



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.



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Volume XXXII **May 2019** Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Last weekend, Jerry and I were in Rochester New York presenting a Marriage Encounter Weekend. While Anna is only part of our life story, our thoughts and feelings about her life and her death are woven into who we are as individuals and as a couple. As a result she has an impact on what we share on a Weekend. Anna only lived for four months and she has been gone from our lives as an earthly presence for 35 years. Since we have moved to Michigan there are fewer people in our lives that even know we are the parents of three children, not just two.

We will never know how our lives would have been different had she lived. What impact her presence would have had on our family. And yet even all these years later we can see how God is able to use the pain of loss that we experienced to make a difference in the world – reaching out to someone in our church whose sister’s baby died before birth, sharing with couples on a Marriage Encounter Weekend, listening to a friend after the miscarriage of her anticipated grandbaby, editing this newsletter. The following two short quotes are reality for those of us whose child died many years ago.

There’s this place in me where your fingerprints still rest, your kisses still linger, and your whispers softly echo. It’s the place where a part of you will forever be a part of me.

Gretchen Kemp

Life will not go on in the same way without him. If it were the same we could only conclude his life meant nothing, made no contribution. The fact that he left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to the uniqueness of his soul.

Molly Fumia

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb



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Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me. Sunday, May 10, 1998, is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of the twentieth century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering—seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of

commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day, Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother—a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background; my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge. The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year—Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death—is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

Barbara Atwood

In memory of Jacob, TCF/Tucson, Arizona

mum mama mommy
BEAUTIFUL
 unconditional love
 creative **UNSELFISH**
 LOVE U LOVE U LOVE U
BELIEVES
 life patient **GENTLE**
 compassionate
NURTURING
 strength **DEVOTED**

Notables

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday, and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

Cathy C. Seeheuter —
 TCF/St. Paul, Minnesota

Imagine for a moment a mobile. All the shapes are of different weight and design, but they hang together harmoniously, each catching the sunlight and creating a melodious rhythm in the wind. Now snip one of the pieces; there is chaos. Each of the remaining pieces smash into one another, and what was a melodious sound is now a clanging, almost a wailing in the wind. When a child is snatched by death from a family, the results are the same, multiplied innumerable times.

Stephen Barrett
 TCF/Ottawa Illinois

AND CAN IT BE THAT IN A
 WORLD SO FULL AND BUSY
 THE LOSS OF ONE WEAK
 CREATURE MAKES A VOID IN
 ANY HEART, SO WIDE AND
 DEEP THAT NOTHING BUT
 THE WIDTH AND DEPTH OF
 VAST ETERNITY CAN FILL IT
 UP.

CHARLES DICKENS

Day after day slips gently by, but love and memories never die. May the winds of love blow gently, and whisper so you hear That we always will love and miss you, and wish you were here.

Margaret Eatwell,
 TCF/United Kingdom

Every morning I wake up and forget just for a second that it happened. But once my eyes open, it buries me like a landslide of sharp, sad rocks.

Sarah Ockler

The healing power of even the most microscopic exchange with someone who knows in a flash precisely what you're talking about because she experienced that same thing too cannot be overestimated.

Cheryl Strayed

May of brilliant greens, harbinger of summer, mother of daffodils and tulips, warm my soul in your sun's glow! I am in need of that warmth, ready again to feel alive. For so long I have shut out life, unwilling to see beauty in a world without my child, unable to feel joy or love or laughter, longing only for him. I cared for naught for life and would have welcomed death.



It has been a long climb, my re-entry into life. In that climb I did not lose the pain of separation, but rather learned to assimilate it into my soul as a part of my life. I here...he there. And so I chance life again, mindful of its brevity, welcoming its brilliant colors, the song of birds, the grace of love.



L. Dolan

TCF/Greenland, New Hampshire

42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

HOPE

RINGS OUT IN PHILADELPHIA

JULY 19-21, 2019

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.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website, as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

A Grieving Mother: What to Do and Say as My Family Navigates This Loss

It's been exactly a year since I lost my daughter, and I have some thoughts and requests I want to share. I hope you don't mind my self-indulgence. Some of you may find them rude or nervy, the meanderings of a grieving mother and friend. If you do, feel free to talk among yourselves, but remember one thing: None of you is going through what I am going through. I don't wish it on you or on my worst enemy. Trust me — this is as bad as life gets.

There are no appropriate words; nothing you can say will make it better. But your calls, your visits, your invitations all mean a lot to me. They remind me I am still alive and still have a life outside this tragedy. I cry a lot, and I am OK with that. I'm not embarrassed about it, and you shouldn't be, either. Don't suggest I should take medication. I am entitled to my emotions. I need to feel, to grieve. I want to talk about my daughter. I want to say her name and hear her name, and if I cry, it's OK. Please don't avoid talking to me about her because you don't want to upset me. I will cry either alone or in front of you, and I don't want you to feel uncomfortable or guilty.

If what you tell me is true, that you think of me all the time, please call me or send me an e-mail. Don't wait for that random grocery-aisle meeting to tell me how much I am on your mind. I appreciate your stored up words, but I am home alone — often — and really appreciate a friendly check-in, a short phone call, a pop-by visit.

My loss is not contagious. You shouldn't be scared to be with me. Any discomfort you initially feel should subside if you give it a chance and give me a chance. If you are planning an evening out, a lunch date, a getaway, please make an extra effort to include me. I often feel like a pariah. My

intention is not to "bring you down," and I do my best not to burden anyone with my sadness. Don't feel awkward inviting me to have some "fun," and don't assume I won't want to join in, so why even bother asking. I may often decline, but it is comforting to be included. Being excluded is killing me.

