



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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V o l u m e X X X V I , N u m b e r 6

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Over

the last several months, Bethany for Children & Families (where I work) has gradually moved its Illinois office from 1830 6th Avenue in Moline to 1701 River Drive in Moline. It was a move of all of two city blocks, but it required us to pack into boxes 20 years of our work-lives and unpack it all in a new location. Among all the contracts, memos, reports, and audits I found a handmade Father's Day card. It was from my daughter, Maggie, manufactured at the prompting of her preschool teacher who had herded a group of five year-olds into a project which, after much coaching and refocusing, would be sent home on that Friday before the weekend, dug out of backpacks and presented to each student's dad on the special day. (No mean feat—how do those preschool teachers do it?) It would be the last Father's Day gift I would ever receive from my daughter. She died the next year shortly after Valentine's day.

The Gospel's tell of a man who has found a priceless pearl and what he does to possess it. My pearl is now affixed to the door of the kitchen's refrigerator. It has a cut out of Maggie's hand, a quick drawing of a little girl with crazy hair, the school photo glued to the palm of that outstretched hand, and of course newly learned block letter signature of MAGGIE S. (to distinguish her card from those of the two other Maggies in the class).

In the 19 years which have elapsed since that Father's Day, I have learned to live with the grief, the loss, the missed years of her life mixed with ours. Camus, in an essay called "The Almond Tree," wrote, "Our task as [humans] is to find the few principles that will calm the anguish of free souls. We must mend what has been torn apart, make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more to peoples poisoned by the misery of the century." We of The Compassionate Friends

do just that. As we mend out lives, let us be ever thankful for the days or years we did have with the child we have lost too early, too soon.



Sincerely,
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser



Some of the most comforting words in the universe are "me too." That moment when you find out that your struggle is also someone else's struggle, that you're not alone, and that others have been down the same road.

Unknown

Can you imagine a world without the color green? If overnight the grass turned white, fields turned black, peas turned orange. That's a bit like grief. Overnight our world looks different. A core color is wiped out, and suddenly our landscape looks so very different.

Zoe Clark-Coates

Whenever I am missing you, I also remember how fortunate I was that you were in my life. I wouldn't trade those moments for the world.

Cindy Adkins

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

SUMMER

Summer in Michigan can warm the heart and heat the body. There are soft silky nights spent viewing dots of light in the heavens. Beaches, barbecues, baseball, family reunions, fireworks, carnivals, and cool drinks make the summer a special time of the year for a Midwesterner eager to shed winter's coat. School's out while vacations blend together for happy times. Even blue skies push the gray away in the peninsula state begging us to view, if not experience, the outdoors.

Someone is not there in their normal place and the season of the year will never change that fact. Determination to make "things" better is a laudable, though often quite challenging goal. Having a good time between spring and fall may be a difficult task when a good day may be a notable achievement. The simple act of attempting to have fun may be a simple, innocent act of honoring our child's memory. Every month seems to bring specific special thoughts and those fun times may bring along some unwanted baggage of sad moments that will never go away, but they will become more manageable, more easily carried.

It seems that if we keep busy sometimes "things" get better even if it's only for a little while. An idle mind is the devil's workshop is another one of those phrases that seem to finally have some meaning for the bereaved. Find something, anything, to occupy the mind and the heart will most likely follow, if only briefly. If there is no time to think, then there is no time for heartache, and this fragile formula may work on occasion to soothe the soul, providing rare relief from the staggering, stunning, seemingly endless pain.



Other times it is just too overwhelming, too exhausting to keep one step ahead of the darkness that reality has inflicted. We are transported back to when "things" were different, normal, better, so briefly we let go of hope and that is ok, it happens. The fight for survival is not easy but it is possible. The struggle may be measured by where we have been, how far we have come, as well as where we are. Congratulate yourself for making it this far. We may share many similarities, but no one knows your hard road better than you.

I think that our son Brian is having the best summer of all. That is what I choose to think, choose to know, choose to feel. So when I close my eyes tonight I will remember fireworks and sparklers of the past, the amusement parks yet to be visited. The happy faces of yesterday's memories will visit while dreaming of the hugs of tomorrow in that most beautiful perfect summer, that someday forever summer, together.

Pat O'Donnell

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.

Another Father's Day

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father, it is a poignant reminder of the bittersweet memory of a loved, now lost, child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of the inability to stop what happened. Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Oftentimes they are unable to do so.

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong...and must not cry. But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop their child's death.

One father says that being a good dad was the thing he did best in his life. He now honors his child's memory by helping others in the same situation and by talking about him and doing things his child liked to do like attend football games at his high school and wearing his favorite clothes. He is making a personal, private statement that his son still matters to him.

Another father says it took him many years to accept the death of his child, but he has now moved on. "When my daughter was alive, she, with the help of my wife, made a big deal about Father's Day, always serving me breakfast in bed, giving me a little gift, and spending quality time with me. Knowing and understanding how I feel, my wife continues to make it a special day. One of the things we do is visit her grave and tell her what we did that day. At home we light a candle in her memory.

Still another father, who lost his only son, says he wasn't prepared for how hard that first year without his child would be. He had difficulties concentrating at work and challenges regarding his wife understanding his feelings. What helped was knowing he had been blessed to be a father and would always love and remember all the good times they had together. Death could not take that away from him.



Perhaps this Father's Day should be a time when family members, whoever they are, give Dad a hug, do something special, help with the chores, and most of all, let him know how important, needed, and loved he is.

Sandy Fox

What to Do When You Wake up to a Terrible Day

Some may work for some people and not for others, but read them through. We bet some will work for you.

- ♥Get up, clean up, freshen up (yourself), and get out. Put on some happy music—that is HAPPY music.
- ♥Get out of the house if you can.
- ♥Talk to someone if it helps.
- ♥Do not isolate yourselves...has anyone EVER heard that an isolated person has recovered from anything by that method?
- ♥Be where there are people.
- ♥Try to enjoy others' "regular" lives and let your heart enjoy their ability not to be where we are.
- ♥Be grateful.
- ♥Read something uplifting.
- ♥Go to a park, a library, a store, a grocery...walk up the street, walk through a garden.
- ♥Help someone.
- ♥Smile even if you don't feel like it...try it—it just helps. And laughing aids body and soul.
- ♥Say, "Hello," to people you meet or "How are you?" as you pass by.
- ♥Don't let yourself "dwell."
- ♥Write a poem, write a story, write a JOURNAL. (I don't know why, but journaling helps.)
- ♥GOT TO A TCF MEETING.
- ♥Eat out. Eat in the park. Eat on the porch. Eat with someone.
- ♥Plan something to look forward to...anything.
- ♥Take in a concert or a parade, a play.
- ♥Get a camera—find beauty and take pictures.
- ♥Take a trip. Sometimes a change of scenery is beneficial.
- ♥Be good to yourself. Eat well, drink a lot of water, move, exercise, be careful about medicating away the pain or sleeplessness—follow doctors' advice but ALSO, just be careful. Not "feeling" the pain much will not make it go away. Grief work will still need to be done.
- ♥NEVER, NEVER, NEVER give up... Promise your family (who cannot take the loss of you) you won't give up...
- ♥Feel like giving up? Go for help from your friends, an acquaintance, a



doctor or therapist, a spiritual counselor, or us—anyone—who can help you find serious help.

- ♥ Make your child proud of your strength.
- ♥ Create order in a part of your life at least and spread it when you can.
- ♥ As you think, so shall you go. Believe you will recover (which is not being the your (which is not being the same as you were before).
- ♥ If you don't know what to do—DO SOMETHING! Something leads to something else.
- ♥ Go to the library Read a book. Walk through a card store and read cards.
- ♥ Beauty is everywhere...very high and very low too. Some of it is very small.
- ♥ Hang on. Things will get better.
- ♥ Be hopeful. Even hoping to hope is a glimmer of hope. Memories will become gentler and kinder.
- ♥ Savor everything.
- ♥ Pray.

There is a journey you must take; it is beyond difficult, but it will make you different in many ways—and some of the changes are to be grateful for (though we would NEVER choose to go “up” this road) because, believe it or not, you can be expanded in ways that “normal” parents are not. That is one of the mysteries of this whole thing.

Frances Taets
(Mother of Shawn C. Williams, 1973–1995)

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.

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.**



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois, Second floor

The next monthly meeting of the chapter is

Thursday, July 27 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 31, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

<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, shoearb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvechio, 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>

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	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.
TCF's Grief Related Resources	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/ .
TCF National Magazine	<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.
Grief Materials	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.
Amazon.com	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.
Previous Newsletter Editions	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.
Alive Alone	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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
Our Newsletter	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

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

July 7, 2023 - July 9, 2023

Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202

The Compassionate Friends' 46th Annual National Conference in Denver, Colorado on July 7th-9th will be an enriching and supportive event for newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences. Unique and cherished highlights of the conference include the Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. The weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

Reservations can now be made online for the conference and hotel rooms for Sheraton Denver Downtown at TCF's dedicated reservation link. TCF's discounted room rate with the Sheraton is \$159 per night plus tax. Each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. Pre-conference activities are offered on Thursday evening.

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.



A Father's Prayer

I am a man, God, and I have been taught that I should be strong and show no weakness. My wife needs me to be strong; I cannot and I must not be weak and lean on her. It is only with you that I can be honest, Lord, and even with you I am ashamed to admit it, but I want to cry. I can feel the tears securely dammed up behind eyes that want to burst. There is a voice in me that shouts, "Be strong." "Be a man." "Show no weakness." "Shed no tears." But there is another voice inside that speaks softly and somehow, I feel it is your voice, Father. Is it you who tells me that I am also a feeling human being who can cry if I need to? Is it your voice that tells me that maybe my wife needs the tenderness of my tears more than she needs the strength of my muscles? You are right Lord, as always. My wife needs to see my grief, she needs to feel the dampness of my tears and know the aching in my heart. Then, just as we became one to create this life, we become one in our grief which mourns this death. I think I understand now, Lord, it is in sharing the awful pain of my grief that I become an even stronger man. It is in sharing my tears that I share my true strength. O God, help me communicate my deepest and most sensitive feelings to my wife so we may become whole together.

TCF newsletter, Palestine, Texas

Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind—at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw some-thing that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you.

We've said it many times: **YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE.** Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change—it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

Elizabeth Estes, TCF Augusta, GA
In memory of Tricia



The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
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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.