

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Saint Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 619 7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341 August/September/October 2007
E-mail address (St. Paul Chapter) peachy3536@comcast.net
The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 Phone No. (toll free) 877-969-0010

The Saint Paul Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends
Meets on the second Thursday of
each month at
Beaver Lake Lutheran Church
2280 Stillwater Avenue;
Maplewood, Minnesota
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

For initial contact and meeting
information call Linda at
763-862-5179

The Compassionate Friends National
Web Site is located at
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF St. Paul Chapter Web Site at
tcfstpaul.org

*MEETING TOPICS:

*The following meetings include
General Sharing & Discussion to
also include the following topics:

Aug. 9: General Discussion.

Sept. 13: Cause of Death-We will
break into separate groups:
Sudden Death, Illness, Suicide,
General.

Oct. 11: Open Discussion

****SUNDAY, SEPT. 23**

BALLOON RELEASE

**SPECIAL GUEST: Alan Pederson,
Singer/Songwriter**

You will not want to miss this rare
opportunity to have Alan with us to
talk of his grief journey and play
his music, written since his
daughter, Ashley's death. See
insert for further details.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

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

The Compassionate Friends' vision is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK - what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE don't stay away from a meeting because the topic scheduled does not interest you. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind; we do not stay on the topic only. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the others is okay too. Remember also that our meeting is open to adult siblings, grandparents, or adult family members such as aunts or uncles.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

ST. PAUL CHAPTER INFORMATION

Chapter Coordinators/Steering Committee: Cathy Seehuetter, Jan Navarro, Debbie Halfen, Lyle Lindberg, Dave Esberg, Denise Bjerke
Newsletter Editor: Cathy Seehuetter
Treasurer: Lyle Lindberg
Librarian: Jan Navarro
Remembrance Cards: Kathy Lesnau
1st Contact: Linda Bergan
Outreach: Karen Gorz
Hospitality: Kim ZumMallen
Chapter Webmaster: Dave Esberg (tcfstpaul.org)

TELEPHONE FRIENDS: Please call the following phone friends if you need someone to talk with:

ACCIDENTAL/SUDDEN DEATH
Cathy.....651-459-9341
ILLNESS
Jeanne.....651-330-7613
SUICIDE
Dave..... (Cell phone) 612-747-8225
ONLY CHILD
Kathy.....651-426-2446
INFANT LOSS
Lori.....952-229-4630
CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
Lois.....651-777-2342

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS

MINNEAPOLIS: Meets the 3rd Monday of every month at Calvary Lutheran Church, 7520 Golden Valley Road in Golden Valley. Contact Carol Hawk at 763-542-8528.

RICHFIELD: Meets the 2nd Monday of every month at Hope Presbyterian Church, 7132 Portland Ave. So. For directions or more information, call Chris or Bob Lewis at 612-825-6500.

ST. CROIX VALLEY: Meets the 1st Thursday of every month at United Methodist Church, 1401 Laurel Avenue, Hudson, WI. For more information, call Ron or Kathy Felsch at 651-439-3290.

APPLE VALLEY: For meeting times and location, please call Shirley Doering at 952-432-5955

Steering Committee

Would you like to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter? Then please join us for our quarterly Steering Committee meeting. If interested, please call Cathy for date, time and place at 651-459-9341 of our next Steering Committee.

Chapter Website

For continually updated information regarding our chapter and other TCF news, see our wonderful chapter website at tcfstpaul.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NEWSLETTERS

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL OFFICE

TCF.....toll free: 877-969-0010
E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

SUICIDE

Survivors of Suicide612-922-5830
Suicide Awareness.....952-946-7998
or 1-800-511-SAVE
Crisis Hotline.....1-800-784-2433

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

St. Paul Chapter.....651-484-0336
E-mail: pomcmn@isd.net
National number..... (toll free) (888) 818-POMC

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Alive Alone: Loss of an only child. There may be a minimal charge.

Kay Bevington
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, OH 45891

The Compassionate Friends. National newsletter published four times per year. Cost is a donation of \$20 or more. This publication is for siblings and grandparents also.

TCF
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522

Parents of Murdered Children. This "survivors" newsletter is issued three times a year and costs \$10. POMC helps survivors deal with their grief and the justice system. Write to:

Parents of Murdered Children
MN HOPE Chapter
PO Box 516
Circle Pines, MN 55014

Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education:

SA/VE
9001 E. Bloomington Freeway
Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55420
888511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

Newsletter

My sincerest apologies for the tardiness of this newsletter. Due to circumstances beyond my control, it was not possible to get it to you any sooner.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and their families...

LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS AND ALWAYS:

August

- | | |
|---|---|
| 8-03-86 Brett, son of Mark & Lonnie Bohnen | 8-14-92 Amanda, daughter of Bill & Karen Berglund |
| 8-08-77 Steven, son of Kathy & Vince Schettner | 8-16-76 Levi, son of Sue Ward |
| 8-09-96 Carley Jean Bruening, daughter of Brenda Bauman | 8-22-79 Aaron Brown, son of Mary Kay Shannon |

September

- | | |
|--|---|
| 9-01-88 Samantha, daughter of Mark & Teresa Bierbrauer | 9-24-79 Kristina (Nina) Westmoreland, daughter of Cathy & Greg Seehuetter, sister of Lisa, Amy & Dan, granddaughter of Harlan & Ellie Plumb |
| 9-04-74 Kellie Kaye, daughter of Joannie Kemling | 9-24-91 Jessica Swanson, granddaughter of Ruth Krause |
| 9-11-77 Loren Tyner Lamb, son of Johanna Lester | 9-24-83 Mike, son of Mary & Jack McGuire |
| 9-13-74 Bill Achterling, stepson of Steve Wertz | 9-27-75 John, son of Joe & Marlene Keyser, brother of Maureen Johnson |
| 9-14-62 Jim, son of Pat Harp | 9-28-76 Timothy, son of Diane & Ken Olinger |
| 9-18-78 Karissa, daughter of Steve & Lou Neumann | |
| 9-22-77 Heather, daughter of Kim & Linda Sanborn | |

October

- | | |
|---|---|
| 10-01-87 Joel, son of Linda & Rick Geiwitz | 10-28-03 Dakota, son of Kalani Forss |
| 10-02-69 Mitchell John, son of Joannie Kemling | 10-29-83 Kelly, daughter of Bob & Jeanne Walz, sister of Tina Thompson |
| 10-04-86 Larry, son of Russ & Marsha Williams | 10-30-67 Danette, daughter of Diane Nelson |
| 10-09-60 Cynthia, daughter of Lois & Warren Johnson | 10-30-83 Briana, daughter of Keith Klindworth & Debbie Lawrence, granddaughter of Lois Klindworth |
| 10-20-73 Anthony, son of Arvid Nielsen | 10-31-03 Jaden, son of Teresa & Jason Karsten |
| 10-27-79 Erin, daughter of Colleen & David Hines | 10-31-87 Cody, son of Don and Deb Nelson |
| 10-28-94 Michael, son of Merrilee Town | |

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS...

REMEMBERED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR DEATH

August

- | | |
|--|--|
| 8-02-92 Deborah Folsom, daughter of Mary Lou & Dave Linn | 8-23-04 Ryan, son of Cori Clagherty |
| 8-02-05 Stephen, son of Don & Nancy Selander | 8-24-00 Larry, son of Lois Nyman |
| 8-04-97 Adam, son of Mark & Linda Triplett, brother of Katrina | 8-25-00 Karissa, daughter of Lou & Steve Neumann |
| 8-04-06 Aaron Brown, son of Mary Kay Shannon | 8-28-95 Kaylen, daughter of Scott & Cheryl Baker |
| 8-06-00 Cindy, daughter of Lois & Warren Johnson | 8-29-93 Kerri Braun, daughter of Barb & Dave Deters |
| 8-10-04 Danny, son of Mona Morrissey, brother of Rob | 8-29-05 Katie Clapper, daughter of Paul & Kellee Wallace |
| 8-12-99 Erin, daughter of Colleen Como | 8-31-05 Brandon, son of Robbyn Devine |
| 8-16-99 Bryan Montpetit, son of Patricia Lilly | 8-31-88 Nick Chavez, son of Judy Coleman |
| 8-17-04 Briana, daughter of Keith Klindworth & Debbie Lawrence, granddaughter of Lois Klindworth | |

September

- | | |
|--|--|
| 9-03-02 Fallon, daughter of Steve Bowell | 9-12-87 David, son of Bev & Jim Franzen |
| 9-03-01 Ian, son of Nancy and John Price | 9-14-06 Robert, son of Janice & Mark Baird |
| 9-03-05 Micah, son of Tommy & Michele Thompson | 9-16-98 Zachary Jon, son of Patty Gaffney |
| | 9-21-91 Jason, son of Jim & Ann Reisdorf |

October

- | | |
|---|--|
| 10-03-03 Bobby, son of Donna & Greg Land | 10-15-04 Hannah, daughter of Kim & Carl ZumMallen, niece of Willeen Tibbetts |
| 10-06-94 Jody Rosenberg, son of Ruth Krause | 10-23-03 Levi, son of Sue Ward |
| 10-12-93 Mitchell John, son of Joannie Kemling | 10-23-05 Tammy Malcolm, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor |
| 10-14-00 Tommy, son of Tom & Carol Nace | 10-25-94 Jim, son of Pat Harp |
| 10-15-89 Michael, son of David & Marcia Preller | 10-27-02 Jacob, son of Laura & David Tussey |
| 10-18-05 Joel, son of Rick & Linda Geiwitz | 10-31-73 Anthony, son of Arvid Nielsen |

A BIG apology to the family of Angela Klover. There was a typing error and her birth date should have read as 12 -16-1988.

