



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 10



Dear Compassionate Friends,

The reality is we don't forget, move on, and have closure, but rather we honor, we remember, and incorporate our deceased children and siblings into our lives in a new way. In fact, keeping memories of your loved one alive in your mind and heart is an important part of your healing journey.

Harriet Schiff, The Bereaved Parent

After a glorious, 75 degree, sunshiny day last Wednesday, winter is upon us in the form of a dump of lake effect snow. Thanksgiving is next Thursday, followed immediately by the first Sunday of Advent. Our minds are turning from raking up the last fall leaves to bringing out the Christmas decorations. One of the boxes in the storage closet is marked "Anna". It contains the tiny stocking I bought in early pregnancy to mark her first Christmas, a miniature tree and ornaments, some given to her and others we have purchased since her death. Anna died 37 years ago, but I display these treasures each year in our bedroom, tangible reminders of her life. She is remembered by the pictures and birth samplers hanging in a corner of our bedroom. She is remembered by the Christmas stocking her younger brother uses, marked, at his request, by his name and in tiny letters, hers. She is remembered in the name of our granddaughter, Hannah, who carries Anna's name within her own. She is remembered in the heart shaped necklace I wear, bearing 3 birthstones, one for each of our children. She will be remembered as we connect over the holidays with three young woman who have become like daughters to us and their families. She is remembered each month we select content for this newsletter and every time we add a name to the mailing list. Your family has and will find its' own way to remember, to celebrate, to honor the life of your child. Our children lived. Our children were loved. Our children's lives continue to make a difference as we love and serve and celebrate and remember.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you're faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow the world keeps turning and the seconds keep ticking.

James Patterson

One thing you can do is start some new tradition that is so different from the old celebrations that it has no painful memories for you.

Helen Fitzgerald, The Mourning Handbook

Whenever the pain feels much too much, I try to remember how much LESS BEAUTIFUL my life would be without ever knowing our kind of love.

-A Bed for My Heart

As far as I can see, grief will never truly end. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does – forever. It's simply the way the absence of your loved one manifests in your heart. A deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love. Some days, the heavy fog may return, and the next day, it may recede, once again. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.

Scribbles and Crumbs

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 Resources	<p>There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/.</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 at climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

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

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (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 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Website:

www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

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

Preparing is the Hardest Part

By the time Christmas Day arrives, we have survived the hardest part of the holiday season. Actually, by the time the day arrives, the hard work is almost finished.

Even before our child died we frequently felt let down on Christmas Day. Many times the day didn't turn out to be as enjoyable as we had anticipated. Could it be that before our child died the real joy of Christmas was not in the day itself, but in the shopping, planning, and preparing that went on for weeks before? Could it also be that now the pain is in that same shopping and planning and preparing?

Before Arthur died I so enjoyed the holidays. The excitement in the little ones' eyes, the secrets the older children shared with each other, choosing just the right gift for each brother and sister, putting up the tree, decorating, party planning all created excitement and happiness. How painful these same activities were after he died.

The real torment of the holidays is in the preparations. Shopping for the other children and family members is hard when we can't buy for our child. Just the right sweater or that special toy scream out at us in the stores. His favorite Christmas song seems to be played



over and over again on the radio. You don't want to bake her favorite cookies, but you have to because the rest of the family loves them too. As you pull out the decorations that have been packed away since last year, the first one you find is the scruffy, but beautiful, wreath he made in kindergarten. Every day of the week everywhere you turn, there are reminders that he/she isn't going to be here this Christmas.

Most of us have to go through the actions to make the holidays good for the rest of the family. But in these preparations is the pain. It is the loss of the very thing that caused us joy before – our child and his/her presence – that causes us so much pain now.

Christmas day itself, outside of its significance as the birth of the Christ Child, is just another day to get through, just 24 hours like any other day. It, too, will be over. So in the next few weeks when the dread of Christmas Day hits you, remind yourself that you are doing the hardest part right now. EVERY DAY of the holiday season is painful. Ask yourself if getting through Christmas Day can be any worse than what you are "getting through" today.

**Margaret Gerner,
Director, Chrysalis Center BP/USA
St. Louis, Missouri**

Ways to Honor Your Loved One this Holiday Season

- ♥ Purchase or make a Christmas ornament with your loved one's name or photo on it to commemorate your loved one. Gather the family together and share memories of your loved one while you hang the ornament on the Christmas tree.
- ♥ Tie a beautiful ribbon around the trunk of your Christmas tree in your loved one's favorite color. This is an activity that the youngest members of the family can participate in.
- ♥ Hang stockings with their names embroidered on them. On Christmas Eve, have your family members fill the stockings with cards and letters to or about your loved ones. You can all take turns reading the memories out loud on Christmas Day. This is sure to become a beautiful and meaningful family tradition.
- ♥ Make an angel tree topper in memory of your loved one to top your Christmas tree. You could make the angel's clothes or wings out of your loved one's clothing.
- ♥ Dedicate a small Christmas tree to your loved one and decorate it with photos, notes, and special "in memory of..." Christmas ornaments.
- ♥ Make a wreath dedicated to your loved one and hang it on your front door. Decorate the wreath with



ribbons in your loved one's favorite colors, sentimental objects and photographs.

