

The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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December 2018

Volume 35 Number 12

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

Upcoming Meetings
December 13th
January 10th

December Meeting Topic -
Candlelighting Ceremony, bring your child's or your favorite Christmas treat to share

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on December 27th @ Fry'n Pan
Annual Worldwide Candlelighting - December 9, 2018 7 p.m. local time
TCF National Conference July 19 - 21, 2019 in Philadelphia, PA

The only time all is lost is when hope is lost. Always hold on!
~ Clara Hinton

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 GIFTS

Richard & Clare Elless in memory of their daughter, Tari Elless Heller
Janet Ouradnik in memory of her son, Steven Newark, Jr
Neil & Kathleen Prochnow in memory of their son, Reed Joel Prochnow
John & Terri Helland in memory of their daughter, Heidi Helland
Dean & Diane Bauck in memory of their son, Davin Bauck
Brenda Kluth in memory of her son, Brandon Kluth
Roy Nell Norby in memory of her son, Michael Roy Norby
Mary Bjerke in memory of her son, Jose Sauvageau
Pat & Denny Wateland in memory of their daughter, Tracy Ann Wateland
Merlyn Anderson in memory of his wife, Elberta Anderson and his daughter, Adele Bye
Walt & Karie Cowden in memory of their children, Kevin Cowden, Bill Cowden and Robin Vigdal-Hosler
Jim & Suzie Hill in memory of their son, Jon Poitra
Sharon Wateland in honor of Denny Wateland's 75th birthday (Denny is Tracy Wateland's dad)

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.

Worldwide Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 9, unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memories of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.



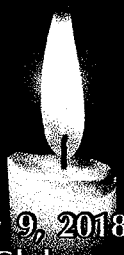
The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

Worldwide Candle Lighting®

... that their light may always shine.

Sunday, December 9, 2018
7 PM Around the Globe



2019 FM TCF Chapter Meeting Dates

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| January 10th | February 14th |
| March 14th | April 11th |
| May 9th | June 13th |
| July 11th | August 8th |
| September 12th | October 10th |
| November 14th | December 12th |

2019 Mom's Group Meeting Dates

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| January 24th | February 28th |
| March 28th | April 25th |
| May 23rd | June 27th |
| July 25th | August 22nd |
| September 26th | October 24th |
| November 21st | December 26th |

ANGEL OF HOPE MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Angel of Hope will be holding an annual

Candlelight Memorial on Thursday, December 6th at 7 p.m. The Angel of Hope in Fargo was dedicated in 2005, and serves as a place for healing and love for all who have lost children. The Angel of Hope is located on the north in Island Park off of 1st Avenue South between 4th and 7th Streets in Fargo, North Dakota. Candles will be provided

for all participants. Attendees are invited to bring a white flower to place at the base of the statue in memory of loved ones. Refreshments will be served at Hanson Runsvold Funeral Home following the service.



Winter Memories

The days are getting colder,
and the first snow's not too far off.

It used to be so pretty
gently falling from aloft.

But the snow won't be as pretty,
as it gathers on the ground,
'cause there'll be a snowman missing,
my son is not around.

The playing children's laughter,
used to be a special song,
but this year will be different,
without my son to sing along.

The song has lost its music,
and it'll be just another day,
as I gaze down from my window
and watch the children play.

But the snow will again be pretty,
in a far off distant time,
and we'll build snowmen together
and we'll never look behind.

For now, I'll remain with memories,
and the melting snow will fade,
but he builds snowmen to his heart's content,
because he now lives where snow is made.

~ Jeremiah Sundown, TCF/Nashville, TN

"...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 Fryn' Pan restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, 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 December 27th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or sherylc13@msn.com.

SHARING A PRIVATE GRIEF

The other day some said to me, "My grief is too private to share." I think we all feel that way sometime. We are saying two things when we say that. First, "You couldn't possibly know how I feel." And second, we are saying, "I hurt so much, I'm not about to tell of my anguish and leave myself open to your judgment of my feelings." We have to protect ourselves, but in protecting our privacy, are we forgetting something? Is it possible that our friends also grieve: that they, too, miss our child and hurt for us in ways we don't let them express? It is possible that our friends are not judging us and that in not giving voice to our sorrow, we are closing the door to the healing love that may be in store for us. People have no trouble wishing us "Happy Birthday", "Get well soon", or "Have a good day", and mean it. But it is hard for people to express their sorrow, often because they are afraid of hurting us. That they don't express their grief isolates us. Sometimes we have to encourage others to address the issues closest to our hearts for our own protection.

