

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Saint Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 617 7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341 Feb/March/April 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:

Feb. 8: What Have We Learned Since Our Child, Sibling or Grandchild Died.

Mar. 8: Grief in the Workplace

April 12: Guilt, Anger & Forgiveness

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

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.

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 & Dick Peterson
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)
National Board Member: Cathy Seehuetter (651-459-9341)

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

ST. PAUL CHAPTER WEB SITE

If you haven't had the opportunity to check out our chapter's very own web site that Dave Esberg designed and put together in loving remembrance of his children Brandon and Brenda, please do so. He did a fabulous job and everything you need to know about everything chapter related will be on that web site at tcfstpaul.org. The newsletter will be online, as well as any updated TCF and

chapter information. There are links to the national web site as well as others. This is an invaluable outreach tool and we are wholeheartedly grateful for all he has done and continues to do. WE ALL THANK YOU, DAVE!

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
888-511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

Our Children Remembered

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

February

2-13-85	Amber Tholey	2-26-61	Kathy Jo Whitehead
2-16-70	Ann-Marie Janes	2-26-98	Zachary Jon Gaffney
2-17-70	Stephen Selander	2-28-86	Kevan Soderberg
2-25-95	Afton Shepard		

March

3-03-86	Kellie Jo Melquist	3-18-89	Derek Vitek-Savage
3-05-85	Jeffrey David Olinger	3-25-81	Cheryl Bjerke
3-13-80	Marit Eldri McDonald	3-27-55	Rick Walker
3-14-71	Robert Meyerson	3-29-82	Erik Spindler
3-18-76	Andrew Guisan-Dickinson		

April

4-02-69	Russell Jackson	4-16-85	Brandon Devine
4-07-73	Jason Reisdorf	4-17-96	Nicholas Ture
4-09-62	Sharon Nyman	4-24-74	Adam Triplett
4-13-60	Kathryn Klindworth	4-26-83	Joe Kromrey
4-15-92	Kevin Halfen	4-27-95	Kaylen Baker
4-16-83	Marissa Marie Bauer	4-29-79	Brandon Esberg
4-23-81	Michael Langer		

**OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS...
REMEMBERED ON THE DAY OF THEIR DEATH**

February

2-02-05	Afton Shepard	2-17-06	Jeffrey Elwell
2-04-03	Barry Eliason	2-24-88	Todd Terhell
2-03-03	Brent Hendrickson	2-26-04	Timothy Keith Olinger
2-06-01	Kyle Lagoon	2-27-00	Joe Kromrey
2-09-01	Kevan Soderberg	2-29-96	Kyle Hannemann
2-14-91	Ann-Marie Janes		

March

3-05-85	Jeffrey David Olinger	3-14-02	Kathryn Klindworth
3-07-99	Julie Rosenthal	3-15-99	Brandon Esberg
3-08-04	Kathy Jo Whitehead	3-21-79	Shelly Buchanan
3-10-99	Sharon Nyman	3-24-94	Julia Ann Bartlett
3-11-05	Patrick Niemi		

April

4-02-00	Loren Tyner Lamb,	4-23-98	Jeff Nielsen
4-09-98	Carley Bauman	4-24-06	Andrew Guisan-Dickinson
4-15-05	Erin Hines	4-25-06	Scott McMahon
4-21-05	Luke Sievers	4-30-03	Lawson Rios
4-22-94	Bill Achterling		

** My sincere apologies to Kim and Carl ZumMallen and Wileen Tibbetts for a mistake made last edition. It should have read that 12/31/87 is the birth date for Hannah ZumMallen.