"LOVE GIFTS" are tax-deductible donations given in memory of our children or other loved ones by family, friends, or other caring people who wish to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter. Our chapter is self-supporting and donations are our only means of existence. We gratefully accept these gifts with the knowledge that our children are warmly remembered **"Love Gifts" were given in loving memory by the following:**

- Judy Coleman, son Nicholas Chavez
- Sandy Frank and Cliff Romberg, son Jesse
- Mardell and Dick Cavanaugh, granddaughter Angela
- Mary Ann and Don Pojar, son John
- Carol Liller White, "niece" Nina Westmoreland
- Katie Vener, for Mary Lou Linn
- Kathy & Al Lesnau, son Charlie
- Kristy Schauer, daughter Kayla



BIRTHDAY TABLE

Every month at our meeting, we have a birthday table. In the month of your child, grandchild, or sibling's birthday, please bring pictures and small mementos of your child to place on the table. You

may also bring their favorite cake, cookies or other snack for the table in memory of your child. We do this to celebrate our children's lives and to share their special day with others who understand.

COMPASSIONATE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION AWARD

If you would like to nominate your employer (even if you do not work for them now, but did at the time of your child, sibling or grandchild's death), look for further information on the Home Page of the TCF National website (www.compassionatefriends.org) on the right side of the page. It not only gives an employer a much-deserved pat on the back as well as a plaque and presentation, as well as a national press release, but spreads the word in the community about TCF and our chapter.

BOOK REVIEWS

Have you read a book recently that has helped you on your grief journey or touched you in some way and you feel others from our group would also find it beneficial? I also have some new books that I bought at the National Conference in Oklahoma City that you could read and review. We would like to have regular reviews in the newsletter. It doesn't have to be anything fancy and not long (only two or three paragraphs); please snail mail or e-mail to Cathy, Nina's mom for publication in the next newsletter; the address and e-mail address are on the front page of this newsletter.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Eastern Pennsylvania
2007 Regional Conference
September 28, 29, 30, 2007

With the theme "From Despair . . . A Glimmer of Hope", the very popular Eastern Pennsylvania Regional Conference is now accepting registrations for its 2007 conference September 28-30 in King of Prussia, PA.

Scheduled conference speakers include: Pat Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends; Elaine Stillwell; Dick Gilbert; Yvonne Kaye; Fred Mountjoy; and Hazel Woodward. In addition to approximately 20 workshops from which to choose for the four workshop time slots, the regional also features a memorial walk, Butterfly Boutique, and Hospitality and Meditation Rooms.

The Eastern PA regional will be held at the Radisson Valley Forge Hotel, 1160 First Ave., King of Prussia, PA. For additional information, call 610-337-1907 or e-mail kenhofmockel@comcast.net.

National Conference

The 2008 TCF National Conference will be held in Nashville, Tennessee July 18-20, 2008. See page 8 for a write up of the 2007 National Conference in Oklahoma City. Info regarding the 2008 conference will be available in January 2007, and this newsletter will keep you posted as more info is obtainable.

New Minnesota Chapter!

Minnesota has chartered another chapter to our already existing 18 chapters. It is in Marshall, Minnesota and meets the 1st Sunday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Avera Marshall Regional Medical Center. Chapter leaders are Ann John and Bette Schweer. Contact person is Lorinda Peters who can be reached at 507/530-6302, cell 507/532-1957. Our chapter sends best wishes and a big welcome to TCF of Marshall!!!!



Thoughts from the Editor...

After the Bridge Fell

I stared in horror at the images I saw replay on my television screen of the sudden and catastrophic collapse of the 35W Bridge in Minneapolis. The huge metal beams twisted like pretzels, the fire coming from the bread truck, the school bus that was precariously perched mere seconds from the rushing waters of the Mississippi River, dazed survivors catatonically walking on what was left of the asphalt road, cars piled on top of one another, and sirens blaring. We could scarcely believe what we were seeing. Though nowhere near the magnitude of 9/11, the bridge collapse was reminiscent of that same shock of seeing something that was taken for granted, there one day, gone the next, and in mere seconds was crumbled into a pile of something horribly unrecognizable. However, the difference was that this tragedy took place practically in our own backyard.

For those of us who have dealt with the death of someone we love, we look with different eyes at calamities such as this. We no longer have the innocence to view something such as the bridge collapse or 9/11 and say, "Oh, isn't that terrible?" and then go right back to our everyday life. We are preoccupied with too many other thoughts and feelings around such a public tragedy. It becomes very personal to us.

For example, when 9/11 took place, I found myself brought back to the time around Nina's death, the bleakest period of my life. I recognized the same sick feelings in my stomach and stunned numbness. Whether it was the disbelief that such a catastrophe could happen in our nation, or the enormity of what the world had witnessed, or the senselessness of it all, I do not know. All I know is that I felt great sorrow and powerlessness to go about my daily business. Time stood motionless after the bridge fell.

Since the collapse happened during rush hour, I knew that it had taken with it someone's child, sibling, grandchild, and other loved ones in the blink of an eye. I had tremendous empathy for those secondary victims, the ones left behind to ask "Why?" The ones who will try desperately to understand and look for answers where there may be none; who will obsess over the "if onlys" and "what ifs" that consume the mind for weeks on end. I knew all too well what lie ahead for the survivors, and my heart and mind literally ached for them.

