



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF's National Office
48660 Pontiac Trl #930808
Wixom MI 48393-7736
Toll-free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

F-M Area Chapter
PO Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106
www.tcffargomoorhead.org
June 2023

Volume 40 Number 6

Chapter Leaders - Paul & Kara Bailey 701-491-0364

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805

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
June 8, 2023 - Balloon Release
Everyone is welcome.

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on June 22nd @ Randy's Diner Too
46th TCF National Conference July 7-9, 2023 in Denver, Colorado
TCF FM Chapter's Annual Walk to Remember - July 29, 2023

Father's Love

Father weighed us once a month
And totaled up the pounds
Then he weighed the dog and cat
(As silly as that sounds)
He then included their weight, too,
And with pride and joy he'd say,
"Hmm. Yes. I do believe
Here's what we have today"
There's thirty-five and forty-eight
And Jim weighs eighty-nine,
Spot and Puss weigh twenty-four
And all these pounds are mine!"
Father loved us not by age
Nor virtues that he found
He gathered all his children in
And loved us by the pound.
~ Dee L. McCollum, TCF/Atlanta, GA
1st Prize Light Verse Award - North Carolina Poetry Society

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 June, 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 June 22nd. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

FATHER'S DAY

As this day approaches I wonder how I will react.

Am I still a father?

I will sit quietly never allowing family and friends to see how I feel.

I will miss my son, but I can't allow myself to "break".

I must remain strong and always be the 'rock'.

I wish I could just let someone know how much I miss my little angel.

How much I cry and how much I miss hearing "Dad I love you."

I am a father, but I wonder, will I just pretend, as usual, that it doesn't bother me?

Remember me, for I hurt, too, on this special day.

TCF/Tampa, FL

VALLEY OF THE BUTTERFLIES

There is a green, sun drenched valley --

Light with the scent of clover and lilacs -- Where the butterflies dance.

Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors of every hue and dimension.

There are Monarchs and Skippers, Swallowtails and delicate spring Azures. Each dances its unique pattern Of flits, circles and dives.

Stretching its fragile wings toward the clouds Or brushing its feet on the succulent grass.

There are no roads, paths, or gates To broach the valley's entrance;

Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.

Every parent who has sent forth a child

And vainly waited for its return

Comes seeking in the Valley of the Butterflies

And there finds a beautiful spirit, Stretching its wings to the clouds

And brushing its feet on the grass

Dancing in swoops, flits and dives,

Drying its dewy wings in the warm sunshine of forever.

~ Marcia Augi, TCF/Trenton, NJ

REFLECTIONS IN SAND AND TIMES

I looked across the lake, then onto the sand,

Wishing I was still standing there

Holding your small hand.

Sandcastles, buckets and shovels

Flashed into my mind,

As I remembered all those precious memories you left behind.

Tiny footprints took me many, many years back in time,

But of those I looked at— yours I couldn't find.

But as I stood there going so far back in the sand,

I almost could feel you holding my hand.

~ Linda Trimmer, TCF/York, PA

Suicide

Once you were rich with life,

you were self-confident and filled with beauty.

Until a darkness came to seize your mind,

a force from out of silence, an ache without a reason, a pain without a name.

What was this darkness that would not be conquered?

What force, what reason,

What pain without a name would use your hands to take your life away.

Once you were rich with life,

you were self-confident and filled with beauty.

Now we are left alone without an answer.

~ Sascha Wagner

NOT GUILT, REGRET

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret.

~ Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN
Survivors of Suicide Group

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, Ill 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

There's No Law Against Grieving--Even for Men

Two years have now passed but I still remember that day like it was yesterday.

If you are reading this, then you have probably lived that day, too. It may have been slightly different—but still the same.

Even though there was a bunch of relatives and friends in the waiting room with me, it was like I was completely alone. I had been called to the hospital less than an hour before. There had been a car accident. My wife was injured but not in danger. But no one would tell me anything about my 8 year-old Stephanie or 5 year-old Stephen who were riding in the car with her.

I had been led to a waiting room, hoping for word from the emergency room doctor. The minutes seemed like hours. Then the doctor came in. Stephanie was in critical condition and would be flown to Children's Hospital. But they were unable to revive my precious Stephen.

The words echoed over and over in my brain.

"Your son has died." The shock and the grief struck me at the same time. I had expected them to come in and tell me the kids were injured but would be just fine thanks to the excellent efforts of everyone involved. After all, that's the way it always happens on "Rescue 911".

But that wasn't the way it happened this time!

I only half remember being led back to my wife where I broke the news to her.

