



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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The F-M Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
127 2ND AVE E
WEST FARGO, ND

We are resuming in person meetings in April.

Please enter on the west side. Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side

We will be social distancing during our meeting. Please wear a mask when entering the building and continue to wear it during the meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

April 8th
May 13th

Meeting Subject:

April - Bring a memento of your child to share with the group
June - Balloon Release, everyone is welcome.

Weather cancellations will be posted on WDAY, KVLV, KFGO and the Fargo Forum online at www.inforum.com!

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on April 22nd @ Denny's
TCF FM Chapter's 15th Annual Walk to Remember - July 31, 2021

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to."

~ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007

LOVE

"...Grief is the price we pay for love. We did not lose our children. They died, taking with them our hopes and dreams for the future, but, never, never taking away their love. Though death comes, love will never go away. Hold it tight, the love our children gave us. Hold it tight through the storms of grief and bring it with you into today. Love never goes away..." ~ Darcie Sims

Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Denny's restaurant, 4437 13th Ave SW, Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday April 22nd. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

LOVE GIFTS

Anthony & Karel Varriano in memory of their son, Chad Varriano
Dave & Michelle Wightman in memory of their daughter, Paige Wightman
Rosemary Feske in memory of her daughter, Vicky Holweger and her son, Steve (Herman) Feske

We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month. Our chapter and all chapters are financed solely through your Love Gifts. Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible. Thank you for your tax-deductible gifts

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking, would you please receive your newsletter by email. We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefitting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings and letting you know "We need not walk alone".

We consider this an important function of our program. If you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you wish to receive your newsletter by email, please email Nancy Teeuwen at fmctcfnwltr@live.com with your full name and your child's name. **Note:** If you are already receiving the newsletter by email, no action is required.

GRIEF IN SPRING?

If Spring makes you feel better and to feel new hope, that is a good, positive, and nurturing thing. But it may not be true for everyone, and no one should feel they have to hide their true feelings. It is perfectly normal to experience new heightened grief and or grief-related anxiety in Spring, just as it is in other seasons of the year. Although warmer, sunnier months can be nurturing and inspire new hopefulness, grief does not suddenly go away just because seasons change.

Spring generally brings a sudden flurry of change and things begin to move faster all around us. There is rebirth and renewal in nature as flowers and trees bloom and everything turns green again, and people quickly begin to flock to their favorite warm-weather activities. Try to take time to sit down make some plans that can nurture you and help you cope with your losses and grief.

A helpful way to respond to one's anxiousness about spring and summer is to remind yourself that YOU are in control and that the warmer months offer unique opportunities for nurturing activities such as travel, planting gardens, nature walks, photography, family gatherings, stargazing, and many other things.

And if it helps, take comfort in the belief that your precious loved ones are with you wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

~ John Pete, TCF/Pike Peaks, CO

Remember When

Remember when:

- you cried at the mention of her name
- you could not bear to look at her picture
- watching home movies of too heart-wrenching to even consider
- everything you saw reminded you of her....and it hurt so bad
- you dreaded going to sleep for fear of dreaming of her
- you dreaded waking up
- you dreaded-----life
- you wanted to go where she was

How about now?

- you can talk about her without crying
- you love to meet anyone who remembers her
- you love to hear them say her name
- you can laugh at the funny things she said
- you have picture albums of her, and you love to share them
- you love watching those movies [they are tears of joy]
- you love to dream of her
- you pray to dream of her
- you even went through her hope chest—and lived to tell about it

There is no time limit on grief. You have your way, and I have mine. I can truly say after all these years, I am better. And I feel confident in telling you, "You will get better, too." My best advice as a "seasoned griever": don't try to do it alone. Let other bereaved parents help you. It helps you, and it helps them. You will find unbelievable compassion among those who have been through what you are going through. They can help, and in time, so can you.

Cherish the days between "remember when" and "how about now." Make a list similar to mine. You have come much further than you think.