My very first thought was my surviving children and my grandchildren. Knowing that my grandson Ethan was in a summer day program that day, was that his bus? Was my son Dan going to a Twins game like he has so many times before and used that same bridge near the Metrodome? Did my daughter Amy use that route instead of the other to get to my oldest daughter Lisa's house in Maple Grove because of traffic delays elsewhere? Where were my loved ones at that moment??? I could not breathe until I knew of their whereabouts. Though the odds of one of them being on the bridge at that precise moment were slim, I knew the possibility was still there. When my daughter died, I became

forever wary of another loss happening. I have tried over the years to purge that horrific thought, but the fact remains: I know that sometimes the unthinkable can happen and does; that lightning can and does indeed strike twice. No one wants to ever relive that unspeakable pain ever again.

In the days following the bridge collapse, we became aware that the numbers of those who died was much less than feared and nothing short of miraculous. Yet, I couldn't help but think how little comfort that was for those for whom no "miracle" came. I know that all of us will be thinking of them as they begin this difficult path. We hope they will find loving supportive people like our TCF group to help them along their grief journey. And with the bridge collapse as a stark reminder of our changed priorities, we will remember to hug our family a little tighter and love a little harder than the day before.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy Seehuetter

TCF/St. Paul, MN

LESSONS FROM MY SON

Alice J. Wisler ~ TCF, Wake County NC
In memory of Daniel Wisler

After you were born
my life became a challenge
Seeing your poised big sister
who did everything right
you escaped out of your crib
knocked the houseplants over
decorated a closet wall
with a bright blue marker.
You didn't hesitate to scare me
at eight months pregnant
waddling like a beached whale
with a trip to get stitches
when you fell in the bathtub
telling jokes and laughing
as the doctor sewed your chin
naming the stitches 'my itches'.
I can still see those bright eyes
the excitement over a frog,
picking green tomatoes,
covered in birthday cake,
drinking pool water,
climbing a pecan tree,
kissing a neighbor's puppy
and running naked down the cul-de-sac.
From you I learned the art of patience,
the joy of mothering a son,
that there are never enough
hours for cuddling and reading.
You taught me well
although you were so young.
And within my heart,
I will always hold my gratitude for you.

Helping Others Remember

Our friends and family love us and want to spare us from additional pain. But they do not realize that by avoiding the subject of our deceased child, they try to invalidate our continuing love for our child. By joining us in the small everyday conversations and remembering how Johnny liked...or Sally would have...or remember when he did...they help us realize we are not the only ones who remember. It is up to each parent to set the tone for this to happen. If we naturally bring up our child's name, it lets others know they can, too. A simple, "Thank you for sharing that about...it lets me know you think of him/her, too," encourages others to continue mentioning their names.

By creating a low-key way to remember birthdays, it opens the door to others to remember our child and share thoughts. I have baked a cake each birthday since my son died. If family and friends would like to visit and share some cake, they can remember my child's birthday was a happy occasion for us all. If they prefer to keep the conversation light or just be with me, that's fine. Just knowing we all remember is what is important.

By sharing a card (probably from another TCF parent) that simply says I'm thinking of you on your child's anniversary, you help teach others how important it is to remember- and to let others know you remember. As the years pass and fewer thoughts about your child are expressed, it is these simple acts of love that give bereaved parents the added strength to face another year without their child.

At holidays, you can discreetly add a "special remembrance" ornament to the tree. Or donate something to charity in your child's name. By lighting a special candle or including your child's name in grace, you quietly let others know you remember and your child is still an important member of the family, even if he isn't physically at the table.

Some parents set up scholarships in their child's name, or donate to a cause or an organization that was important to their child. Not only does this help another child who was probably close to yours in age, it gives the parents the satisfaction of knowing someone else remembers their child.

Collecting butterflies or angels is another subtle way for you and others to show you remember your child. Each time someone adds to my collection, it is as if they are saying, "Yes, I think of him, too." The tangible act of holding something in your hand that symbolizes the love you have for your child is such a comfort.

Try to remember the more comfortable you are of speaking about your child and sharing your feelings, the more comfortable others will be in doing the same. For many years, death was a taboo subject, and the bereaved were supposed to get on with life. By encouraging others to share their memories and love for your child, you help change this attitude. Every small step we take now makes it easier for the thousands of other parents who will be facing this in the future. - Lynn Vines, TCF/South Bay, L.A., CA

Autumn Feelings

During the next couple of months, we will see many changes taking place in the world around us. The amount of daylight is decreasing - nights are becoming chilly - we will often need sweaters or jackets as we venture forth each day. However, the most dramatic change is that of the trees trading their green outfits for the brilliant reds, orange and gold of autumn. Many of us who are bereaved parents find ourselves feeling tense and depressed when the earth awakens in the spring. We may also experience these feelings when the dramatic changes of autumn occur.

A wise lady once said to me, "Our bodies respond to the changing seasons." She was right, they do! And they respond by FEELING! It seems to me that all of the grief feelings that I have - emptiness, sadness, anger, loneliness, guilt, and depression - are intensified as the world of nature around me changes.

