



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

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

Upcoming Meetings

March 10th

April 14th

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

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on March 24th @ Denny's
TCF FM Chapter's 16th Annual Walk to Remember - July 30, 2022

LOVE GIFTS

Anthony & Karel Varriano in memory of their son, Chad Varriano
Linda Bartsch in memory of her son, Brent Michael Bartsch
Lisa Beach & Jeff Amundson in memory of their son, Nathan Beach
Dean & Diane Bauck in memory of their son, Davin Bauck
Jim & Jody Kutter in memory of their daughter, Michelle Kutter
Choice Financial Bank Employee Donation & Match for Casual Friday
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 at the Denny's restaurant, 4437 13th Ave SW, Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday March 24th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

YOU CAN GO ON

You can shed tears that they are gone
Or you can smile because they lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that they'll come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all they've left you.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see them
Or your heart can be full of the love they've shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember them and only that they're gone
Or you can cherish their memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your eyes, be empty and turn back
Or do what they want: smile, open your eyes, love, and go on.

~ Author Unknown

Nibbling At Life's Pleasures

Most mothers I know are pretty selfless creatures. When there's not enough meat to go around, Mom takes a second helping of beans. There's probably nothing she'd rather do than iron Missy's cheerleader uniform at midnight. And why would she want a new Easter dress when the old polka dot polyester still fits? Altruism aside, every mom needs a smidgen of pleasure in her life to help maintain her sweet disposition.

To reward myself for being a hardworking wife and mother of three active boys, I allowed myself an occasional indulgence ... a long, hot bath in a tub filled to the brim, a good book (preferably one that would make me laugh), and my favorite guilty pleasure, a Skor bar. I liked to eat it a piece at a time, sucking off the chocolate before I crunched down on the tooth-jarring English toffee. If I managed to finish a Skor with fillings intact, it was a triumph. And if I could read a good book while soaking in a hot tub and munching on a Skor bar, well, life just didn't get any better.

Then one day I found out how life couldn't get any worse, when my 3-year-old son, Blake, died suddenly from meningitis. Guilt and self-hatred overwhelmed me. What kind of mother wouldn't recognize how sick her child was and rush him to the hospital? How could I have been so blind, so stupid? As his mother, he trusted me to care for him, and I let him down.

My once-carefree existence became a series of gray days followed by black, sleepless nights. I ate, but only to stay alive. I took short, cool showers, but only to get clean. I never picked up a book unless it dealt with grief. Driven by guilt, I convinced myself that I no longer deserved any of life's pleasures. Besides, how could I ever enjoy anything again with Blake gone?

One night, some months after Blake died, my husband, Jeff, left to take our boys to basketball practice. The dishes were done, the house was spotless, and the long, empty evening loomed ahead of me. I went into the bedroom, flopped on the bed and curled up with the cat. On the nightstand I spotted a book a friend had given me. "*Funny*," she had said. "*A great read.*" Well, it wasn't a grief book so I wasn't interested. Idly, I picked it up anyway and read the first page. Before I knew it, I was hooked. Suddenly, I heard a strange sound, somewhere between a hack and a hoot. The cat jumped and looked at me in alarm. I had laughed! It was a creepy, creaky laugh, rusty from months of disuse, but a laugh nonetheless. Did I just have fun? Yipes! I couldn't do that! I snapped the book shut and shoved it under the bed.

The next morning I took a shower as usual, only this time I lingered for three minutes instead of two and I turned the temperature up a notch so it was almost warm. I dressed and headed for the grocery store, where I careened down the aisles grabbing stuff from the shelves and trying not to look at the treats I used to buy for Blake. While reaching for a package of sugarless gum at the checkout, I caught sight of a display of Skor bars. I quickly looked away, but to my amazement, a Skor bar leaped onto the conveyor belt with my other groceries. Before I could put it back, the sacker had bagged it and it was mine.

I broke the speed limit getting home, dashed inside, and guiltily pitched the Skor bar on the highest shelf of the pantry. Later, when I opened the pantry to get a can of tuna for my lunch, a small voice from above called out, "Pat, oh Pat, I'm here. Come and get me." I slammed the door and started furiously chopping pickles for tuna salad. But the voice in the pantry became more insistent. "Pat, I'm here and I'm delicious!" A Skor-deprived woman can only stand so much. I flung open the pantry, stood on tiptoe, snatched the talking Skor bar, and ripped the wrapper open with my teeth. In a frenzy, I broke off a piece and popped it in my mouth. Hungrily, I sucked the chocolate off and crunched down on the rock-hard toffee. Lord, it was good! To my amazement, the heavens didn't open and swallow me.

