



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January 2020

Volume XXXIII Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

The summer after our daughter died, our pastor announced at the beginning of worship that a young man from our congregation had died the day before in a tragic water skiing accident. I remember feeling stunned, overwhelmed by the knowledge that another mother (one I had been in a small group with) would be experiencing the painful journey of child loss. I remember wishing that no other parent would ever have to feel that kind of pain. I wished there was something I could do to make it better, even though I knew there wasn't. Jerry and I did what we could. We brought food. Jerry mowed their lawn. We shared books. We listened when they wanted to talk. We prayed for them.

Over the years we have had many opportunities to reach out to families who have lost a child. Some have been personal friends. Many we have reached out to through this newsletter, at Compassionate Friends meetings, or through our work with Marriage Encounter. Much of our healing and our growth as individuals and as a couple is because we chose to reach out and care about other people. Taking the focus off of our own pain in order to listen to and care about the pain of others is healing. One of the articles in this month's newsletter, "Reaching Out to Others" by Darcie Sims speaks to this.. Darcie says, "My own healing paralleled my involvement with others. As I continued to reach out, others reached toward me and the circle of healing expanded." Even in the depths of your grief, we encourage to consider reaching out to care about someone else in a way that is meaningful for you and them. We wish you hope and healing in the New Year.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb

Inside

New Year's Resolutions?	2
Love Gifts	
Reaching Out to Others—Grief Can Be So Isolating	3
Facebook and TCF About TCF TCF National Newsletter	4
Printing Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
New Year a Time to Search for Ray of Hope	6
She Existed.	7
Be Gentle with Yourself in Grief	
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings	8
What Makes Suicide Different.	9
Contact the Editors	
It's Okay to Grieve	10
Notables	11



New Year's resolutions?

I hear my friends resolving to lose weight, stop smoking, be better organized. My problems aren't that specific. I'll make my resolutions one day at a time – to survive that day the best way I can. Hoping that when nightfall comes, I will have felt that extra bit of strength to make it through the times when the pain cuts through like a knife.

I've come far this past year...we talk about him with ease now. His name does not bring the choking rage of tears...his memories have become precious. And most of the time I carry the pain well; when it begins to stalk me now, like an animal with its prey, I search frantically in my memory banks for the sound of his laughter and the warmth of his love. It always seems to be very near, hovering over me like a protective coating, and I whisper, "Son, I love you, please know that I love you." And he knows. That simply is all. All there ever was, and all there ever will be – LOVE. It has more dimensions now than before his death. It reaches farther than an earthly plane, and it encompasses a broader horizon. But it all began with the gift of my firstborn, Todd. And the true understanding of its strength came with the death of my firstborn, Todd. He gave me love. He gave me all.

And to all my Compassionate Friends, I wish you each day of the New Year a sense of peace, contentment, and a newfound happiness, the courage to rebuild your shattered lives, and the belief that it is possible...knowing love is forever, separation is never totally complete.

Brenda Holland, Piedmont TCF/Concord, North Carolina

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:

Kurt and Sandy Griebel, in memory of their son, Erik.

Linda Pearson, in memory of Julian Pearson, Jimmy Pearson, and Aaron Morford

Sandi & Ron Sacco, in memory of their beloved son, Anthony James Sacco

Gene and Debbie Fournier, in memory of their daughter, Kelli Mallum.

Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, on the 21st birthday of their daughter, Maggie, and 40th birthday of their niece, Beth...remembering them both.

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.**



REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Grief can be so isolating

We may find ourselves exhausted beyond our capabilities, hurt beyond endurance, and lonely beyond belief. No one seems to know what to say or how to behave around us. Many of us have discovered we are grieving not just the death of our loved one, but the loss of friendships, self-esteem, and self-identity as well.

When our loved one died, we were surrounded by people, but the silence was deafening. Hardly anyone spoke. Maybe they were afraid that death was contagious, or maybe they just didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to hear, either. As the months passed, it just grew darker, and I began to wonder if we would ever know peace, hope, or love again.

Life, as we knew it, planned it, and dreamed it, was gone. My days were filled with emptiness rather than the activities I had anticipated. I found myself unable to concentrate long enough to read or to watch a favorite TV program. I couldn't remember anything, and I began to think I had not only lost my dearest love, but my sanity as well.

I couldn't imagine living very long and even began to pray for some type of relief. The pain was understandable. The silence, however, was unbearable.

Eventually, I managed to leave the house and then I began to run—as fast and as far as I could. I believed that if I kept busy, the grief wouldn't overwhelm me. I thought I could run away from the hurt, the pain, the awful silence. (I even tried joining the circus, but they told me I cried too much.) No one understood the depths of my pain, or so I thought.