A moment later when I had been led into the corridor, someone asked me if I wanted to see my son. I don't even remember my response—just walking down the hallway, a nurse on each side holding my arms. All I could take were little half steps. My legs had no strength. Through the tears I could see all the nurses and hospital personnel stop everything they were doing and stare at us. Apparently they hadn't seen a grieving father before.

Finally we reached the emergency room at the end of what seemed like the longest corridor in the world. The door swung open and I spotted my son lying on a table at the far end of the room. I was helped to him and then left alone.

Waves of grief overcame me as I looked at Stephen's sweet face, laying there as if asleep. And the realization that I would never hear his laugh, I would never see him smile, I would never feel his kiss again.

After a few minutes a nurse came back and told me I would have to go because my daughter was being loaded into the helicopter and I should give her some words of encouragement, even though she might not be able to hear me.

I did that and I was driven to Children's Hospital where Stephanie died later that night.

The grief that I felt was so intense. The shock was incredible. This couldn't be happening. Both of my children were dead.

I remember the newspaper reporter who showed up at my house the next day. I had gone home to get some clean clothes and take a shower. On my way into the house she approached me. We sat on the porch and both cried and grieved as I related to her the story of the wonderful life I had spent with my children. This reporter never once stared at me with that critical look that I have seen from others. If translated into words, it would be "Men don't cry".

So often men are not allowed by society to grieve. They have to be strong for their wife and their remaining family. How many bereaved mothers have told me that "He holds it all in.

He never cries. He never talks about our dead child." They want me to meet their husband because maybe I can get him to understand it's okay to open up and feel grief.

I was fortunate that I grew up in a family where it was okay to let my feelings show. If I was beaten up by the school bully, my father and mother let me know it was okay to cry. When the first person I was really close to died, my grandmother, no one told me it wasn't alright to grieve.

And this upbringing stuck with me. If I'm in a store and Bette Midler's song "God is Watching Us From a Distance" (Stephen's favorite tune to sing) comes on, I've given myself permission to cry, right then and there. If I read a poem that touches me, I've given myself permission to let it all out. And if I hear about the death of another child, I've given myself permission to feel my grief all over again.

The only thing bad about men grieving is that society looks down on us because we are not "strong". After losing both my children, I really don't care what society thinks. Less than one percent of them have had a child die—and that one percent understands my feelings. The rest of them don't. And, God willing, they never will.

If you are a man and having a hard time allowing yourself to grieve, look at your inner being. Are you better because you haven't grieved? Or are you worse? Have your feelings of frustration from not grieving affected your relationship with your spouse or remaining children?

Our deceased children would, no doubt want us to accomplish something meaningful with our lives. They would want us to go on living.

Maybe it is time to grieve so that we can move on with our lives.

~ Wayne Loder, TCF/Lakes Area, MI
In Memory of his children, Stephanie and Stephen Loder

Treasured

What I love most is
Waking to the dew of
The grass upon my boots
What I love most is
Smelling the end of
The day upon
My shirt, holding
My child
What I love most is
Something I don't see
Everyday or smell or
Touch
What I do love most is
The memories of those
Moments if only buried in
My dreams

~ Scott Newport, TCF/Royal Oak, MI

You give yourself permission to grieve by recognizing the need for grieving.

Grieving is the natural way of working through the loss of a love.

Grieving is not weakness, nor absence of faith.

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired or sneezing when your nose itches.

It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

~ Doug Manning

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
KEVIN SCOTT COWDEN.....	49.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
RILEY MARK DAHLBERG	20.....	BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG
JULIE M ERICKSON.....	54.....	JANET ERICKSON
JARRED FALLER.....	37.....	CONNIE JOHNSON
BRADLEY KARL GRABER.....	60.....	CONNIE GRABER
WANDA (HINTZ) HAGEN.....	50.....	DARLENE SIMONSON
HAZEL JANE HALL.....	6.....	JORDAN UST & NATHAN HALL
DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER	55.....	MARK & HELLA HELFTER
MARC T HENDERSON.....	55.....	TOM & LINDA HENDERSON
VICKY HOLWEGER.....	70.....	ROSEMARY FESKE
DOUGLAS C HUDSON II	33.....	DOUG & SUE HUDSON
JACOB LABER.....	37.....	DEBRA LABER
GAIL DIANE LARSON	65.....	DALE & MARILYN LARSON
AHNA MEHUS	21.....	WENDY & JAMES MEHUS
STEVEN J NEWARK JR.....	41.....	JANET & JOHN OURADNIK
ELIJAH ORVIK.....	23.....	KIRSTEN ORVIK
RACHEL PAYNE.....	60.....	BETTY KARAIM
ASHLEY PERRINE.....	32.....	BRAD & BRENDA MERGENS
CHERYL L SAMSON.....	60.....	PATRICIA SAMSON
DOUG E SCHENCK	59.....	HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK
ADAM JOSEPH SNYDER.....	40.....	ANNE SNYDER
LARISSA UNGER.....	32.....	JON & CYNTHIA UNGER

