



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

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

Meetings for 2023 will be quarterly instead of monthly

Next Meeting & Topic
September 14, 2023 - To be determined

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on July 27th
@ Randy's Diner Too
46th TCF National Conference July 7-9,
2023 in Denver, Colorado
TCF FM Chapter's 17th Annual Walk to
Remember - July 29, 2023

One often calms one's grief by recounting it.
~ Pierre Corneille

LOVE GIFTS

Linda Bartsch in memory of her son, Brent Michael Bartsch
Anne Snyder in memory of her son, Adam Snyder
Vera Jordheim in memory of Adam Snyder
Pat & Denny Wateland in memory of their daughter, Tracy Ann Wateland

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.

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. For the month of July, we are meeting 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 July 27th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

Happy Summer! The F-M Chapter of The Compassionate Friends needs assistance. We are looking for volunteers to help with newsletter prep, writing out cards, other secretarial duties, and meeting assistance. If you are interested, please contact Kara at 701-261-0668 or Sheryl at 701-540-3287. You can also email us at tcf1313@gmail.com.

Grief is not truly a process unless
There is an EXIT as well as an ENTRY.

Grief has a beginning.
Does it also have an ending?

"Footsteps Through the Valley" By Darcie D Sims



Fargo Chapter's 17th Annual WALK TO REMEMBER

WHAT: 17th Annual Walk to Remember Potluck

WHEN: Saturday, July 29, 2023 at 10 a.m.

WHERE: Main Shelter at Oak Grove Park

The Compassionate Friends of Fargo-Mhd will hold its 17th Annual Walk to Remember, on Saturday July 29, 2023 at the main shelter at Oak Grove Park, 124 N Terrace in Fargo.

REGISTRATION: We will open registration when we get nearer to the date. Pre-Registration – www.tcffargomoorhead.org or you can text Kara at 701-261-0668

Our 2023 Walk to Remember will not include a walk to The Angel of Hope due to construction in the Island Park area. We will have a speaker instead.

- We'll get together at Oak Grove Park, at the main shelter, beginning around 10:00 am.
- The speaker will begin around 11:00 am.
- You may bring a balloon and join us as we release them at Oak Grove Park.
- There will be a mass butterfly release with butterflies provided by the chapter.
- Following these activities, we will enjoy a catered lunch and fellowship at Oak Grove Park. Subs and sides will be provided but you are invited to bring your child's (or your) favorite dessert or treats to share.
- There is no cost for our event.
- We ask anyone who wishes to join us to bring only their memories (and their (or their child's) favorite dessert or snack to share).
- All are welcome. We love to hear about everyone's child.
- We will, again, have a Silent Auction benefiting The Angel of Hope in Island Park. The Silent Auction will be set up by 10 am so come on out then to peruse and bid on an item or two.

If you would like to volunteer to help out or if you have any questions, please check our FaceBook page or contact:

Kara or Paul Bailey (Chapter Leaders) – 701-491-0364, email – baileysfive@msn.com

Sheryl Cvijanovich – 701-540-3287, email – sherylc13@msn.com

or email – tcf1313@gmail.com

Butterfly Messages To Our Children

As balloons fill the northern sky, floating up and away on the wings of wind and love, I am astonished by the sense of peace which sweeps over me. I have sent my child a message written on a butterfly shaped note attached to a balloon. In my mind's eye, I know that my child will read that message and understand that his mother's love for him is eternal and unconditional. The void left in his absence is often overwhelming, and the pain frequently escalates from a quiet sadness to a screaming ache which shatters me. My child knows the pain I have felt and will always feel without him in my life. I express it every year on a little butterfly note. He knows he is loved.

This butterfly message is an important ceremonial part of my life now. Instead of an e-mail or letter, I send my child a note once a year. This ceremony is moving, the bagpipes are haunting, the readings are reflective and touching. I stand with other parents and notice that they, too, are watching the balloons until they disappear into the heavens. I am imagining my son plucking his balloon from the heavens and reading my message. Other parents are imagining this, too. Our communication to our child will be understood.

