



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume XXXII **April 2019** Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

The first day of spring on the calendar was almost two weeks ago. But spring in southwest Michigan has been a disorganized process. One day we have brilliant sunshine and mild temperatures and the next the thermometer plummets and snow flurries are in the air. Spring flowers break through the ground, but there is ice on the lake. Brilliant sunshine invites us outside to discover the air temperature is still arctic. Although I have optimistically put our boots away, we still need our winter coats, hats, and gloves. As we were walking last week, savoring the sunny but blustery day, I was reminded of how the reluctant coming of spring is much like the grief process. We can be making good progress in reclaiming our life when some event, perhaps a small trigger sends us plummeting back into the arctic depths of our grief. I ran across this quote from Robert Veninga from *A Gift of Hope: How We Survive Our Tragedies*. He summarizes this observation well.

“Human pain does not let go of its grip at one point in time. Rather, it works its way out of our consciousness over time. There is a season of sadness. A season of anger. A season of tranquility. A season of hope. But seasons do not follow one another in a lockstep manner. At least not for those in crisis. The winters and springs of one’s life are all jumbled together in a puzzling array. One day we feel as though the dark clouds have lifted, but the next day they have returned. One moment we can smile but a few hours later the tears emerge.... It is true that as we take two steps forward in our journey, we may take one or more steps backward. But when one affirms that the spring thaw will arrive, the winter winds seem to lose some of their punch.” Here’s hoping that spring will soon be here to stay in your world and in your hearts.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb

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Somehow, It's Spring

It's spring in some places now. And in some places, it will be winter for another couple of weeks (months?). Somewhere the tulips are beginning to push through the soft earth and somewhere the birds are returning to sing. Somewhere the air is warmer, the breezes more gentle; the land begins to awaken from a frozen sleep. The trees are beginning to bud and even the air smells fresh and clean. Somewhere windows are open and the sound of the vacuum can be heard, marking the beginning of spring cleaning...a ritual given to us long before our forefathers set sail for a new world. Somewhere the last holiday decoration is being packed away (those holiday diehards!) and somewhere a lawn mower is being readied for a new season.

As spring approaches, we begin to shed our overcoats and stand in front of the mirror...examining the body for the extra lumps we've accumulated during the hibernation season. We lace up our jogging shoes and make our way to the sidewalks, high school tracks and to the gym, eager to strip away the added inches that came because it was dark and gloomy and food seemed to soothe and comfort during the dark days of winter. Somewhere someone is planning a wedding, a graduation, a family reunion. Vacation brochures begin to appear, and plans are discussed in anticipation of summer.

Spring is the reawakening season...the great wake up call for the

earth. Somewhere, someone is answering that get up call...greeting the new season with vim, vigor, and vitality. There are smiles and renewed energy and hope seems to simply float on the softened air. Somewhere...all of that is occurring, but not within me. It's still snowing inside my being. It's still winter inside here, and there aren't any tulips about to burst open in my spirit. I've still got my snow boots on, and the sun hasn't quite made it to my world. It's still winter inside me...I wonder if spring will ever come.

Oh, there have been moments of spring in the past. Wonderful, warm fleeting moments; moments when I "forgot" about the pain, the emptiness, the despair, the grief. Moments when the world was right side up, and the music made me dance. But they were only moments, and I'm waiting for spring to arrive in me.

Hope...the major ingredient in spring, seems to elude my grasp. Just when I think there might be some hope, a memory comes creeping across my soul, and it's winter again in my heart. It's this lack of hope that seems especially cruel during springtime. I thought this winter inside me would end, and I was looking forward to a more peaceful time in my life. I thought we would settle down, plant a garden, and live our life filled with memories and the opportunity to make new ones. HA! I thought grief would end at some point.

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A note to the Newly Bereaved (and a reminder to the rest of us...)

The first months and years after bereavement can be terrifying. It seems as if the pain stays at a monotonous peak; it seems as if one's mind will be lost at any moment. And although most of us "get better" after the first terror, we usually do not realize that until we look back, years later. When we think about it: This state of affairs is almost "reasonable" After such an overwhelmingly traumatic experience, we can fall – as it were – to the end of the world. Coming back from there is bound to be slow beyond our imagination and fraught with reversals. So far, no one has found a method to avoid this painful journey back. But perhaps it will help to know you have already begun to travel... You will find it a long journey, and desperately hard – and you may almost want to stay where you are. But you will realize later that the wind of tomorrow is already stretching your sails, and life waits for you across the sea. If only you knew...

Sascha, TCF – Des Moines

Everything is a First

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother, Dave, will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me... NEVER.

The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality.

Forget? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Followers and food were everywhere – love and concern were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say – nothing is NORMAL.

Tragedy has bought seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this.

People ask me, "How are you?" Here is my answer. "I am mad Dave died at the age of 17. I'm angry that my parents have to go through this. I'm confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I'm fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be STRONG."

Lisa Ann Jones TCF – Avoca, PA

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.

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. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

Hope = The Compassionate Friends

Olivia was born still – an umbilical cord too tightly wound.

Lucas was two days old when he died from complications.

Greta was only two years old when she was killed by falling debris.

Max was seven when he died from a brain tumor.

Jasmina was only six.

Jaden was ten when an asthma attack proved fatal.

Donald was 16 when he suffered a similar fate.

Kareem was 15 when he drowned along with his brother Kevin.

Peter was 22 when his friend lost control of the car he was driving him home in.

Charlie was 23 when his prescription didn't work with his social life.

Mark and Karen were on their honeymoon when their bus ran off a mountain in Nepal.

Kelli was 39 when she succumbed to ovarian cancer.

Jimmy was 36 when a heart attack took him, and his brother Charlie followed a year later when cancer chose him.

Eleanor was 41.

Philip was 45.

Andrew was 47, and Harvey was 59.

Sudden, unexpected deaths – walking, running, skiing, skating, driving, flying, burning, drinking, drugging, falling, swimming, shooting, stabbing, hanging, jumping; heart attacks, brain tumors, seizures,

aneurysms, strokes, organ failures – so many ways to die.

No matter the age, no matter the reason – they all were children – leaving their parents and siblings here to grieve them too early, unexpected deaths. Every day children die. While the world turns for most, for so many parents the world suddenly stops. Losing a child sets survivors on a totally unanticipated life path.

This grief is different. There is so much to deal with even while disbelief is the prism through which everything else must now be seen. In a numb state of initial shock, we go through the motions necessary to shut down a life only partially lived. At last, able to focus on our grief, we discover it is not like any grief we have ever experienced, learned about or lived through with anyone we've ever known. We try in vain to understand this mind-bending confusion while the uninitiated around us try to offer well-intended but ultimately useless comfort and solace based on their own limited understanding of loss. Our inability to fathom our new reality and the loss of hope for a future creates even more pain and isolation. Only those who have lived this calamity recognize the future that newly bereaved parents face. The bereaved become aliens in a world where they no longer feel like they belong.

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Losing a child is the beginning of an extraordinary grief experience.

Because healing doesn't begin as expected, doubts about one's own sanity begin to creep in. We begin to think that perhaps we are losing our minds.

Healing seems unattainable. We are reluctant to "let go" as others encourage us to do. Our grief is the most solid thing we have. We hang on for dear life. "Getting over it" is impossible. They say we'll never be the same; they are right. Frustrated by our inability to describe this unique grief experience, we finally find a measure of relief when we meet others who have lost a child. Without saying a word we feel safe in knowing they understand exactly what we are feeling. They've been there – and survived.

Parents who survive their children are chemically rearranged. Like a butterfly's metamorphosis, we too must confront changes in our personality, our physicality, our perspective, our health, our attitudes, our capabilities, our needs, our desires, and our understanding. Our healthy survival depends on our ability to reinvent ourselves. The future we spent a lifetime envisioning and working towards becomes a black hole; we have no idea where we're



headed and we simply slide toward some unknown destination.

Adjustment to this new reality can take years – the better part of a lifetime. As Jason Greene, Greta's Dad said, "Children remain dead in ways adults do not." Eventually, we do get over other inevitable losses. Like a stone in our pocket, we carry this loss for always.

It takes a very long time to care about anything again. But hope does live – in our world hope is The Compassionate Friends.

**Marie Levine – TCF Facebook
February 20, 2019**

I Am Spring

I am the beginning. I am budding promise. I spill cleansing tears of life from cloudy vessels creating muddy puddles where single cell creatures abide and splashing children play.

I am new green growth. I softly flow from winter's barren hand. On gentle breezes I fly – embracing sorrow. With compassion, we feather nests where winged voices sing winter-spring duets. As frozen ice transforms to playful stream I whisper truth - life is change.

I am spring. I bless long, dark wintry days. I crown mankind's pain with starry skies in deepest night lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy as the wheel of life turns "round and round."

Carol Clum

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

The next regular monthly meeting is
Thursday, April 25, 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 May 23, 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 shoearb4@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.

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.



Thank you to:

Donald and Anastasia Schold, in memory of their son, Gregory Hillard.
Linda Pearson, in memory of her son, Aaron.

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



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.

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The books all say it will...everyone else looks like their grief has subsided... how come spring missed us?!

A season without hope is the ultimate in despair, and I’ve spent too many such seasons. Where does hope go, and how do I get it back?

Hope is that elusive something that keeps us moving, even in the dark. We are only powerless when we have no hope, no vision, no faith in our own abilities. We may be helpless at times. We may question the arrival of spring, but we are only truly powerless when we have no hope, no dreams...

Don’t lose the hope! Search for it!

Fight for it! Demand its return. Hope changes as we do, and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found — in the moments of our memories. We probably won’t ever have totally



happy lives again...We probably didn’t have that kind of life anyway; we just thought we did.

Don’t let death rob you of the moments of joy still to be remembered, and

found. Don’t let grief rob you of those spring places where love and joy live forever in the heart. Somewhere it is spring...Deal with the anger, the guilt, the depression as it comes, and then let it go as you can...so there is room for joy to come again. Let hope come in...it’s spring.

Notables

Through the glass, I touch your face.
I trace the beauty with my fingertip.
I close my eyes and imagine you sitting next
to me.

Your head is gently resting on my shoulder
like it used to.

I feel your presence with me and I am at
peace.

If only for a few moments, it feels like
you're back where you belong.

Through the glass, I touch your face and I
remember what you felt like.

Laurie Lizotte, Bangor ME

On Memory - When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that, when we meet again, you will know me, and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost.

Frederick Buechner,
BPUSA Tampa Bay

GRIEF IS KIND OF ON A CONTINUUM, AND SOMEONE DESCRIBES IT AS HAVING A ROCK IN YOUR POCKET. IT'S ALWAYS THERE, YOU JUST SOMETIMES DON'T NOTICE IT AS MUCH.

KATIE COURIC

Grief assaults you on every part of your being. Is it any wonder your brain is in a fog, you don't care two hoots about anything and all you want to do is curl up and retreat to some place where you can pretend it never happened.

But grief is a walk alone. Others can be there, and listen. But you will walk alone down your own path, at your own pace, with your sheared-off pain, your raw wounds, your denial, anger and bitter loss. You'll come to your own peace, hopefully but it will be on your own, in your own time.

Cathy Lamb,
The First day of the Rest of My Life

The ringing phone still echoes in memory. I didn't get a chance to say good-bye.

From *Sibling Grief*



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.