



# The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

## May 2014

Volume XXVII, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**D**uring the sermon on Sunday the pastor mentioned how important knowing the names of the people in our congregation was for building community. Too often we make the excuse that we have trouble remembering people's names, but the pastor emphasized the value in making the extra effort to go beyond excuses and do what it takes to know and use the names of our church family.

I was reminded of how bereaved parents often say how much it means to them when people know and use the name of their child who died. Today, while looking for articles related to Mother's Day, the importance to a bereaved parent of being able to say their child's name as well as hear others say it was also emphasized in what I read. For parents whose child has died, the name remains an ever important connection to that child. That is one of the things so special about our annual Candlelight Memorial Service. Each family is given the chance to lovingly speak the name of their child as they light a candle. Jerry and I were deeply moved eight years ago when our son and his wife purposely embedded our daughter's name in the name of their daughter, Hannah. And my heart is warmed each time I see on the wall of my parent's bedroom the birth sampler I made for our daughter with her name – Anna Katherine Webb spelled out in bright letters.

I encourage you to go online (<http://www.griefhaven.org/e-haven/ParentJourneyJuly-Sept2012.pdf>) to read this well written article by Susan Whitmore entitled "Please Say the Names." It expresses well the heart cry of many bereaved parents especially those whose child was very young when they died or it has been a long time since their child died. She summarizes her article with the following statement.

"More than ever, we want to say their names to you, and we want to hear you saying their names - not because we are in denial that they died, but because they did die, and we want you to help us keep them alive in our hearts and in yours."

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb

### Inside

Chalkboard Reflections	2
A Mother's Love	
On Mother's Day: Being the Mother of a Child Who Died	3
National Conference	
Love Gifts	
What's it all about?	4
No Vacation	
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
Angel of Hope Memorial Garden	6
When you have experienced...	
Angel of Hope Memorial Garden	7
Support Groups for Grieving Parents and Siblings	8
What to Say to a Bereaved Mother on Mother's Day	9
The Secret of TCF...	
Tips for Mothers Who Are Grieving Their Children	10
A Mother's Love	

# CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes  
- but it never fails to bring music to my ears.

Please don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music. It  
soothes my broken heart and fills my soul with love.

*Nancy Williams*

There is no sequence of grief - it is a constant, evolving  
journey with many diversions into emotional peaks and val-  
leys along the way. It is a journey and it is never over.

*In memory of Maria-Victoria TCF/Jonesboro, GA*

Talk about your feelings with your spouse and encourage him or  
her to express to you how they are feeling.

*Good Grief Center for Bereavement Support*

## A Mother's Love

A mother's love for her child may begin with the very dream of becoming a mother...A mother's love for her child may begin with the thought of maybe expecting the news...A mother's love for her child may begin with the verification of her expectations...A mother's love for her child may begin with the affirmation that the child lives within her...A mother's love for her child may begin with her first sight of the new life that she has delivered into the world...A mother's love for her child may begin...But it may never end...Not even death can steal away a mother's love for her child. A mother's love for her child knows no end!

**Diana M. Rohrbaugh**  
**TCF/Anne Arundel County, MD**

# On Mother's Day: Being the Mother of A Child Who Died

It can feel very lonely, being the parent of a child who died. Especially on Mother's Day or Father's Day. We feel so different from those around us, all those happy people with children the same age our child was, or would have been. But over the years, I've come to understand that I'm not alone at all.

There is a wonderful Buddhist story about a woman whose son gets sick and dies. She goes to the Buddha to ask him to bring her son back to life; I will, he says, if you bring me some mustard seed from the home of a family that has not known loss. She goes from house to house but can find no family that has not lost someone dear to them. She buries her son and goes to the Buddha and says: I understand now.

That is what I understand now. It doesn't make me miss my son any less, or Mother's Day any easier. But it helps me make sense of it; loss is part of life. There are no guarantees, ever. Our children, and all those we love, are gifts to us

for however long we have them.

I understand now too that we are together in this, all of us, in joy and in loss. It's the connections we make with each other that matter -- it's the connections we make that give life value and help us face each morning. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "We are all in the same boat in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Years ago, I chose words to say each time I go to my son's grave. It makes it easier to have a ritual. And over the years, the words have come to mean more to me. They aren't just about grief anymore. They are about who I am, what I have learned, and what I can give.

"I will always love you, " I say. "And I will always be your mother."

**Claire McCarthy, M.D.**

## 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 is \$90 for adults, \$40 for children (9-17), and \$40 for full-time college students. After June 6 registration will be higher.