"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 generously given in loving memory by the following:**

- Kim ZumMallen - daughter, Hannah
- Greg & Cathy Seehuetter - daughter, Nina Westmoreland
- Mary & Jack McGuire - son, Mike
- Doug & Christy Spindler - son, Erik
- Jim Franzen - son, Dave and wife, Bev
- Teresa Franzen - for Dave & Bev
- Kathy & Al Lesnau - son, Charlie
- Mike & Teresa Bierbrauer - daughter, Samantha
- Kathy & Vince Schettner - for Mrs. Krause & loved ones
- Mardell Cavanaugh - granddaughter, Angela Klove r
- Mark & Diane Shepard - daughter, Afton
- Charlene Roach - for Michael Roach, Jr.
- Linda Bergan - son, Derek & grandson, Lawson Rios
- Lois O'Neil - granddaughter, Erin O'Neil Como
- Mary Shannon
- Catherine Dickinson
- Brenda Bauman - daughter, Baby Carley
- Tom & Carol Nace - son, Tommy
- Wileen Tibbetts - niece, Hannah ZumMallen
- Lonnie Bohnen - son, Brett
- Dolores Walker - son, Rick
- Linda & Mark Triplett - son, Adam
- Mary & Mark Pagel - daughter, Nichole Margaret
- Laura & David Tussey - son, Jacob
- Jason & Teresa Karsten - son, Jaden
- Barb & Dave Deters - daughter, Kerri Braun
- Dave Esberg - children Brandon & Brenda
- Gregor McDonald - daughter Marit Eldri
- Karen Gorz - daughter, Rita
- Grace & James Kuznia - son, Jared
- Lois Nyman - children, Larry & Shari
- Lois & Warren Johnson - daughter, Cindy
- Mary Kay Shannon - son, Aaron Brown
- Catherine Guisan & Stephen Dickinson & Nicolas - son and brother, Andrew
- Lou & Steve Neumann, Jennifer & Nathan - daughter & sister, Karissa
- Sue Ward - son, Levi
- Rick & Linda Geiwitz - son, Joel
- Lois Klindworth - daughter, Kathryn & granddaughter, Briana
- Shannon Sievers - son, Luke
- Arvid Nielsen - sons, Anthony & Jeff
- Mary & Jack McGuire - son, Michael
- Carol Liller White - "niece", Nina Westmoreland
- Ronele & Jerry Janes - daughter, Ann-Marie
- Donna Elwell - son, Jeffrey
- Tom Franzen - brother, Dave and mother, Bev
- Don & Eleanore Baumann - daughter, Betsy
- Nancy & Jim Hendrickson - son, Brent
- Dan & Sarah Yurik - for Olivia & Caleb
- Tom & Jeri Diaz - daughter, Brittney
- Steve Wertz, stepfather of William "Bill" Achterling

Book Review

A book I would recommend is This Thing Called Grief: New Understandings of Loss. My husband and I lost our son Larry on November 4, 2005 and we grieve for him still. He suffered from metastatic melanoma for 16 months. This is an aggressive cancer with a horrific treatment regimen. At the time of his death he had just turned 19. We are so proud to be his parents and thankful to have known his influence in our lives.

This Thing Called Grief: New Understandings of Loss was written by Thomas M Ellis. The author is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, clinical supervisor and executive director of the Center for Grief, Loss, and Transition, based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He is a second-generation funeral director who lived and worked in a small-town funeral home. When the author was a young man his father had an extended, chronic illness so his experience with loss has personal as well as professional aspects.

Things do not hold my attention for long as I struggle with my grief. This book is helpful in that respect as the chapters are short and to the point. The approach taken in this book is to identify what is lost, what is left and what is possible.

What is lost is huge for those of us who have lost a child. I need not embellish that in any way. My words could not be adequate.

What are left (for some of us) are our other children. Focusing on how to keep a family together was a reminder I needed in respect to my situation. My husband Russ and I would be experiencing this "empty nest" of ours anyway. Our two older boys are in their twenties and out on their own. Our house is suddenly very quiet. Diving into a solitary grief was very inviting. I have to consciously continue to engage with my adult children. They need my interest and enthusiasm. This book reminds me not to lose what is left.

What is also left is our extended family. They struggle to know how to help. We have to help them help. That seems so unreal at times!

