



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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F-M Area Chapter
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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

Meetings are quarterly

Next Meeting & Topic
March 14, 2024

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

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 6:30 pm on February 22nd @ Randy's Diner Too

LOVE GIFTS

Loretta Keisacker in memory of her daughter, Carla Rae Truitt
Lila Jean Gunderson in memory of her daughter, Laurie Etta Coleman
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.

"As the rose-tree is composed of the sweetest flowers and the sharpest thorns, as the heavens are sometimes overcast ~ alternately tempestuous and serene ~ so is the life of man intermingled with hopes and fears, with joys and sorrows, with pleasure and pain."

~ Edmond Burke

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. This month we are meeting at 6:30 pm at Randy's Diner Too, 641 32nd Ave W, West 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 February 22nd. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

We would like to thank the people who have volunteered for some of the leadership positions in order to keep our Chapter open. We can still use more help so if you would also like to volunteer, please let us know by calling/texting Sheryl (701-540-3287) or Kara (701-261-0668) or email us at tcf1313@gmail.com. Thank you.



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 benefiting 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 fmtcfnwltr@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.

When Sadness Becomes Depression: Some Thoughts for Bereaved Parents

About a month after my son died, I went to visit my doctor for my annual check up. He was aware that my son had died and was very concerned about my state of mind. He asked me how I felt, and I told him this was the worst trauma of my life and I was “in the hole” mentally. When he offered to write a prescription for an anti-depressant, I declined. Why did I do that?

I explained to my doctor that I was supposed to be depressed, disconnected, tearful, sad, angry, withdrawn and deeply hurt. That is expected in the initial stages of this grief process. I told him that if I had said, “Oh, I’m doing great. No problems. Just another little hiccup in life,” that he probably would have had me in a straight jacket on the way to a mental hospital. “Wouldn’t you think I was completely insane if said I was ‘ok’?” He agreed and said that a loss of this magnitude was incomprehensible to him, and he was available day or night if I needed his help.

A year later when I went back for my annual physical, we had the same conversation. This time, though, I was in a different frame of mind. I wasn’t depressed, I was simply very, very sad. Medications were not necessary.

However, I have met many, many bereaved parents who are unable to start seeing hope after six months, eight months and then a year. These parents are in a paralyzing fog of deep depression. Once we pass the one year mark, we are still devastated, but we are usually functioning on most levels, albeit without the joy that once was in our lives. Those parents who are still depressed, unable to motivate themselves, unable to function, continually tearful and withdrawn, are probably clinically depressed. These deep, continuing depressions call for a medication to work on the physiological causes and a good grief counselor to work on the damage to your psyche. There is no shame in this; it is a matter of simple survival.

Here is a good description of depression and anxiety (both so very common to bereaved parents) from the DSM-Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association:

“A person is suffering from a major depressive episode if he or she experiences items number 1 or 2 from the list of symptoms below, along with any 4 others, continuously for more than 2 weeks:

1. Depressed mood with overwhelming feelings of sadness and grief
2. Apathy--loss of interest and pleasure in activities formerly enjoyed
3. Sleep problems--insomnia, early-morning waking, or oversleeping nearly every day
4. Decreased energy or fatigue
5. Noticeable changes in appetite and weight (significant weight loss or gain)
6. Inability to concentrate or think, or indecisiveness
7. Physical symptoms or restlessness or being physically slowed down
8. Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
9. Recurrent thoughts of death and suicide, or a suicide attempt.”

While the above are also symptoms of the initial grief for the bereaved parent in the early months, these symptoms should modify toward the end of the first year. If they do not, the “episode of depression” referenced above will become a never-ending way of life. Should this happen to you, address it now. Talk to your doctor and a counselor about your days and nights and feelings. Let them know what you feel...not what others want you to feel. You won’t be pulling yourself up by the bootstraps on this one, gentle parent. You are unique in your grief. I have never seen any two parents grieve in the same way. I’ve often said that my odds of winning the lottery 20 times are better than my odds of seeing a bereaved couple who travel the grief road in exactly the same way.

It may surprise you to know that a substantial number of our members are seeing counselors and many are taking medications for depression and anxiety. This is the harsh reality of life after the death of our children. The shock and the overwhelming sense of loss do damage us both physically and psychologically. That’s our truth and our reality. Not all parents experience this. But to deny that many of our members do experience depression and deep anxiety is to deny the very essence of our souls. Be honest with yourself. Be open to possibilities.