The Hyatt Regency O'Hare is now accepting reservations for the National Conference. Reservations 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 Larson, National Conference Volunteer Committee Chairperson, [aflarsen86@yahoo.com](mailto:aflarsen86@yahoo.com).

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



# 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:  
**John Page, in memory of his granddaughter, Anna Katherine Webb .**  
**Bill and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, in memory of their niece, Delaney Steinhauser,**

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.



## 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.

## NO VACATION

There is no vacation from your absence. Every morning I awake I am a bereaved parent. Every noon I feel the hole in my heart. Every evening my arms are empty. My life is busy now, but not quite full. My heart is mended, but not quite healed. For the rest of my life, every moment will be lived without you. There is no vacation from your absence.

Kathy Boyette - □TCF, Gulf Coast, MS

## 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, Rock Island – first and third Wednesdays, 4:00-5:30 pm.</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, accessible from the webinar page.</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 Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</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 reached at <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</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>

## Phase One of the construction of the Quad Cities' *Angel of Hope Memorial Garden* gets underway next month!

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, scrubs, 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 for a brick. Simply complete the form and send it with your remittance.

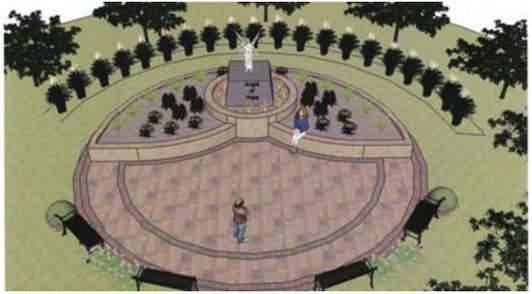
There is one bench still available for purchase as are the 4"x 8" and the 8"x 8" inscription bearing bricks that will adorn the circular floor of the monument. Please use the order form on the next page for purchasing and inscribing bricks. To purchase the remaining bench, please call 309.736.6601.



**W**hen you have experienced a traumatic loss you have to make a choice. You choose whether to retreat from life, to give up on life and what you held dear, or to grow from this horrendous experience. Making this choice is not easy, but it is a choice. You also have to redefine your relationship with your loved one. You may not have a physical relationship anymore but you can choose to always have a strong and loving relationship. My feeling of connectedness with my daughter is very, very strong. She is very much a part of my life and will always be. I have redefined my relationship with her and do the things I want and need to do to keep our love and connection alive.

TCF, Jonesboro, Georgia

Please mail your completed order form to:  
**Angel of Hope Memorial Garden**  
**c/o Bethany for**  
**Children & Families**  
**1830 6th Avenue**  
**Moline, Illinois 61265**



## 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, May 22, 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: June 26, 2014, at 6:30 pm.

<p><b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b></p>	<p>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>.</p>
<p><b>Helping Heavy Hearts—Grief Support Group</b></p>	<p>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></p>
<p><b>Rick's House of Hope</b></p>	<p>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>.</p>
<p><b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)</b></p>	<p>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 Waggnor 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>.</p>
<p><b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)</b></p>	<p>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>.</p>
<p><b>SHARE</b></p>	<p>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>.</p>

<p><b>Loving Listeners</b></p>	<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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## What to Say to a Bereaved Mother on Mother's Day

Obviously I cannot speak for *all* bereaved mothers and how they would like to be approached on difficult days like Mother's Day. But given my daughter's stillbirth and the fact that I have come to know many women in the baby loss community, I like to think that my insight on this matter is fairly keen. So here are my do's and don'ts on how to relate to your bereaved friend on Mother's Day.

### DO:

**Recognize that your friend is a mother.** Just because her child is dead doesn't make her any less of a mother, nor does it erase her child's life. Recognition of that is life-giving.

**Acknowledge that Mother's Day is probably a strange or difficult day for her.** It is an especially upsetting day if she has no living children.

**Say her child's name.** Every bereaved mother wants you to talk about her child. Remembering her child in a loving and honoring way is an immense gift. *You cannot hurt a bereaved mother by bringing up her child in this manner.* It's not like she has forgotten her child. Don't be afraid of reopening a wound, because the wound left by her child's death will never close.

**Say, "I'm so sorry that your child isn't here with you today."** When in doubt of what to say to a bereaved mother, this always works. It doesn't dismiss her pain or trivialize the loss, and it does give her and her grief that all-important recognition.