~Pat Tyan, TCF/Silverdale, WA

Self Help

For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends Group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process.

Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, time with friends, meditation or intense spiritual conviction. Each day we should take some time to center ourselves, to find a place of peace.

If you haven't already done so, start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even terrible, days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/ Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

In Your Heart and Mine

The year is coming to an end. Please lend an ear to my thoughts, my friend. May I really tell you how I feel about another year in which I'll deal? I won't always ask that you understand. and when you don't, just hold my hand. If I look ahead with a sense of dread, help me look again with hope instead. If on New Year's Eve I shed a tear for that precious child no longer near, Just know I need a little time to blink back tears, then I'll be fine. This hurt will last my whole life through but I can manage with god and you. I know again my child will shine because he's in your heart —and mine.

~ Nan Gurski TCF/Houston, TX

A Message for My Husband...

From a Grieving Mother

My world has turned upside down since the death of my child. I am writing this to you because I know that my grief is difficult for you to understand. All bereaved couples probably have challenges in this regard, but our situation is complicated by the fact that my child was not your biological child.

You have asked how you can help me. This is what I need:

Acceptance. The enormity of my pain is incomprehensible to you, even though you have experienced the death of other family members to whom you were close. In addition, you were not part of my child's early life, so our relationship to him is very different. You can't know what it feels like to lose a child. I need you to accept that fact and listen to me when I want to tell you what it is like for me. I don't need advice or solutions—just a willingness to hear my feelings. I know that men and women grieve differently and although talking may not be helpful for you, it does help me understand my loss.

Patience: No matter how much you love me, you cannot cure my grief. I have to do this in my own way and in my own time. I need your patience because although I want this pain to go away quickly, I know it will not. I don't have control over when it hits me or how long it lasts. I need you to know that I am not intentionally wallowing in my grief, I am just trying to get through it the best way I can.

Flexibility. I understand your fears that since I am not "myself" right now, I am not the person you married and you want the old "me" back. I am less efficient and less able to concentrate and remember than before the death occurred. The small things that used to be important to me just don't seem to matter anymore. I have been assured that I will regain my ability to think and remember. Yet, things will never be the same as they were before my child died. I will never be able to view the world in the same way. You and your love are still incredibly important to me. I need you to be flexible as we gradually create a new normal for our family.

Support: Though I try to be strong, I have given myself permission to seek help and understanding from others who have experienced a similar loss. It is important that you support my efforts to attend counseling sessions or parent support group meetings, for I need these other people in my life right now. This does not mean that I love or need you less.

Openness and Understanding: I know that sexual intimacy is an important part of our relationship, but right now my heart and my soul are consumed with grief and my body simply cannot respond. I need your understanding as we work on openly communicating our needs to each other.

Please know that I truly appreciate your offers to help. Know, too, that I have faith that there will again be a time when our family will experience happiness and joy.

~ Catherine Johnson, Enumclaw, WA

(Catherine Johnson, M.A., is a Certified Grief Therapist and Death Educator who does individual counseling as well as facilitating a parent grief support group as part of an on-going aftercare program for Weeks Funeral Homes in Washington state. She has published several articles and chapters on topics related to bereavement, made presentations on the national level, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education and Counseling.)

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Those of us who have traveled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile,
That first mile of no relief.

It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal.
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.
Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs.
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

~ Nancy Myerholtz, TCF/Waterville/Toledo, OH

PICTURES FROM THE HEART

Since we have lost our children, part of what remains of them are pictures from the heart, which are those mental images we hold so dear.

For some of us these pictures are memories of what had been, and for others these pictures are dreams of what might have been.

And for some of us these pictures are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are really the same. It is the dimension where our children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories of the future, because we remember our children by the dreams we had for them; and memories are nothing more than dreams of the past, because to remember them is certainly to dream of them.

I believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not hurt as much because they only had their child for a little while or to think that someone will not hurt as much because their child had the chance to grow up.

In these dreams and memories, these pictures from the heart, all of our children are infants and all of our children have grown up.

The sadness and pain comes from the broken heart, the memories and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

~ Kenneth Hensley, TCF/ Nashville, TN

PERHAPS THEY ARE
NOT STARS, BUT RATHER
OPENINGS IN HEAVEN
WHERE THE LOVE OF OUR
LOST ONES POURS THROUGH
AND SHINES DOWN UPON
US TO LET US KNOW
THEY ARE HAPPY.

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

| CHILD | | PARENTS |
|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| NICOLE ANNE BLILIE | 29 | SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE |
| CHLOE LOVE CONN | 16 | JEROD & STACY CONN |
| STEVEN DUANE COOK | 50 | SHARON COOK |
| SARAH FRANCES GUNDERSON | 32 | JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN | 30 | DAVID HALLMAN |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN | 30 | LYNETTE MYROLD |
| KARL HELFTER | 48 | MARK & HELLA HELFTER |
| BENJAMIN GAFFREY KNIER | 31 | FRANK KNIER & MARY GAFFREY KNIER |
| TONY MILLER | 30 | SHAWN & JIM MILLER |
| CHARLES "CHUCK" NELSON | 63 | REVENIA NELSON |
| JOSE DANIEL SAUVAGEAU | 22 | DANIEL SAUVAGEAU & MARY BJRKE |
| GARRETT JOSEPH SCHWAN | 16 | JENNA BJORNSTAD |
| GREGORY SEARS | 31 | LORI & JERRY BRADY |
| GREGORY SEARS | 31 | PERSYS PIERSALL (Grandparent) |
| SCOTT WARNECKE | 50 | DOUG & JOAN WARNECKE |
| TRACY ANN WATELAND | 47 | DENNIS & PAT WATELAND |
| TRACY ANN WATELAND | 47 | SHARON WATELAND (Godmother) |

ANNIVERSARIES

| CHILD | | PARENTS |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| RENEE ANN BERNIER | 1 | KENNETH & PATRICIA BERNIER |
| NICOLE ANNE BLILIE | 11 | SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE |
| KARI RAE BORGEN | 12 | JOHN & KELLY BORGEN |
| ADELE BYE | 1 | MERLYN ANDERSON |
| KIRSTIN ELIZABETH CANTLER-BOOKE ... | 9 | CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER (Grandparents) |
| JULIE M ERICKSON | 4 | JANET ERICKSON |
| TYLER JAY FREED | 8 | RANDY & DEBBIE FREED |
| RYAN P GOERTZ | 2 | JAMES & CHERI GOERTZ |
| SARAH FRANCES GUNDERSON | 6 | JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON |
| ASHLEY RAE HAINES | 7 | WILLIAM HAINES III |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN | 25 | DAVID HALLMAN |
| DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN | 25 | LYNETTE MYROLD |
| NANCY DIANE HEST | 14 | RALPH & ETHEL HEST |
| TARA LEA KELLAR | 7 | CATHY & GREG GRONLAND |
| JODY ANN MAURER KNUDSON | 9 | JOHN & SHARON MAURER |
| MICHAEL "MIKE" ROY NORBY | 1 | LAROY NORBY |
| JONATHAN LEVI POITRA | 8 | SUZIE & JAMES HILL |
| CHERYL L SAMSON | 7 | HENRY (DUKE) & PATRICIA SAMSON |
| BERNARD "BERNIE" WATELAND | 9 | SHARON WATELAND (Sister) |
| PAIGE WIGHTMAN | 2 | DAVID & MICHELLE WIGHTMAN |

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



2018 Holiday Angels



Given By:

PAT SAMSON

DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
JOAN & STEVE HALLAND
RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS & FAMILY
CARL CASEY
LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW & FAMILY
JEROME & RAMONA GUNDERSON
SHARON COOK
NORBERT & LUELLE KLEINGARTNER
SHERRY LASSLE
DARLENE SKAR