There is hope. You see it in the eyes of those who have passed the third, fourth, fifth, tenth and even twentieth anniversary of their child’s death. But many of these people were clinically depressed and wisely sought professional help. Do this for yourself. Depression is a roadblock to your grief work.

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

In Memory of Brent M Gangnes

2/1977 - 2/2001

Five years have come and gone now
And we all think of you every day
Each one of us still carries you with us
Each one in our own special way
 Some carry you within their hearts
 While others carry you in every thought
 Two little boys carry you by their names
 One carries you in the last name she never got

We remember the man that you always were
And the man you never got the chance to be
Truth in the fact only the good die young
Is something we've all come to see.
 So many dreams you had yet to live out
 And so much you still had to do
 One thing that we all know every day
 Is that we will forever miss you

In five years that have come to pass
Each one of us thinks of you each day
And still struggle with the heartache
That your life shouldn't have end this way
 We will always love and miss you
 Continue to carry you in each heart
 Memories of happy times we all shared
 Will always keep us from ever being apart
We all love you and miss you, Brent

~ Lois Gangnes, TCF/Fargo, ND
Written in 2006

THERE'S A NEW MAN IN TOWN

My son is dead. The moment I was told my son died in an auto accident, there was a new man in town. The old man would find a way to fix "it" or at least make "it" better. The new man couldn't fix a thing. Oh, he could make arrangements, settle accounts, acknowledge condolences as though he were really there but the new man was far off, living in a protective shell hardened by disbelief and shock. Yes, he did things, but he didn't feel in the old ways, he was far off being reborn.

My wife's grief would bring the new man back, at least for a while. There was no fixing her, just acknowledgement of the hurt and pain and helplessness we both felt. I was there for her as she was there for me and we bonded in our grief at depths we did not know existed. My son did not die to make our marriage better or worse and his death did not change what it fundamentally was and is. There is however a new level where we meet to hurt and heal together.

When a baby is born there are pain and tears followed by profound joy. If that baby dies before his parents, there is pain and tears and a longing for peace. No man can anticipate the number of tears that will flow during his rebirth. The half hour drive to work each morning was a time of nothing but tears and pain and guardian angels to provide safety for myself and those around me. The new man was every bit the good driver the old man was, but he wasn't there, he was far off being reborn in those unstoppable tears. Peace was nowhere to be found.

I am not going into detail into the many ways I think I have changed. Believe me, I have changed and so have you fellow bereaved father. I cannot believe my son died to make me a better man. I do believe that my son's death shocked me into holding dear all that was always precious to me with the new knowledge that "it" can all end in an instant, and neither the old man nor the

new man can ever fix "it". The protective shell is fading away and real peace is finding its way into my heart and soul. But the shell will never be completely gone and the peace will never blend into complacency. We are new men with new priorities and new things to do. This does not mean we abandon all that was of the old man, the newness is in our attitudes and understanding and acceptance of vulnerability.

~ Dave Simone, Bereaved Father, Tampa, Florida

A Survivor's Alphabet: Empathy

"Where were you when I needed you?" Ever find yourself saying words like that? Ever look for comfort at a point of greatest need and wonder why it doesn't come or help? Family and friends try their best to let us know they care. It never seems enough for just what we need at the critical moment.

What's going on? Family and friends, in expressing their sincere words of comfort and love, are relieving their own anxiety. In their attempts they often bypass our more critical need. It's like two trains passing each other in the night. They meet but quickly go their separate ways.

What we have received is sympathy which, by itself, gives temporary comfort and relief but has little long-lasting effect. It may or may not touch the point of hurting with enough impact to relieve. What is better is a sensitivity to hurt where it is and a response to that hurt that mirrors the crisis itself. What is needed is not sympathy but **empathy**.

Empathy is made up of the following:

Listening. What do you hear when you hear? Isn't it amazing how often we hear but we do not listen. You and I hear the concert while the violinist listens for pitch and tone. We tell a mechanic the engine runs "rough" while he listens and notes that something is wrong with the valves. Developing the skill of listening enables us to be more sensitive to actual need where it occurs. A cry for help may be more, or less, than what we think we hear. Someone is hurting and needs relief, now. Being with that person we listen and are given clues of what to say and do that will bring the greatest relief. It's not for us to set the agenda; the other person in their hurt and pain does.