- ♥ Buy a special candle and dedicate it to your loved one's memory. Keep it lit throughout the Christmas season (but do not leave it unattended).
- ♥ If you enjoy doing crafts, try making a memory candle with a photo of your loved one. Directions can be found on YouTube.
- ♥ At your place of worship, light candles in your loved one's name or remember him or her in prayer.
- ♥ Find a poem that reminds you of your loved one, or compose an original poem. Use your best penmanship to write the poem, frame the poem, and display it in your home over the holiday season.
- ♥ Dedicate some time before you and your family start eating Christmas dinner for remembering loved ones. You and your guests can take turns toasting him or her and sharing special memories.
- ♥ Purchase or make your loved one's favorite holiday treats, whether it be a certain kind of chocolate, candy canes, or his or her favorite Christmas cookies and cakes. On Christmas Eve, set a beautiful table filled with sentimental holiday treats to enjoy with your family and friends.
- ♥ If your family takes a photo every year for your Christmas card, start a tradition of including an angel, dove,



butterfly, or some other symbol to represent your loved one.

- ♥ Send a holiday card to someone who was special to your loved one, for example, an old friend who too is missing him or her during the holidays.
- ♥ Volunteer your time to help those in need during the Christmas holidays is a great way for remembering loved ones at Christmas. If your loved one was passionate about a particular cause, choose a related charity to volunteer for. As an example, if he or she was an animal lover, volunteer at a local animal shelter.
- ♥ Instead of the “Twelve Days of Christmas,” do “Twelve Days of Random Acts of Kindness” instead. Each day, do one random act of kindness in your loved one’s name, such as paying for the coffee of the person standing behind you in line, or sponsoring a child from another country in need of basic necessities. Kindness is a wonderful way to celebrate the positive impact your loved one had on the world.
- ♥ Knit a scarf or pair of gloves in your loved one’s favorite color and donate it to a local charity or homeless shelter. You can even create a tag that indicates that you made the gift in his or her memory.
- ♥ Gather around the fireplace with a cup of steaming hot chocolate. Have everyone in the family write down a special memory of your loved one,



or special messages to him or her. Take turns letting the messages burn in the fire as a symbol of sending the messages onto your loved one.

- ♥ Remember a loved one by taking a trip to a place that he or she always wanted to visit, or was special to him or her.
- ♥ Start a new tradition during the holidays where you and your family take part in your loved one’s favorite hobby. For example, if he or she loved board games, have a games night with family and friends in his or her memory.
- ♥ Build a snowman in your yard and dress it in your loved one’s old scarf, hat and mittens. This is a great activity to get the kids involved in honoring your loved one’s memory.
- ♥ Visit your loved one’s resting place and leave a Christmas wreath that incorporates family photographs and mementos.
- ♥ Plant a memorial tree and dedicate it to your loved one. You can then decorate the outdoor tree each Christmas in memory of your loved one.

*Excerpted
from*



loveliveson.com

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
Candle Lighting Service on
Tuesday December 6, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
at the Moline Memorial Park Cemetery
in the mausoleum south of the Angel of Hope.
*The next monthly meeting of the chapter is
Thursday, January 26, 2023 at 6:30 pm.***

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</p>	<p>Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</p>	<p>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. 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.</p>
<p>SHARE</p>	<p>A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. 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.</p>
<p>Phone Support</p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <p>Doug, Kay, 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.</p>



**Annual Candle Lighting Memorial Service
Tuesday, December 6, 2022
at 7:00 p.m.
Angel of Hope
Memorial Garden**

**The service will be held at the Mausoleum
(south of the Angel of Hope Memorial)
in the Moline Memorial Park Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue
Moline, Illinois**

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:

All of the many donors who support the Quad Cities Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

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 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.



to

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

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



Christmas Morning or Mourning

That inevitable awakening lies ahead for each of us, that moment when we open our eyes and face the climax of weeks of colored lights, carols, frenzied shopping, social gatherings, accumulating gifts... even if we have not taken an active part in all of these preparations. Now the prelude is over and the day itself is upon us. However we have participated, with apprehension or dread, with courage or resolve, this is the moment when we confront the ultimate reality of dealing with the holiday without our child.

Will it be morning or simply mourning? Whether this is our first Christmas since our child's death, or one of many, this is far more than a cute play on words. For the answer lies within each of us and not without. The quality of our Christmas is but another in that series of countless decisions we each confront when our child dies.

The holiday is more than just another day, but like each other it does afford moments for grief and occasions for joy. It is simply more intense, more culturally bound in rituals that establish the significance for certain parts of our lives.

Without doubt, we will each remember our child's anticipation and excitement from holidays past, and we will hear the unnatural silence of absence above numberless other sounds. Allow yourself to cry and let the hurt course through you as you dress. It is your own grief...it belongs only to yourself...and it must not be denied. Wash, brush your teeth, feel the hollowness without being consumed by it, for there are others in your life. Even

if you are alone, you are an "other," a personality apart from your deceased child and a great deal more than a life summed up in a denial of living.

Therefore, grant yourself moments to grieve, but leave room to sandwich instants of joy between.

A single smile, one quiet laugh, a gentle moment of fondness for the delight of another, even if only from memory...these are all it takes to turn mourning into morning. You can and should not smother or suppress grief, but you must also remain open to the light that still can enter your life.

In my own memories of my son at Christmas, I will find both reasons to cry and irresistible urges to laugh. His life was sunshine in mine. In the holiday his memory should not become a shroud to hide away my love for him. On the 25th, as on every other day, I will remember him and long for him, knowing he has forever marked Christmas for me with his own happiness, and it is only his permanent physical withdrawal that chills these moments with a seemingly endless sorrow.

If we decide, if we are willing to work on it, we can mix remembrance with mourning and turn it to morning, thus enriching our lives by continuing to feel the laughter and joy our children gave to each of us. It is our deceased child's Christmas gift to us this year and in all the years to come. Take it with the same grace and gratitude with which we accepted all the others from holidays past...from other Christmas mornings.

Don Hackett, Kingston, MA



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.