Another thing that is left is our own lives. This is where "what is possible" comes in. How do I find meaning in this new reality? It would be great if the answer could be found in a book. I have yet to find that answer but I keep looking. Until I figure that out I keep reading and right now this book is at the top of my list. The message is punctuated with beautiful poetry and pictures. The author has an obvious understanding of loss and gives relevant examples of how others have coped.

That offers some hope - maybe that is what is possible.

- **Written by Marsha Williams, Larry's mom, St. Paul Chapter**

Note from Editor: Your book reviews on a publication that you have found helpful in your grief journey, the length of this one or less, is welcome at any time.



For further information regarding the 2007 TCF National Conference in Oklahoma City go to www.compassionatefriends.org, as well as future newsletters, or call Cathy at 651 -459-9341.

Surviving the Unthinkable

I vividly remember April 19, 1995. My daughter Nina had heard on the news that something horrible had just occurred in Oklahoma City. She told me that a federal office building had been bombed, killing many people, many of them very young children. As the scene replayed itself on every station, Nina and I knelt in front of the television. We held hands and were motionless and hushed except for the sound of our occasional choking sobs. As we watched the horrific scene and the victim's loved ones in their shock and grief, I distinctly remember my reaction. After saying a silent prayer that I would never have to bury my children first, I looked at my daughter through teary eyes and said aloud, "Those poor parents! I can't even imagine! I know that I could never survive losing any of you."

Little did I know those words that I had spoken to Nina would come back to haunt me. That only three weeks after the Oklahoma City tragedy my own beautiful 15 1/2-year-old daughter, my Nina with the captivating smile, would be killed suddenly, far away from home, on a Florida freeway while on our family vacation. From that moment on, our lives changed completely. She would not be here to see her sisters become mothers and enjoy a being auntie to her nephews, or watch with pride at her brother's graduation. A piece of the family puzzle would be forever missing. As my son, Dan gazed out the plane window on the agonizing flight from Florida back to Minnesota, he turned to look at me with deep sorrow in his eyes and said, "Mom, what will we ever do without Nina?" That one sentence said it all. I truthfully answered back, "I have no idea."

And so the nightmare began for my family, just as it has for all of yours. We were harshly and unexpectedly propelled into the same horror as those left behind in Oklahoma City. We were left behind to try to answer the unanswerable and pick up the pieces of our shattered world that had changed in a fleeting second. We have lost our children from many different causes, all of them life altering. I am quite confident that you felt as I did...that we would never survive the loss of our child. It was unthinkable, for no human being could ever withstand the force of such unbearable pain.

However, if you are reading this right now, that means that, somehow, you have survived. I am quite confident that you sit back and wonder how you ever did. But, like me, you had been directed to The Compassionate Friends, whether through a caring friend who asked that we send you the newsletter or you heard about TCF from a professional. You may have even taken the initiative yourself. Whether you attend our meetings or read the newsletter as your contact to other bereaved parents, you already took the first giant step. It was a step that said no matter how much easier it would have seemed to refuse to go on, you had made that commitment toward survival, toward learning to cope with the pain, and finding ways to live again. It isn't an

easy road to travel, as it is fraught with roadblocks along the way.

The first time I noticed I must have been progressing was when I realized that I had made it through half a day without crying. For those who have not lost a child, this may not seem like much of an accomplishment. But for those who have, this seemed improbable and insurmountable. But, if you really look closely, I think that you too will find that you have made progress, no matter how tiny the steps may seem. The grieving process is a long one. Try not to be impatient with yourself if you thought you were making progress only to find you have slipped backwards a little. It is a lifelong process, because we love our children so deeply, and therefore we need to be patient with ourselves. The ultimate heartbreak does not heal overnight.