As parents who have lost children to death, we face new ceremonies and new traditions. As the years roll by, many of us will cling to those ceremonies and traditions. We are forced to replace the traditions of the past, before our child died, with new, fitting tributes that acknowledge our child's life and the meaning of that life to us. The Compassionate Friends provides us this opportunity to share our feelings and our need to honor our child in the company of others who understand us and encourage us to speak openly about our child and our sorrow. This tribute to our child has deep meaning and touches our souls with its simplicity and grace. Our ceremony is brief by most standards, but meaningful beyond words. No speaker could reach us as this ceremony does. For a small window in time, we are reaching out to our children, honoring them, remembering them openly and communicating with them. Tears are shed. Hugs are shared. Memories form a kaleidoscope in each parent's mind as we watch our balloon join with the others on its journey to our children.

This tribute and message to our children is one of two ceremonial gatherings that we, as Compassionate Friends, share each year. Remember. Always we remember our children. Others may wish to forget, put the unpleasantness behind them, but we, the parents of children whose lives were too short, will never forget. We have established our traditions and we look to each other for hope and support as we walk this lonely road.

And so, as our balloons completely disappear into the heavens, we are immersed in peace and serenity, and we share a light meal and memories of our children with our Compassionate Friends.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX

TOGETHER WE'LL WALK THE STEPPING STONES

Come, take my hand, the road is long,
We must travel by stepping stones.
No, you're not alone, I'll go with you.
I know the road well, I've been there.
Don't fear the darkness, I'll be with you.
We must take one step at a time
But remember we may have to stop awhile.
It is a long way to the other side
And there are many obstacles.
We have many stones to cross,
Some are bigger than others,
Shock, denial, and anger to start,
Then comes guilt, despair and loneliness.
It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.
It's the only way to reach the other side.
Come, slip your hand in mine.
What? Oh yes, it's strong.
I've held so many hands like yours.
Yes, mine was one time small and weak, like yours.
Once, you see, I had to take
Someone's hand in order to take the first step.
Oops, you've stumbled, go ahead and cry.
Don't be ashamed, I understand.
Let's wait here awhile and get your breath,
When you're stronger we'll go on, one step at a time.
Say, it's nice to hear you laugh.
Yes, I agree, the memories you shared are good.
Look, we're half way there now,
I can see the other side.
It looks so warm and sunny.
Oh, have you noticed, we're nearing the last stone,
And you're standing alone.
And look, your hand, you've let go of mine,
We've reached the other side.
But wait, look back, someone is standing there,
They are alone and want to cross
The stepping stones,
I'd better go, they need my help.
What? Are you sure? Go ahead, I'll wait,
You know the way, you've been there.
Yes, I agree, it's your turn, my friend—
To help someone else cross the stepping stones.

~ Barb Williams, TCF/Fort Wayne, IN

FIREWORKS

He saw his first fireworks from a car bed,
and the noise frightened him.
Afterward, the Fourth of July
became his favorite celebration.
Now I can hardly watch fireworks without crying.
But that is not right.
Those were some of the happiest times
for our family.
He wouldn't want me to be sad.
Help me get my reactions in order, Lord,
and to remember with joy
all the warm and wonderful times
we had together.

~ Margaret B. Spiess
“*Cries from the Heart*” copyright 1991

Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, “It’s different with me! You don’t understand!” This is the “normal” response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child’s death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of “Why?”

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one’s spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—return not occur, although the term “recovery” is used. I prefer the term “healing,” a process whereby our lives come to a new “normal.” Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child’s death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that’s all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

~ Robert Gloor, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL

“THE BATTLE”

It seems we’re all alone, like a few army troops in the jungle struggling to stay alive and keep our sanity. Sometimes right when it seems it’s over and you can go home, you’re ambushed, and you realize you’re at the beginning. Later, after this happens over and over again, you know you’ll be fighting forever. Grief is a battle that cannot be won but just gets easier to live with. I’ll always love and remember my big brother. As the battle goes on and others begin, we all can come together and try to overcome this everlasting battle--grief.