God bless you.
~ Sam Smith, TCF/Tyler, Texas

On Picking Up the Pieces

A few months after my son died someone said to me she was glad to see I was "picking up the pieces and going on". Well, I was picking up the pieces all right, but what she didn't know was they were almost a whole set of new pieces. I haven't been able to go on as though nothing about me has changed since my child died. I'm a different me now and I am still learning how the new me reacts to old situations. I have found the new pieces don't exactly fit together all nice and neat like a jigsaw puzzle because some of the old pieces are hanging in there and they don't quite mesh with the newer ones. I am and have been in the process of grinding off the edges, hoping for a better fit, one I could live with more comfortably. Time, patience, and hard work are helping me accomplish this.

How are the rough edges on your new pieces coming along?

~ Mary Cleckley, TCF/Atlanta, GA



HOPE

It is the gift of HOPE which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends. HOPE that all is not lost, HOPE that life can still be worth living and meaningful,

HOPE that the pain of loss will become less acute, and above all else, the HOPE that we do not walk alone, and that we are understood. The gift of HOPE is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

~ Rev.Simon Stephens, TCF Founder

Mystery

I bought toys for my baby after she died
And I opened the cedar chest and put them inside
And nobody ever knew but me
The meaning of the mystery
Of brand new toys hidden here and there
And not one baby anywhere.

~ Andy Cipriano, TCF/Tallahassee FL

Griefscape

Shadows play with the light here
And no matter the age gone
Our arms ache
Wishing to cradle our child.
This land we now inhabit is
Vast empty plain
Barrenness of the poles
Harshness of deserts.
Grief rules
Taking all color with it
Leaving us bruised and battered
Lost hopes and dreams
Dark skies.

~ Melissa Anne Schroeter, TCF/Rockland County NY
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“Grief is complex stuff. It can impose a cruel trick on us all. It begins when death barges into our lives and takes our loved one from our physical grasp. It then leaves us in pain, which in turn causes a multiple array of grief reactions. Finally, because our memories are all we have, the recollections easily become blended with our pain and grief.

You can overcome this cruel trick by doing all you can to compile and retain lasting memories of this wonderful, amazing person whose love will never die. By now, you’ve likely heard of the many ways that you can keep your loved one with you still: creating a picture album, writing the person’s live story, planting a tree, giving to others in your loved one’s name, building something, producing a video, making a quilt. As you gradually experience the many levels of diminishing pain while simultaneously strengthening the memories, you will find that, despite this sad loss, you are getting a little better.”

~ *The Cruel Trick of Grief*, Bob Baugher, PhD

If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.

If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting robin into his nest again, I shall not live in vain.
~ Emily Dickinson

FEELINGS

Her clothing is folded in tidy array
How it was left is how it will stay.
Her desolate dresser silently weeps
In the still of the night, when everyone sleeps.
The closet continues to guard and protect
Items hanging on hangers, forlorn with neglect
The bed she adored, where she bounced high with glee
Cries invisible tears when no one can see.
The bathtub she splashed in will not again see
Someone who will love it as fiercely as she.
It sits idle now, no longer a "star"
And asks (in its way) if I know where you are.
The house that she lived in, the yard where she played
Are missing the landscape of love that she laid.
Her numerous playthings, her once favorite toy
Languish mournfully now without any joy.
This dwelling called "home" has relinquished its heart,
That gift from the one who was forced to depart.
Now it withers from grief—is spirit extinct
and we watch through our tears as the walls seem to shrink.
Our angel was gone in the blink of an eye
She took the light with her that day in July.
Yet now there are times when my heart feels her near
Then I know she's not left me ... her love is still here.

(For Tracey, Always)

~ Sally Migliaccio, TCF/West Islip, NY

Bring My Child Back To Me

Whisper, whisper, wind in the woods,
Bring back my child, here where he stood,
Let him laugh, let him shout, let him giggle with glee,
Wind in the woods, bring my child back to me.

Silence of morning, dew on the grass,
Give me peace in my soul, let this time pass,
Let my child sit beside me, let the two of us be,
Silence of morning, bring my child back to me.

Middle of night, so dark and so still,
Let me relax and remember at will,
Let my child in my thoughts drift forever to see,
Middle of night, bring my child back to me.