Understanding. By careful listening it's amazing what we can learn that we only surmised before. We learn that our agenda can be put "on hold" while the hurting person is considered as top priority. We learn that words do not always have the weight we give to them; a touch will do far more. Maybe just being there without thinking that we have to do something helps. Whatever it is, we are there for the other person and they know it; they are given just what they need at that given moment.

Value. This tacit understanding gives strength for building trust. A bond is created whose value will be noted long after the crisis is over. Friendships are developed that are long lasting. New understanding between family members creates a climate of love. Personal self-esteem is given a boost which has a value of its own. We understand others and they understand us and a network is established of support and caring.

Empathy is "LUV" actively supporting and sustaining to develop strength for times of crisis. It goes beyond in creating long-lasting relationships that give personal vitality to each of us.

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Jesse Baker is a retired minister of The United Methodist Church.

He and his wife Fay live in Port Orange, FL.

Reprinted from the Heart of Florida Chapter newsletter, May 1999.

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
DAVIN LOREN BAUCK	34.....	DEAN & DIANE BAUCK
PAMELA KAYE BJERKE	68.....	DARLENE SKAR
BRIAN BJERKEN	52.....	DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
SHERI PETERSON BJORGAN.....	61.....	DEWAYNE PETERSON
ISSAC JEREMY ENGELSTAD	28.....	SETH & DEVI ENGELSTAD
BRENT GANGNES.....	47.....	LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
DERRICK DENNIS JACOBS.....	36.....	TROY & DENISE JACOBS
BRANDON WILLIAM THOMAS KLUTH.....	41.....	BRENDA KLUTH
SCOTT LIMA.....	50.....	MARGARET LIMA
MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON	49.....	JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
AMANDA LEA PERKINS	36.....	DWIGHT & MARLENE PERKINS
JANZEN PETERSON.....	24.....	JULIE & JAY PETERSON
JONATHAN LEVI POITRA.....	42.....	SUZIE & JAMES HILL
TRAVIS JON MICHAEL ROBINSON.....	37.....	LARRY & MARY LEE ROBINSON
JOSEPH PETER ROEL	56.....	BOB & SANDI ROEL
KORBIN KURT STEINWEHR.....	26.....	MAZY STEINWEHR

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
NATHAN KEITH BEACH.....	10.....	LISA BEACH
BRENT GANGNES.....	23.....	LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
KARL HELFTER	8.....	MARK & HELLA HELFTER
MARK ANTHONY MORATIS	2.....	WALTER & MARGARET MORATIS
ROY DANA RICHMOND.....	15.....	THOMAS & AUDREY RICHMOND
CARSON DENNIS RONEY	7.....	PAUL & RENAE RONEY
CHAD VARRIANO.....	7.....	ANTHONY & KAREL VARRIANO

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children'. 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.

A Familiar Face

My family was on vacation in 1985 traveling from Houston to the Black Hills of South Dakota. We were traveling through Kansas and it was getting dark and late. I got out of our car to check us into a motel. The woman waiting on me was obviously very tired. When she saw me, she opened her eyes widely and just looked at me for a while. The expression on her face was as if she saw someone who looked very familiar and very close to her. I knew instinctively that I reminded her of someone special. As I started to fill out the forms, she began to cry. She was in too much pain to explain herself to me. I reached over to hold her hand. The next morning when I came to check out, she was making small talk but her eyes were remembering a face that looked like mine. As I told her good bye, she started to cry again.

Years later my thirteen-year old son, Ryan, died. Six months after his death, I was shopping and saw a young boy who looked a lot like Ryan. I followed him from aisle to aisle. I told this boy's mom that my son had just died and her son looked so much like mine. I pulled out pictures of Ryan and she agreed the boys did look a lot alike. Their clothes were even similar. The mom told her son to give me a hug: "a real one with both arms." While I was hugging this young man, I asked God to please let Ryan's spirit move through his body so I could touch Ryan again. The hug felt like Ryan. I closed my eyes and pretended it was Ryan. That hug felt like salve on my broken heart.

I wonder if God ever lets our children's spirits come into some other person for just a few seconds so we can feel some sort of relief? When that woman in Kansas was looking at me like I was someone else, I did - for a few brief seconds feel like another person. I hope the tearful woman felt it, too.

~ Niecy Moss, TCF Houston-West, TX
In Memory of my son, Ryan

SIBLING PAGE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY LITTLE SISTER

I remember when mom brought you home that bright summer day, a beautiful bundle of joy. I looked at you and smiled, when I saw your sparkling eyes and smile that would light the darkest room. I was so proud to call you my little sister.