Sometimes, however, we can draw strength from situations that seem, on the surface, to be negative. A few weeks after Linda's death, I heard from two friends within a few days of each other. One said, "You know, when I'm troubled, I get out and walk until I find something that I have never seen before. I look at it and think about it, and I am renewed." The other friend, who has some physical disabilities, wrote me a note in which she said, "Whenever I feel discouraged, I find something in nature to study and I am renewed." I think that hearing from these two people within just a few days of each other had to be more than a coincidence. I feel that there was an important message there for me, and I've tried to act on it.

I can draw strength from an early morning walk, from birds at our feeder, from a rainbow, a ladybug- many beautiful sights in nature - if I slowdown, think about these things, observe their intricacy and beauty, and attempt to let some of their energy into myself.

We have to slow down, try to realize what is happening to us and be receptive to the energy that is in the natural world for us. When I'm down because it's a sparkling clear, colorful autumn day and Linda isn't here to experience it with me, I have to feel that pain, then let it go so that the natural beauty and energy around me can strengthen and renew me.

Let yourself experience autumn - the emptiness and aching that you feel. Then try to let go of those feelings, just enough to let the wonder and beauty of the season into yourself - one day at a time. - Evelyn Billings, TCF/Springfield, MA



The Keepers

You make friends because you have things in common. We are friends because of our children.

The older ones, the younger ones, the one's who never even had a chance to breathe.

They are our reason for being...our heartbeat, our life's blood.

Whether we have lots of memories or only a few, we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember and carry the torch for those we remember so lovingly. We are there for ourselves and each other...because we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those who unfortunately join our ranks. Because we are the parents of lost children, the bruised hearts, the keepers of memories.

- Cheryl Pelletier, TCF/Concord, NH

True Words

"You will not always hurt like this"

- these words are true.

If they do not reach
your heart today,

do not reject them;

keep them in your mind.

One morning --

not tomorrow perhaps,

but the day after tomorrow,

or the month after next month,

One morning the dawn will wake you
with the inconceivable surprise;

Your grief will have lost
one small moment of its force.

Be ready for the time
when you can feel for yourself
that these words are true:

school by himself; a teacher who must reach out to a class, when her little one won't be in school this year. A mother sending two children off when there should be three, Many tears, behind smiling faces.

~Patsy Hedges, TCF/Fredrick
County, MD

Halloween - Again?

Bittersweet chocolate for trick or treat; a reflection of the way I feel?

The children on the street are gone -

What has happened to them?

Oh, well, just a few stragglers at the door, with grotesque masks and makeshift costumes, holding their gaping bags for gummy drops, or Mary Janes, or Hershey Kisses.

A watchful parent in the background on the sidewalk.

Halloween again? Should I turn off all the lights, And sit in total darkness and pretend we're not home?

Am I still angry? Am I?

I know it's not their fault-I mean the trick-or-treat children.

I'll pop a bittersweet chocolate into my mouth...and keep the entry light on.

- David Ziv, TCF/Philadelphia, PA

FALL

Will I ever see the leaves turn and wither without thinking of my son's last days? On the very first day of this season each year my heart aches. Yes, there is such a physical thing as heartache. It feels like my chest cavity is too small for the organ...it hurts.

Then I look at the world, the wispy fall clouds look like the sky has a furrowed brow, and occasionally it puckers up and cries with me. The sun is so innocent, so naïve. It casts its rosy glow on every object - oblivious to the gray pain just around the corner. The trees begin to cry their dead leaves onto the ground and stretch their empty arms heavenward (just like me), asking "Why?"

And then I think of my own naiveté five years ago with a bittersweet memory. I can't say I was carefree, but I never knew the terrible aching grief of losing a loved one. For many months after he died, I longed to escape back to the days before I felt the pain. Now I know that going back is more painful than facing the NOW.

All the other months I live a happy and healed existence, but beginning with that

first day of fall, my brow furrows, my eyes cry, and even though the warm sun shines on me, my arms feel empty and they are raised to the heavens asking, "Why?"

Hurry up, fall, move on by. Even the dread of winter is preferable to the pain you bring each year.

- Donna Ellis, TCF/Kansas City,
MO

A Grandparent's Grief is Unique

When a grandchild dies, the grandparent often mourns the death on many levels. The grandparent probably loved the child dearly and may have been very close to him or her. The death has created a hole in the grandparent's life that cannot be filled by anyone else. Grandparents, who were not close to the child who died, perhaps because they lived far away, may instead mourn the loss of a relationship they never had.

Grieving grandparents are also faced with witnessing their child-the parent of the child who died-mourn the death. A parent's love for a child is perhaps the strongest of all human bonds. For the parents of the child who died, the pain of grief may seem intolerable. For the grandparents, watching their own child suffer so and feeling powerless to take away the hurt can feel almost as intolerable.

Acknowledge the grandparent's search for meaning.

When someone loved dies, we all ponder the meaning of life and death. When a child or young adult dies, this search for meaning can be especially painful. Young people aren't supposed to die. The death violates the natural order of life and seems terribly unfair.

For grandparents, who may have lived long, rich lives already, the struggle to understand the death may bring about feelings of guilt. "Why didn't God take me, instead?" the grandparent may ask himself. "Why couldn't it have been me?"

Such feelings are both normal and necessary. You can help by encouraging the grandparent to talk about them.