It will be seven years April 19th since the Oklahoma City bombing. Sadly, since that time, we have seen additional tragedies that have taken the lives of more children such as TWA Flight 800, the school shootings in Kentucky, Oregon, and Littleton, and the unspeakable horror of September 11th. Each of us cried along with those parents who were just beginning the same painful journey that we know all too well. I wish I could say that another tragedy such as this would never occur, or that I would never again see the shock and emptiness in another bereaved parent's eyes as they walk into a meeting or their cries of despair on the other end of the phone, but I know that is impossible. Yet, I can say with certainty that those who have thus far survived the unthinkable will be there for the newcomers who walk through those doors. We will cling to each other and reach out with understanding and compassion and hope--through all those tiny steps, whether forward or backward. Somehow, we will survive--together.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN
Written spring 2002

Note from Editor: In November 2006, I was in Oklahoma City, the site of the 2007 TCF National Conference. The Oklahoma City bombing memorial is only blocks from the conference center and hotel where the conference will be held. I took a bus and visited it one evening while I was there for a meeting. It literally took my breath away: the Survivors Tree, the reflecting pool, the letters and personal effects left by loved ones in the chain link fence, the clock marking the time of the blast, the black burn marks on the walls, the illuminated chairs representing each victim. And I suddenly was brought back to that sad April day over a decade ago where Nina and I sat in front of the TV stunned and transfixed at the horror we saw, not knowing that in less than a month I too would lose my own sweet daughter in a moment of senselessness. Remembering I had written this article a few years ago, I thought now might be a good time to share it.

GRIEF: THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

Grief is a NATURAL and NORMAL reaction to loss...loss of any kind. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet, grief occurs following any change in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

Grief is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, our religious beliefs, our social-economic situation, our physical health and the cause of loss. Loss, anger, fear, frustration, loneliness and guilt are all part of grief. It is important to understand that grief is NOT a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. **GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE.**

Grieving may cause physical and behavioral changes such as sleep irregularities, changes in appetite, gastrointestinal disturbances, "heart ache", restlessness, spontaneous crying, irritability, sighing or muscle tension.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children or with others, either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. Guilt feelings often accompany or follow anger. You may want to withdraw and be left alone.

Depression, feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may experience headaches, tightness in the throat or chest, muscle aches, or a burning sensation in your stomach. Grief hurts! You may, for a while, become preoccupied with images of your loved one. You may "see" or sense your loved one's presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

You can help yourself through grief.

1. Acknowledge the loss.
2. Accept the pain of grief. Try to live through it, not avoid it.
3. Share your thoughts and feelings. Find enough compassionate listeners. You can talk more than one person can listen!
4. Understand that each person has an individual timetable for grief. Each person grieves separately and differently. We each move through grief at our own pace.
5. Find your sense of humor. Try to hang onto it!
6. Get some physical exercise. If nothing else, jog your memory.
7. Learn to hug again.
8. Accept yourself. Begin to understand you are someone new. Acknowledge that change.
9. Begin to become the person you already are.....
10. Remember, though death comes, **LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!!!!**

- By Darcie Sims

THE SEASON OF THE HEART

This is the Season of the Heart!

Yet, many of us will be asking how to live during this season with a heart that is broken.

Just what is it that our hearts know during these days?

What are the feelings that pulsate and ebb and flow?

Is it—

...the Heart that catches its breath on a memory and is overwhelmed?

...the Heart where hope seems absent?

...the Heart that feels it absolutely cannot hold one more ounce

of pain?

...the Heart that knows the fleeting smile of a loved one?

...the Heart that catches a fragment of joy and is warmed?

...the Heart that knows pain, and keeps on loving?

...the Heart that is tempted to lie still and lonely?

...the Heart that searches for the acceptance of a friend?

Questions arise!

Why is a heart red and why does it have two lobes?

A response might be—

... a Heart is so vulnerable; so easily bloodied.

... a Heart consists of opposites; changed by sorrow and by joy.

... a Heart, when whole, includes all emotions.

... a Heart can lie cold and sad and broken.

... a Heart can grow and heal and love...

We EACH have our choices to make!

- Mary Andrews, TCF/So. Maryland

LOVE LETTER TO MY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

This is my love letter to you on Valentine's Day. When Sarah died I thought my heart would never again feel anything except pain. I was so overwhelmed with grief. My thoughts and feelings were only of my own tragedy. And then I met you.