Lightning didn't strike me dead. For the first time in months, I REALLY enjoyed myself! I chucked the tuna back on the shelf and piece by piece, I relished the rest of the Skor bar. Then, with chocolaty fingers, I grabbed a handful of Cheetos and a couple of Oreos, and washed them down with a Yoohoo. It was the best lunch I'd had in months.

Later, as I was putting clean towels in the linen closet, I heard a familiar voice echoing from the bathtub, "Pat, I've missed you. Wouldn't a hot bath feel good? Why don't you fill me up?" Trying not to be alarmed that voices were orchestrating my behavior, I obediently ran hot water in the tub, but only half-full. I didn't want to go overboard. Peeling off my clothes, I hopped in. And as I sank into the heavenly, steamy water, I closed my eyes and thought of Blake. He knew how to live! He packed more living into three years than some people do into thirty. He ran faster, climbed higher, laughed louder than any little kid I ever knew. He savored life, every aspect of it. No nibbling at life for him! He broke it off in chunks and devoured it.

Right now, because of my grief, I could only nibble at life's pleasures. But I knew Blake wouldn't want me to live a guilt-ridden, joyless life. He would want me to buy a SIX-PACK of Skor bars, fill the tub to the brim with the hottest water, grab a good book, and soak and eat and read until the water turned cool and I was all pruny.

And, by golly, some day I'd do just that. *For Blake. For Blake's mommy.*

~Patricia Butler Dyson, TCF/Beaumont, TX We Need Not Walk Alone, Fall 2000

Feed the Cat?

My son is dead—and you expect me to feed the cat? Isn't it amazing how society is so rigid in their expectations? There are rules you know ...steps we must all take..." Whoever set these standards obviously has never lost a child, the core of your heart and soul. It just doesn't work that way.

Simple every day tasks are impossible to complete. The only constant in your upside down world is pain, unlike any pain you have ever known. Shortly after your child's death, you are expected to return to your job, take care of your household, pay the bills, and yes, feed the cat! It has been a year for me, since I lost my son, and I still go blank mid act. I stand in a store with no idea what I came in for, or I cry over bananas because Lee loved them. I can go from laughter to tears in 1.1 seconds.

The Compassionate Friends has been a life saver (or perhaps a heart saver) for me. Only those who have experienced the same heartache will understand when you say I need to be alone, but I can't stand to be alone! Each grieving parent must heal in his or her own way, in his or her own time. One step forward, 15 back, spin around and start over, only to repeat the same progress, one step forward, 15 back, spin around... You get the picture. But you don't have to heal alone. You need not walk alone. Join us, we know you're not crazy—just a grieving parent. We do care.

~ Ann, TCF/Roseburg, OR

Dormant Anger Erupts Unexpectedly

Over three years ago, just 15 months after my son was killed in a traffic accident, a Dodge Ram dual cab truck that was traveling at 55 miles per hour when it ran a stop sign struck the vehicle I was driving. The front end of my car was ripped from the frame, the hood was crumpled and car spun from the impact. The other driver was cited for running the stop sign. A very credible witness gave his statement. Three months later I had neck surgery for the injuries sustained in the accident. The facts were simple in my mind. He ran the stop sign. I stopped. He was negligent. His insurance company paid for my car that was totaled but stopped talking to me when the adjuster heard about the necessary surgery that was performed a month later.

Mediation failed. The defense postponed the trial eleven times. The attorneys for the defendant's two insurance companies dug in. Delay, deny, debate...the mantra of all defense attorneys now became my reality.

Finally we had a court date. The players knew their lines...the diminutive judge whose campaign election funds are donated by the attorneys who practice in his court, the four well-dressed defense attorneys, my attorney and his associate...all knew the rules. All played the game well. This was their theater, their play, and their world. I was not happy with the pre-trial instructions that ruled out much of the evidence. But I wanted my day in court. I'd served on many juries, but I had never seen this side of the courtroom. It was a revelation.

All went fairly well with the testimony of the eyewitness and the policeman who had handled the accident scene. Then it was my turn. My attorney began asking me questions and suddenly, out of somewhere in my soul, anger akin to a long dormant volcano arose. I repressed it after my attorney asked me if I was angry. That was my hint: be sweet, be likeable, Harris County juries are notorious for stingy awards. I settled back down until the louder of the six defense attorneys began asking his carefully prepared questions.

I spoke over him. I responded with no small amount of hostility. He baited me, and I swallowed the hook. The volcano unleashed. I raised my voice, became animated in my anger and finally drew the judge's wrath. I even interrupted the judge to say I was sorry. The judge raised his voice to top volume, berating me for failing to answer the questions in a single word, for continuing to respond while the defense attorney was talking. The judge gestured wildly at the court reporter, explaining that she couldn't write the words of two people at one time. Someone who was very important in his own world had chastised me. But more significantly, I had discovered something about myself: the anger that had erupted from within me like a volcano was not caused by the accident, the neck surgery, the legal-eagle games, the courtroom setting or the judicial stage.

I discovered that the repressed anger that I had managed to contain for over 4 1/2 years was still alive and well. Much was learned that day by this bereaved mother. As the volcano of anger erupted, the truth was so apparent to me that I smiled at my naivety.

Since my son's death, I have intentionally placed myself in situations where the people are gentle, positive, upbeat, balanced and not aggressive and violent in their actions or words. Subconsciously I knew that my anger was still there, and I didn't want to tempt the fates; the anger caused by the death of my only child was not going away. Now it had become apparent that my anger had to be addressed. So I brought it to the forefront of my mind as my husband and I drove home. I examined it closely, seeking an answer.

Sitting quietly that evening I realized that my anger has surfaced from time to time since my son died but never in such a nerve jolting eruption. When I realized the depth and scope of that anger, when I acknowledged its existence, when I faced it down, the volcano quietly went back to simmer. I must be very careful about quick retorts, actions without thought, words spoken in haste. I must be conscious of my anger during the process of releasing that anger in a gradual way. One day the anger volcano will become dormant.

Our grief journeys are life-long. I will always feel the many emotions that accompany the death of my only child. But each emotion has moderated over the years. My anger will be less raw, just as the other negative emotions and feelings have become less pronounced over time. Actively identifying each enemy that lives in my psyche has enabled me to address it. Negativity cannot fester when exposed to the light of hope. And, yet, I must always remember that I am still a work in progress. We are all a work in progress.

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

Rosebush Full of Blooms

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms: it receives the same amounts of food and water from the earth, of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside it. It has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its petals and fragrance and color for the world to see.

But for some reason, once in a while, a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault, nor the fault of the rose. So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, the best efforts of the gardener, the best possibilities for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its growth for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss, not for the loss of a promising rosebud, whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment. In the midst of our grieving, we can remember the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that was shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

~ Ernestine Clark, TCF/Oklahoma City, OK

GRIEF

When a storm of grief grows in the heart; reach back to yesterday to catch onto your memories.
The storm will calm and, for a brief moment, the lost feeling of happiness will shine through and through.

~ Lori Pollard, TCF/Montgomery, AL

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
BRENT M BARTSCH.....	40.....	LINDA BARTSCH
JOHNNY LEVI GREY	41.....	DOERAE PRANTE
TAMARA JO "TAMMY" HINES	57.....	SHARON COOK
JOHN CLAYTON JACKSON JR	74.....	NORMA JACKSON
DARIN M KLABO	38.....	CRAIG & TERRY KLABO
ISIAH KUJANSON	22.....	ARNE & SHAWNA KUJANSON
MICHELLE KUTTER	33.....	JIM & JODY KUTTER
GREGORY MICKELSON.....	67.....	ROSELLA MICKELSON
ZAYNE WILLIAM MALHEIM OLAFSON....	13.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
JAMIE CLIFFORD OLSON	44.....	GLENNIS OLSON
ANNIKA LORRAINE QUALLEY	11.....	RHONDA & MICHAEL QUALLEY
ROY DANA RICHMOND.....	57.....	THOMAS & AUDREY RICHMOND
JESSE SKOW	41.....	KRISTI & JASON MCSPARRON
CARLA RAE TRUITT	58.....	LORETTA KEISACKER
CHAD VARRIANO.....	50.....	ANTHONY & KAREL VARRIANO
ROBIN VIGDAL-HOSLER.....	51.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
PAIGE WIGHTMAN.....	32.....	DAVID & MICHELLE WIGHTMAN
MELINDA JOY WINTERROTH.....	40.....	MONTY & JOANNE WINTERROTH

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
RUSS T BOYLE.....	1.....	TOM & CHERYL BOYLE
NANCY PRATT COASH.....	18.....	PATRICIA PRATT
KEVIN SCOTT COWDEN.....	4.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
JUSTIN L DIETRICH.....	4.....	TRACY & CAROL DIETRICH
STEVEN "HERMAN" FESKE.....	4.....	ROSEMARY FESKE
COREY ALEN FLEISCHFRESSER.....	2.....	ANNETTE & SCOTT ENGEN
JAYSON P HAUGEN.....	5.....	PAULETTE HAUGEN
DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER	18.....	MARK & HELLA HELFTER
KEVIN GENE HUELSMAN	1.....	EMMA HUELSMAN
TODD ALLAN JOHNSON.....	7.....	ANN JOHNSON
MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON	22.....	JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
STEVEN J NEWARK JR.....	4.....	JANET & JOHN OURADNIK
JARAD NILLES	10.....	CAROLYN NILLES
ZAYNE WILLIAM MALHEIM OLAFSON....	13.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
AMANDA LEA PERKINS	3.....	DWIGHT & MARLENE PERKINS
CONNER SANDER.....	3.....	KELLY SANDER
LAURIE SATHER.....	3.....	PEGGY BULLIS
JEFFREY M WEBBER.....	5.....	JUANITA WEBBER

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

SIBLING PAGE

Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't. The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend. While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of sibling are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

~ Jane Machado, TCF/Tulare, CA

Washing the Family Car

As the water began to bead across the hard black surface, my mind slipped into a memory. Back to a time when a smile could fix the pain and mortality was not questioned. You and I played during the dreary task of washing the family car. Rinsing turned into a water fight. Soapy sponges became weapons, and upside down buckets served as our fortress.

This dull chore became an adventure, a game shared only by you and I. Drenched, the giggles slowly subsided and we turned to complete the more serious side of our labor. We began to dry off the car. As the memory faded, so did my smile. With forlorn my mind came back to the present. I had my own serious task to complete

So I picked up a towel to dry off your headstone.

~ Adele Rosales, TCF/Ventura, CA
In memory of my sister, Anita

I Wish

I wish I could say that it gets easier. I wish it GOT easier. The good news is that it does get easier to recognize when it will be difficult. The passage of time, the repetition of holidays and of certain event, having gone though those occasions before lessens the anticipation. I'm also a lot better at letting people know what I need from them. And more importantly, what I don't.

~ Jordon Ferber, Russell's brother

My Time to Go Home

It was my time, the time for me
to go back home to be free.

A time for me to learn to fly,
with new wings above the sky.
The angels came to guide my way,
making sure I did not stray.

So many things to see up here,
I'm much at peace, I have no fear.

I see many people that I know,
all from the world I lived below.

I hear the bells when they ring,

I dance with the angels when they sing.
I know you miss me, and I miss you all
But I had to leave when I heard them call.

Please don't cry, I am so free,
try to be happy, Please for me.

I see you all from up above,
I continue to give you my eternal love.

My journey here has just begun,
I'm living my dreams I left undone.

Life is quick, you must live yours now,
I can't do it for you or tell you how.

But listen to these words, they come from my heart
they will help to ease the pain while we're apart.

We will meet again, face to face
only this time in a better place.

So you see, it was my time, it was his plan,
I was sent to learn lessons, and return when I can

Now it's time for me to move on,

But I'm always around you, I will never be gone.

And someday, you too will see,
this beautiful home made for you and me.

By Lisa McQuade for her brother, Bobby
We Need Not Walk Alone - Summer 2004

Why Can't I Let Go

You were always my hero. I always wanted to be like you.
You were my younger brother, Still, I always looked up to you.

You were always there for me, even when things were at
their worst. You helped me through my hardest trials,
And we always made it through.

Now as I sit here, writing these words, remembering you and
times gone by, I'm trying to say good-bye.

Nineteen years are just too many, to just let you go,

I can't believe you're gone, you died, and left me here alone.

Some days I'm fine, some days I'm low, but most days, I just
miss you so. It was you and me, but now, what do I do?

Each night I ask why?

Why I'm so angry?

Why I can't cry?

Why I can't let you go?

I know we'll see each other again, but the years seem so long.
I long for the day I'll see you again. Waiting for me with open
arms.

Brother, I love you and miss you so.

But now I need you most.

This time in my life is oh so hard,

I just can't let you go.

~ Stephen Welch, TCF/St Louis, MO

Healing with Humor

Laughter is not a part of everybody's life, so it is easy to accidentally offend someone with humor. Bereaved parents, especially the newly bereaved, do not feel like laughing; their joy in life has gone. Laughing seems so trivial to them, they can easily be offended. Some bereaved parents feel guilty about humor and laughter. They feel they have no right to joy because their child is dead. Appearing joyous can bring condemnation from society, not to mention your spouse, for appearing to not care. People may think, surely if you are laughing you did not love your child as much as I love mine. The truth is, joy makes life better. Joyous talk and laughter do not show disrespect, they show that healing is taking place. If you laughed with your child while they lived, it is OK to someday laugh with your child again. Your dear child has never left your heart and their spirit would surely rather fill your heart with joy than sorrow.

An Image of Grief

I am a tree, standing alone in the early winter. I feel cold, empty, gray and ugly. The winds of grief have ripped away a branch and have left me unbalanced – with a great gaping hole. The sap of my innermost being rushes to the hole to provide a balm for the pain of the open wound. The icy cold rain of my weeping falls through the shaking of my boughs. I continue to sway in the harsh gales of reality, and the keening of the winds are the voice of my heartaches. But.....

Under the ground there is life. Each root of love, friendship, care, family and faith is feeding into the trunk, and I know for a certainty that surely spring will come again! The bark of time will cover the rending wound. The scar will always be there, but the drain on my heart will be over. The leaves will burst forth and gently surround the wound with breezes of loving memories and promises of life to come. My boughs will be heavy with the wonder of living. Nestled near the scarred trunk, secure in the knowledge that God is my refuge and strength, the sweet bird of happiness will sing again.

~ Anita King, TCF/Hagerstown MD

TO SEE THE GOLD

Autumn's here, when trees turn to gold,
It's the prettiest time of the year I'm told.
Then, I think back, Denny, to that September day,
When all of a sudden you were taken away.
That's when the color left the trees, for me,
And grief set in and I could not see.
But, now that years have passed, my Son,
The memories of you are happier one's
Even, the color of the trees,
Are beginning to unfold.
Now, I know someday soon,
I may see the gold.

~ Gwen Kearns, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

ANGEL BY MY SIDE

I hear a whisper in my ear.
It speaks of love without a tear.
I feel an aura next to me. A gentle peace I cannot see.
It sends a shiver down my spine.
Because this I know, is an angel of mine.

~ Jana Houg

A Father Returns to Work

After Kathy died, I, of course, went back to work. Some of my co-workers made the stop at my desk to express their sympathy. I know I turned them off, as my pain and my denial were so great. I could not talk about what had happened and how I felt. I thanked them. Although nobody ever talked to me about it, that was okay as my pain was such. I thought, I could not bear to talk. I threw myself into my work and on occasion was confused because I could not make the kind of decisions I had been making for years. I never made the connection that this inability to concentrate was part of my grief and was normal.

Lunch was the worst time. My habit was to eat with my associates, but often in the middle of the meal I would just have to get up and walk away. Although nobody ever said anything to me about this odd behavior, I do thank them at least for their tolerance. Slowly I readjusted (I thought) and in time (a long time) I was able to perform well again. But I never really grieved until I found THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS and it was here that people helped me to talk. It was almost twelve years before I found TCF as there was no such organization in 1967. My friends, let TCF help you...don't wait twelve years to talk!

~ Bill Ernmatinger, TCF/Baltimore. MD

Holding Onto Love

Trees and flowers seem suddenly reborn,
As another spring arrives fresh and new,
Surrounded by such beauty, My thoughts turn to you.
As another college graduation looms,
Great excitement fills the air,
Glancing at the smiling students,
I still search for strawberry blonde hair,
No matter what I do in life You are always there,
I feel your presence constantly,
As each new experience we share.
Though physically, you have left us,
Your love remains here to stay,
A bond so strong and nourishing,
It gets us through another day.

~ Chuck Collins, TCF/Burke/Springfield/Fairfax Chapter

The Water Lily

A lonely young wife in her dreaming discerns
A lily-decked pool with a border of ferns
And a beautiful child, with butterfly wings,
Trips down to the edge of the water and sings;
"Come, mamma, come! Quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water Lily!"
And the lonely young wife, her heart beating wild,
Cries, "Wait till I come, till I reach you, my child!"
But the beautiful child with butterfly wings
Steps out on the leaves of the lily and sings;
"Come, mamma, come! Quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water Lily!"
And the wife in her dreaming steps out on the stream
But the lily leaves sink and she wakes from her dream.
Ah, the waking is sad, for the tears that it brings,
For she knows it's her dead baby's spirit that sings;
"Come, mamma, come! Quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water Lily!"
"Come, mamma, come! Quick, follow me!
And step on the leaves of the water Lily!"

~ Henry Lawson

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

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

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



“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.

Life is a cycle - part of a whole, and death is part of life.

Nature can be very healing for our spirits and souls. Many of us have had experiences that draw us closer to nature for healing. It seems so much easier to feel closer to God in the great outdoors. In the days after my son's death, I found myself drawn to the outdoors by digging and cleaning the flowerbeds and feeling the moist fragrant earth beneath my fingers. It seemed to ease my intense pain and shock. Others viewed my behavior as strange, but at this point I realized that my healing would come from Nature. I needed the assurance that life does renew itself even in the face of death.

That summer I found myself hiking on the Colorado Monument every chance that I had. I would lie on the rocks and feel the heat come up through my body and warm me. That winter I would cross-country ski on the top of the grand Mesa. The quietness was almost deafening and the only sound was the singing of the birds as they perched on the bare branches of the trees. The snow glistened in the sun and felt crisp beneath our skis. The stillness and openness would work its magic on my tortured soul and a peace would fill me.

When we moved from Colorado to North Carolina, my black lab and I took many enjoyable walks in the numerous rural parks. Having always lived in the West with its desert terrain and scarcity of trees and greenery, the abundance of trees and greenness was overwhelming and stifling until we became accustomed to it. While walking through a dense ceiling of branches, we came upon an area where the trees had been cleared. On one side was a fenced area and as we approached, I saw many graves. Some had headstones and many just had large rocks with writing on them. On closer inspection, I realized that this was a cemetery for the children of two families in the 1800's. The ages ranged from infants to 18 years of age and there were over a dozen. I remember that it gave me such a feeling of sadness and grief, but also of being connected, as I felt such a bond with these parents who had also suffered the loss of children. This somehow lessened my own loneliness and I realized that life was indeed a cycle and that we are all part of the whole. Life does keep renewing itself. Think of all the children who had been born since these had died.

Life is constantly renewing itself. The tender new leaves on the barren trees, the crocus, tulips and daffodils poking up through the earth represent new life and springtime. My son died in the spring, but it is still my favorite time of year and in the succeeding years I have learned that Life does indeed renew itself each spring regardless of how dead and lifeless I may be feeling.

~ Reneé Little, TCF/Salt Lake City, UT

Getting Better

My tears feel warm on my cheeks now— Not burning hot.

Is this a sign I'm "getting better"? When I cry now I am almost often alone.

In the car, in the shower. Or sometimes taking a walk. I do not cry in public or feel as much panic.

Is this a sign I'm "getting better"? I sleep the night through sometimes

And awaken without tears—for awhile. They come now while I'm brushing my teeth. Or making coffee

And are always gone before I say "Good morning." Is this a sign "I'm getting better"?

Yes, I think so—but when does the pain end? Perhaps when I no longer ask Is this a sign I'm "getting better"?

~ Shirley Blakely Curle, TCF/Central Arkansas

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
 OF THE F-M AREA
 PO BOX 10686
 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
Librarian	Contact Us to Volunteer		

LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

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

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

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

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____

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