JIM & JODY KUTTER
LORETTA KEISACKER
ELLEN PAZDRO
SHERYL CVIJANOVICH

CHARLES & SANDRA KLINKHAMMER
DALE & MARILYN LARSON

CRAIG & BARB LARSON
JERRY & YVONNE NELSON
TIM & MELANIE BUTH
BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG

BILL & LOIS SCHAFFER
DOUG HANSEN
DICK & DIANE MACGREGOR
CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
TOM & LEAH TVEDT
PERSYS PIERSALL
JOE & VINCENT LEGGIO
DEBBY & DAVID FACEY

MARK & JEAN CHAFFEE
JUANITA WEBBER
CAROL & DAN WINTER
LYNETTE MYROLD
JACK & KELLY BORGEN
REVENIA NELSON
LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON

In Memory of:

H.D. "DUKE" SAMSON
CHERYL SAMSON
CHRIS SAMSON
BRIAN BJERKEN
COLE HALLAND
TARI ELLESS HELLER
CARTER CASEY
BRENT GANGNES
REED JOEL PROCHNOW
SARAH F GUNDERSON
STEVEN DUANE COOK
DAVID KLEINGARTNER
JAYME LASSLE
ALBERT SKAR
PAMELA BJERKE
MICHELLE KUTTER
CARLA TRUITT
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
KELLY BOYES
ALEX B KLINKHAMMER
GAIL LARSON
JOE LARSON
AMY LARSON
ERIC LARSON
SUE ELLEN LARSON
ERIC CRAIG LARSON
KYLE IRVIN NELSON
OLIVIA BUTH
RILEY DAHLBERG
SHANE TERRY
ERIC JOHN SCHAFFER
KENT ALAN HANSEN
SANDRA MACGREGOR CASELLA
ANDREW BRAUN
MICHAEL LIVDAHL
DANE ADAM TVEDT
RAND L PIERSALL
ANNIE PAGE LEGGIO
DANA KEBLAR
FRED FINCH
KONNIE JEAN CHAFFEE
JEFF WEBBER
MATTHEW WINTER
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
KARI BORGEN
CHARLES D NELSON
ALLISON DEUTSCHER
AARON DEUTSCHER
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER
UNBORN BABY DEUTSCHER



2018 Holiday Angels



Given By:

CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
 BIRDINE GRAFSGAARD
 BRENDA KLUTH
 AMY & JERRY NOESKE
 PATTI PRATT
 TODD & ADELE AASEN

RICHARD & LINDA OLSON
 KEITH & SANDRA KISER
 LEE & LUANNE SCALLON
 BECKY NELSON
 DONNA & LEROY KORNELIUS
 JOHN & TAMMY SADEK

CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN
 MARK & HELLA HELFTER

DINO & HELEN COOK
 MARY TOBOLT
 DEB WAYMAN & ZOE WREN
 MARY BJERKE
 PAT & DENNY WATELAND
 DIANE FENSKE
 DEWAYNE PETERSON
 MARLYS KESSEL
 PAUL & KARA BAILEY & FAMILY
 LISA BEACH & JEFF AMUNDSON
 GLENNIS OLSON
 BEVERLY HIRN
 PAUL & RENAE RONEY
 JIM, SHAWN, ALEX & ELINAH MILLER

KEN & PATTY BERNIER
 JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
 CARRIE BALSTER
 SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
 HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK
 ARLEN & JULIE KOTTA
 JIM & SUZIE HILL
 WALT & KARIE COWDEN

ANNE & JERRY BARBEE

In Memory of:

MATTHEW HOLLAND
 DAVID GRAFSGAARD
 BRANDON KLUTH
 SAMUEL NOESKE
 NANCY PRATT COASH
 RYAN TODD AASEN
 JOSEPH DARRIN BETTS
 MATTHEW OLSON
 CORDELL A KISER
 JESSE DANIEL SCALLON
 RYAN NELSON
 LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS
 NICK SADEK
 ANDREW SADEK
 CHLOE GRACE RONGEN
 DAVID HELFTER
 KARL HELFTER
 DOMINIC ANTHONY COOK, AFMSGT(RET)
 SCOTT TOBOLT
 HEATHER WREN
 JOSE SAUVAGEAU
 TRACY ANN WATELAND
 NATHAN ANDERSON
 SHERI PETERSON BJORGEN
 ANNIKA QUALLEY
 NICHOLAS BAILEY
 NATHAN BEACH
 JAMIE OLSON
 ALEX HIRN
 CARSON RONEY
 TONY MILLER
 KELSEY GRACE MILLER
 RENEE ANN BERNIER
 MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON
 JESSICA BALSTER
 NICOLE ANNE BLILIE
 DOUG SCHENCK
 BENJAMIN KOTTA
 JON POITRA
 KEVIN COWDEN
 BILL COWDEN
 ROBIN VIGDAL-HOSLER
 MATTHEW J GAFFNEY

BOULGER FUNERAL HOME
 HANSON-RUNSVOLD FUNERAL HOME
 KORSMO FUNERAL SERVICE, INC.

Hope is a rare gift that, if we are lucky, comes to us with the power to heal our lives. I've come to know that the deepest sense of hope often springs from the hardest lessons in life. It is in the darkest skies that the stars are best seen.... perhaps it is divine irony that within the darkest moments we are capable of revealing the greatest light, demonstrating what is best with humanity.

~ Richard Paul Evans

SIBLING PAGE

To my brother Marc in heaven:

Today, December 14, 2012 would be your 40th birthday. It has been 5 years since you left this Earth, but it seems like yesterday. I feel your presence often, and know you are watching over me always, my dear guardian angel. You are of the timeless and formless now, finally and completely free, free of pain, attachments, worldly thoughts, and all forms of suffering. I pray your transition was one of peaceful passing, as you transcended your human experience. You embody the spirit eternal now.

Today, here on earth, a tragedy took place, as I'm sure you already are aware. I know you will watch over these children whose lives were abruptly cut short today and empower their spirit to ease the suffering of their grieving loved ones here on Earth.

I miss you and love you, my dear brother . . . please continue to guide me in the right direction, to give me the strength and confidence I need to face my fears and conquer my demons as I navigate the bumpy roads on this journey called Life. I used to envision us sharing and supporting one another through life's defining moments . . . I still interact with you nightly in my dreams, only to awake and accept the reality of your physical absence daily. May you R.I.P. Marc. May your spirit soar gloriously above the heavens, gracefully free like a butterfly chasing a rainbow.

~ Lisa Pearlman, TCF/Metrowest Chapter, MA

This Can't Be

This is still such a shock to me
This really can't be!

I don't want to believe this is real
This is not something that I want to feel!
You just came back, you can't leave for good
If I could change this all...I would.

You were the one that was always there.
You were the one to always care.
Now a picture is the only way to see you.
I really don't know what to do.

You'll always be my big sister,
But life's not the same.
Life without you seems so lame.
No more car rides, no more late nights.
No more singing and no more play fights.

Where are you? You should still be here.
Where are you? I can't find you anywhere.
I need you still you just can't go away.
I need you here, please come back and stay!

Useless to pray you'll come back, you're gone.
God took you with Him to call his own.
But you'll always be present here in our hearts.
You always have been, right from the start.

This is still such a shock to me,
This really can't be!

~ Lilli Pugh, TCF/Houston Northwest, TX
In Memory of my sister, Mandi

TO THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW

If you could imagine the loneliest moment in your entire life, remember exactly how your body felt in that moment, empty those feelings into an expanding pill and swallow it, then you could begin to imagine what it feels to live through loss.

I would have one hand in happiness...the memories we made together, and one hand in isolation...the world without my brother. I constantly push and pull in an attempt to firmly remember yet triumphantly live a positive life.

~ Scott Mastley, for his brother Chris, TCF/Atlanta, GA

GRIEF IS LONELY

Grief is lonely. When my sister died two years ago, everyone knew about it and talked about it. Everyone was in shock – but now, two years later, the anniversary of her death came and went without even a card in the mail. No one at work remembered the day. No one called to say, “I am thinking of you.” No one asked, “How are you feeling?” My family has stayed in close contact and we talk about Susan all the time. But when it comes to grieving over Susan, everyone grieves alone. No one knows how I feel about my little sister and how it hurts me so deeply to know she is not here. Everything else in life can be shared with someone else, but not grieving. No one can fully understand the pain because everyone's pain is different. When the pain is the greatest, the loneliness is the greatest too. I never thought I could feel this much pain and still survive. I am alone in my grief. There is no one else here with me.

Susan was born when I was almost 11. She died by suicide when she was 16. The baby of the family, the youngest of four kids; our hearts are broken forever.

~ Cherie Bagadiong, TCF/St. Mary's County

REMINISCING

I thought about you today
As I bade farewell for school.
I thought about you today
When I heard a certain song.
I thought about you today
As the teacher passed the test.
I thought about you today
When the kids jumped in the leaves.
I thought about you today
As a stranger passed my way.
I thought about you today
When I got drenched in the rain.
I thought about you today
As I sat in church and prayed.
I thought about you today
When I embraced an old friend.
I thought about you today
As the day turned into night.
I will think of you again
When I close my eyes and dream.

~ Lori Phillips, TCF/Scranton, PA

“What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”

~ Helen Keller

The Gift We Give Ourselves

Six Christmases later, I think I have run the gamut of emotions. Of course, the first two Christmases after my daughter Nina died were pretty much a blur. I do remember the first one; so desperately trying to go through the motions and determined that my family would have as unchanged a Christmas as possible. I would momentarily lapse into my grief stupor, only to pick myself up by the bootstraps and zombielike, plod onward toward my goal to "normalize" an anything-but-normal Christmas.

Nina adored the holidays. She could scarcely wait for the day after Thanksgiving so we could pull out the holiday music tapes, get out the cookie press so she could make her favorite Spritz cookies, and decorate her daybed frame with tiny Christmas lights. Therefore, I was positive that Nina would want us to go on with Christmas as if the numbing and life-altering tragedy that had befallen our family had never occurred. I had convinced myself that it is what she would have wanted. So out came the Christmas tree and all the ornaments. Shopping commenced as usual, plowing my way through crowds of cheerful people, full of the spirit of the season. I wouldn't allow myself to see that I didn't belong amongst them -at least that year. Eventually, the charade took its toll and I paid for it for weeks afterwards. Then again how could any of us know how we should feel that first Christmas, or what we should or shouldn't do during the holidays after our child died? For most of us, we had never experienced the death of a child before. There are no step-by-step rulebooks on how to grieve. And even if there were, each of our children is unique and therefore so is our grief.

That second Christmas I didn't have enough energy to even run on empty. I felt drained and barely made it through necessary day-to-day tasks. The Christmas tree made it out of the box that year, but sat undecorated in the middle of the living room floor. Only when my son asked about five days before Christmas, if we could either put some lights on it and sit it in its customary corner, or just put it away that Christmas did I make an effort to do anything with it at all. That year I didn't attempt to sugarcoat my emotional state of mind I didn't pretend that everything was "normal."

If possible, we would cut out November, December and January 1st out of our calendars--just close our eyes and wish it away. But since we can't, we have to do the next best thing--we need to give ourselves a gift this holiday season. And in doing this, we give our family and friends a gift as well. That gift is taking care of us through this trying holiday season, to do what feels right to us. We can try to spare ourselves any unnecessary stress. That could mean doing away with the old family traditions and making some new ones. It could mean having Christmas dinner at a restaurant. That gift to us might be to go away for the holidays; for others that may be just staying home and doing nothing. Maybe a relative or family friend could help with any preparations or gift buying that we feel we might want to do this year. Possibly they could involve any surviving siblings in their holiday happenings so that they too feel like they are participating in something for the holidays. So often our family and friends feel helpless and desperately want to find some way to assist us and this is one way that they can. ~from the TCF Chapter in Tuscaloosa, Alabama said "No matter how many people or how many presents, the pulsating void that seems too large for your heart to hold keeps on drawing your attention back to the child who is missing. As others laugh and play, your thoughts fly away - to Christmases past or a snowy cemetery. Give me a special gift this year... let me weep."

