



The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September 2024

Volume XXXVII, Number 7

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Our grandson suffered a massive seizure when he was two years old. Now sixteen, he deals daily with the motor challenges he has as a result of his brain injury. He and I were walking this summer when he commented, "I sometimes wonder who I would be if this had not happened to me." After listening to his thoughts, I commented, "I think every person probably has a story of, 'I sometimes wonder who I would be if this had not happened to me.'" This is probably especially true of bereaved parents.

At many Christmas candlelight services is a liturgy read which repeats the refrain, "We are what we are today, because we had a child whom we loved."

Because we had the opportunity to love Anna, I think we have been better able to see the hurt and heartbreak in the world and look for ways we can care for those who suffer.

Because we had the opportunity to love Anna, I think we have been more aware of young women God has put in our path who have a need for encouragement and practical help.

Because we had the opportunity to love Anna, we experienced care from many people who walked with us through her short life and after her death, providing comfort and support, reminding us of God's provision even in the darkest times. Now God gives us many opportunities to pay forward all we have received.

The last lines of the liturgy are, "Because we have discovered the fellowship of suffering as we identify with other sufferers, we have been brought out of the aloneness of our pain into the community of other pilgrims who have walked where we are walking. In and through them our lives have been enriched. We are what we are today because we have had a child whom we have loved."

For our Anna, and all the ways over the years we have had the opportunity to celebrate and honor her life by caring for others, we are grateful.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb

The act of loving and caring for others can help us stop sitting in grief and gradually move us towards standing again.

Will Platnick



Sometimes grief or disappointments threaten to darken our days. It is then we must keep hope burning in our hearts. We must believe that if the sun is not shining at the moment, it will shine again and we will have a richer appreciation of the bright days for having experienced the darkness.

Madeleine K. Robinson
Twin Lakes, WI

We must participate with the process of grieving so that those who remain in our lives while on this earth will still have access to our hearts and health, love and gifts. We must grieve well not only for ourselves and our own healing but for the rest of our loved ones who need us and want us to be present with them.

Tony Evans



The loss of an only child is neither greater nor less than the loss of one of many children. However, the loss of an only child is experienced differently. It is different because you lose your parenthood, which is such a large part of the life of any parent.

Bill Snapp
TCF, Fayetteville, NC

Helen Hayes, one of only two women to receive all four prestigious entertainment awards: a Tony, Oscar, Emmy, and Grammy, was the “first lady” of stage and screen throughout most of the 20th century. Encouraged by her mother, Helen began performing at an early age and ‘wowed’ Broadway with her “beauty and girlish actuality” playing, at age seventeen, a much younger Pollyanna.

She seemed to have the dream life, fame, fortune, and family. She and her husband, Charlie MacArthur, raised two children: Mary (who had a short career on stage), and James (who starred as Danny on Hawaii Five-O). After winning the Oscar for her role in “Madelon,” she returned to Broadway to portray Queen Victoria, the role for which she is most remembered.

Then tragedy struck. Mary, who had appeared on stage with her mom, contracted polio and died. The MacArthurs were devastated. Charlie turned to drink and died not long after; many say from a broken heart. Helen

returned to acting, knowing that staying busy with work could help her get past the all-encompassing sadness. Miss Hayes also established the Mary MacArthur Fund to assist her friend, Jonas Salk, in raising awareness and financial support to advance his efforts to find a cure for polio.

Helen Hayes honored the life of her daughter by continuing to act and her humanitarian work. Delighting audiences well into her senior years, she won an Oscar for her supporting role in “Airport.”

“I gratefully was able to throw myself into constructive activity and the work I did allowed me release, carrying me over the abyss, back to the land of the living. Being needed saved my sanity. Then the theatre, as always, came to my rescue,” Helen wrote in *On Reflection*, her autobiography.

Perhaps her most important role was helping find the cure for polio and thereby saving uncountable parents from the grief she endured.

TCF Chapter Newsletter
Bluegrass

Afterglow

We came to the beach in Florida intending to watch the sunset over the Gulf. The sun had already disappeared over the horizon, apparently lost beyond the waters. After a brief period, emerging from where the sun had set arose a brilliant afterglow, seemingly covering the sky with a growing, pulsating display of molten gold.

I was struck by the spectacular beauty emanating from the sun already gone from view. Involuntarily I thought, just like our children! When the sunshine of their lives disappeared, we expected eternal darkness to remain. After our initial period of grief, we find that each child has left an afterglow – the memories of the beauty and joy their lives brought us.

It is incumbent upon each of us left on the beach of mortal life to allow ourselves to maintain that afterglow and continue to bring meaning to the “suns” of our lives who have disappeared from view “over the horizon.”

Hopefully, we can help one another honor our children’s lives by perpetuating their afterglow with our own meaningful lives of hope, optimism, and peace.



Toba S. Cohen, TCF, Bustleton, PA

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.

Grief, Darkness and Light

Grieving is a lot like being lost in the dark, being unsure of the way before us and unsure of the illusion of the safety and security we once thought we had. The anchors and footholds we once believed existed simply are no more; the path we were on, the dreams that we had, the projects not yet finished – all seem to have disappeared, and all that remains is the darkness.

It's not easy to find our way in the dark, especially when the ground we are on is unfamiliar and foreign. When someone we love dies, no one asks us if it is okay or if the time is right. The death just happens and we are left to navigate the aftermath without any rules or direction, at least none that make sense to us.

If we are very lucky, someone will enter into the darkness with us, and as they do, the darkness will begin to lift a bit as it takes on the light of their presence.

Each of us has the capacity to be a light in the dark to someone. More than anything, the person who is grieving needs to feel as if they matter and what they are going through matters to someone else. They need to be shown that in tangible ways that can be seen

and felt. Being a light for another may mean sitting with them while they tell their story one more time and really listening without giving advice or hurrying them through. It may mean holding their hand while they cry and being comfortable, allowing them the expression of what they feel inside. It may mean listening without judgment while they rail at the doctors, the one who died, or even God for their aching heart and shattered dreams. It may mean not just dropping off dinner, but staying and sharing the meal with them. It may mean being comfortable with their silence.

It is seldom about saying the "right thing." It is not our words the grieving and broken-hearted hunger for, it is our acceptance of them as they are now rather than our insistence that they be as they were. It is our sincerity and kindness and patience as they make their way through the darkness on their timetable, not ours. It's being a light on their path, not seeking to direct or control their path.

Deb Kosmer, Oshkosh
From *Grief Digest*
Centering Corporation
www.centering.org

The wounds we carry with us are not obstacles to simply get over. Rather, our wounds are the way through. Our wounds aren't something to hide or deny; instead, they are sacred parts of who we are and testaments of our journeys. At first, we may not have eyes to see our loss as a gift - how could it be? – because it's too painful. But as we sit with our suffering and courageously welcome and move through our loss, we are transformed. Loss gives us new eyes to see the grace threaded through all humanity.



Our wounds are not separate, but a sacred part of the gift of life. Through our wounds we are empowered to offer healing to others in pain.

Kayla Stoecklein

The Anger of Bereaved Parents

The anger of bereaved parents can often be seen as a reaction of feelings of helplessness and loss of control over events. Our beloved child has died, whether suddenly through accident, suicide or murder, or as a result of illness and disease – and we have not been able to prevent it.

Our desperate frustration emerges in anger, either against particular others, against the whole world, or against God.

Someone must be responsible; someone must be to blame for our loss, our suffering, and our pain. After all, the inevitable process of aging cannot be an explanation for such an early death.

So, our anger is directed against those seen to be responsible, or sometimes simply against those nearest to us.

In this way our anger may be turned on doctors and hospital staff, on police, or on the driver of the vehicle involved in our child's death.

Writers on bereavement have often mentioned the anger, conscious or submerged, which can exist against the loved one who has died.

This can present an enormous problem to bereaved parents.

How could we be angry with the child who has died? But we could, after all, be angry with our children when they were alive, and still love them, couldn't we? Better, surely, that anger is brought to the surface rather than repressed and added to our burden of unnecessary guilt.

The worst outcome is that anger, unacknowledged and unexpressed after our child's death, is turned inward leading to despair and deep depression. We have all felt the beginning of this descent in the temptation to blame ourselves.

Like all the welter of emotions, which hit us in the terrible weeks and months following our loss, it needs to be faced and talked about with those who will listen with real empathy and understanding.

Fall

It is so hard to believe that summer is over! Even

though summer is technically still here until September, the cool evenings we have been having, school starting, and football games being played are all signs that fall is here. And I love it!

To me, fall is the most invigorating time of the year. The crispness of the air, the beautiful coloration of the trees, the smell of leaf and wood smoke, the sky full of birds traveling south "talking" with one another as they go, are all part of this wonderful world we live in. I hope all of you will be able to feel and see the wonders of fall.

Sometimes we are so "down" and preoccupied with our child's death, and we are working so hard to just get through each day, that we are unable to appreciate what is going on in the world around us. Try to take a few minutes each day and look around. If you can focus on a beautiful tree or leaf, smell the chrysanthemums blooming in the garden or bite into a fresh apple just picked and enjoy doing this for just a few minutes, it will make your day seem brighter. And, if you are up to it, go to a high school football game or a band competition. The enthusiasm of the young people participating in these events is contagious.

Yes, it sometimes hurts. We want our children to be there also, enjoying these activities. But it also gives us renewed faith that life does go on, and there is happiness and excitement in the world. I hope you all can find some beauty and peace in the fall months ahead.

Peggy Hartzell TCF Ambler,



Every day is a hard day without our child, sibling, or grandchild.

Some days are extra painful because they mark events or emphasize the passage of time without them. Holidays, the coming of spring, ceremonial days in our family, and the anniversary date of their passing tend to feel heavier and carry extra pain.

The birthday of our brother, sister, child or grandchild is a bittersweet day for many of us. I just passed another birthday this week for my son, Connor. He would have turned 23, and

this is the 9th time I've marked this day without him physically here. Most of us experience the anniversary date of our loved one's passing as very painful and difficult. Birthdays, however, straddle both pain and joy as we celebrate the precious life we were given, yet one we weren't able to keep.

What are some of the ways to honor their birthdays that increase the beautiful moments we remember and decrease the deprivation we feel? Helping others in a way that reflects your loved one can help shift your focus to gratitude and the good memories. If your child liked to play sports, you can collect donations of athletic equipment for a local school in need. Planting a tree or starting a garden is a representation

of new life that can continue your brother or sister's impact and legacy. If music, art, or reading was a passion of your grandchild, you can volunteer to do this type of volunteer service on their birthday in honor of what they loved.

We started a tradition on Connor's birthday of doing random acts of kindness. Whether small or large, many people have continued this tradition



over the years in their different communities. These acts of kindness warm our hearts as we pass more years without him physically, yet know kindness is extended in his name in so many places. I try to focus my energies during the day of his birth on celebrating the life I was blessed to receive. Although I never get through the day without the deep longing and sadness that accompany his absence, I'm able to experience more of the good memories and smiles when I do something positive in the world in his honor.

Shari O'Loughlin
CEO,
The Compassionate Friends

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting September 26, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, in Moline, Illinois

(Please park in the east lot and go to the second floor.)

The next chapter meeting is on

October 24, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the Snyder and Hallenbaugh Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa, Chapter. The contact person is Tom Summit, 563.506.0103.
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages three to 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 p.m. and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 p.m. All meetings are held at 852 Middle Road (Vera French), in Bettendorf, Iowa, and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third 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 .
Phone Support	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): <ul style="list-style-type: none">♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoheartb4@gmail.com♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.

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>

Death, especially unexpected death,

changes one's life in ways that cannot be anticipated. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle, and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is, and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

Stephanie Elson – TCF, Fayetteville NC

Prayer

Father, I know You are my comforter.

I know You are strong when I am weak.

I know You are hope when I am hopeless.

I need all these from You today –
comfort, strength, and hope –

because I cannot muster them on my own.

When I am deep in grief, all I see is darkness,

and all I feel is hopeless.

But You empathize with this pain.

You know it well.

Remind me of Your love during this time.

Remind me that I can share my thoughts and struggles with You.

You are not afraid of negative feelings.

Hold me as I walk through this season of grief.

Don't let me run away from it, but also don't let me fall into despair.

Guide me toward the hope and light I have in Christ.

In his name, amen.

Max Lucado.



If you're fortunate enough to have surviving children, when was the last time you:

- ♥ § Told them how important they are to you?
- ♥ § Thanked them for their patience with you during these dark hours?
- ♥ § Assured them that had it been one of them who died, it would have been just the same?
- ♥ § Told them that the reason you struggle so hard to survive is because you want to enjoy life with them again?
- ♥ § Reassured them there will be joy and some happiness in your family's life again when you all have had the necessary time to create your new life?

If you haven't told them lately — or even if you have — tell them again. Both you and they need that reassurance.

Mary Cleckley

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 our bereaved families, for the materials shared at our meetings, and/or to purchase books for our library. Thank you to the many families who provide love gifts so 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, Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, 2946 Summertree Avenue, Bettendorf, Iowa 52722. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**

Contact the Editors

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

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

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

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

Please contact: Jerry and Carol Webb
390 Arbor Ridge,
Benton Harbor, MI 49022
or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bethany *for Children
& Families*

1701 River Drive
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.