tyler

TCF/Lighthouse Chapter Lewes, Delaware

The Holidays Are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. (continued next page)

A new year. Another one without you. Another one without breathing in your scent, running my fingers through that soft tuft of hair, without watching you toddle down the hall.

A new year. Another year that goes on while my heart still beats and yours has long since stopped. The cruelest trick nature can play, to steal the one I love.

A new year. It won't be filled with your big blue eyes, your silly laugh or the smile that made me melt into the ground whenever your eyes met mine.

A new year. Missing you. Aching for you. Longing for you.

A new year. Wanting to make you proud. Wanting to carry out a legacy. Wanting to show the world that you were here, you still are mine. You still matter.

A new year. Another chance to live, not because I always care much about life, but another year to live, because you would want nothing more than for me to take all this love and spread it around.

A new year. One year more of making you proud. One year more of saying your name. One year more of living a life inspired by the boy who stole half of my heart and carried it with him as he left.

A new year. And even with the heartache, it's another year of living more richly because you were here. Another year in the "after," when my life has been defined by love and purpose because that's what happens when you lose someone you love with your whole heart. You break and then you mend, and your soul becomes richer than ever before.

A new year. One year closer to you.

Lexie Bernhart - Scribbles and Crumbs

Continued from previous page

We may personally know the coolness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throats tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too in our searching find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within.

Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them and let us have the courage and love to share with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

The next regular monthly meeting is

Thursday, January 24, 2019 at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

Please call (309.736.6601) for information and directions.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>.

Next months meeting is on February 28, 2019 at 6:30 pm

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com .
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com .
Loving Listeners	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoartb3@mchsi.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.

Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a beloved child, and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.



Thanks to:

Mark and Debra Knoblock, in memory of their son, Sam.

Ken and Sandra Keller in memory of their son, Adrian.

Bill and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, in memory of Maggie and Beth on their birthdays.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue.

If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it or to our chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa, 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Contact the Editors

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and

address.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

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CarolynPwebb@gmail.com



Grief in the New Year

“I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy” (John 16:20 NIV). What a powerful affirmation for us to take into the New Year. As most of us have experienced over the past few days and weeks, for those of us who grieve while the world rejoices, surviving the holidays largely intact is an emotional and spiritual victory we’ve every right to claim.

As the New Year approaches, we realize that life presses on whether we like it or not. Time does not stand still for those who grieve - not for you and not for me. As the end of the year in which my husband died neared, I struggled with a very real sense of anxiety about being forced into a New Year. Emotionally I didn’t want to leave the year in which he died. I felt that a New Year would somehow be yet one more degree of separation between us. I’d like to say I dismissed this notion quickly or easily but, in all honesty, the calendar effect of his death was tenacious. It took a long time for me to find the courage and spiritual resolve to release my self-imposed duty of counting every hour, day, month, and year without him.

When we grieve we’re not suddenly “over it” just because December 31 turns into January 1. Our grief may be too new and raw and fresh to even care much for the promise of a New Year. No mere turn of the calendar can dictate that we suddenly move from “why did this happen,” to “how will I go on” - from disbelief and shock, to the reality of life without our loved one. Grief is not a straight line experience - it defies the rhythmic structure of ordinary time. Rather, grief creates its own calendar, the days and weeks of our pain and sorrow etched forever in our heart by every breath and act of remembrance that honors the life of the one we now grieve.



Beyondthebrokenheart.com

The Compassionate Friends National Conference



The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone’s wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings, and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia on July 19-21, 2019. “Hope Rings in Philadelphia” is the theme of this year’s event, which promises more of this year’s great National Conference experience. We’ll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Reflections

"It takes strength to make your way through grief, to grab a hold of life and let it pull you forward." (Patte Davis) Most times we don't see the strides in our grief every day. We get up, we work to make it through the day, and as we step into life it pulls us forward - slowly but surely. We may slide backwards at times. We may feel totally stagnant some days. But if all goes well, at some point we look around and realize, holy crap. I have survived for days, or months, or years when I never thought it possible. The days have gotten easier when I never thought they would. It wasn't about overnight transformations or butterflies or rainbows after the storm. It was about slowly but surely putting one foot in front of the other.

What'syourgrief.com

 New Year – It has a different number. Days have gone by. We've accumulated more time between ourselves and our child's death. We may have rearranged our perspective – have different ideas about what is important and what hardly matters. In this new year, we know that there will be ups and downs – some good moments and some bad. And if we take just one moment, just one hour, just one step at a time – together we can make it.

Joan Schmidt, TCF/Central Jersey

 All of us have suffered losses. It might be the loss of arms or legs, or the loss of a spouse or a job. Or the loss of a farm. They are all losses that profoundly affect us. But the truth of it is, after whatever loss you suffer, you still make choices, and you still control your life. And you can still reach out to others and allow them to reach out to you. No matter what happens.

Mary Kay Shanley

An Image of Grief

 I am a tree, standing alone in the early winter. I feel cold, empty, gray, and ugly. The winds of grief have ripped away a branch and have left me unbalanced – with a great gaping hole. The sap of my innermost being rushes to the hole to provide a balm for the pain of the open wound. The icy cold rain of my weeping falls through the shaking of my boughs. I continue to sway in the harsh gales of reality, and the keening of the winds are the voice of my heart-ache, but...

Under the ground there is life. Each root of love, friendship, care, family, and faith is feeding into the trunk, and I know for a certainty that surely spring will come again! The bark of time will cover the rending wound. The scar will always be there, but the drain on my heart will be over. The leaves will burst forth and gently surround the wound with breezes of loving memories and promises of life to come. My boughs will be heavy with the wonder of living. Nestled near the scarred trunk, secure in the knowledge that God is my refuge and strength, the sweet bird of happiness will sing again.

Anita King TCF/Hagerstown, MD



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1830 6th Avenue
Moline, Illinois 61265

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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.