You shared your sorrow and your tears with me. I learned of your loss, your life, your child now gone. And my heart was broken for you - my weary heart, that I thought would never care about anyone else ever again. When you shared your hurting, vulnerable, intimate core of yourself with me, my heart was revived. When you trusted me to know your precious child and your bruised love for this one who was the delight of your heart, my exhausted soul was encouraged. Your words comfort me. Your hugs strengthen me. Your tears quench my thirst.

As I see you heal, I know that I'll also become whole again. When I hear you laugh, I trust that lightness will one day return to my heart. Thank you for being my compassionate friend. I love you.

- Linda McLean, TCF/Medford, OR

Tissues, Tears & Treasures

A circle of chairs
and boxes of tissues,
A roomful of tears
and emotional issues.

Frightening at first,
I did not want to enter
into this strange group,
and be in the center.

What I soon learned,
as we sat side by side,
We were bound by the love
of our children who died.

Each shattered heart,
desperately seeking
a moment of peace,
from the pain and weeping.

So many things different,
and yet all the same,
Hearts lost in a fog
of loss and of pain.

Those who have journeyed,
much further than me,
Reached out in comfort,
listened quietly.

Each shattered heart spoke,
and the tissues were passed,
We never avoid
speaking of the past.

This circle of friends,
have found a bond,
And here I'm still known
As "Tony's Mom".

Slowly, I've found
I can reach out to others
Who are newly bereaved,
fathers and mothers.

Strength I have found in this
Circle of chairs,
To grieve and to heal
And to show that we care.

- D. Barta, TCF/Portland, OR

Springtime

If there were a time I had to choose
to say goodbye, it would most certainly
not be in the Spring ... No, Spring is a
time of new life and beginnings and
sweetness, a time I remember with her
as special, dying Easter eggs, dressing up.
Spring would not have been a choice.

Neither could Summer have been a
choice. Summer was the season she
worshipped the sun and the ocean; when
her lovely young body turned golden...No,
summer would not have been a
choice...and Fall?

No, I think not. Fall is the time for
reflection and personal growth and
preparation and beautiful colors. She
was so much a part of the colors. Fall
would not have been the time to say
goodbye.

Winter could certainly not be a choice.
She loved to play in the snow and was
learning to ski. She was always excited
over the holidays. She made Winter fun
in its oft dreary state...No, Winter could
not have been a choice.

There is no season I could have chosen
to say goodbye to her. I will remember
her in all seasons. It was in the Spring I
had to say goodbye, and I see her in
every blossom. I hear her laughter in
every sweet breeze. She will always be
Springtime...and I will remember.

- Kerry Marston, TCF./Mesa
County

For the Newly Bereaved

**One day you wake up and realize
you must have survived it because
you are still here, alive and
breathing. But, you don't
remember the infinitely small steps
and decisions you took to get
there. Your only awareness is
that you have shed miles of tears
on what seems to be an endless
road of sorrow. One day...one
glorious day, you wake up and feel
your skin tingle again and you
forget, just for an instant, that
your heart is broken...and it is a
beginning.**

- Susan Borrowman, TCF/Kingston,
Canada

A Valentine to My Child

As long as I can dream,
As long as I can think,
As long as I have memory...
I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see,
And ears to hear,
And lips to speak...
I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel,
As soul stirring within me,
An imagination to hold you...
I will love you.

As long as there is time,
As long as there is love,
As long as I have a breath,
To speak your name...
I will love you.

Because I love you more than
anything in all the world.

- Daniel Houghton,
TCF/Massillon, OH

Footfall

Your shoes,
Your summer sandals,
You're high-heeled Italians,
Your little blue Adidas,
Your furry bear-faced
slippers.

Nothing,
Not this closet night,
Not this need
to count them all.

No, nothing
Not even this writing time,
can fill your shoes,
Your soundless steps
walk this house
Without you

- Charles Ghigna.

