



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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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.

The Quad City Chapter



September 2011—Volume XXIV, Number 8

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

This evening, just before I began work on this month's newsletter, I received a text from my daughter-in-law expressing her concerns that our grandson, Logan, is running a fever and unable to take his medicine. This is quite concerning and I immediately sent out an email request for prayer to the many prayer warriors who have followed Logan's progress over the past five months. Almost immediately I began to receive responses that people were joining us in prayer for our sick little guy. Their words of comfort brought tears to my eyes. Then I ran across this poem in another TCF newsletter.

I share with you the agony of your grief.
The anguish of your heart finds echo in my own.
I know I cannot enter all you feel
Nor bear with you the burden of your pain.

I can but offer that my love does give
The strength of caring,
And the warmth of one who seeks to understand
The silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss.

This I do in quiet ways,
That on your lonely path you may not walk alone.

*From Howard Thurman's
"Meditations of the Heart"*

I hope each of you have people in your life whose hearts reach out to you to share in your grief as much as they are able. I hope too that you will know who they are and be grateful that they are standing beside you in your grief.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

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, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

Vine and Dine for Iowa SIDS Foundation

Wine Pairing Dinner and Auction
Friday, November 18, 2011
6:00 p.m.

Davenport Country Club

For sponsorship opportunities or additional information, call 563-332-6265 or visit the Iowa SIDS Foundation website at www.iowasids.org.

Alive Alone

provides bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased a self-help network and publications including a bi-monthly newsletter, to promote communication and healing.

Email: alivealone@bright.net
Website: www.alivealone.org
Alive Alone, Inc.
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

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 Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends 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 rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

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.



The AngelPics Project

Hollywood FotoFix Digital Studios is proud to sponsor the AngelPics Project. **The AngelPics Project** has been created to donate photo retouching resources to the parents and families of a stillborn baby.

Photographs of stillborns and newborns who don't make it home from the hospital are usually very difficult to look at, and are usually the only image that the parents have of their child. Through this free service, our skilled digital artists work with a digital copy of your original, eliminating medical equipment, removing marks and bruising, even replacing the background if desired.

How do I submit my angel picture to be retouched?

There are two ways in which to submit your picture to be digitally retouched: Using our online digital retouching system, you can from the privacy of your own home, upload your picture to be restored. All you need is a scanner and an internet connection to upload your image to us.

If you do not have a scanner, or would rather trust an imaging professional to scan it for you, you can visit your nearest Hollywood FotoFix Dealer that participates in the AngelPics Project. Just tell them you were referred by Hollywood FotoFix for an AngelPics photo. The dealers will also provide a free 8x10 print with your restored picture.

More information is available at www.babyangelpics.com/. According to the website there is a local Hollywood FotoFix Studio – Best Expressions Photography – 1526 River Drive in Moline, IL. Call 309-762-8970.

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

Your grief will not heed anyone's timetable - even your own. Be patient with yourself. Be patient with those around you. You are doing the best you can, as are they.

Practicing patience means relinquishing control. Just as you cannot truly control your life, you cannot control your grief. Yes

HEALING FROM THE DEATH OF YOUR CHILD IS MUCH LIKE WISDOM; IT CAN'T BE FORCED; YET IT COMES UPON YOU IF YOU LET IT.

DR. TOM FRANZ

A New Life

You have changed.

You have grown.

You understand for the first time what the Psalmist meant when he said:

"Yea, though I WALK THROUGH the valley of the shadow of death."

The important words are "WALK THROUGH."

you can set your intention to embrace your grief and take steps to mourn well, and these practices will certainly serve you well on your journey, but you cannot control the particulars of what life will continue to lay before you.

Sascha

You WALK THROUGH.

You do not remain where you were.

Life is for the living.

Earl A. Grollman

Living When a Loved One Has Died

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

Thank you to:

Alcoa Community Foundation and Cynthia Fuller (in memory of her son, Brian) who nominated TCF for this grant.

Mike and Sue Raney, in memory of their nephew, Brad Shoemaker

Love gifts 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 love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Our Newsletter

For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to **www.bethany-qc.org** for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.

Amazon.com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

Reflections from the National TCF Conference *Shining Stars – Guiding Hope*

Alan and I just attended our second TCF conference. Just as it is hard to describe our grief journey and how much pain we are in, it is also difficult to describe the benefits from being at the conference with about 1400 other bereaved family members. We went a second time and plan to go next year to California. Just like last year we met new people and when we saw others with a child's face pinned to their shirt or a TCF nametag around their neck there was an unspoken acknowledgement that they were walking a similar journey. Conversations could begin as easily as if they were a family member. You have a beautiful child. Tell me about him/her.

This year there was a new workshop for men only. It was led by two bereaved moms who tried to explain how a mom might grieve differently than a dad. Alan said that the questions and discussion were lively and beneficial. He said that the men suggested a similar workshop be held for women so they can understand us better.

CHAPTER HELP

Some of you who are further out from your deepest grief could benefit newly bereaved parents. Please consider helping the chapter in some way. Unfortunately there are newly bereaved parents in our area and our chapter needs to be available to those who need us. We are establishing a library of new books on grief and this is a possible way to help. We have the documentary *Space between Breaths* that could be shown in a local theater for free to attendees. With good advertising this could benefit the community as well.

Having rituals around our emotions seemed to be discussed a lot. One example was to write down names of those we feel we might need to forgive and then burn the paper. Another was cutting out images or words from old magazines to reflect our child. It was suggested that we limit the time to both cut and then to make a collage of these so that little thinking goes into the project.

Discussing signs we receive was again a popular sharing time. The room was filled and each person was given an opportunity to share one sign they felt meant the most to them. Since I had gone to this last year I made room for another, but when I went by the closed door at 1 am the sharing continued.

Tapes of most of the workshops are available for purchase at the TCF website. I feel very fortunate to be able to attend the conferences.

Rosemary Shoemaker
TCF/Quad Cities IA/IL

You could share your grief journey in our newsletter as a benefit to yourself and to those who can relate to it.

Note: Anyone who checks out a book from the chapter can return it to the church during business hours anytime and it will get to us. We don't have a lot of books so if you are finished reading, please return it. If you would like to help in one of these ways or have an idea to reach out to bereaved families in the community, please contact Rosemary Shoemaker, shoearthb3@mchsi.com or (309-441-5586)

As the rivers around us continue to swell and spill over the banks I

am reminded of how at times our grief can resemble the flood waters. Both are natural occurrences that happen after a significant event. Whether it is a hard, heavy, and fast rain that only lasts a short while, or a slow, long, and steady rain that goes on for weeks, the flood still comes. Such is grief. It comes whether your loved one died in an accident, from an illness, or for other reasons.

That doesn't mean your grief will look and act the same way as everyone else's just as floods don't have the exact same path each time they occur. You may be able to predict what both will be like, from previous experience, from others, and from researching what they are like. But there is no way of knowing for certain until you are in it.

For flooding, we often get "alerts." While grief may not have radio alerts (which is probably a good thing) you sometimes put yourself on "alert" to grief and the feelings we may experience. When flooding is possible, you are given a flood watch alert. In grief, this is the time when you are anticipating a death of a loved one or a difficult period in your grief, such as an anniversary. You begin to prepare for both as much as you can, and sometimes wait in dread for them to occur.

If the waters begin to rise quickly, a flash flood watch or warning is issued. This is a time in your grief when you may know or feel a grief trigger coming. There may not be much time to prepare (sometimes there isn't even a warning). And you may

Floods of Grief

by Lisa Glissman-Mayner

try to avoid it, but you can't just up and move your house anymore

than you can banish grief from your life.

Then comes the flood warning. This is when the flooding is already occurring, or when you are in the midst of your grief. Both can leave you sleepless, tired, frustrated, angry, and asking, "Why?" People may say, "Well, there's nothing we can do now," or "It's not like this hasn't happened before," in attempts to deny or minimize the impact. But this is also a time when people bind together and really show how important it is to have support. People do what they can to help out, and wade through the muddy waters to make sure no one is left alone.

When the recovery begins, both for a flood and grief, you take stock. You mourn your losses. You find your rocks: prayer, laughter, tears, friends, journaling, nature, reading – things that give you strength to get through the day. Rebuilding begins. It is hard work, and takes time, but it happens. Memories continue to be with you and always will be but the sting lessens. Hope is renewed. You don't get over a flood, and you don't get over grief. You get through them.

From the Sioux City TCF Chapter newsletter



"Whatever we do – going or not going to our children's graves, sleeping with a toy or closing the door to their rooms – has only to be what we each need, what we require to make it through each

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, September 22, 2011 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL

For information and directions, call Rosemary Shoemaker (309-441-5586)

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church is on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.) Next meetings: Thursday, October 27 and Thursday, November 17 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
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. Please call ahead to verify the meeting location. Contact Kirby White at (563)271-5908.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month at 403 SW 10th Avenue, Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.
Rick's House of Hope	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call (563)324-9580 or (563)421-7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web: www.genesishealth.com — keywords "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and 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
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support that meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

Summer Unhinged

It's the shattered dreams that hurt.

It's not the death (they are in a better place than I, and I find myself even envious), but the **loss**. It may be selfish to suffer so over empty arms and canceled registries and my designer maternity dress that I bought for this summer's wedding season, but I think it's okay. Well, except for the dress bit; that actually IS sick. I think what I mean to say is that I look at that dress hanging there, know that I still have four weddings to attend in the next 6 weeks, and remember sadly that I had planned to go to them all eating for three. Now I am just me.

I dreamt of one last baby. I got two, and then relished the blessing of twins; thanked God for these two for reasons He and I alone know. I was excited to double-time over the threshold of "mother of four" - the line where you go from being a woman with kids to a woman who must have always wanted to be a mom because *why else would she have so many?*

Those dreams are what I lost, along with the opportunity to give to two fresh souls in the ways that only a mother understands.

Steffanie Kolbus
(following the death of her infant twins,
Sarah and Tessa)



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

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

Mission Statement

The mission of the Compassionate Friends (TCF) is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child at any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Quad City Area Chapter of The

Compassionate Friends meets on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

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

And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of "self help" were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April's meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May, I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother's Day and my son's birthday. In June, I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I sat at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child's story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son's death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be "cured." As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope; to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I

Continued, next page.

began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing, as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace, and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence, which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.



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

Time

Time is a strange thing. When we want it to go quickly, it drags, and when we want time to move slowly, it flies. Since the death of my brother, Rob, I have shared a love-hate relationship with time.

When his leukemia got so severe he could barely move, I wanted and prayed for the end to come quickly. He had suffered enough. After his death, I clung on to every day. I was so afraid of losing his face in my mind.

Now as the first year has passed, I have many emotions. I never thought a year could pass so fast. One of my strongest emotions is fear. I am afraid that this one year marks the end of my grieving process in the eyes of others. Will my friends stop listening to me talk about Rob? Do they understand that time doesn't ever completely stop the pain?

I am also afraid of the future. It is amazing that I have so much time ahead of me. Losing my brother has taught me to weed out the trivial things in life and concentrate on the important aspects. Everything I work on is in some way dedicated to Rob. At the same time, I am scared to live the rest of my life without him.

Some mornings I wake up smiling and go to sleep crying. Other days I never stop crying. As each day goes by, as time passes, I realize I cannot bring back what I have lost. However, with each smile my memory of Rob grows stronger and each tear I lose forces a little bit of pain away from those memories.

Julann Pontician
TCF/Tri-County, PA