- An excerpt from an article by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., "Helping a Grandparent Who is Grieving"

September and a New School Year

To most people means:

The kids out from under foot; buying a new lunch box, new clothes, and the usual school supplies; fixing breakfast and trying to get it eaten, and getting to the school bus on time.

What does school mean to a mother who has lost a child?

Watching other children filled with excitement; a little boy who should be in kindergarten; a brother who must go off to

2007 National Conference
Trails of Tears to Healing Hearts

It is at the urging of our Chapter Leader, Diane that I made the opportunity to go to a TCF National Conference happen. I will forever be grateful ather and have come away from this event with a lighter heart and a hope for what the future holds for me. I am in the first two years of bereavement after losing my youngest son, David. As you well know these first two years have been the toughest I ever want to experience. To go from the extreme pain of the initial loss to the numbness, which followed for that first year into the reality of the second year and the acceptance of the finality of this loss. I felt that the future held no life in it, no hope, no love. Although I have been to the monthly chapter meetings, have experienced two December Candle lighting events (which now replace all Christmas traditions I can no longer enjoy), and have met some wonderful new friends; this conference has helped me towards those necessary steps that may help me to get on with the rest of my life without David in it.

From the first to the last moments of my experience at this event, I was surrounded in love, understanding, and acceptance. TCF surpassed itself with its organization of every thing to make an environment that was comfortable, safe and reassuring for us first timers and newly bereaved parents. There were fellow parents-in-grief who had volunteered their time to be on hand to be sure we found our workshops, were ready to answer any questions and were there to support and share the tears that were always just under the surface. We truly Never Walked Alone this weekend.

There were so many workshops on a varying of subjects related to our new life as it is; it was difficult picking the ones I wanted. In the workshop "The first Two Years" I learned that I was not alone in what I had and still am experiencing. In the workshop "Long term", I learned that there is hope ahead for the future and that the severity of these intense emotions will soften. I also learned that I could put in place things so that David will never be forgotten. In another workshop, I learned about the difference between the old "Normal" and the "New Normal" that is now my future. I can see the sense in whom I have become and what I can do to go on, rebuilding on the shattered dreams. While at this conference I no longer felt the strain of being around people who don't "Get It". I was among fellow parents-in-grief, who shared the same world of reality that I had suddenly been thrust into. I had several opportunities to tell "David's story" and to share my feelings, thoughts, and pain and not feel uncomfortable.

The Opening Ceremonies, the Friday banquet luncheon, the Saturday evening dinner, and the Closing ceremonies offered speakers and music artists, all of whom were fellow parents-in-grief who had found words to express their stories of grief and give their messages of hope. The opportunity to meet and listen to the Founding Father of TCF, Reverend Canon Simon Stephens was incredible. The Candle Lighting ceremony held on

Saturday evening was especially moving for me; when I began crying there was someone to hold me and share my tears. The Walk to Remember was a truly unforgettable experience. It was like being in one very large group hug walking those 2 miles with a finish where we fell into each other's arms for hugs for our accomplishment and shared tears. We all experienced miracles along this route: from a heart in a shop window which was formed by condensation and appeared to have cracks in it; to the bombing site memorial with its green lawns, water features, and 169 bronze chairs, large and small; to the stature of the weeping Christ; to the care and concern of the police officers blocking the street for our march. The closing ceremony brought us all together and gave us completion after three days of intense feelings and exhaustive trials. Here again, the speaker, another parent in grief who had lost his only daughter in the Oklahoma bombing shared his story and message of hope and the closing music sent us on our way.

Please, join us next year when the TCF National conference is held from July 18 thru 20, 2008 in Nashville, Tennessee. You will be in store for the most wonderful and healing experience since you entered this "New Normal" life. See you there.

- **Vesta Thompson, David's Mom**

HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?

Shortly after my son died, I realized that this question was going to be bothersome. Each time someone asked me about the number of children, I struggled with the answer. I soon decided I was not going to let this become a problem. I thought about how I felt about my choices of answers and chose the one that met my needs in the beginning. I had a surviving daughter, but I knew for me to say "one" would seem denial on my part that my son had lived, and that wasn't right for me.

In the beginning, when I still needed to tell people that my son had died, I would tell in detail about his accident when the question about how many children came my way. As the months passed and I had told the story enough times, I found that it wasn't necessary to go into detail anymore. My needs had changed, and I rethought my answer. Now, when I am asked how many children I have, I answer, I had two children." The criteria I use in determining if I go any further is whether the person asking is going to be a continuing part of my life. If

so, they need to know about my son, and I tell them. Otherwise, we will be constantly dancing around that fact. Better, I think, to have it out in the open. It then loses its ability to interfere with the relationship.

If, on the other hand, the person asking is simply passing through my life, then I feel no need to go any further than, "I had two children." Seldom does anyone catch the had, instead of have, and pursue it. If they do, or if they ask follow-up questions about ages and professions, I tell them first that my 26-year-old son was killed in an accident. Then I tell them about my daughter. I am comfortable either way. If they are embarrassed, I see that as their problem. Just to show you how different we all are, however, my husband feels comfortable answering, "We have one child." That is what is right for him, and that is what he should say. You decide what is right for you -- then say it. That way you defuse that powerful question and it loses its ability to traumatize. Don't let it be a problem.

Mary Cleckley,

TCF Atlanta, Georgia

My Witch and My Angel

For Zoë, Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, makeup, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year—1987—I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures. Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four, I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes. I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoë's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly. With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath—the same one I take every year at every holiday and every milestone. With my unsteady hand, I will design witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoë's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13-year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make believe?

Zoë will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as okay as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here.

And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoë, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly glaze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's okay. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treating' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoë skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom—take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween. Just like his sister.

By Mary Clark, TCF/Sugarland, TX

© 1999 by Mary Clark (Reprint rights given to the Compassionate Friends)

Season of Many Feelings

Autumn is here once again, as it comes every year, and with it comes my falling tears.

This time of year is the hardest of all. My heart is still breaking, once again it is fall.

Memories once so vivid are seeming to fade. My time spent with you seems some other age.

This season reminds me of grief and of pain, yet teaches of hope and of joy once again.

For the trees are still living beneath their gray bark,

and you my sweet child are alive in my heart!

- Cinda Schake, TCF/Butler, PA



SEPTEMBER SONG

The school bells ring, young voices sing
And small ones shot with glee.
The autumn air beckons school to start and
left alone is me.

What makes me feel so down and blue
And boggled down with thoughts of you?
I see the school bus passing by
and find myself with a tear in my eye.
Is it the clothes we can't buy
While others grab the jeans to try?
Or is it autumn in the air
That pulls at heartstrings - already bare?

Maybe it's the falling leaves and dying
grass, bringing reflections like a looking
glass? Whatever the reason that stirs my
heart, every year when school must start,
Reminds me how much I miss you.
Forever loved - forever missed.

- **A Mom from TCF/Fort
Worth, TX**

ON LOSING AN ONLY CHILD

I would like to put in perspective the
subject of losing a child as compared
to losing an only child. The pain of
losing a child is excruciating, whether
that child has siblings or not. That is
incontrovertible. However, it has to be
admitted that the particular
relationship with the lost child, the
involvement, the constancy and the
intimacy, are all factors that affect
the degree of pain.

For those who have remaining
children, there is resentment when
they are told that they are fortunate
to have other children. Someone said
when a person loses a leg, he doesn't
say how lucky he is that he has
another leg. He is distraught that he
has lost a leg, his whole focus is on
that lost leg. The observer, however,
can see that to lose both legs is more
difficult.

We look at our children for a variety
of reasons. They provide us with
companionship of a unique sort. They lend
continuity to our lives - a form of
immortality. They create the role of
parent for us with the immeasurable
possibilities inherent therein. They
provide that comfort that comes from

knowing someone very close will be
concerned with us.

Though the pain suffered by any
bereaved parent is just as great, it
must be admitted that those who have
other children can have the benefit of
all of the above, whereas the person
who has lost an only child (and
especially one who can never bear
another) has had one fell stroke, all of
the above wiped out.

- *Kay Bevington/Alive Alone*

AFTER THE FIRST YEAR

After the first year,
The pain changes from a crushing weight,
to a wickedly cutting edge.
Time speeds up from grinding plodding
to a more normal routine.
And sometimes you can forget
(for a moment)
that your whole life was destroyed
Just last year.

After the first year,
You start to remember the good times.
You can tell a funny story about your child,
and save crying for later.
But sometimes it seems like you're the only
one left who mourns.
"What's the matter with you, anyway?"
"It's been a whole year."

After the first year,
Your child seems a little closer and yet so
far away.
Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten
how he walks, his voice, the shape of his
head, or the warmth of his hand in yours.
Those memories ambush you at many
unlikely moments, and tear you apart.

After the first year,
Your heart begins to thaw. You remember
that you once loved your surviving children
and you love them again. You remember
that life used to hold joy, and you
rediscover some small enjoyment in living.

After the first year,
You pick up your burdens and go on.
Amazingly, you have survived a blow more
painful than anything you ever imagined.
Even though you sometimes wish you could
have died, too.
It slowly dawns on you that you must still
live, because after the first year,
comes the second year.

- **Liz Ford, TCF/Madison, WI**

SPIRIT GIFTS

Grief is such an individual journey,
enveloped by a depth of pain we never
dreamed existed. We all have times
when despair and loneliness threaten
to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on
this lonely, unsought road. Our child
who died. I think there is never a
moment in the day when a part of me
is not connected to my son Philip. Our
journey through grief is a goodbye to
the physical presence of our children,
but never to their spirits and to the
essence of their beings. Philip lives
inside me now, and the same gifts he
gave me when he was physically alive
are still available to me through his
spirit. In some ways, those spirit gifts
are stronger because they are
contained and undiluted within me.

When the days are unbearably hard,
when I think of all this wonderful
young man missed, I try to remember
to focus on the present Philip, the one
inside me. I try to integrate his gifts
into my life, sometimes seeing through
his eyes, thinking from his heart and
mind.

No matter how old your child was,
the essence of this unique being
remains with you forever. It is
through us and others who knew them
that our children continue to live and
affect our present world. Though not
in the way we hoped and expected, our
beloved children are still alive. May
the spirit of the child who lives so
deep within your heart help you now
and through every moment of the re-
establishing of your life.

~Kitty Reeve, TCF/Marin County, CA

Cancer is not God's will.
The death of a child is not God's will.
Deaths from automobile accidents
are not God's will.
The only God worth believing in
does not cause the tragedies,
but lovingly comes into the anguish
with us. -

~Madeleine L'Engle

Brothers and Sisters

My Dear Brother Billy was 6'5" and 230 pounds and 19. He shall forever be 19. I was 22 and suppose to meet him that night. I can't really remember the weather in December of 1972 except that it was cold enough to make moisture hard. Thirty years ago and what happened is just yesterday. So my sibling friends what does one think 10,950 days after their brother or sister dies? I will tell you what it is like for me.

I remember a stunning, debilitating, overwhelming guilt that I had been less than always kind to my younger brother. Perfection in the execution of brotherly love was not always present. Billy's dying eliminated any chance for me to say that I was sorry for being less than an ideal sibling. It hurt that I was suppose to go to the baseball all-star game with him but canceled at the last minute and I have regretted that for 30 years. Odd what takes on great significance after death but not before? I remember Billy and I struggling in life like so many other young Souls just trying to find their way and do the best they can. Simple survival can be such a challenging chore. Why couldn't I be there for him when he needed me? We got close our last couple of years but there is still a void where we went our own ways and ...maybe if I...should I have...could I have...why didn't I, what if...

Why did this have to happen to him and not me? He was the good one, the innocent one, the big one, and the fun one. If only I had cared more, been smarter, put forward more effort to understand his life then maybe things would have been different, what if...

I remember getting that phone call from my sister and her asking "are you standing or sitting?" "Standing," I replied. A trembling voice that immediately conveyed the "I know something is wrong" feeling. From miles away through a lifeless wire that would transmit a message that changed the future forever I heard, "I suggest you sit down!" and "Billy is dead!" It was good I had sat down as numbness seized my heart and Soul. My brother was gone in an instant. Billy was now a memory.

Not knowing how your sister or brother

died, the age, the circumstances, I don't really know precisely how you feel but I have a pretty good idea. I have often wondered if it is better to go quick or to have time to consider death. I still don't know the answer to that one and I'm not sure if it even really matters. Death equals gone and what more is there to say. It seems talking about my Brother Billy does rekindle fond memories of laughter and good times. Time has nurtured an ability to put any bad stuff like the funeral in a place I never have to go. Occasionally I will encounter a stranger and in our conversation we learn we both have an unspeakable loss of a brother or sister and it always somehow feels good to identify with a veteran of secret grief. We brothers and sisters have gotten quite good at keeping our sadness well below the surface of casual observation. Misery does not love company but it does crave and cling to conversation from someone that actually understands. An encounter with a fellow traveler that doesn't say a lot but with a simple nod of the head expresses knowledge that has been earned. The "I know what you mean" glance directed from their so sad and sometimes slightly moist eyes to another Soul tuned into their heartbreaking loss through experience.

Thirty years ago and my yesterday shows a 22-year-old sweeping off the dusting of night snow from a porch that doesn't need it to keep busy and not have to be inside with all the crying. Thirty years and I still remember the bizarre. There was the casket showroom that held the Cadillac's and Ford's and Chevy's of coffins but it all seemed too weird to care at all. Then someone got upset that a Dear friend of Billy's wanted to put one of those funny cigarettes in with him for all eternity. The rest of us felt it was endearing so it stayed. We hurt for all of his young friends that seemed so lost, shaken by being thrust into an insane world of reality and death before their preparation was complete. Friends mean so very much and seem to be the first of the

forgotten.

We hurt so much because we love so much. I can admit that today because I am old. I wished I had done it back then. One day a long time ago I asked forgiveness for all my mistakes. One day long ago I said goodbye to my Brother Billy and all my regrets. I said I was sorry for having to let him go but I just couldn't stand the unrelenting, horrendous heartache and the "what ifs..." I had to let go, not of Billy, but of the pain and all the negative emotions that kept that tortuous ache alive. Some 10,950 days later I have survived and I am the better for having known a little big brother named Billy.

- Pat O'Donnell
TCF/Livonia, MI

A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.
~Helen Steiner Rice

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/ST PAUL CHAPTER
7884 IRISH AVENUE SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016-2072**

PLEASE FORWARD

Please circle the appropriate relationship:					
Parent	Sibling	Grandparent	Relative	Friend	Professional
Parent (s) name: _____			Child/Children's Name(s) _____		
Address: _____			Birth Date(s) _____		
City: _____			Death Date(s): _____		
State: _____		Zip: _____		Home phone: _____	
				E-mail address: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permission is given to include my child(ren), sibling or grandchild on the Remembrance page in the St. Paul Chapter newsletter and Chapter Website.			<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to enclose a donation to the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____		

Please fill out the form above if you need to update information or to renew your newsletter subscription. The expiration date of the newsletter can be found on the mailing label.