EASTER and GRIEF WORK

The Easter morning of resurrection should be especially comforting to bereaved parents because of its promise that our children live, and if they do, we shall surely be reunited in some form with them in the afterlife. However, particularly in the first years after Tricia's death, I did not find much joy in singing, "Hallelujah!" I felt God knew about His son, and while I tried not to begrudge Him that, I had no such positive reassurances about my daughter.

When people told me, "God is a bereaved parent, too," I often thought that He made the plan for Jesus' life, and I didn't know that overall plan for Tricia's. God would be more in my position of anguish, sadness and disappointment if Jesus had decided to say, "No, I believe I do want this cup taken from me." Then God's plans would have been thwarted just as I felt mine were. So I didn't get much comfort from God's bereavement. After all, God at the time of Jesus' death was a spirit being and Jesus was an earth being, Jesus' death once more put him on a spiritual plan, thus reuniting him with his father. I wished the reverse could be true for me.

Knowing that I believe about life after death became very important after Tricia died. Had she completed, according to some cosmic plan, what she came to this earth to do and therefore was given an opportunity to leave? So began my quest for "Easter" victory. It's been a long trek, which had to reconcile my traditional church upbringing of blind believing with what became a new spiritual concept of Easter. Please note that I don't say religious concept. I do believe after much reading, reasoning, and searching that Tricia lives and that one day in some form I will be reunited with her. Through memories of her and our mutual love and respect for each other, I am already reunited with her, transcending the physical limitations of this earth plane. My mind and heart can take me to her whenever I choose.

I also intuitively sense that at times she reaches out and touches her earth family and me. I wore her amethyst birthstone ring to her brother's wedding in February, felt she was there with us, and felt her love surround our family. For the newly bereaved, happy occasions are so often tinged with almost unbearable sadness and tears. After fourteen years, Tricia's presence at her brother's wedding comforted me, brought no tears to my eyes. I felt she was delighted, laughing her clear tinkling laugh, at some of the frantic antics that went on to get that wedding held and concluded.

My husband sometimes accuses me of being a heretic. Possibly I am when it comes to accepting what I was taught to believe before I reached the age of reason and agony. I do know I am more integrated spiritually since I doubted, disputed, and at least partially resolved what I perceived as conflicts between the way life is and the way my religious beliefs had explained it to me.

Each bereaved parent will eventually untangle the mystery of his own spirituality if he desires to do that. Certainly, the bereaved should give themselves license to question and reach out for the hallelujah of Easter morning. It's there!

- Elizabeth Estes, TCF/Augusta, GA

...In time of sorrow everyone deals with feelings in unique ways. Try not to be hurt if those closest to your heart seem to grieve less or behave strangely...We cannot always see on the outside how someone mourns on the inside.

- Sascha Wagner

EARLY GRIEF

I feel a light-less voice inside
It has no name.
I know that others
say I am in grief.
But for me,
it is without a name,
a mortal distress
beyond words.

AT FIRST

At first
My very name was grief,
my eyes saw only grief,
my thoughts were grief.
and everything I touched
was turned to grief.

But now
I own the light of memories.
My eyes can see you,
and my thoughts can know you
for what you really are:
more than a young life lost,
more than radiance
gone into night.

Today you have become
a gift beyond grief,
a treasure to my world---
though you have left my
world and me behind.

COMPARISONS

It is useless to wonder
what grief is larger
or what grief is smaller.
The death of children
fills to ultimate endurance
every human dimension
for pain.

There is no need
to give rank to death.
We only have to recognize
that grief has filled
a whole life
to its ultimate borders.

- Sascha Wagner, WINTERSUN

Grandparents Remembrance

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is twofold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief, and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

- Susan Mackey, TCF/Rutland, VT

NOT a Matter of Choice

Our son Keith was 29 years old when he decided to end his life by suicide in 1999. Suicide is a frightening word, and it is not only ignorance but fear and stigma that keep people from understanding why someone would take their own life. In a way, it is easier to think that a person made a "choice", freeing us from knowing the truth.