As the years went by, you grew up so fast. One day, I'm looking down to talk to you and the next, I'm fighting neck pains from looking up at you. For being the youngest, you looked to be the oldest. It was fun going to the mall and have people ask us, if we were twins, or almost argue with us that you were older than I.

Your hair grew long and turned the color of fire - your eyes large and bright. Every day, in every way, the closeness, that we shared, grew. And my love grew even more.

Every day I heard you sing, your voice like none I had ever heard before. I'd swear that I was listening to an angel sing. I could listen to you all day. Your voice was made of gold and sent shivers of joy down my spine.

The day, that you left to join a choir in the sky, is the hardest day to forget. I try so hard to be strong, because I don't want you to see my tears. It is hard not to cry. I try to remember how strong you were and tell myself to be too. I know that where you are, you are with people who love you, as much as I.

I sometimes look back over the years and smile at all of the wonderful memories that I have. I see your face in my mind and feel the happiness and joy that I felt the day that mom brought you home. As long as I live, so too shall you. Nothing will ever change the fact that you are and always will be my little sister.

~ Dawn Porter, TCF/Central Iowa

"It is has been said, time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone."

~ Rose Kennedy

For My Baby Brother

You came and went without a word.

But I'll miss your loving cry.

We barely got acquainted,

And then it was goodbye.

There was so much more

You should have done.

Your innocent eyes had barely opened,

Your life had just begun.

You never saw a sunset,

Or a star in the night sky.

You never saw a sunrise,

Or a rainbow flying high.

You never drew a picture,

Or sang a nursery rhyme.

You never took those first few steps,

You should have had more time.

You never hit a baseball

To score the winning run.

You never even had the chance

To miss the things you've never done.

Although you left so many things

Undone, unseen, and unsaid,

Their numbers never shall come close

To the tears that I have shed.

You came and went without a word.

T.C. , Miami, FL

From Bereaved Parents USA

Regret is an appalling waste of energy. You can't build on it. It is only for wallowing in.

~Katherine Mansfield

Find Someone to Talk With About Your Grief

Written by Mary A. Paulson, Ph.D.

Finding someone to talk with following the death of your sister or brother may be one of the best ways to cope with the loss. It really doesn't matter who that person is, as long as you can be open and honest in conveying your feelings.

It would be terrific if this person could be a parent or a surviving brother or sister because sharing your loss and going through the grief process together can make you stronger as a family. But often other members of the family are facing their own struggles with the grief process and may not be able to open up with you.

Sometimes it is difficult to share your own feelings with other family members because of the emotions this can bring on. Tears are often difficult for us to handle because, as surviving siblings, we may feel guilty for causing someone else to have a bad day. We may interpret the other person's tears to mean that our deceased sibling is more important than we are, or that we must compete with them for our parent's attention. If you can't talk with your parents or a surviving, talking with another person who has experienced the death of a sister or brother may be the next best thing.

One of the hardest things to do after a sibling dies is to create a life for yourself that will not include your sister or brother. You have to continue going to work or school; fight back the tears when that special favorite song comes on the radio; run to the phone to call your sister or brother only to realize no one will answer; thinking you see your sibling in a crowd; and, answering for the first time the question "how many sisters and brothers do you have?"

Others around you may not understand these things, but someone who has had a sister or brother die knows what this is like. They have sat at a red light, crying their eyes out. They, too, may wear their sibling's clothes. They, too, may look to date someone who knew their sister or brother.

Although no one can know exactly what you are going through (because no one will have the same relationship you had with your sister or brother), someone whose sibling died has probably gone through many of the same experiences you are going through. It helps to hear that what you're going through is "normal". It helps to talk about your sibling and his or her death. It helps to talk about what's going on in your life now.

The Compassionate Friends provides you with unique opportunities to do just that - to talk with someone who has had a sister or brother die. Your local chapter may have a surviving siblings group. If not, you may want to consider joining the Compassionate Friends Sibling Pen Pals which matches you with someone in your age bracket whose sister or brother died in a similar way to yours.

A PART OF ME

YOU were not just my brother, but YOU were my friend.
YOU were supposed to be here always, or till the world came to an end.

I know that we argued and seemed to disagree, but

I could always count on you to be there for me.

YOU may be gone from this world I see, but you will always be a part of me.

~ Donna Montville, TCF/Gardner, MA

The Hurricane of Addiction

My name is Nancy and I work as a para-professional with special education children in Long Beach, New York. Each day I walk in my classroom and feel sad for those children whose lives may be taken away by the wrong choices. Once, my child, Jesse, was so full of life too. How I wish I could go back!

Not a day goes by that I don't wonder what my son would be doing if he were still on this earth. He was a talented wrestler for his high school, a talented drummer from a very early age, and had a gift of making people laugh.

Jesse was diagnosed as ADHD very early in life. His energy and wit were contagious, but in school it was an issue. He felt different even during the short period of time where he took his medicine as prescribed.

Jesse stopped his ADHD medicine and, I believe, started self medicating with Xanax and Valium. I searched and searched for a rehab that took 15-year olds, but after 10 days in the facility I found, our insurance refused to pay. I had to bring him home. I didn't have the financial capability to keep him there for a month. I believe that was his one chance at life, before his addiction progressed.

He tried again and again, and the ups and downs went on and on. My hope of him being able to stop was diminishing. I used to fear that I would get a phone call every time the phone rang. His brothers tried to talk to him, but he hid his ongoing addiction from everyone.

When Jesse was 19, Hurricane Sandy hit our town. At that time, he was in recovery for two years. Within minutes, our house was 75-percent destroyed. All our possessions on the first floor were destroyed and our cars were gone. I spent the next year trying to find ways to fix my house back up and make sure all my sons had transportation to get to college.

I was also looking for a job, as the hospital I worked in at that time was destroyed and condemned. In the middle of it all, Jesse relapsed. Jesse confided in me that his addiction to OxyContin had turned into a heroin addiction: it was easier to find and cheaper. Once again, I found myself writing letters to rehabs. I tried everyone, even the President of the United States and Eric Clapton, who owns a rehab. I was desperate and Jesse was too. My bank account was wiped out, between the rehabs and the storm. All I wanted was my son back!

After a short stay at a rehab in Florida, he remained in recovery for about four months. He was so happy to be home. He rode his bike on the boardwalk, played his drums, hung out with his brothers and friends, and even praised my home cooked meals. Life seemed normal again.

But on Thursday, December 12, 2013, Jesse came to talk to me. He was noticeably high. My heart sank. I decided for once not to talk with him or nag him in any way, and just keep the peace. I had every intention of having a talk with him the next morning. But on Friday, I was still upset so I went straight to work instead.

My phone kept vibrating in my pocket and I walked into a hallway to look at it. It was a text from my son, Zach. Mom, pick up your phone. Mom, Jesse is dead in his bed!

That is the day my heart broke forever. I am still broken and miss my child more and more each day that passes. I am still angry with our health insurance system and the lack of rehabs for all ages.

It will be four years this December that I lost my sweet, kind, funny boy. I am crying right now at the thought of never seeing him again. His addiction killed him and affected everyone in my family. His addiction wiped us out financially.

But I would do it all again, for him. I love you, Jesse Mark Barnett: always and forever.

~ Nancy Rossetti

In Loving Memory of Dana Dawn Keblar

1978 - 1999

You would be a 30-year-old woman now;
How we wish we could turn back time
To the place when you were here with us,
When there were not only memories, but life.
We wanted you to fulfill your dreams;
It's not fair you didn't have that chance.
Always wondering where you would be now
If not for tragic circumstance.
Our lives are going on without you;
We once thought it would never be true.
We have precious memories to sustain us,
And every day holds a remembrance of you.
Grateful for the precious time we had;
Your big smile forever bright.
We hold you dear to our hearts,
Our lovely Angel in the Light.

~ Debby Facey, TCF/Fargo, ND
Written in 2008

Strangers & Friends

Bereaved parents gather monthly and tell their stories again and again. The pain is evident on their faces yet strength comes deep from within. To simply attend these meetings is courageous. We enter as strangers, and we depart as friends. I've attended our group meetings for over four years. I never had the honor of meeting these children in life, yet I know them intimately—how each lived, and how each died.

Some of us were blessed to have our children several years, and others only a few. Some children lived just a few months, days or minutes—and some never took a breath. Still, our pain and emptiness is universal.

Our grief is universally unique. As individuals our journeys lead us in many directions, yet once a month we come together, to tell our stories again and again. These strangers, these people I call friends.

~ Kathy A, TCF/Fort Collins, CO

Parable of Immorality

I am standing upon a seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud where the sea and sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says —There she goes.

Gone where? Gone from my sight—that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There she goes! there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she come!"

~Henry Van Dyke

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

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.

A permission slip is valid for four years from the month received.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

(Signature) Date: _____

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, PO Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(If you have already submitted a permission slip within the past 4 years, you do not need to submit another one.)

Our Logo — Its Mystery and Its History

Are the hands reaching out or letting go? Are they the hands of one person or two? These are questions often heard from new members...so we asked the people who know.

Much of the beauty of our logo lies in the fact that there are no definitive answers to its symbolism. At first glance its meaning seems obvious; yet as you look more closely, these questions may arise.

The hands represent different things to us at different periods in our grief journeys. To the newly bereaved, the hands reach out toward him or her, offering comfort and support. Later in our grief journeys, they may symbolize the process of letting go, of coming to terms with the child's death, of acknowledging that the child is no longer a part of our earthly existence.

Still later in our grief journeys, we begin to reinvest in life and reach out toward others. Then our hands become the hands which are extended to the newly bereaved.

The circle is complete: a circle of friends, a circle of love and understanding, with the child at the center.

Thanks to the efforts of TCF historian Helen Robinson of the Tuscaloosa AL Chapter, the origin of our logo has now been documented. Helen has been in touch with Joe Lawley, Founder-Chairman of The Society of The Compassionate Friends. Joe supplied details on how the logo came about, as well as a copy of a letter which John and Maggie Fisher of Coventry, England, wrote on February 12, 1975.

In his letter, John says that their daughter Clare "was killed on November 17th last, aged 8 1/2. By chance we met someone, who knew someone who had heard of the Friends, who lived in Watford, some twenty or thirty miles from our home, and as a consequence Mrs. Joan Wills wrote to us and subsequently came to our home.... Although we still feel our loss greatly we both know that we are now ready to assist the Friends ourselves.

"Our help would also include the services of my own company (John Fisher Design & Marketing, Ltd.), which include Advertising, Design, Marketing and Public Relations activities.... We are mobile, immediately available, and ready, both physically and spiritually, to begin work for the Friends. Please use us."

Joe tells us that "Its first appearance was on the June 1975 Newsletter and is recorded on that occasion as being 'in a bright emerald green' subsequently however settling into the generally universal color of royal blue and white from 1977 on."

(This article first appeared in the Spring, 1998 issue of Friends, Caring and Sharing, which at the time was The Compassionate Friends' in-house newsletter for chapter leaders and steering committee members.)

~ Joyce Andrews/TCF, Sugar Land - SW Houston Chapter

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT

"Human pain does not let go of its grip at one point in time. Rather, it works its way out of our consciousness over time. There is a season of sadness. A season of anger. A season of tranquility. A season of hope. But seasons do not follow one another in a lockstep manner. At least not for those in crisis. The winters and springs of one's life are all jumbled together in a puzzling array. One day we feel as though the dark clouds have lifted, but the next day they have returned. One moment we can smile but a few hours later the tears emerge . . . It is true that as we take two steps forward in our journey, we may take one or more steps backward. But when one affirms that the spring thaw will arrive, the winter winds seem to lose some of their punch."

~ Robert Veninga in *A Gift of Hope: How We Survive Our Tragedies* (Little Brown & Co., 1985)

THE FIX-IT MAN

Being a "jack of all trades and master of none" all my life, our children thought I could fix anything that they broke. I myself thought that anything that was made could be fixed, and maybe even fixed better than when it was new. Many times one of our children would bring me something that had broken, though they didn't know how it got broken, and asked me if I would attempt to fix whatever it was, and one way or another, I would succeed.

Then one day something broke that I never will be able to fix. One of our children died. This time, the something that broke, I could not fix. There are no tools to bring a dead child back to life.

All I can think and wonder is, how and why did I end up with something I cannot fix? Since that time, it is hard for me to fix something that breaks. It brings to mind the one big thing I will never be able to fix, the death of our child.

~ Bill Krieglstein, TCF/Fox Valley

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
Newsletter Database	Sheryl Cvijanovich	701-540-3287	Secretary	Sheryl Cvijanovich.....	701-540-3287
Treasurer	Chuck Klinkhammer.....	701-298-2929	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich.....	701-540-3287
Initial Contact	Sheryl Cvijanovich		Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join	

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 for a period of 18 months.