Sunrise and sunset, beginning and end,
Give me a day with my child, my friend,
We'll run on the beach, we'll play in the sea,
Sunrise, sunset, bring my child back to me.

Memories, memories here in my head,
Don't ever leave me, even though my child's dead,
Keep him alive, keep him strong, keep him free,
Memories of mine, bring my child back to me.
~ Barbara Patterson, TCF/Conquitlam, BC

A Little Time for Spring

Find a little time for Spring. Even if your days are troubled.

Let a little sunshine in -

Let your memories be doubled. Take a little time to see
All the things your child was seeing

And your tears will help your heart Find a better time for being.
~ Sascha Wagner



**OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED
BIRTHDAYS**

CHILD		PARENTS
JESSICA MARIE BALSTER	32	CARRIE BALSTER
NATHAN BEACH	30	LISA BEACH
RENEE ANN BERNIER	54	KENNETH & PATRICIA BERNIER
ANDREW HOWARD BRAUN	32	CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
JAMES DANIEL DEPLAZES	19	DAVID DEPLAZES
ALLISON DEUTSCHER	45	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON
COREY ALEN FLEISCHFRESSER	34	ANNETTE & SCOTT ENGEN
SCOTT JAGER	64	BEVERLY JAGER
CLEO CAROL JORGENSEN	65	FRAN LEINGANG
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS	61	LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
DAVID R KOSAK	29	BRUCE & MYRA KOSAK
AMELIA MARIE PRATT	10	TANDY PRATT
MARY-ALICE MARIE PRATT	13	TANDY PRATT
KYLE KEVIN QUITTSCHREIBER	29	KEVIN & KATHY QUITTSCHREIBER
CARSON DENNIS RONEY	24	PAUL & RENAE RONEY
JENNIFER SCHUMACHER	42	ANTHONY & LORETTA SCHUMACHER
BRUCE C THORNBY	60	JANET & HOWARD GALLAGHER
KRISTOPHER WEISS	43	HERMAN & RENNAE WEISS
HEATHER WREN	45	DEB WAYMAN

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
JOSEPH "JOEY" DARRIN BETTS	3	ADELE & TODD AASEN
ANNE CLEMENSON	5	MARVIN & DOROTHY CLEMENSON
STEVEN DUANE COOK	10	SHARON COOK
MATTHEW TYLER HARRIS	5	RACHEL BODIN
MATTHEW TYLER HARRIS	5	WILLIAM & RACHAEL BODIN
VICKY HOLWEGER	4	ROSEMARY FESKE
KYLE KASSMAN	7	TOM & NANCY KASSMAN
ALEXANDER BRENT KLINKHAMMER	9	CHARLES & SANDY KLINKHAMMER
CARMEN LALUM	6	RUSSELL & SHARON LALUM
AMY CHRISTINE LARSON	22	DALE & MARILYN LARSON (Grandparents)
ERIC LARSON	22	DALE & MARILYN LARSON (Grandparents)
GAIL DIANE LARSON	22	DALE & MARILYN LARSON
JOSEPH CHRIS LARSON	22	DALE & MARILYN LARSON
JESSICA ANNE NORBY	4	LAROY NORBY (Grandmother)
CAITLIN JEAN POSCH	2	DEAN & JEANNIE LAMB
AMELIA MARIE PRATT	10	TANDY PRATT
MARY-ALICE MARIE PRATT	13	TANDY PRATT
DANE TVEDT	11	TOMMY & LEAH TVEDT

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children'
(www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html). If you would like your child's picture and a poem or story posted on this page, please submit them to us at tcf1313@hotmail.com or mail them to our PO Box (listed on the back of the newsletter). Photos and poems/stories sent to the PO Box will be electronically scanned and then returned to you so please remember to include a return address.

SIBLING PAGE

A Sister's Love

My sister Angela had a beautiful baby girl October 23,1990. She named her daughter Courtney Renee. My sister died from an infection one week after giving birth. She was 19 years old. I felt as though my life was over, and I didn't care if I lived another day.