**Give her a big hug, and don't be alarmed if she cries.** Personally, I love hugs from my loved ones, especially when I'm hurting. But often hugs can trigger tears. Don't be afraid of those tears, though. It is a gift to be able to mourn your child with your loved ones.

**Give her a card or a gift if you feel so in-**

**clined.** That would be very honoring of her motherhood and her child's life -- both of which are priceless gifts to the bereaved mother.

**Respect that she might not want to go out on Mother's Day.** Being out and about on Mother's Day, seeing other mothers celebrating with their living children, is likely to be intensely painful. I know that for myself, I have not yet decided if I will attend church on Mother's Day. Respect her wishes, and support her by dropping a note or card into her mailbox.

**Ask her how she's doing -- but only if you're prepared for an honest answer.** Our culture is afraid of pain. When people say, "How are you?" they usually don't want to hear anything else but "good" or "okay." But a bereaved mother is anything but "okay," especially on difficult days like Mother's Day. So be sure that you want an honest reply when you ask -- otherwise, it's probably best to leave this one alone, so that the mother doesn't feel like she has to lie.

### DON'T:

**Ignore her on Mother's Day.** If she is anything like me, she is grappling with intense identity issues. To ignore her (and her motherhood) on this painful day is likely to be immensely hurtful.

**Dismiss her loss or her grief.** If a bereaved mother chooses to say things like, "God needed my baby in Heaven," "Everything happens for a reason," or "It's God's will," that's up to her. But it is not okay to say things like that to her. These are flimsy explanations of her child's death -- and the harsh reality is that there is no explanation that will make her child's death okay. Don't try to explain her pain away. It won't work, because there is nothing logical about death and grief, and any such attempts are likely to be very hurtful.

Continued on page 11

### **The Secret of TCF's Success**

**is Simple:** As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward, and both are helped to heal.

### **To Our New Members:**

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose, and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you find the right person or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

### **To Our Members Further Down The Grief Road:**

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting, we have new parents. Think back . . . what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF.



### **Tips For Mothers Who Are Grieving Their Children**

- Be gentle with yourself. This could be the most dreaded day of the year for you. You may feel anger, sadness, guilt or a range of other emotions because your child died before you. These emotions are very common with grief—don't try to suppress them.
- Seek out emotional support; it is a sign of courage, not weakness. It is unrealistic to believe that you will process your grief quickly. Everyone grieves in their own time and their own way.
- Be patient with yourself. Talk openly with trusted family and friends about your child and encourage them to talk openly with you too—hearing your child's name mentioned can be helpful.
- Create your own memorial. Whether it involves planting, writing, building or painting, be creative and put your energy into doing something in memory of your child.
- If you're a woman who never held your baby due to a pregnancy loss, celebrate your baby by lighting a candle or planting a flower that blooms every year. If your friend experienced a pregnancy loss, offer a hug and let her know you are thinking of her on Mother's Day.
- If you have not been able to conceive, follow the suggestions above that are right for you. Give yourself permission to grieve and to talk with trusted others about how you have changed as a person.

Continued from page 9

What to Say...

### Don't

**Tell her that she'll be "over it" by next year's Mother's Day.** The sad truth about child loss, whether that loss occurred before or after birth or well into adulthood, is that the mother will *never* "get over it." A significant part of her died along with her child, and grief has changed her forever.

**Assume that because she has living children, Mother's Day is not difficult.** As every parent knows, every child is unique and special in his or her own way. As a result, no amount of living children can ever "make up" for a deceased child -- nor should they be expected to.

**Place blame.** It is *NEVER* okay to tell a bereaved mother that it is her fault her child died. That is up to the mother's doctors, who will tell her the truth. To try to blame a bereaved mother for her child's death is inappropriate all of the time, especially on difficult days. (And yes, incredibly, I have had someone blame me for Eve's death, although it was not on Mother's Day.)

In summary, on Mother's Day a bereaved mother is desperately in need of recognition. She needs to be known as a mother. She became pregnant, and loved and cherished and bore a child. The child's death does not change her love for that child, nor does it negate her motherhood. So the name of the game in interacting with your bereaved friend on Mother's Day is **recognition**. Tell her that she is a mother, and that you wish her child could be here with here, and you are golden.

Don't be afraid to talk about your bereaved friend's dead child or grief -- ever. I know that many people are afraid of making an already difficult situation worse. But if you honor her motherhood and grief, and remember and mention her child, there is no hurt being done -- quite the opposite in fact! Even if she cries, this honoring and remembering are gifts that are more precious to your bereaved friend than you can fathom.

**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.



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*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.***