My grief is not on any timetable. There is no magic in one year's time. It will take as long as it takes. I will always miss my daughter, and there will always be a hole in my heart. Don't tell me I am "doing better" or wonder when I will "get over it." I will never get over it, but I hope someday to build a new normal for myself.

Don't tell me "She is in a better place" or "God must have really needed her" or "Her mission on earth must have been completed." These conclusions are painful to hear, and while I know you mean well, sometimes saying nothing or giving me a hug is all that is required. As her mother, I will always feel the only better place for my daughter to be is here, now, with me.

If you see my kids, don't just ask them how I am doing; please ask them how they are doing. They lost their oldest sister, their confidante, their best friend, and need to know that people are concerned about them, too. This loss happened to my whole family — all of us.

I realized this past year, after the last meal was dropped off, the last card arrived, and the official visits were over, everyone's lives resumed, except for ours. Yes, we go through the motions, smiling, working, shopping, nodding, and telling people we are fine. But deep inside there is that void, that constant ache that will always be there, as it should be, and that is all right with me.

Roberta Waters, reprinted from the *Boston Globe*, March 08, 2015

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 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.

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.

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.



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
CarolynPWebb@gmail.com



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

The next regular monthly meeting is

Thursday, May 23, 2019, at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

Please call 309.736.6601 for information and directions.

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

Next months meeting is on June 27, 2019, at 6:30 pm

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-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 Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or chalyn@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 shoartb4@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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	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.
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	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.
TCF National Magazine	<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.
Grief Materials	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.
Amazon.com	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.
Previous Newsletter Editions	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.
Alive Alone	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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
Our Newsletter	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. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Shared Thoughts on the Love that Makes Us Parents

For many, the month of May can be a very traumatic time. We expect the warm days and the beauty of spring to renew us, but often our depression lingers, or deepens, for we are not ready to move on with the season. Many of us feel we are not finished mothering our child when they die. Mother's Day magnifies the fact that we can never complete that unfinished job, and we cannot find a place for our unfinished love.

On the days we feel so sad, and don't have the energy to help ourselves, it is normal to want to stay where we are in our grief. It takes more strength than we have to move on. Our grief can become so overwhelming that we have to fight to get through the day. We feel we are not making progress, but it can be a tremendous accomplishment just to survive. Each day of survival helps us to recovery. Even reversals show progress, when we can get back to where we were before the slip. We often expect too much of ourselves. We are very fragile, confused, and vulnerable to slipping while climbing out of the pit of grief.

It takes a lot of grief before our days can have more good hours than bad. But it does come. Most of us cannot even imagine that progress in our early grief.

Eventually, we can make peace with our loss and our painful memories become warm treasures. Even though we always think of our

child daily, it is with thankfulness that they were a part of our lives.

The only real joy comes from having known our child or sibling. Our grief becomes so overwhelming it crowds out the joy and deteriorates us to the level of feeling we can never know joy again. It is necessary for all of us to go through stages of grief.

Once we have finished our grief work (which is much more than a few months), the memories of those we love become superior to the death, or



cause of death. And we accept that the real joy was having them in our lives, knowing them, and the mark they left on us.

When our child was born or adopted, we became a parent; that relationship cannot be revoked. We are still their mother and father. Often those who lose only, or all, children struggle with their parental title. We are their parents, and they will always be our children. Love is what makes this bond, and that did not diminish because they died. We still have the pride and joy of being their parent as long as the love remains, and we know that is forever.

Marie Hofmockel

TCF/Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

Wisdom

As bereaved mothers, we know the joys and the pain of Mother's Day. Through the life and death of our child, we have loved much and lost much. We are far better people because of our children. Our wisdom surpasses anything we could have considered possible before our child died, for now we know loss, the darkest places of the human psyche, the deepest valley of the soul and the depths of insurmountable pain. This wisdom was not chosen by us. It is, nevertheless, our wisdom and experience to share with others as we choose. It is ours to keep in our minds as we live a life without our child. It is the purest wisdom one finds on this side of the moon.

We will continue to learn much about life as we live on after our child has gone. We were active participants in the lives of our children; we must be active participants in the mourning and grief following the deaths of our children. From this experience we grow....it is painful growth, but it is absolute growth of mind and spirit. As our growth increases exponentially, we find that, wondrously, we have come full circle.

One day we choose to focus on the life of our child. When that day comes, as it does for each of us, we are released from the darkness and

despair and gently enter into the ambient glow of the light of hope. Tentatively we take our first steps into the light. Then gradually we move with more confidence. The light glows brighter as we accept the healing it provides to us. As we heal, we reach out, we return to life, we work a little harder, love more deeply, and give freely to others. Our perspective turns outward. We will still reflect, but we will not be enveloped by our grief. We will laugh again; we will smile. We will even act spontaneously on occasion. We will live...live in the shining light of hope.



And so, gentle mother, as you mark Mother's Day, think of your child's life. Think of love. Think of times passed and those to come. Think of your journey. Think about your vast wisdom. Think about hope. You are a remarkable work in progress. Think about that.

Peace to you on Mother's Day,
Annette Mennen Baldwin

**Efforts and courage
are not enough
without purpose and
direction.**

John F. Kennedy