Life became something to be endured. The days and months began to accumulate, all jumbled together in an endless, faceless stream of time spent. Nothing mattered anymore. I didn't care about the seasons, the news, the weather, what I ate, what I wore, who I lived with, or who I loved. Life had been reduced to blanks and I had nothing to fill them in with.

But one afternoon, I happened to be listening to a friend recount her troubles when I found myself thinking how nice it would be if someone would just



listen to me. So, I began to really listen to her and for the next few hours, I found myself immersed in her life, not mine. My own trials and tribulations took a back seat to her needs, and as she left, she hugged me and thanked me for being so kind. She said she felt so much better, what a magic touch I had. Magic touch? Hardly! I hadn't even touched her until we hugged good-bye. All I had done was listen.

I discovered something that afternoon. I not only discovered how simple it is to listen, but I also learned that listening to someone else helped me. As this friend thanked me for helping her, I found my own burden a little easier to bear. It was as if I had been lifted slightly, unburdened for a moment. And I had been granted a few moments of breathing space. My own troubles, my own grief were still with me, but I had, for a moment, returned to

Continued on page 10

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

Visit the **sibling resource** page at

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.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

TCF Online Support Community	<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 www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	<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 http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter 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>
Grief Materials	<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 www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
Amazon.com	<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>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
Alive Alone	<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 www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.</p>
Our Newsletter	<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 climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

New Year a Time to Search for “Ray of Hope”

“Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter. Be my song to sing that guides me on my way. Be the arms that hold me. Be the love that enfolds me, be my light, Be my ray of hope today...”

Paul Alexander, songwriter



Snowflakes drift silently to earth. A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended. As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for “recovery” in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life—a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Times Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does this new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

Can we be kind to ourselves? Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say “NO!” Can we enjoy life again? Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living...and yes, they would want us to love again!

Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago? By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

Inside of me are all the answers. Everything I need to know lives inside of me.

“Come behold my miracle, Come and hear my story. Come and paint a memory with me...” P. Alexander

Wayne Loder TCF/Lakes Area, Michigan

“Ray of Hope” by Paul Alexander on the CD *The Best of Paul* at www.griefsong.com (Paul wrote “Light a Candle” which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs.) Permission to use excerpts from “Ray of Hope” granted by Paul Alexander.

She Existed.

Many people, even friends or family can be confused as to how hard parents who have experienced infant loss grieve. They may not understand how someone can miss a child who was with them for such a short period of time. How they can grieve so hard for someone they barely knew.

When you become pregnant there's that immediate glimmer of hope that this pregnancy will go all the way, that in just mere months you will have a child in your arms, you'll kiss their sweet cheeks, count their precious fingers and toes, that they will come home with you. You dream of what they will look like, who they will be. You look forward to birthdays, holidays, watching them take their first steps, play sports, and all of those in-between moments that we all imagine with rose-colored glasses.

But when you lose a child, when you hold a baby in your arms as you say goodbye, as they take their last breath, all of that is gone. Every ounce of hope, every dream, every prayer for them to be the person you had waited for is ripped from you. My daughter was with us for 23 days. She lived, she breathed, I rocked her in my arms as I read to her and sang to her. I prayed over her, for her, for us. We dressed her in cute little clothes, we changed her, bathed her, we experienced what life was with her. And then we lost her.

She existed. But even if we hadn't had that time with her, if she had passed away while I carried her, she still would have been just as important to us. We would have loved her just the same. She is our child. She is our daughter. She is a part of our hearts forever.

By Amelia Kowalisyn of *Emma's Footprints*

Be gentle with yourself in grief

You cannot hurry it along by tackling it all at once

You cannot sweep it away without so much as a glance

You cannot dam it in an ever-increasing reservoir.

If grief is to pass, it must pass through you

And on its way it may alter the course of a thing or two

Or abruptly turn the whole damn river around

In any case, you will continue on.

For some a slow drip carves out new possibilities

For some a torrent will sweep away things once clung to

For some a steady flow will deposit things unimagined

For all, grief must and will pass.

So be not afraid on account of grief

It means no harm as it seeks a path through and onward

To the Gatherer of All Tears, who wipes each one away

And builds for us a city where tears flow no more.

Jacqueline Tisthammer

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

Please call 309.736.6601 for information and directions.

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

Next month's meeting is held on **Thursday, February 27 , 2020, at 6:30 p.m.**

1830 6th Avenue, in Moline, Illinois

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 .
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 or go to 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 Chalyne Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or chalyne@shareqc.com or 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 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearthb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 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.