The friendship and understanding of other bereaved parents is one of the most helpful gifts we can give ourselves. Other bereaved parents will let us reminisce of happier Christmases' past; will allow us to speak our child's name without hesitation; and will let us cry and not be uncomfortable with our tears. It is so consoling to be able to share your feelings with someone who understands that, for us, grief does have a place in our holiday. In turn, by being a listening ear for them we have given them a gift as well.

When I think back, I am not sure if I found comfort in hearing that the holidays would get easier in time. I think I was so preoccupied (and with good reason) with the fact that my Nina was gone and the holidays would never be the same. But I have learned to know what I can and cannot handle. I have learned how to say, "I just can't do that this year". I have learned that, although I couldn't imagine it then, with each passing year the holidays have become a little easier to deal with. And I absolutely believe that Nina does understand my need to alter Christmas since she died. That she would want me to change what I need to in order to get through the holidays. Nina would want me, as all of our children would want us, to be gentle with ourselves and to take care of our tender hearts. That gift we give ourselves is also a gift we give to them what they would want for us: for us to find as much peace in whatever way that we possibly can.

We have many new TCF members this year who will be facing that first Christmas without their child I will, as I know all of us will, keep them all close in our thoughts and hearts these next two months.

With love, peace and gentle thoughts this holiday season,
Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St Paul, MN

The holiday period is an especially difficult time for bereaved parents and particularly for the newly bereaved. The holidays, which have been our happiest times with our children, are a time when the changes that tragedy has made in our lives are most evident. As we gather our emotional forces to make a happy day for surviving children, grandparents and other family members, it can be a very difficult time. It helps to know that you will find the holidays less difficult than your fear of them and you will find some of your happy memories, too. Our children live on in our memories and in the many happy holidays now past. We hope that during this period you can find some happy times to remember and to cherish. We were fortunate to have had these Wonderful children as long as we did, and we will have our memories of the good times they enjoyed. The pain of loss will always be there. We share that, and we have a special concern for those who are having their first holidays without their children. There will be hard times and sad days. Without grief, there would be nothing. In that grief there are some wonderful memories to cherish. We will be with you in spirit. You are not alone....

~Dayton Robinson, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL

“What if the journey at the end of life is not a lonely path into eternity, but rather, an incredible reunion with those we have loved and lost?”

~ David Kessler

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: _____

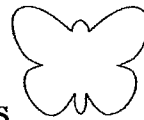
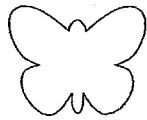
Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

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.

You can see pictures of the trailer with butterflies on our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourtrailer.html.

Eternal Flames

This is a night like no other
In the days now all too the same
When we stand with one another
And share our Eternal Flames

For in this gentle expression
Of the light from each candle's glow
Shines hope amidst our depression
And the truths we've all come to know

That death steals more than theirs only
These unfinished lives we bemoan
But though we are sad and lonely
Trust that 'We need not walk alone'

The love and loss that we all feel
Are joined, but each tries to 'win out'
Minds struggling to know what's real
And what this grief is all about

How do we make them 'alive' again?
Who here has not wondered 'to die'?
Where do we pose our question?
When the only question is 'why'?

If love truly burns eternal
Much like Mother Earth's molten core
With each turn grief grows less infernal
While love still grows all the more

That's not to say pain only subsides
For the bereaved know better still
But love which was before.....abides
As their memory becomes thy will

So tell me 'dear friend' your story
And I will regale you with mine
We'll bask in that glow and glory
So that their light may always shine

~ Patrick Thibault for TCF WWCL 2010, TCF/Redlands, CA

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern.

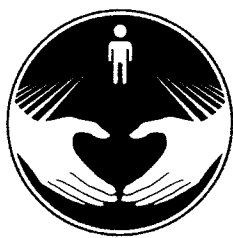
Beautiful people do not just happen."

~ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
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The Compassionate Friends

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 Bailey..... 701-491-0364 | Newsletter Editor | Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805 |
| Co-Chapter Leader | Lori Wiger 701-446-7504 | Newsletter Database | Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287 |
| Secretary | Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287 | Website Administrator | Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287 |
| Treasurer | Chuck Klinkhammer 701-298-2929 | Initial Contact | Mary Bjerke |
| Mailing Committee | Contact Us to Join | Librarian | Contact Us to Volunteer |

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 _____

Address _____

Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____

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