Then I joined the sibling group of The Compassionate Friends. No one else really understood how I felt, but my sibling friends do because they too, have lost a brother or sister. Now I look forward to those meetings because I can talk if I want to, even cry, and sometimes laugh. My advice to anyone who has lost a sibling is to take it one day at a time.

I still have a void in my life, and my life will never be the same, but it does get easier. It's only been a year and a half for me, and the pain is still there, but I do feel better than I did then. I cherish the memories I have of my sister, and I guess my biggest fear is I'm afraid of forgetting her face or voice. I'm lucky to have a constant reminder of her in my niece, Courtney. I will always have a part of my sister with me.

Time does help. I still have plenty of bad days, but I do have a lot of good ones, too. And, Angela, I love you, Sis, and miss you so much. Thanks Kiddo, for Courtney. And thank you my Compassionate Friends.

~ Cheryl Long, TCF/Louisville, KY

A Sibling's Memories

As the youngest child in the family, I was the tagalong. I could never run as fast, or play as hard, as my older siblings. My sister, barely 3 years older, pushed our relationship into a competition that she always won. My brother, 5 years my senior and a male role model, was my protector. I can still remember his clothes, blackened with the musty darkness of our tree house, and the sweaty smell of the perspiration of play. I could never keep up. He knew that when he took my hand, I would lean on his shoulder, where I could feel his blood pulsing through his veins. He would vault me on his back, where I clasped my hands around his neck. He smelled of minty shampoo and musk, as if he were an older man. He was 10.

On days when he was away, and I was alone or scared, I would open the door of his bedroom and let the whirlwind of air envelop me. I would close the door carefully and lie on his bed, the powdery scent of his sheets surrounding my body like a security blanket. Then I would rise from my reverie, and look at his metal airplanes and the rest of his stuff. The sound of a door slamming would snap me out of my trance. I would run from his room.

Now, 12 years later, I am 17 and my brother is dead. But his presence rushes back to me when I sort laundry. The musty smell of his clothes resides in my memory like yesterday. And when things become too rough and I need my protector, I slip into his room to see his stuff, and the moment lingers.

~ Samantha Stritter TCF, North Andover, MA

FOREVER CHANGED

Can you see the change in me? It may not be obvious to you. I participate in family activities. I attend family reunions. I help plan holiday meals. You tell me you're glad to see that I don't cry anymore. But I do cry! When everyone has gone - when it is safe - the tears fall. I cry in privacy, so my family won't worry. I cry until I'm exhausted and can finally sleep. You tell me you admire my strength and my positive attitude. But I am not strong. I feel that I have lost control, and I panic when I think about tomorrow...next week...next year. I go about the routine of my job. I complete my assigned tasks. I drink coffee and smile. You tell me you're glad to see I'm "over" the death of my loved one. But I am not "over" it. If I get over it, I will be the same as before my loved one died. I will never be the same. At times, I think I am beginning to heal, but the pain of losing someone I loved so much has left a permanent scar on my heart. I visit my neighbors. You tell me you're glad to see I'm holding up so well. But I'm not holding up well. Sometimes I want to lock the door and hide from the world. I spend time with my friends. I appear calm and collected. I smile when appropriate. You tell me it's good to see me back to my "old-self". But I will never be back to my "old-self". Death and grief have touched my life, And I am forever changed.

~ author unknown

DO NOT OVER PROTECT ME ... LET ME BE ME...

Dedicated to all the brothers and sisters of The Compassionate Friends.

When you are consumed with grief, don't forget about me.

Let me be me ...

I grieve too but different from you, I miss my brother/sister too.

Let me be me ...

Tell me I can't fix your pain. Don't tell me I won't understand. Please don't overwhelm me with your grief. Just like the real world mine doesn't want to talk about a dead sister/brother.

Let me be me ...

Tell me often that you love me for being me. Ask me about my goals and dreams for the future.

Let me be me ...

Don't break my spirit with your grief.

Let me be me ...

Let me follow my dreams. Now they will include some of my sister's/brother's dreams.

Let me be me ...

Don't overprotect me.

Let me be me ...

