



# The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

## April 2014

Volume XXVII, Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**This winter** has been one for the record books. Until the last few days it has seemed as though spring would never revisit the Midwest, and we would be stuck in an endless cycle of snow and freezing temperatures. Last week I felt bleak and disheartened, burdened by the frigid mornings and cold, damp windy days. Intellectually I knew that winter could not maintain its grip forever, but my feelings had their doubts. It was on one of those cold dark days I read the following words written by Sascha Wagner. They remind me of how grief mirrors the cold dreary days of winter – “always winter and never Christmas” (from *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*.)



### Winter Grief

Grieve as if to find eternal winter.

Ache as if to banish every spring.

In your broken footsteps follows mourning for the children who were with you once.

Grieve as if to keep the day from dawning.

Weep as if to kill each song you shared,

But be ready; when the sun grows stronger,

Spring will yet reclaim your loving heart.

Today the sun is shining and the promise of spring is in the air. We hope that for each of you who have been in the grip of your own endless winter of grief that the hope of spring will soon warm your heart. For those of you who have only just begun your grief journey, remember, that just as the seasons cycle, someday spring will return to your lives.

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb

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# CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

Don't expect everyone to understand your journey. Especially if they've never had to walk your path.

Our child's life, no matter how short it was in years, is so much more than the day they died.

Bill McCracken  
TCF/Muscataine/Iowa

Where grief is still very fresh, the most important resolution made may be the dedication to survive each new day.

Bruce H. Conley

I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again, it doesn't mean I am dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart.

Cathy Seehvette from the Central Iowa Chapter newsletter

**Please contact the editors, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242**

- ☼ 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, send us your new address.
- ☼ 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.
- ☼ If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.

There once was an old man who journeyed back to his hometown with the intent of reminiscing about the good times, as well as the sorrows he had experienced as a young father. High on the list of places he intended to visit was the elementary school his daughter had attended.

First he would walk around the huge playground where he so often had brought his daughter to play. He would stop at the slide, then the swings, and finally the monkey bars, remembering the joy on his daughter's face as she had moved happy and care-free from one adventure to another.

Then he would enter the school building. His first stop there would be the kindergarten room. He could still see in his mind that memorable day almost 75 years before, his daughter's outstretched hand enclosed in his firm, yet tender, grip. As they searched for her classroom, their loving touch finally ended as she walked through the open door to a new stage in her life.

The old man's next stop would be the tiny gymnasium where his daughter had performed in the holiday pageant.



How beautiful she had appeared, dressed in soft white as she sang Silent Night, Holy Night.

Finally he would stop at his daughter's third grade classroom. The old man clearly remembered the day he and his wife had stood outside the closed classroom door, tears streaming down their cheeks. Finally, gathering their courage they entered the room to comfort and talk with their daughter's classmates who, as yet, failed to comprehend why they would never again see alive the little girl they all

## The Visit Home

considered their best friend.

The anticipation grew strong as he neared the street where the school stood. Arriving at the spot, the old man wept at what he saw. The plain white concrete structure he expected was no longer there—a sleek modern building in its place. An asphalt parking lot now covered the old grassy playground.

Now understanding that he would never be able to fulfill his mission, the old man started thinking about the transient nature of life—how nothing ever remains the same.

Communities change. Buildings are here today and gone tomorrow. Loved ones live—and die. Even nations rise and fall.

But then the old man had another thought: The love his daughter had passed on to him still remained within his heart—67 years after she had died. He realized that it truly didn't matter if a day, a year, a decade, or a century were to pass. The candle of love would continue to burn bright in his heart. And he thought how even an eternity from now the love he still carried for his daughter would have transcended his own death and been returned to her a thousand fold.

The old man turned his car around to head back toward the highway. There was no need to stop elsewhere. Taking one last glance in the rear view mirror at the new school, he understood that memories live on not because of a building, or a classroom, or a playground. They remain alive inside each of us because love outlasts even the sands of time.

A smile crossed his lips.

His mission had been completed!

Wayne Loder  
Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*

## Love Gifts

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



Thank you to:

**Bill Steinhauser and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, in memory of Matthew Ronquillo.**

Love gifts 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 love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

## ABOUT BEING STRONG

Many people are convinced that being strong and brave means trying to think and talk about “something else.”

But we know that being strong and brave means thinking and talking about your dead love, until your grief begins to be bearable.

That is strength. That is courage. And only thus can “being strong and brave” help you to heal.

**Sascha Wagner**



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**

## What's it all about?

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.compassionatefriends.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

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<b>Understanding Suicide</b>	<p>ASAP (Awareness, Support, Action, Prevention): A confidential group that meets biweekly to serve individuals who have contemplated or attempted suicide and those coping with the suicide of a loved ones. Christian Care, 2209 3rd Avenue,</p>
<b>TCF's Grief Related Webinars</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx">http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx</a>. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library,</p>
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <b>TCF e-newsletter</b> 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>
<b>Grief Materials</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<p>For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.</p>
<b>Amazon.com</b>	<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>
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	<p><b>Looking</b> for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<b>Alive Alone</b>	<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</p>
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm">http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm</a>.</p>

## *The first* phase of the Quad Cities'

**Angel of Hope Memorial Garden**, a gathering place for all parents who have experienced the death of a child, gets underway this spring.

The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden, to be located at the Moline Memorial Cemetery, 5001 34th Avenue, Moline, is a place where families can gather to remember and pay tribute to those children who have passed on.

The Memorial Garden will eventually consist of a circular (20' diameter) garden designed with more than 1,600 decorative bricks, benches, and a variety of native

grasses, shrubs, and decorative flowers.

The memorial has areas with designated paving stones that are suitable for inscription. These stones will be available to parents, siblings, and families who would like to remember a deceased child, adult-child, sibling, niece, nephew, or grandchild. The form on the facing page can be used to order a brick. Simply complete the form and send it with your remittance to:

**Angel of Hope Memorial Garden  
c/o Bethany for Children & Families  
1830 6th Avenue  
Moline, Illinois 61265**

## Letting Go

Recently I received an award for volunteering in the community. I was honored to receive it. Some of the people in my life mentioned that it looked like I had "let go" of the pain of losing my child. "Let go?" Of course, they don't understand.

But when the award was mentioned at our monthly Compassionate Friends meeting, a bereaved mother made an interesting observation that touched my heart and reminded me why I need this special group to keep me centered and balanced.

"I remember that article you read to us last Mother's Day....the one your son wrote about how proud he was of you," she said. "Wouldn't it be great to put that article in our memory book with the newspaper article about your award? He was right about you. He was proud of you."

What a great idea! What a wonderful way to bring my son into my life even though he is no longer on this planet. That's what Compassionate Friends do.....they help to bring our children into our lives even though our children are no longer alive. For a few hours each month, our children return to us. We're proud parents who can share our children's stories and keep our children in our lives.....without explaining why we won't be "letting go."

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



## Angel of Hope Order Form

Name			
Address			
City, State, Zip			
Email address			
Telephone			
4"x 8" brick	\$100	Inscription limits: 15 characters per line (including spaces & punctuation), 1 to 3 lines	
8"x 8" brick	\$200	Inscription limits: 15 characters per line (including spaces & punctuation), 1 to 6 lines	

Inscription on 4" x 8" brick (print):


Inscription on 8" x 8" brick (print):


Please call (309)736-6601 with questions or for more information.

# Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

## The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

**Monthly Meeting: Thursday, April 24, 2014, at 6:30 pm**

**Bethany for Children & Families 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265**

Please call Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, for information and directions. Next meeting: May 22, 2014, at 6:30 pm.

<b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b>	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 <a href="mailto:linmac67@machlink.com">linmac67@machlink.com</a> .
<b>Helping Heavy Hearts—Grief Support Group</b>	We are a support group for people who have suffered a tragic loss of life whether a child, sibling, or other. We are great at listening and offer tender shoulders when you contact us. We are flexible to meet any time of day or night. Death needs no appointment and neither do you. We are not professional counselors, but we do have a degree in life experiences. Please contact Kirby White at 563.271.5908 or <a href="mailto:kombo100@msn.com">kombo100@msn.com</a>
<b>Rick's House of Hope</b>	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director at 563.324.9580, or <a href="mailto:egordon@rhoh.org">egordon@rhoh.org</a> or go to <a href="http://www.rhoh.org">www.rhoh.org</a> .
<b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)</b>	A peer group for suicide grief support meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, 563.843.3655 or at <a href="mailto:there.is.hope@hotmail.com">there.is.hope@hotmail.com</a> — <a href="http://www.mjlfoundation.org">http://www.mjlfoundation.org</a> .
<b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)</b>	Survivors of Suicide Support Group Meets on second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Contact: Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425 or <a href="mailto:laura@secondreformedchurch.net">laura@secondreformedchurch.net</a> .
<b>SHARE</b>	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 <a href="mailto:chalyn@shareqc.com">chalyn@shareqc.com</a> or <a href="http://www.shareqc.com">www.shareqc.com</a> .

<b>Loving Listeners</b>	<p><b>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</b></p> <p><b>Michelle Curtis</b> 309.644.0486  <b>Judy Delvecchio</b> 563.349.8895 or <a href="mailto:delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com">delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</a></p> <p><b>Kay Miller</b> 309.738.4915  <b>Kirby White</b> 563.271.5908 or <a href="mailto:kombo100@msn.com">kombo100@msn.com</a></p>
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## **Pity Party**

I feel that every day I engage in a battle with my very own personal adversary. It plagues me and pursues me relentlessly. It has many tricks. It's a master at the "sneak attack." My adversary's name is Self-Pity.

I know the mistakes I'm making in this daily battle. I am supposed to ask "Why not me?" instead of "Why me?" I'm supposed to focus on the things and people I have and not on what I have lost. But there's a significant gap between knowing in my head what I'm supposed to do and actually being able to do it.

My most effective defense against it is to focus on people who are enduring a similar loss; I hold them in my heart and mind. I am grateful that because of The Compassionate Friends, they have names and faces and are real to me. I also try to remember those who inspire me by the way they endure different challenges, such as serious illness or financial misfortunes. However, this perspective takes effort and energy. Energy is in short supply for me.

I try not to give in to it, my Self-Pity beast.

It's hard when my son's friends and classmates are graduating from college and have photos of their celebrations all over Facebook (note to self: it is not a good idea to look at Facebook).

I don't understand why it's called a "pity party." It sure doesn't feel like a party. It feels like a war.

**Peggi Johnson**  
**TCF/Arlington, VA**

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## **THERE IS LIFE AFTER INFANT DEATH**

Here I am, two years later, a normal functioning person. It must be a miracle. Two years ago, I wouldn't have believed it possible, yet here I am. I can smile, laugh and do the everyday menial tasks that two years ago seemed to overwhelm me. I feel pain--not the driving, stabbing pain of the past—but pain that comes and goes when the memories of the past creep in to disturb my happier present. Somewhere along the road, I found the strength hidden within me to go on without Sara. I know my life is less rich without her, but still very much worth living. Does time heal all wounds? I don't feel healed, but time has given me a chance to learn to live and cope with the pain. I can now go on and live a good life with my husband and three wonderful daughters. I hope for all those whose pain is new, that they can just hold on until their day comes as mine has today--when they can say, "It's a miracle. There is life after infant death."

**Fran Downing**  
**Winchester HOPE**

**Beyond  
Surviving:  
Twenty-five  
Commandments**

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there

are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with “why” it happened until you no longer need to know “why,” or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

**Iris Bolton,  
author of *My Son, My Son***

## National Conference

Chicago will be the site of the 37th TCF National Conference on July 11-13, 2014. "Miles of Compassion through the Winds of Hope" is the theme of this year's event which will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, just minutes from the airport.

Early registration for the conference will be \$90.00 for adults, \$40.00 for children (9-17), and \$40.00 for full-time college students (until June 6 when registration will be higher).

The Hyatt Regency O'Hare is now accepting reservations for the National Conference, which can be made by calling the hotel directly at 888.421.1442. Please mention The Compassionate Friends when reserving your room. Please visit Rosemont's website, [www.rosemont.com](http://www.rosemont.com), for information on local area dining and activities.

Volunteers are needed for this very special conference. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Mary Seibert, Chicago National Conference Chairperson, [k\\_m\\_seibert@yahoo.com](mailto:k_m_seibert@yahoo.com) or Ashley Larsen, National Conference Volunteer Committee Chairperson, [aflarsen86@yahoo.com](mailto:aflarsen86@yahoo.com).

Sponsorships are available. For additional information, please contact the National Office.



## A Promise



The colors of life change as we go through grief. We begin black and white;

Then gray settles over us, seeping into our pores, surrounding us,

Smothering us for a long period of time; then slowly the colors change. We may not even be

aware of their changing 'til one day we see a rainbow,

And know it was meant for us.

Faye Harden  
TCF, Tuscaloosa AK



## *The Compassionate Friends*

*Quad City Area Chapter*  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1830 6th Avenue  
Moline, Illinois 61265

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**T**o 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.***