~ Justin Jenkins



**OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED
BIRTHDAYS**

CHILD		PARENTS
JONATHAN C BERG.....	48.....	CLINTON & CARMEN BERG
SANDRA DIANE CASELLA.....	55.....	RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
ANNE CLEMENSON.....	66.....	MARVIN & DOROTHY CLEMENSON
AARON DEUTSCHER.....	46.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (In-Laws)
BABY DEUTSCHER	11.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
JUSTIN L DIETRICH.....	38.....	TRACY & CAROL DIETRICH
WHYLIX EDWIN DITCH.....	4.....	LANCE & TASHARA DITCH
RACHEL ELIZABETH ELLINGSON	41.....	PATRICIA & ERIC MONSON
PETER H M GRIFFIN	24.....	DAVID & MARY GRIFFIN
BRANDON HUSETH.....	30.....	ROBERTA & BRANDON WINGE
JARAD NILLES	39.....	CAROLYN NILLES
ZANDYN LARRY MALHEIM OLAFSON ...	13.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
NATE OLSBY.....	39.....	NANCY DODD
MATTHEW ALLEN OLSON.....	48.....	RICHARD & LINDA OLSON
LOGAN F RINKE	33.....	PAULINE RINKE
SHERYL ANN TOBAR.....	59.....	ANGIE SCHLICHT
AUSTIN WAYNE WAGAR.....	28.....	JAMIE & SCOTT OLSON

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
JESSICA MARIE BALSTER.....	7.....	CARRIE BALSTER
BRENT M BARTSCH.....	8.....	LINDA BARTSCH
KASIE JOANN BERG.....	3.....	KIMBERLY FOLSTROM
HALLIE CLARE BJELLAND.....	18.....	ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND
AARON DEUTSCHER.....	11.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (In-Laws)
ALLISON DEUTSCHER.....	11.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON
BABY DEUTSCHER	11.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER	11.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
JESS R FORD.....	3.....	SHELLEY FORD
MARC T HENDERSON.....	5.....	TOM & LINDA HENDERSON
CLEO CAROL JORGENSEN.....	5.....	FRAN LEINGANG
SUE ELLEN LARSON.....	41.....	DALE & MARILYN LARSON
JAYME ELIZABETH LASSLE.....	13.....	SHERRY LASSLE
MICHAEL L LIVDAHL.....	10.....	ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
CASEY MEYER.....	2.....	REBECCA MEYER CHARLET
ZANDYN LARRY MALHEIM OLAFSON ...	13.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
NATE OLSBY.....	6.....	NANCY DODD
ANNIKA LORRAINE QUALLEY	9.....	RHONDA & MICHAEL QUALLEY
CHAD MICHAEL RINNELS	3.....	MIKE & CHERYL RINNELS
NICHOLAS J SADEK	18.....	JOHN & TAMMY SADEK
DOUG E SCHENCK	19.....	HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK
THOMAS SCHMITZ.....	2.....	BOB & CAROL SCHMITZ
JENNIFER SCHUMACHER	5.....	ANTHONY & LORETTA SCHUMACHER
ADAM JOSEPH SNYDER.....	10.....	ANNE SNYDER
TRACY ANN WATELAND.....	30.....	PAT WATELAND
MATTHEW ALLEN WINTER.....	10.....	CAROL & DAN WINTER



SIBLING PAGE

Siblings

When my parents lost their son, I lost my twin brother (when I was 30). I could not share my loss with my parents, yet their loss was the same as mine. The fear, despair and anger I felt ran deep. My parents were already suffering from the deepest of wounds themselves, and simply did not realize my feelings.

I was old enough to understand, but for younger children, one crisis may pile upon another, causing a separation between parent and child. Everyone in the family has changed. The struggle to survive when everyone is so unsure of their footing takes a total effort - and that effort must begin with yourself.

Finding someone outside the family who understands is a beginning. It was the beginning for me. I could confront the emotional crisis with the care and concern of others. I won't live in the past, but the past will live in me. My life is no longer entirely my own. That part of my brother that is within me will live on, too. It is a great help to be able to talk with others in the sibling support group, and I am grateful for it.

~ Denise Schoo, Dallas, TX

You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes;
You heal because of what you do with the time.

~ Carol Crandall

Forever and Always

Every time I think of you it always eats away,
60 minutes an hour, 24 hours a day.

From the time I get up to the time I go to bed.

I regret the things that were left unsaid.

A simple I love you would have done just fine,
sadly to say there was not enough time.

You were taken too early or so we thought,
but God needed a guardian angel to watch over us
and it was you that He brought.

Not a word, nor a sentence can tell how I feel,
I still can't believe that this is all real.

The way that I feel I cannot explain,
the horrible emptiness, aching, and pain.

The way you were always there for me
no matter when, where or why,
now when I think of you it makes me want to cry.
I love you so much and will forever and always,
for the rest of my life, and the rest of my days.

~ Michael Oetken

MARK

Some people dread the holidays;
others, anniversary or birthdays.

With me, it's not just these days,
but Spring and Summer.

From the first talk of Spring training to
the last out of the World Series, I MISS YOU.
Baseball was such a big part of your life. I see you in
a baseball uniform in so many of my memories.
How I wish we could catch a Royal's game together!
Did you know they were World Champions in '85?
I know that you have rounded third and slid into
home, but that doesn't ease the pain in my heart.

I love you so much!

~ Tamala Lauffer, TCF/Independence MO

One

It was only *1* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this *one*. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend. I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being - I just looked at him one day and knew he was.

I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity - for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this *one* decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that *one* moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that *1* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that *one* moment be the only *one*.

By Michele Mallory

Reprinted from *This Healing Journey:
An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings*

Second Anniversary

Yes, I'm an adult over 40

And Tom, little brother, was 25

When he died returning from his bar exam.

So what? Does grief have an end age?

Does someone 40 plus not die too losing a sweet small playmate?

I see him learning to roller skate

I'm running beside the bike;

First game of the Cardinals' season

And, scared, in the stands,

A "gorilla" running wild.

Sleepy, at a drive-in, running around the zoo.

All that, and as an adult, I knew him too.

At graduations,

Proud in his own pad

Pouring Spanish champagne.

Tireless breaking wood feeding a hungry campfire

Cooking eggs for all, sharing dreams.

This sibling remembers and grieves.

~ Jeanne Brady, TCF/Olathe, KS

Grief is like weeding in a flower garden in the summer
You have to do it over and over again until the season changes.
~ Fay Harden, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL

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

Just Thinking

When getting old, our wrinkles appear
And as our hair turns gray
We sometimes say
"Seems like just yesterday"
ften there's another thought
When remembering life's path so slow
We marvel and might say
"Seems so long ago"
We are always in awe of time
Never mind what the clock may show
Our minds alter time quite curious
"Time goes by so fast" or "Time goes by so slow"
When compared to eternity
A lifetime must be "A blink of an eye"
Making each human life span the same
Thus we are all the same age when we die
Time is what we perceive
Could it really be both fast and slow
Or is time just a blink of the eye
Someday we will surely know
~ Donald Moyers, TCF/Galveston County, TX

LITTLE BY LITTLE

I once thought that my only link to you was my grief.
I couldn't let go. I knew if I did I would lose us both.
But one day when I couldn't take the pain anymore,
I decided to try. So, slowly and carefully I let go of
my deathline to you, and I was surprised to find
myself being held by God.
Little by little, step by step, I learned that I didn't
need to hang on to the death to remember the life.
What a joyous discovery!
~ Kittie Brown McGowin, TCF/Montgomery, AL

A Box of Coins

My husband Bruce and my stepdaughter Jess drove to our son's apartment to retrieve his things shortly after his death. They returned with clothing, bed linens, lots of CD's, his backpack, and a computer desk that he and I assembled together at his new apartment. They brought back the computer, kitchen items, and a New Balance shoebox.

I recognized the box. We gave him shoes as a parting gift as he left for college that fall. His college expenses stressed our budget. I second guessed most purchases but not the shoes. He needed them. I wondered why he had kept the box.

It was filled with coins and a red cup. Jess said the cup had been on his desk. Apparently at day's end our son Art emptied his pockets of loose change into the cup. Eventually Arthur poured the contents of the cup into the shoebox. The boy had a savings plan.

I saved the box of coins. I could not toss them into a change counter. He had touched each one. I stored the box under a bed that he had used as a youngster.

After four years, I pulled out the box and spent a quiet evening counting coins. \$74.14. I wrote a note from Art to an anticipated nephew or niece that he would never met and slipped it in the box. "Use these coins for college." From Art. The box slid under the bed again. I would find the right place for those coins—maybe a charity, maybe the scholarship initiated in memory of Arthur. Not now.