Please don't feel every spare moment I have with basketball, baseball, soccer, music or dance classes, just so you can fill your spare time and fall exhausted into bed at night. I need free time to explore who I am.

Let me be me ...

Don't forget to continue to teach me to celebrate life. I need to know that through all this pain there is hope ...for my future.

Let me be me ...

As young as I am please don't overprotect me ... Love me, guide me, teach me.

LET ME BE ME ...

~ Colleen, TCF/Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

LOVE LIVES ON

Love lives on, my son.
It lives on in the lives of those you touched.
We found, at last, your music tapes, my son,
And hearing you again, our hearts rejoiced.
The ached I felt to think I'd never hear you play again was
eased.
The phone rings—a voice from far away—“Is Bryan home?”
Two times in just two days.
My heart stops—and I feel it break again.
I have to tell them “Yes, he has gone home.”
And then a friend, someone I did not know, says,
“I was blessed to know Bryan”
Once more the pain was eased, and I realize again,
How many lives your life has touched.
Yes, Bryan, love lives on.

~ Carolyn Jackson, TCF/Independence, MO.
Her son Bryan (1962-1992), who died in an accident,
was a gifted musician to played guitar and piano.

Team Lift

Remember being at a store
A box so huge you'd see?
A fork lift is not what's required,
“Team Lift” the notice that you'd see,
At TCF, our stickers say
Our names and kids we've lost.
Inside these walls sad stories sobbed
Of precious children who have crossed.
Our inner sorrows securely told
“You should” tips safely spared.
Whatever age or reason gone,
Our childless heartbreak shared.
So every month as I begin
To feel my soul run dry,
I go to group and fill it up
“Team Lift” my tag, and love supplied.
~ Barbara Batson, mom to Sarah and Amy

The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were. “Parent” is a living word. It is an eternal word.

Our children would want us to remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name of “parent” that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts. We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

~ Janet G. Reyes, TCF/Alamo Area Chapter, TX

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

~ Albert Schweitzer

The Breakfast Cup

Yesterday we had breakfast, a small group of men whose common distinction was that we had each lost a child or young son or daughter to death. Talk ranged around the table, mixed with pride, love, regret, and questions: What now? How do we move forward in life a little less than we were? Why was I unable to protect my child? How can I honor his or her memory? How can I be a better man because of this precious gift given me?

The answers, if there were many, varied, and incomplete. As a result of these young lives we considered have come many acts of kindness and faith shared. Growing from their loss is a deepening sense of appreciation for our wives, and our children. There is also an unwanted, yet greater understanding of meaning of death. Who we are as husbands and fathers has changed—even though we can't fully comprehend how these roles have been altered. Aaron, Mark, Mike, Wayne, and Jan...five guys sitting around a table sharing a meal, sipping coffee, and talking about our children, our hopes, our dreams, our disappointment, our loss, and our next steps.

We have been handed a cup of grief which we cannot refuse. We each take it unwillingly but take it we must. Its effect is catastrophic and causes us to weep with regret and guilt. The cup has stolen time and love. The cup has altered our course, our walk and in a bizarre way, the cup has led us to a path nearer to God. As men, we desire to fix and solve our family's problems. We cannot overcome this cup. We can only hold out our trembling hands, raise the cup to our lips, and whisper a silent, aching prayer, “Lord, you will not take this sorrow from us, so help us to honor our children, Carl, Travis, Katie, Kate, and Brian. By Your will, with Your mercy and grace we drink. We share our children with the One who gives us hope and life. Hug them for us today, please. Amen”

~ Jan Owens, TCF/Visalia, CA

Newly Bereaved . . . Time will ease the hurt

The sadness of the present days is locked and set in time, and moving to the future is a slow and painful climb.

But all the feelings that are now so vivid and so real can't hold their fresh intensity as time begins to heal.

No wound so deep will ever go away, yet every hurt becomes a little less from day to day.

Nothing can erase the painful imprints on your mind; but there are softer memories that time, will let you find.

Though your heart won't let the sadness simply slide away, the echoes will diminish even though the memories stay.