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
JONATHAN C BERG.....	13.....	CLINTON & CARMEN BERG
DEREK R CHURCH	4.....	KELLY CHURCH
WILLIAM "BILL" COWDEN	9.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
ISSAC JEREMY ENGELSTAD	5.....	SETH & DEVI ENGELSTAD
JOHNNY LEVI GREY	4.....	DOERAE PRANTE
HAZEL JANE HALL.....	6.....	JORDAN UST & NATHAN HALL
MASON HAMRE.....	1.....	CHRIS & CHRISTINE HAMRE
KENT ALAN HANSEN	7.....	DOUGLAS HANSEN
KATHRYN "KATIE" HANSON	4.....	JEANETTE & DENNIS HOLLAND
ERIK HINZPETER.....	4.....	JOHN & LEANN RINDT
CHASE HRON	4.....	MICHAEL & STACEY HRON
SCOTT LIMA.....	2.....	MARGARET LIMA
ALIVIA PAIGE MORTENSON	4.....	DANIELLE MORTENSON
RYAN DEAN NELSON.....	24.....	BECKY NELSON
CHARLES "CHUCK" NELSON.....	5.....	RAVENIA NELSON
LOGAN F RINKE	8.....	PAULINE RINKE
TRAVIS JON MICHAEL ROBINSON.....	5.....	LARRY & MARY LEE ROBINSON
JOSEPH PETER ROEL	16.....	BOB & SANDI ROEL
DANE DONOVAN SAYERS.....	2.....	DALE & BONNIE SAYERS
TYLER JAMES THOEMKE.....	20.....	JAMIE & SHERI THOEMKE

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.

SIBLING PAGE

WE WON'T FORGET YOU

We won't forget you.
Every night before we sleep,
We say a little prayer,
In hopes that when we're sent to heaven
We will find you there.
If only you could send a signal,
A bright shining star above, a quiet little whisper,
A laugh or a cry,
A signal of your love.
If only you could be here
To sing and say your cute little rhymes
To be here when we're saddened for you
To help us through our troubling times
To be here when we need a hug,
Or to see your big bright smile shine through.
Not being able to hear your laugh
Just makes us feel so blue.
For anyone else it's hard to understand
Just what we are feeling inside,
But as long as we pray and know you
Here, in our hearts you'll always abide.
~ Rhonda Desormeau, TCF/Prince Albert, SK
(Rhonda lost her youngest sister to leukemia, in 1991, just 1
year after being diagnosed.)

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.
At some time everyone is angry at the person who dies.
Anger does not mean you loved them less, it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.
I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?
Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.
Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.
This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents.
Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.
All of a sudden, I burst into tears and cannot control crying.
You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.
I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.
You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

This Healing Journey
An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

On Sibling Grief from a Grieving Sibling

I am a surviving sibling. Fifteen months ago I was not even familiar with the term...now I am one! How am I doing? What are the guidelines to measure my progress? Why can't I remember when I was told of my brother's death...or the days following the accident for that matter? Did I go crazy? Was it yesterday, or was it over a year ago? Did I laugh just today when I never thought I would laugh again? What is this peaceful feeling that I feel from time to time? Is it healing?

Lee, 29, was my little brother. I remember trying to alternately protect or tease him, make him laugh or make him cry. He was like having a real live baby doll to play with since I was 10 years older than he. (Our Mother said he was the cleanest little boy in the neighborhood. I guess having 3 older sisters is the reason for that!!!)

How can I explain the pain I felt on learning of his accident. I wanted to go to him right away to see that he was OK, but our cousin, Judy, said that wasn't possible. I guess that was when I was told that he was dead...but I don't remember that. I only remember screaming.

When was it that I began to heal? Probably at the same time that I thought I was going totally, certifiably crazy! Then, someone told me about The Compassionate Friends and what they did. I wondered if they could help me but doubted that they could. After all, how could they understand how much I hurt at having lost my precious baby brother or how close we had always been and how he always helped me. Why should they even care about me? But, you know what...they did help. With the help and support of this group of wonderful caring people, I am alive today and working toward a fruitful life. I will never be the same as I was before June 18, 1992, but I truly believe I have become a better person.

While Lee's life taught me so much, his death taught me some invaluable lessons. I have learned to become more aware of life and my own mortality and am more attuned to other needs. I no longer take anything for granted. I miss him terribly but take solace in the belief that he is happy in his new world and that one day we will be reunited.

Sibling grief takes a tremendous amount of time and work. Sometimes just thinking of my brother, looking at his picture, or hearing his favorite song, "God Bless America," reduces me to a teary mess. Sometimes these same things make me smile. But, I am surviving and have developed a new perspective on life. I am closer to and cherish my family more than ever and realize how very important they are. I am dedicated to helping other surviving siblings work through their grief. I pray daily for peace, not only for myself and my family, but for everyone making this journey through grief.

One thing that I have found to be most helpful during the past fifteen months of grief work has been to talk about and to be honest about my feelings. I encourage siblings (and parents) to try to hook up with a support group such as The Compassionate Friends to talk out your feelings and concerns. After all, we've already paid an extremely high price to join this group...the life of our loved one...so why not take advantage of what they have to offer.

You may even find yourself helping someone else (even though you might not believe that now.)

~ Sunday Lee Stanton, Wyoming Valley, PA

What Does It Mean?

Why do we say committed suicide? I mean, why not say she committed love or he committed laughter? Words uttered from mouths removed having never tasted it wreak a curious kind of havoc in the hearts of many survivors.

And the breach that causes such offense along with the need to stigmatize is it not more insult to our vanity, more reminder of our frailty than offense to humanity?

To die of affliction like any ailing body tattered, torn, on the brink beyond finding any link so racked with pain no option remains but we in horror that life could so test and terrified of who might be next shrink away, heaping judgments on all who've left crossing a border, taboo.

And I ask you when does one commit the act? Just how do we read the walking dead turning away from the fullness of longing that signifies a life? And how to view the random stuffing, heady diversions, walls we build around our hearts, these various numbings we engage hoping to soften the edge of pain that is the human condition.

By Kristen Spexarth

(Published in TCF's "We Need Not Walk Alone" magazine, Autumn 2008)

I BELIEVE

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge.
That myth is more potent than history.
I believe that dreams are more powerful than facts.
That hope always triumphs over experience;
That laughter is the only cure for grief.
And I believe that love is stronger than death.

~ Robert Fulgham, TCF/Boise, ID

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now – right now - it is Our Hearts that are freshly wounded and Our Hearts in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess- to swell and undermine – erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia, MI



FAMILY TIES

Every time a new person is added to the family by birth, marriage, adoption, etc., everyone begins to readjust and reorganize to new roles they must assume. Husband and wife work out the give and take necessary to establish a family system. Mothers and fathers find new roles when children enter the picture, and adjust their sleeping, eating, loving, working and being. Brothers and sisters truly learn what sharing and change are all about when a new member is added.

Everyone, in fact, becomes a changed individual in this new system. New patterns of trusting and communicating are established. Like the mobile we hang above the crib, the family works toward establishing stability; each part balances the whole.

The family mobile is susceptible to many forces of change; winds from outside and within. But blown and disturbed, each piece moves and sways until eventually the mobile becomes stabilized once again.

When one of the parts is suddenly removed, as in the death of a child, the very core is threatened. Cut off one of the parts of the mobile and it becomes frenzied, looking for stability and lost balance. It sways to and fro, bobbing and weaving, tilting up and down.

When our child dies, we are inevitably faced with this chaos in the system. How can we seek to balance our ship of life when we, as a part of that system, feel pain, confusion and imbalance? If we were the anchor before, we find ourselves adrift, unable to hold in the current. If we were the steering wheel, we begin to spin uncontrollably. The propeller shaft is bent; the spare oar is missing; there aren't enough life preservers to go around. How do you save the ship – the mobile – the family?

- Recognize the part you as an individual play in the family and work at resolving your own losses.
- Encourage the expressing of feelings in yourself and others. Know that each person grieves in his own way and at his own pace, and give them permission to do so.
- Understand that sometimes a system cannot rebalance without professional help, and seek this help if needed.
- Watch for obsessive behavior in your family, i.e. overprotectiveness, overeating, undereating, alcohol and/or drug abuse, rage and violence, etc., and offer support, sharing and help for the pain – not the behaviors.

How tragic it is when the ultimate loss, the death of a child, leads to an even greater loss; the breakdown of the family, the marriage, the individual. You, as part of the family, can work to make sure this doesn't happen.

~ Neenan, TCF/Wisconsin



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.)



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 four colors (yellow, pink, red 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.

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
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
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FARGO ND 58106

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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.