



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Quad City Area Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

October 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

#### **October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month.**

*We remember the babies born sleeping, those we carried but never held, those we held but could not take home, those who came home but could not stay.*

**W**hile researching articles for this newsletter, I came across the website for Bridget's Cradles – [www.cbridgetscradles.com](http://www.cbridgetscradles.com). Ashley Oplinger started this ministry after the stillbirth of her daughter, Bridget Faith, in 2014. When Ashley was hospitalized with pregnancy complications, she asked her mom to knit Bridget a special, small blanket in the likely case Bridget was born too early. After making a small mint green blanket, "Grammy" realized it would be difficult to wrap such a small blanket around a tiny baby. She knit the sides together to create a cradle, sewed lace around the edges and adorned it with a cross at the head and a footprint charm at the bottom. A week later, Bridget was born weighing only 13 ounces. The nurses initially wrapped her in a hospital blanket for her parents to hold her, but then discovered the cradle, knit by her Grandma, was the perfect size. Bridget's father Matt said, "The cradle changed everything for us. It was an honoring, sacred, and functional way to hold our little girl. It made a heart-breaking situation more bearable, and it was a blessing and comfort to us in the midst of such a tragedy as losing our one and only child."

In the months following Bridget's birth and death, Ashley knew she wanted other families to be comforted with a cradle for their baby in Heaven. Grammy began to knit more cradles and Ashley created the ministry with the support of family and friends. As of July 2020, over 1000 hospitals, including Trinity in Moline and Bettendorf and Genesis Medical in Davenport have received a donation of cradles. The website includes stories from other parents who have experienced infant loss, a number of grief-related podcasts, as well as ways to get involved in both making and distributing cradles. For those who have experienced pregnancy or neonatal loss, the site includes much helpful information.

Sincerely,  
*Jerry and Carol Webb*



*There is no foot too small that it cannot leave an imprint on this world.*

Rainbows remind us that even after the darkest clouds, and the fiercest winds, there is still beauty.

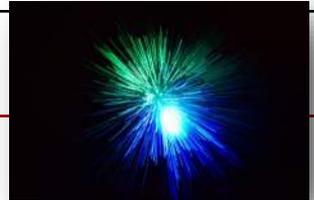
Katrina Mayer

When I go, don't learn to live without me, just learn to live with my love in a different way. And if you need to see me, close your eyes, or look in your shadow when the sun shines. I'm there. Sit with me in the quiet and you will know, that I did not leave. There is no leaving when a soul is blended with another. When I go, don't learn to live without me, just learn to look for me in the moments. I will be there.

Donna Ashworth

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

Desmond Tutu



Sometimes we need to stop and think when another of life's hurdles is thrown at us. We have survived and are surviving the worst. Just knowing that helps us to keep things in perspective and helps us to realize that we have developed coping skills that some people will never have. There aren't many positive sides to losing a child or children, but at least we know the difference between the worst thing that has ever happened to us as compared to the minor irritations of today's problem.

Mary Cleckley

When trying to remember when something took place, our mind decides by remembering whether it was before or after our child died. It is a pivotal date that forever created a division in the timeline of our hearts and minds.

Karen Cantrell, TCF/Frankfurt, KY

## Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	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.
<b>TCF's Grief Related Resources</b>	There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to <a href="https://www.opentohope.com/tv/">https://www.opentohope.com/tv/</a> .
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<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.
<b>Grief Materials</b>	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.
<b>Amazon.com</b>	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.
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	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.
<b>Alive Alone</b>	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> .
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="https://bereavedparentsusa.org">https://bereavedparentsusa.org</a> .
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	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.

**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

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

**email:**

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Website:** 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 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

**TCF National Office**

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Website:

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

## **What to Say to Someone Who Lost a Baby**

If your job is to provide support, and you don't want to sound dismissive or cold, what are some of the best words of comfort for the loss of a child? Here are a few options:

- *“Even though the baby was only with you for a short time, they were already loved.”*
- *“I’m so sorry. I don’t know what to say but I’m going to be there for you.”*
- *“Take all the time you need.”*
- *“I hate that you’re going through this. It’s unfair.”*

Any of the above conveys that you don't come with answers or that there's a "right" way to mourn. Past the words, there's stuff to do. After a death, parents aren't focusing on practical matters, so make sure the garbage gets out and the lawn gets mowed. Send a text, telling them you're dropping off food at a specific time and won't be ringing the bell. Parents don't need to worry about company but they do need good food. Keep checking in with your friend, offering to get a beer, take a jog (being side-by-side makes talking less threatening), or just run an errand. He doesn't have to ever respond or take you up on it, but the constancy will provide comfort and take the onus off of him to reach out. If you do get together, follow his lead on talking or not talking, and realize that he'll be ready when he's ready. It's not unusual for grieving to come a year afterwards, making it more important that you stick around and put zero pressure on what or how to feel.

Steve Calechman – Fatherly.com

## **Rose in the Cradle**

There's a rose in the cradle where you should have been.

A tiny faded bloom and our tears for you,  
Are laid to rest in this quiet empty room.