~ Bruce Wilmer, TCF/NJ newsletter

Breakthrough

The tears of grief
Have washed away
The clouds of sorrow
And vision now is clarified
I miss you still,
But see you new
In light of joy
And smile at your remembrance.
The love we shared
Still here to give
And to experience
The joy that comes from that, IS YOU!

~ Nel de Keijzer

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

Your Name: _____

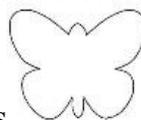
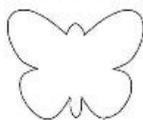
Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, PO Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)



Butterfly Decals

"Butterflies are the heaven-sent kisses of an angel." ~ Author Unknown

Butterfly decals are available to help personalize our trailer. The trailer is used to carry items to and from our Walk to Remember and other chapter events. It has also given us some visibility in the Fargo/Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our beloved children.

Butterflies are available in five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue, and green). The cost is as follows: \$25 for 1 butterfly, \$50 for 2 butterflies, \$65 for 3 butterflies and \$80 for 4 butterflies. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies, please contact Paul and Kara Bailey at 701-491-0364.

Butterfly orders should include the child's first and last name (middle name is optional) and the color of the butterfly. Checks should be made payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead and the order mailed to PO Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

The Little Yellow Butterfly

My son and only child, Josh Wilcox, was killed in a car wreck in Dallas on September 7, 2008. I received the 'notification of kin' phone call from a nurse at the hospital in the middle of the night. My first reaction to this news was denial. I remember walking around my house in a dazed state of shock, repeating the phrase, "It's not true," over and over to myself.

I was alone when I received the call that changed my life forever. The next hours and days are pretty much a blur. I remember having to go to the funeral home to make arrangements. I remember going to the florist to pick out the spray for his casket. I remember choosing a casket and the clothes for Josh to wear. I remember the funeral director asking me for pictures of him throughout his life for the video. And I remember after Josh had been made ready for viewing how my parents had to help hold me up when I saw my baby lying dead; just like he was asleep. His beautiful long eyelashes; all the details of his handsome face, I memorized. He was 31. I had been his mother since I was 22 years old and now, I was no longer a mother and I no longer had my son. The pain of such a loss is numbing. You don't eat, or sleep, or care about going on with this life. Once you have buried your child, you fear nothing. You have already been through the worst this world can dish out.

And so the stages of grief were upon me. The denial, the shock, the anger, the guilt, the extreme sadness. And the tears, so many tears. Josh was a Christian, strong in his faith. His Bible had been with him in the car and of all the things inside his car, they found his Bible lying just a few feet from him. He had been thrown from the car.

And so I buried my son. I returned to work. I went through the motions of living. But I really didn't want to. Barely able to function. About 3 weeks after Josh's death, I was at work in my cubicle when I noticed right above my head a little yellow butterfly making circles. Like it wanted me to notice. Then, it attached itself to the wall of my cubicle and just stayed there resting for a while. I saw that its left wing was broken. The left side. This is significant to me as the funeral director had told me prior to viewing my son's body not to touch his left side as it had been more injured than the right side. I asked my co-workers if they had ever seen a butterfly in the building before. None had. I worked on the 3rd floor with no open doors or windows; accessed only by an elevator and security card entry. Then, just as suddenly as the little yellow butterfly appeared, it was gone. I never saw it again at work. But I started seeing yellow butterflies everywhere I went. Even when I was out of state or out of the country, there they were. Like they were following me.

So I am comforted by this sign from my son...the little yellow butterfly. That is his way of letting me know that he is ok, that he is in heaven and that I will see him again one day. I continue my journey of grief just as all of the other parents of dead children do. Every day. You learn to live with it and accept the loss. But it never goes away.

~ Melanie Elrod Wilcox, TCF/Tyler, TX

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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**The
Compassionate
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Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT: 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.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS...We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	Paul & Kara Bailey701-491-0364	Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen..... 701-730-0805
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LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:

- Sheryl Cvijanovich (son, 23 - illness) 701-540-3287
- Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) 701-282-4083
- Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness)..... 701-730-0805
- Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage, son, 35-accident & son, 45-cancer)... 701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift, please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____

Name _____

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NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries.