



# The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

## April 2020

Volume XXXIII Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**March 27th** marked 36 years since our daughter's death. It is and it seems like a long time ago. And yet memories of those last days and moments of her life and saying goodbye remain crystal clear even all these years later. This year we discovered that one of our new friends in Michigan was born on the day that Anna died. As we were saying our wrenching goodbyes to our little daughter, his parents were welcoming their first-born son. How odd to think of our tears of sorrow and theirs of joy happening at the same time.

There is a lot of uncertainty in the world and in all of our lives these days. No one really has a good idea of what tomorrow will bring. As we socially isolate, we try to find ways to encourage the people who are part of our world. So Friday afternoon, we baked some muffins, signed a card, created a sign and drove over to our friend's house. At a socially appropriate distance, we sang a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday." We laughed together and look forward to the day we can give him a belated birthday hug. On a day that could have been filled with wistful remembrance, we celebrated our friend's life. That was truly a special gift.

For those of you whose grief is more recent, the current chaos in our world is probably making your grief journey much more challenging. We have included an article this month about ways your grief may feel worse or be more intense right now because of the COVID-19 virus. We encourage you to find people you can reach out to via phone or text or online chats. Even with social isolation, you do not need to walk through grief by yourself.

Sincerely,  
Carol and Jerry Webb

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# Bereavement is

a lonely place, even within a close marriage. No two people are alike. Each of us grieves in a unique manner. We often seek support from our spouse, the other person bearing a burden equal to our own. We often feel anger and abandonment when that support is not forthcoming. We sometimes feel our spouse is not even grieving or did not love the child as we did. This situation can become extremely stressful for both partners and the marriage. In light of failed marriage statistics among bereaved couples, grief is a time to be non-judgmental toward our spouses. It is extremely important for each to give



the other “permission” to grieve in his or her own way, regardless of how it may differ from our own. It is wise to remember that we love our spouses, but considerable recovery time may be needed for each to grieve in a private and unique way. Judgments do not help when dealing with another person whose battered emotions are as frail as our own.

Dennis Klass

## Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a beloved child, and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Thanks to:

**Jerry and Carol Webb, in memory of their daughter, Anna.**

**Donations** are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue. **If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**



## **In the Springtime of Your Grief**

Spring has fragile beginnings: a tiny shoot of green that emerges from the cold earth, a hint of pastel against the brownish grass, a bud that awakens with the morning sun. Sometimes spring comes so quietly we almost miss it, but once it begins, it is impossible to ignore the daily growth and change. The morning sun brings sounds that were not there before. The breeze carries warmth that invites us to venture outside of ourselves. A promise is released with the budding and blossoming surrounding us. Hope emerges for the beginning of a new season; change is in the air.

What we experience in the springtime of the year is what we experience in the springtime of our grief. There begins to be a glowing radiance. The radiance is not just around us; it is within us. A gradual warming of the heart silences the chill of intense pain. The natural unfolding of the grief process moves gently to remind us that we will survive. Life is changing and growth emerges through the changes. The song of our heart that seems off key begins to experience a harmonious blend of the past and the present. The songs of the birds invite us to sing. It will be a song we have composed through the heartache of loss. Optimism for a better day may

awaken us one morning. Hearing laughter and realizing that it is coming from ourselves gives us promise for today. Dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow shine brightly with the morning sun.

Surviving the winter of our grief with the openness to embrace change is a decision to embrace loss and integrate its impact into the fabric of our lives. It can be a willingness to explore new possibilities that create a different landscape to behold. We can make a decision that we will begin to appreciate what we still have, not focus on what is missing. We will know when we have made that decision. Something buds; something opens. The harshness of winter is softened with new life and new growth. It is not something we can force; it is something that unfolds when the time is right.

The springtime of grief arrives with no dramatic entrance, no flashing lights. The stillness of the beauty unfolds and captures our attention. It is happening around us, but it is also happening in us. If spring has already crossed the path of your personal journey of grief, rejoice! But if the chill of winter remains in your heart, be encouraged; spring is on its way. Look for it, expect it, and it will be yours to experience around you and in you!

**Judi Fisher, Cleveland, Ohio**

## **Spring is Coming**

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your “first” spring, you may be surprised at some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear much about the beauty of spring – the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my “first” year, I expected that spring would cheer me up and make me

feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days that life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was in “the pits.” When a friend said to me, “Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?” I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day – that sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

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**TCF's Facebook Page** is a proven support area for bereaved family members to



come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

**Closed Facebook Groups:** The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

## The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (877)969-0010.

**email:**

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Website:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Visit the **sibling resource** page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

It is also available to read online without charge.

**e-Newsletter Now Available!**

An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.



## About The Compassionate Friends

**The Compassionate Friends** is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

**TCF National Office**

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Web site –

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

**Mission Statement**

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is that 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.

**Vision Statement**

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

## Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<b>TCF's Grief Related Webinars</b>	<p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx">http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx</a>. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <b>TCF e-Newsletter</b> is also available from the National Office — to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
<b>Grief Materials</b>	<p>Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for — or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
<b>Amazon.com</b>	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<b>Alive Alone</b>	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</p>
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="https://bereavedparentsusa.org">https://bereavedparentsusa.org</a>.</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai at <a href="mailto:climb@climb-support.org">climb@climb-support.org</a>. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

## **Eight Reasons Why Your Grief Feels Worse Right Now**

If your grief feels worse right now, you are not alone! There are a lot of reasons it is totally normal that a crisis can make grief feel worse.

### **Your bandwidth was already low.**

Grief can take everything you have, especially in the earliest days. When a crisis hits and you are already depleted, all of a sudden everything becomes more challenging. Things you could have managed before your loss feel insurmountable now. Aspects of your grief that you were managing before the stress or crisis suddenly seem seven times as tricky to manage.

### **The person who died was your ROCK.**

You might be grieving a person who took care of you. Maybe it is the person who handled practicalities and logistics. Perhaps who checked in on you to make sure you were okay. It could have been the person who made you feel safe. If this is your situation, you're likely feeling even more acutely aware of their absence than ever. With that, your anxiety might be spiking.

### **You're feeling especially alone.**

*Grief is almost always an insulating experience.* Layer on that quarantine and your feelings of loneliness might be skyrocketing. If you are living alone after your loss, no longer having contact with people by getting out of the house can start to feel like a crushing weight (especially for those

extroverts out there).

### **You're acutely aware that you're living through this thing your loved one probably never could have imagined.**

Hmmm...that's clearly a weird one to sum up. But if you get it, you get it. This is a scary and surreal time. Most of us have not lived through anything like this. And there is just this weird thing in grief that happens at moments like this when you realize the world



feels fundamentally changed and it is a world your loved one never lived in. It makes us strangely more aware of the

passage of time and that the world keeps turning.

### **You're not thinking about your loved one because of the current crisis.**

In our emails and comments, we have seen a couple of themes. One is "I am thinking about my loved one all the time." We'll get to that. The other is "I am so overwhelmed by the current crisis that I am barely thinking of my loved one or my grief." The latter seems to be bringing up a lot of guilt for some people. We won't tell you not to feel guilty, because that's not how guilt works. We will tell you that it is totally normal if your brain doesn't seem to be making space for your grief. Our brains can only handle so much and sometimes, in a self-protective way, *they start triaging.* They compartmentalize things for us,

so we can focus on a pressing matter at hand. If this keeps up long term, it is something worth spending some time with. But give it some time for your acute stress response from this current crisis to settle down.

**You're annoyed everyone is complaining about stuff your grief has had you coping with for weeks/ months/years.**

Are your friends suddenly complaining about isolation and feelings of uncertainty about the future? Does it sound a lot like what you've been coping with for a long time? Are these things your friends haven't historically been sympathetic about? Hopefully this isn't coming up for you, but we have heard loud and clear that it is coming up for some people. It isn't that you don't empathize with your friends. Quite the opposite, in fact. You empathize deeply. It might just feel a little annoying that it took something like this for them to empathize with you.

**You're thinking about your loved one. A lot.**

Research has shown that we don't just want and miss our loved ones during the good times. We actually really want and miss them in bad times. In times of pain, stress, crisis, and indecision, we often think of and want to be close to the person who died. We imagine what they would have said or done. We find strength in things they taught us. It is actually something that most people find helpful and comforting. But that doesn't change that it can also bring up tough, bittersweet feelings.

**You're imagining that everything would just be better if they were still here.**

Don't get me wrong. We do this all the time in grief. But we ESPECIALLY do it when the going gets tough. When life is hard, we often go back to the moment our loved one died and we think, "If only they were still here, everything would be so much better." Now, they would be alive, so that would obviously be better. Even if you were trapped at home fighting. Even if it was the same old boring day-to-day. They would be here, so that would mean a whole lot. But the extension that EVERYTHING would be better or easier...that's a different proposition. No doubt having them around would make your baseline better – you wouldn't be coping with grief and this crisis. But as for the rest, we really have no way to know what sort of "different" it would be. In philosophy and psychology, they call this *counterfactual thinking* – constructing a whole, imaginary reality around things that didn't actually happen. We imagine a world if things had gone differently. It might seem harmless enough, but if we're not aware of it, it can double-down our grief emotions. Why? Because now, instead of just coping with the stress of this crisis and desperately missing the person who died, we're also bitter or resentful or grieving this *idea* of what would have been. I know, this one is a little abstract. But if you've felt it, you probably know what I mean.

What'syourgrief.com

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

### The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Thursday, April 23, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.

Please call 309.736.6601 for information and directions on how to sign on.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Next month's meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 28, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.**

**It will be held in person if the shelter-in-place order has been lifted. Social distancing seating will still be required.**

**1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois. 6:30 pm**

#### The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine

Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at [linmac67@machlink.com](mailto:linmac67@machlink.com).

#### Rick's House of Hope

Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at [millerl@verafrenchmhc.org](mailto:millerl@verafrenchmhc.org) or go to [www.rhoh.org](http://www.rhoh.org).

#### SHARE

A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or [chalyn@shareqc.com](mailto:chalyn@shareqc.com) or [www.shareqc.com](http://www.shareqc.com).

#### Loving Listeners

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):

♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 [doug.scott@mchsi.com](mailto:doug.scott@mchsi.com)

♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 [shoeartb4@gmail.com](mailto:shoeartb4@gmail.com)

♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 [delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com](mailto:delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com)

Doug, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.

# Loss

I am here among friends, smiling at their humor and making plans for tomorrow. But there is another person, lying curled in the corner, crying out in unbelievable pain. This, too, is me.

I am doing my household chores, and routine is familiar and satisfying, a gesture toward a need for living. But there is another person, lying in bed, willing her mind a blank; not wanting to think or be. This, too, is me.

I look at a lovely spring day, a view of a world of growth and change, a world only God could make.

But that other person stares through tears with unseeing eyes, knowing there is no God. That, too, is me.

I am surrounded by my family, a gathering of love and joy and tenderness, of cherished moments and warm hugs.

But another person is there, whose arms and heart ache for one she can never hold and comfort. That, too, is me.

Blue Grass Chapter Newsletter

## Sharing Sweet Memories of Love

### 43<sup>rd</sup> TCF National Conference, July 24-26, 2020, Atlanta, Georgia

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings, and grandchildren. Details are on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#). Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

#### Contact the Editors

**If** you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.

**If** you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

**If** you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the

newsletter, send his/her/their name and address.

**If** you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.

#### Please contact:

**Jerry and Carol Webb**

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 49022

or email [CarolynPWebb@gmail.com](mailto:CarolynPWebb@gmail.com).



**As for grief** you'll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you're drowning, with wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you can do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it's some physical thing. Maybe it's a happy memory or a photograph. Maybe it's a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and don't even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After awhile, maybe weeks, maybe months, you'll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function. You never know what's going

to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything...and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life.

Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O'Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.

The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don't really want them to. But you learn that you'll survive them. And other waves will come and you'll survive them too.

**Anonymous – Seen on Facebook**

Continued from page 3  
Gradually I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work we all must do before we can "be healed." The coming of spring can't make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what

happens in our lives, nature's processes will continue and that can offer us hope. I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, the forsythia, the daffodils, and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

**Lisa Fields – TCF Bluegrass Chapter**

# Notables

I don't know if there is anything special about what I and my family have been through because so many people suffer in this world. If there is a take-away, I would hope that it is that feeling joy after loss is possible. When Meghan died, I remember feeling like I would never be happy again. But then a day came when I laughed and I realized I was feeling happy for just a few minutes. That first glimpse of joy was incredible, and soon I would be able to sustain it for longer periods until my former sense of optimism and happiness returned. Being conscious of these moments of grace and being grateful for the small things helps the process along.

-Connie Bowman, *Back to Happy: A Journey of Hope, Healing and Waking Up*

As a loss mom, I live my life every day, without. I live with joy, I live being grateful, I live with my heart full of love – *but I also live without.* In time, I may have learned how to carry my son with me more gracefully but every so often, even now, I will feel the full weight of his loss and lose myself in the misery. I will wallow in the knowing that my life will always be missing someone. Sobs of despair will come over me as I contemplate his life that was left un-lived.

-Morgan McLaverty

It's the strangest dichotomy; this tarnished life has given me confidence and maturity and has at the same time shown me how small and foolish I can be. I'm daily trying to make sense of it all, trying to figure out how to live in grief while at the same time actually live.

-Kate Merrick,  
*And Still She Laughs*

They say her birth defects were a surprise after an "uneventful" pregnancy. Was it uneventful the day we knew she was there inside - growing? How about the day we saw her little body on the ultrasound screen and fell in love with her? Was it uneventful the first time I felt her kick? Or the second? What about the day we chose her name - Meg? All those days we dreamed and hoped and loved her? These were the happiest days of our life with her. Don't tell me it was uneventful... Please.

-Felise Freeley-O'Brien,  
TCF Hingham, MA

In a time like this, there are three courses open to man: He may endeavor to drown his sorrow in drink or in a life of wickedness. Or he may turn to God. -Harry Lauder, the great Scottish comedian, after receiving word that his son had been killed in France



## *The Compassionate Friends*

*Quad City Area Chapter*

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1830 6th Avenue

Moline, Illinois 61265

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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.