Little one, you left too soon for me to hold,  
Before I even knew your name.  
Little one, you left too soon.  
But not too soon for me to love.

Now the One Who created your delicate form,  
Has welcomed you in His home,  
Where no baby cries, or rose ever dies,  
And you're cradled as His own.

Little one, you left too soon for me to hold,  
Before I even knew your name.  
Little one, you left too soon,  
But not too soon for me to love.

Someday I'll hold you, know you, call you by name and take your hand,  
When we're together...together again.



**Donna  
Gassett**

## Why We Should Talk About Our Children Who Have Passed

It was a dark, cold day in October. At least that's how it felt from my son's dimly lit hospital room. In my mind, I imagine it raining outside, the fog lining the windows and obscuring our view of college dorm rooms, sidewalks, the arboretum across the street. I don't remember many of the details of the day. I just remember holding my son's hand, weeping as I sat by his hospital crib, watching the clock, praying and hoping for answers, and sitting with his doctors as we discussed the end of Charlie's life. His lungs were tired, and he was ready to go.

I've laid awake replaying those conversations, and replaying what happened only hours after, when a hand knocked loudly on our door in the parents' sleep room, and a nurse's voice told me to come quickly. I ran to his side only in time to be seated in a rubbery hospital recliner and have my son disconnected from his oxygen support and placed in my arms. His heart gave out. He was done, and my wish was to hold him when it was time.

Before the death of my son, I didn't want to think about death. I didn't want to talk about it. As a mom, talking to other parents who had a child that died made me nervous, as if I could "catch" the bug, and something tragic would happen to my child.

I am not that person anymore. I have changed, and I have seen things from shoes that I never wanted to be

in. No one wants to be in the shoes of the parent whose child died. Standing on this side, I can't think of anything more important than to talk about them. To say their name.

### Charlie.

To talk about his favorite things. To talk about his personality. To smile and laugh and remember and never let his memory die. To talk about the impact he left, and how the echo of his life is still resounding in the hearts and lives he touched.

His legacy is just beginning, and if I have anything to do with it, it will only grow from here.

There is something so important and so healing for myself and other parents who have lost children to be able to share that child's story. To be able to laugh at funny memories. To be able to mourn with another. To be able to celebrate and remember and value a little life that has gone too soon.

A few months ago, I met another mother much older than myself. Her son was born still years ago. I asked her his name, and found out days later that it was the first time in 35 years that anyone had asked her that question. *This is not okay.*

We need to talk about these children. We need to brave the pain and talk about them for the sake of the parents and for the sake of that child's memory.

This is not the natural order and we know that. Parents should not have to live on as their children die. Parents should not plan funerals or buy tiny

urns or headstones for their child. Parents should not. But of all the should-nots, there is one thing that is a must-do: talking about that child.

For those who have no option but to walk through the pain, I want to give you freedom today. Freedom to talk. Freedom to share. Freedom to laugh and cry and remember and mourn and love that child openly, even in death. You have freedom to say their name, even if you never had a chance to say it to them while there was breath in their lungs.

Say their name. Tell their story. Cry. Laugh. Celebrate. Hope.

Let's move past the stigma. Though in the past it may have been taboo to talk about a child who died, let's move on. Let's move on for the children who deserve to be remembered. And let's move on for the parents who deserve a chance to tell their story.

For those who can be a friend and a listening ear, please do that today. Mention that child's name. Send a note and let that parent know you are remembering. Sit down for coffee and relive special memories with them. We are all in this together. Brave the pain together. Remember together. Celebrate together.

Let's do this together.

*Lexi Behrndt is a communications director, a writer, and a mom to two sweet boys – Lincoln and Charlie, who passed away in October 2014. You can read more of Lexi's writing at [scribblesandcrumbs.com](http://scribblesandcrumbs.com) or follow her on Facebook. [This post originally appeared on [www.scribblesandcrumbs.com](http://www.scribblesandcrumbs.com).]*

### **One Foot in Yesterday**

Yesterday my child was here, on this planet, alive. Yesterday, life looked promising. Yesterday morning I woke up looking forward to the day. Today I awake peacefully and then I remember my child is dead, and I cannot breathe. I am jolted from head to toe. My child has been dead for a day. I wonder what my child was thinking in the last moments. I remember all the wonderful times. I remember the joy. I think of my child's life and how his life changed me forever. I remember the last time I saw my child. I remember the last goodbye. I sob and breathe.

I am lost for days. Final arrangements are made. The platitudes float past me...these words have no meaning. A memorial service for my child. People with sad faces. Hugs, words, tears, head shaking. I can see it in their eyes...they are thankful it isn't their child. They are uncomfortable. Time heals, they say. There's a plan, there's a reason. I cannot respond. They understand. No, they don't. My child is dead. This is not my parent, my husband, my sibling. This is my child. My child was supposed to outlive me. I thank them for their good intentions. I have no interest in their words. A few friends say nothing. This is the better choice, the wiser action. Be there, be there for me. Understand my unspoken words. See my broken heart.

Understand. Listen to my story, a story of my child. Remember his life, remember his death.

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

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

### The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

**Thursday, October 27, at 6:30 p.m.**

**Our meeting is held in-person at 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois,  
on the first floor. Masks and social distancing are required.  
The next meeting of the chapter is on November 17, 2022.**

<b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b>	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.
<b>Rick's House of Hope</b>	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. 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.
<b>SHARE</b>	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. via <b>ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic</b> and in "normal time" 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.
<b>Phone Support</b>	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com</li> <li>♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915</li> <li>♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com</li> <li>♥ Judy Delvechio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</li> </ul> Doug, Kay, 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.

## A Walk With Grief

Grief is catching. After five and a half years of showing up unexpectedly, it continues to do just that.

I bent down to pick up the dirty laundry in the corner of our bathroom that somehow landed next to the hamper and not in it. With three children in our home, four and under, dirty laundry sprawled across the house is recurring. As I picked up the last pair of pants and dropped them into the white hamper, it caught me. In the form of brown shoes that I had taken off my one-year-old, grief overtook me.

Brown shoes that I had received at our baby shower for Carson, our first born. He would have been five in March, or maybe it sounds better if I say he should have been five in March. However, instead of celebrating a fifth birthday with a big balloon and gifts, we celebrated his life and what would have been with the traditions we have in place. My kids and I made a rainbow-colored birthday cake, decorated by them. We ate some, and then when we finished, we smashed it all over each other's faces, and my husband and I laughed to fight back the tears. Our children don't understand the sadness, because it is masked with fun and celebration, because that's how we want our Carson to be remembered by them. He's the big brother that was never able to be.

He never got to wear the shoes I had imagined him in, stomping through green grass, mud puddles, and away from me to find mischief. As I looked at the shoes, I remembered the woodland themed animal wrapping paper they

came in. I remember holding him close to my chest in the hospital, putting my head to his. I remember not knowing when the right time to say goodbye was, because there would never be a right time. I remember singing *You Are My Sunshine* and trying to take in every piece of him: his tiny hands, his button nose, and his tiny little toes, perfectly created and shaped. I remember coming home to an empty house. I remember the expectations, hopes, and dreams that died in me that day. It all came rushing back. Five years of grief, five years of distance, so far, yet so close. I still don't understand how two worlds exist for me: my heart filled with love and happiness from my three toddlers I have the privilege of raising in one, yet the other brimming with sorrow for the what could have been but never was. Wherever you are in your journey, be gentle on yourself and allow yourself to meet grief, the familiar, uninvited friend who visits unannounced. In the midst of life and chaos, she reminds me that Carson was mine, that he was real, and that he is still loved.

Amanda Crews – SHARE



## 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:

**Mike and Brenda Busse in memory of their son, Dylan.  
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser, in memory of their nephew,  
Patrick.**



**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, MI  
49022 or email  
CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.

### Helping a Grieving Friend

People who mourn have days that are sad and others that have joy. You don't know and can't assume which it is. But as a friend, you're willing to deal with the spectrum and sit in occasional discomfort without squirming. And if you're not sure, ask what he needs. If that doesn't get an answer, an always good question is, "How are you doing **today?**" The last word is important, since it recognizes that emotions fluctuate and that he doesn't have to be any particular way or over anything. It's a way to recognize the loss and that it still might be difficult. Acknowledging that can be huge.

**Jennifer Kaiser**

## What Not to Say When Someone Loses a Baby

Talking to someone experiencing any kind of loss is difficult. It's easy to feel uncomfortable, to slip up, and slide into clichés. But when you're expressing condolences to someone who lost a baby, do your best to avoid the below phrases:

- *"The baby's in a better place."*
- *"You're not given more than you can handle."*
- *"You're handling it so well."*
- *"Everything happens for a reason."*
- *"You have other kids."*
- *"You can have another."*
- *"The baby's not suffering."*

In saying these phrases, people think they're being comforting. But the words fail to acknowledge the death and end up being dismissive. Any of the lines can also be prefaced with, "At least, ...," and if that's the case you shouldn't say it. Why? It diminishes the weight, and when a baby is lost, the whole world is heavy.

You might think the safest move is to say nothing. But outright silence is abandoning and painful. You do want to say something. There *are* words. You just want to keep in mind that there are no magic ones. You don't have to fix things.

## Talk About Your Baby

Say your baby's name. Bring them up in conversation. Talk to close friends and family about your grief. Don't bottle up your emotions inside and pretend to be okay. If you feel comfortable sharing, consider posting about your baby or experience on social media so that people in your life know what you're going through. As uncomfortable as it can be to talk about your baby and their death, it can be incredibly healing to feel vulnerable enough to share their life story with the world. The more you share, and with more people (including strangers), the more comfortable you will become. That being said, there will also be times and places and with certain people that you may not feel comfortable, and that's okay. Don't feel guilty about that. Speak about your baby when you feel it would be healing to you and with people you love and trust.





## *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.

***You are not alone in your grief.***