Last month Jess called me with a funny story about her toddler son, my first grandchild. Jess and Brandon had taught their young son to drop coins into a big red piggybank. They were scrounging for coins because their son liked the game so much.

Perfect! Those shoebox coins just found a new home! That weekend I delivered the box of coins to them. The next time I babysat, I pulled a few coins from the shoebox and handed them to my grandson, one by one. Mason giggled as he touched each one and dropped it squarely into the piggybank. We both smiled at each other.

The boy has a savings plan. Must be genetic! I am grateful for the gift of time with my son's possessions. TCF monthly meetings taught me to be patient with myself until I found my new balance. It took almost seven years. I gave away my son's coins with no regrets.

~ Monica Colberg, TCF/Minneapolis, MN
In Memory of my son Art

Benchmarks

Goodbye would be too difficult,
Although I know you are gone.
Instead, I keep you in my heart
And your memory lives on.
I have redefined my purpose, son,
Since you are no longer here.
With your death I faced a choice
To die, exist or to live free.
My life has changed forever, child,
I'm redefined each week,
You would call these "benchmarks"
Of goals set and then achieved.
And so I set my benchmarks,
Achieving many, reshaping some...
But everything is different now
Except your mother's love.
~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

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

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
(If you have already submitted a permission slip within the past 4 years, you do not need to submit another one.)

Suicide Note

The following letter was written by David John Bernreuter before he died by suicide on May 12, 1987. David, an astute 22-year-old, was unusually well-informed about his illness. By his own description of his feelings, myths and assumptions about suicide are shattered, and we are allowed an insight into his motivation to end his life. In granting permission for its use, it is the hope of David's family that the loved ones of other victims may find comfort in David's words.

Dear Mom, Dad, and Stephany:

First, some facts:

1. I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.

2. I KNOW YOU LOVE ME VERY MUCH. If love alone would have made me better, I would be the most well adjusted man on earth. Please don't feel that you neglected to tell or show me how much you loved me.

3. YOU WERE NOT TO BLAME FOR MY CONDITION. I believe my mental illness was the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. A certain percentage of people, from all types of family situations have a major mental illness. It was just the luck of the biological draw that I happened to be one of them. Whether it was Major Depressive Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, Manic Depressive Disorder, or Schizophrenia, my mental illness made my "life" unlivable. But you are not to blame for that. So please don't let yourselves feel guilty.

4. I KNOW THAT YOU WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS. It won't be easy, but you will have a lot of support from a lot of friends and relatives. Don't be like me, the ultimate schizoid loner. Count on the support of your friends and relatives. If you only knew what goes on inside my head. I know you will say that I "didn't try long enough or hard enough." I have been emotionally disturbed since late childhood. I now have a major mental illness. I tried as long and as hard as I could. I've had all sorts of suggestions,

like: "Repeat positive phrases over and over again. Don't eat foods with yeast. Take Haldol. Don't take Haldol. Accept Jesus as my 'personal Savior.' Quit smoking. Get a girlfriend." And the list goes on and on...

I know that the above suggestions were made with the best intentions, but they lack an understanding of what mental illness is all about. That's why I found something in common with other people who are mentally ill. When they told me how being mentally ill affects their life, I understood, because my illness affected me in the same way. If I were to tell Uncle Ray that I had bought a gun, that I felt suicidal, he would have no alternative but to call the hospital and the police. And before you know it, I'd be back in the hospital. I'd rather be dead. It's not like I killed myself because I didn't get an A on an exam or because I broke up with my girlfriend. Those are the kinds of depression that have a reason to happen. My depression comes without any help from the outside. Nothing bad has happened to make me depressed except my depression. It's not like I did this "on a lark." I've had over a year to think it over. But I can hardly expect you to understand about something I myself don't understand. I don't know why I am the way I am. 'The man who didn't see it through.' That is what this is. If given a chance to choose between an eternity in heaven or another go-round as a human of earth, I'm certain I would choose the latter.

And now for the business part of this suicide note: Cremate and scatter me (I don't care where). All my money goes to you. Everything else, too. Do with it what you will, but may I suggest sending a portion of my worldly goods to a mental health research foundation of your choice."

As David requested, the family sent a donation to a mental health organization in hopes that someday a cure will be found.

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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 Cvijanovich701-540-3287	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.