The word "choice" continues to perpetuate the stigma of suicide. The definition "choice" is "the freedom in choosing, both in the way one chooses and in the number of possibilities from which to choose." In a pre-suicidal state, an individual is overwhelmed in a given situation. They suffer extreme mental anguish and a painful sense of hopelessness. Their sense of judgment is distorted, and they do not have the ability to make "choices" or options. They usually want to kill the pain rather than themselves.

Suicidal people may be unable to restrain themselves from acting on feelings or impulses. This strong impulse to end the pain is often due to the depletion of the chemical called serotonin. Serotonin is a chemical within the brain that helps restrain impulsive behavior.

"There is no suffering greater than that which drives people to suicide. Suicide defines the moment in which mental pain exceeds the human capacity to bear it. It represents the abandonment of hope," says John T. Maltzberger, M.D., past president of the American Association of Suicidology, practicing psychiatrist and teacher at Harvard Medical School.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the USA and the second leading cause of death for those ages 25-34. About 30,000 of the 650,000 Americans who attempt suicide each year die. Suicide is almost always the result of depression, an illness of the brain.

We can only imagine the horrible mental torture our son Keith endured. Depression is one of the most terrible and pervasive

illnesses of our day. In 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States listed suicide as a national public crisis. Having accurate information about depression is critical. We live in a world where people hang onto old stereotypes. In order to stop future loss of lives by suicide, we must make certain to take advantage of any opportunity to encourage greater awareness. In that goal, we can make great strides to ensure that these stereotypes cease to persist.

- Carol Loeher, TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter, from TCF national magazine, "We Need Not Walk Alone", Spring 2004

My Thoughts on Mrs. Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln has always been my most admired and respected figure in the history of our country. After standing in front of his statue at the Lincoln Memorial, no one could ever forget the terrible marked sadness in his face, his forlorn and melancholy attitude.

I have been picking up from other chapter newsletters the many pieces of prose and poetry attributed to Lincoln, which speak so poignantly of grief, and I have researched the Lincoln life. It is for his wife, Mary, for whom I cringe now when I read how life dealt with her. Washington gossip circles referred to her "mental state", that she was "deranged" and "eccentric". The Lincoln's lost their second son, Edward, almost 4, in February 1850. Their third son Willie was born in December of that year and died in February 1862 at the age of 11. And then, the tragedy of tragedies. In April, President Lincoln was assassinated in front of Mrs. Lincoln's eyes...her grief must have been worse than inconsolable.

How could life deal such a terrible fate to one woman? How could any one of us deal with such multiple tragedies? We know how easy it is to feel as if we are "going crazy" and how common that feeling is. To share that feeling in Compassionate Friends is more than wonderful...to be assured that it is common, to learn and understand from other bereaved parents why we feel that way, and that it will pass helps immeasurably.

But tragedy stalked Mary Lincoln's footsteps, for not quite six years later, her son Tad was killed at 18 in January 1871. History books do not say, but I pray that Mrs. Lincoln had ONE compassionate friend who understood her grief over the death of her three sons and her husband. One friend wrote of her: "Poor Mrs. Lincoln. She has been a deranged person."

Yes, of that I am sure. And then I thank God for The Compassionate Friends.

- Mary LaTour, TCF/Dallas, TX

SPRING: HOPE OR MORE PAIN

Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain, right? Wrong!

My six-year-old son Arthur was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family. For years after, spring and especially the Easter season began the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out and my sadness was deeper. Easter came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left.

Many more springs came - and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically, though, the beginning of the resolution of my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them, was the deterioration of my marriage.

We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years.

Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps, and pain and sadness and loss. But it is also a long story of change and growth. The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons.

Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic. But, spring is not magic.

Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in nature can cause us to do what we need to do to resolve our grief. The beauty of spring can be the factor that encourages us to find beauty in our lives again. Yes, we see growth and change and renewal all around us in spring. But it won't happen for us unless we make it happen.

In early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again. Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief. Don't endow a season with magic to make changes in you. Hard grief work is what will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar.