What Makes Suicide Different

Losing a friend or loved one is never easy. However, when you lose someone to suicide, it can feel different from other types of loss. Several circumstances can make death by suicide different, making the healing process more challenging.

STIGMA AND ISOLATION

Talking about suicide can be difficult for those who have experienced the loss. Different cultures view suicide in different ways, and sometimes discussing it can be a challenge. This can also be made more difficult when the act of suicide conflicts with religious views. Suicide can be isolating as communities of friends each struggle differently to make sense of the loss they all experienced. Finding the right people in your support network who are able to help you experience your loss is important. Sometimes, this may mean seeking professional help in order to help you cope with your loss.

MIXED EMOTIONS

After a death by illness or natural causes, the bereaved's feelings may be less complicated than when the death is by suicide. When a death is by suicide, you might both mourn the person's passing while also hold intense feelings about the circumstances of their death. Feelings such as anger, abandonment, and rejection can all occur after a suicide as well as positive feelings about the deceased. Sorting

through all of these diverse feelings can make the healing process more challenging.

NEEDING TO UNDERSTAND WHY

Understanding the circumstances of a death by suicide can sometimes lead us to asking "Why?" You may second guess actions, wish that you had noticed signs earlier, or wonder how you could have acted differently. This need to understand "why" may be a difficult path, as the circumstances surrounding the loved one's death could be unclear or not easily known. Some questions may never be answered, while you may find other answers that make sense. Sometimes you will find answers to your questions, while other times, you must learn to accept the fact that there are some things no one can know.

RISK FOR SURVIVORS

People who have recently experienced a loss by suicide are at increased risk for having suicidal thoughts themselves. After experiencing the loss of a loved one, it's not uncommon to wish you were dead or to feel like the pain is unbearable. Remember that having suicidal thoughts does not mean that you will act on them. These feelings and thoughts will likely decrease over time, but if you find them too intense, or if you're considering putting your thoughts into action, seek support from a mental health professional.

University of Texas
Counseling and Mental Health Center

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.



Continued from page 3

being the caring, concerned human being I once had been. I hadn't lost myself after all. I could still care.

Each time we reach out across our own pain to find another hand searching in the darkness, we begin to lighten our own darkness. Each time we send out a message of love or hope or simple presence, we receive back the same message. We are not alone when we reach out to others.

That's the secret to lessening the isolation: helping someone. We are always trying to find the right words to say, the right things to do. There are no words in any language that will make it all right that someone you loved has died. There are, however, actions that can make it less lonely. It is the gift of your presence that helps so much. You don't have to say anything. Just be there, and the magic begins. We cannot take away the hurt, but we can make it less lonely for ourselves and others.

Be careful, however, not to expect your own pain to disappear completely as you become involved with helping others. We each must still do our own grief work, and work it is. But never again do we have to be alone unless we choose to be. Be aware of your agenda, so that your caring for others does not become an excuse to postpone your own healing. Take good care of yourself as well. Healing begins from the inside out, and the best care you can give is to model your own healthy growth towards wholeness.

My own healing paralleled my involvement

with others. As I continued to reach out, others reached toward me, and the circle of healing expanded.

Darcie Sims



It's Okay to Grieve

It's Okay to Grieve. The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to Cry. Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to level off and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal. We do not need to prove we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel guilty, for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh. Laughter is not a sign of less grief. Laughter is not a sign of less love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Patricia Lufty Nevitt
TCF/Austin, Texas

Notables

We get no choice. If we love, we grieve.
Thomas Lynch

When you forgive, you in no way change the past – but you sure do change the future.
Bernard Meltzer

Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

A man in a support group said it best; "I don't think grief ever goes away, we just get better at it." The death of your loved one leaves a hole in your life that can never be filled. From my perspective grief lasts a lifetime, but trust me, it will be transformed over time. If you hang in there, you will get better at negotiating the currents of grief. The rapids of grief will give way to calmer waters and you will again be able to return your focus on the events and scenery of everyday life.

Thom Dennis

Talk to people about your loss and pain. Don't hide or deny your feelings. Let people know that you need them and ask for help. Consider writing a letter to family and friends outlining your needs. Be patient with those that don't know what to say. Talk about your loved one, and share your precious memories. Be grateful for those with the courage to hear your pain and stay with you on this journey. Always remember that you can always talk to God through prayer.

elliesWay.org

Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours.

Vera Nazarian

And most of all, you were sure it would be impossible for you to function as a whole human being, not buffeted by the waves of sorrow that swept over you in the early days of your tragedy. But you will. You will do all that and you will do more.

Harriet Schiff



The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1830 6th Avenue
Moline, Illinois 61265

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No.190
Rock Island, Illinois

Return Service Requested



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.