- Margaret Gerner, BP/USA-St. Louis, MO

FINDING HOPE

Some find hope in butterflies, and some in children's smiles.
Some find hope in photographs, and some in walking miles.
Some find hope in quietness and solitary reflection.
Some find hope in helping others and sharing friendly affection.
Some find hope in holding tight to all the old traditions.
Some find hope in the creation of a special new variation.
Some find hope in family gathered, some in cherished friends.
Some find hope in seeking God, feeling peace in worship again.
Beyond the sad and beyond the past,
beyond the ache that lasts and lasts,
there is a path that winds its way
into your future and a hopeful day.

- Karen Pope

Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children safe from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, whether of anger or left unspoken, haunts us. Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty about that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret.

- "We Need Not Walk Alone" Summer 2004

MARCH WINDS

He raced against the wind as if his very life depended on it.
Eyes bright, cheeks glowing from the still chilly March wind,
Throwing me a smile now and then to make sure I was watching.
I was, and when I caught a smile I applauded.
His effort so great for one small boy.
I don't remember now if his kite ever flew -
But I remember the day - the nip in the air -
his cheeks glowing - his fresh clean smell -
My afternoon of playing catch with smiles...
I remember every year when March winds begin to blow.
Even if he had not died long after the age of flying kites,
I would still remember.
Maybe if he were still here
teaching his own small boy the delicate art of flying kites
and catching his own smiles,
it wouldn't hurt so much
when March winds begin to blow.

- From "Songs from the Edge" by Faye Harden

Learning to Survive in a New World

The world is now a different place. The bereaved sibling is a different person. Each of us heals in his or her own time. The sibling may seem to be doing well and then suddenly feel as if they are starting over once again. Memories can be a source of strength, comfort or pain. They can be both uplifting and depressing.

Siblings grieve as individuals, and there is no standard plan. Their grief is now part of them. Ignoring it will not help, for it will keep coming back when it is least expected. Their lives will gradually improve as they learn to acknowledge grief without denying it or letting it take control. Their perception of the world has changed, as well as their priorities. Indeed, they are new people in a new world.

"Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

What was once a simple question now brings so much pain. The question, "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" is often asked as a part of getting to know someone new. The answer may vary depending upon the circumstances. No matter how siblings respond to the question, they know that the relationship does not die and that they will always be brothers or sisters to their sibling who died.

- Excerpt from Winnipeg Chapter News (July/August 2006)

The 2006 Candle Lighting Remembrance Service

For those who were there, I am sure you are still amazed by the number of people who came out on a December

evening to light candles for their children. We don't know the exact numbers, but it was well into the hundreds--far and away, a record attendance. We will always remember Michelle Marie's beautifully impassioned vocals, Tami Briggs' soul-soothing harp music, the moving interpretative signing by Mitch Carmody, eight-year-old Kristina Plumb's touching, yet powerful singing voice, and especially the sight of our flickering candles, lifted high into the air with the belief that our loved ones were gazing down at them from above. What a sight that must be!

We would like to thank all who were responsible for putting the program together, and for the overwhelming generosity of volunteers who came early to setup and stayed late to clean up. Without them, programs like this would be impossibility. We thank those who brought pictures of their children, siblings and/or grandchildren for all to view, and who brought a variety of goodies to share (we believe we have worked out the glitches to make going through the goodie line more efficient, so be watching for that next year!).

Our chapter's candle lighting service has become an essential part of the often -difficult holiday for many, that special time set aside where the focus is solely on remembering our children and honoring their lives with our family and TCF friends who firsthand understand our need to be there. We hope you will again plan to attend on December 9, 2007. If you have never been to our candle lighting before, we truly hope you will consider joining us. We believe you will be glad that you did. Again, thanks to all for everything!!!

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: _____

() Permission is given to include my child(ren), sibling or grandchild on the Remembrance page in the St. Paul Chapter newsletter.

() I wish to enclose a donation to the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/ST PAUL CHAPTER
C/O CATHY SEEHUETTER
7884 IRISH AVENUE SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016-2072

Please forward



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS' CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS