



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



St. Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 624 7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341 February/March/April, 2009
St. Paul Chapter E-mail address 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
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:**

We do not talk about the topics of our meetings only. We are there to talk about and listen to whatever is on your mind.

February 12: Open Discussion

March 12: Relationships with Family & Friends. Our support systems after our loved one has died are not always what, or who, we thought they would be.

April 9: Humor and Laughter. Grief is a curious mixture of many emotions. "Laughter is not a sign of 'less' grief. Laughter is not a sign of 'less' love. Humor may provide some necessary relief from the work of grieving (see description on page 6, and article page 5).

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 come to a meeting even if 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 other members is okay too. Our meetings are 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, Lyle Lindberg, Dave Esberg, Denise Bjerke, Cori Clagherty, Kim ZumMallen, Cliff & Sandy Romberg
Newsletter Editor: Cathy Seehuetter
Chapter Webmaster: Dave Esberg (tcfstpaul.org)
Treasurer: Lyle Lindberg
Librarian: Jan Navarro
Remembrance Cards: Kathy Lesnau
1st Contact: Linda Bergan
Outreach: Karen Gorz
Hospitality: Kim ZumMallen
Newsletter Mailing and Folding: Susan Rogge
National Board of Directors: Cathy Seehuetter

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 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 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 at 651-439-3290.

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

Chapter Website

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

Steering Committee Meeting

Please call 651-459-9341 if you are interested in helping with the work of the chapter and need further info and meeting date, time and place of our next meeting. All are welcome!

TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PORTLAND, OREGON

August 7-9, 2009

Featured speaker: Candy Lightner, founder of M.A.D.D.
Room availability is going fast. For further information, go to

www.compassionatefriends.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
888-511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

Our Children Remembered

The light of life never goes out. Please keep the following children and their families in your thoughts.

LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED ALWAYS ON THE MONTH OF THEIR BIRTHDAYS:

Graeme Grothe, son of Hannah Lieder
Gregory, son of Hildy Nesenson
Ann-Marie, daughter of Ronele & Jerry Janes
Stephen, son of Don & Nancy Selander

Jeffrey David, son of Ken & Diane Olinger
Erin Schmotter, daughter of Judy Lovold
Marit Eldri, daughter of Gregor McDonald
Robert, son of Pete & Lee Meyerson, brother of Charlie
Joey, son of Diane Nelson
Jesse Frank, son of Sandy and Cliff Romberg

Sharon, daughter of Lois Nyman
Michael, Jr., son of Carol & Mike Morgan
Kathryn, daughter of Lois Klindworth
Kevin, son of Joe & Debbie Halfen
Marissa Marie, daughter of Nancy Bauer
Brandon, son of Robbyn Devine
Brandon, son of Teresa Quinn

Barry, son of Claudia Eliason
Brent, son of Nancy & Jim Hendrickson
Kyle, son of Sherry & Steve Lagoon
Ann-Marie, daughter of Jerry & Ronele Janes
Daphanie, granddaughter of Sam Zimmerli
Jeffrey, son of Donna Elwell
Robert, son of Lee & Pete Meyerson, brother of Charlie
Quinnie, son of Shannon & Lucas Arnold

Greg, son of Judy Townsend
Jeffrey David, son of Diane & Ken Olinger
Jason, son of Terry Basting
Gregory, son of Hildy Nesenson
Julie Rosenthal, granddaughter of Elaine Henthorne

Kathy Jo Whitehead, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor
Sharon, daughter of Lois Nyman
Kayla Hoffman, daughter of Kristy Schauer
Patrick, son of Julie Niemi, brother of Allan & Joe
Kathryn, daughter of Lois Klindworth

Loren Tyner Lamb, son of Johanna Lester
April, daughter of Bill & Lori Englund
Carley, daughter of Brenda Bauman
Erin Schmotter, daughter of Judy Lovold
Erin, daughter of Colleen & David Hines
Gabriel Gonzales, son of Rosemary White Shield

February

Quinnie, son of Lucas and Shannon Arnold
Kathy Jo Whitehead, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor
Zachary Jon, son of Patty Gaffney

March

Andrew, son of Catherine Guisan & Steve Dickinson
Cheryl, daughter of Denise & Steve Bjerke
John, brother of Kristy Schauer
Rick, son of Dolores Walker
Erik, son of Doug & Christy Spindler
Kayla Hoffman, daughter of Kristy Schauer

April

Michael, son of Wendy & Tom Langer, brother of Jim
Adam, son of Mark & Linda Triplett, brother of Katrina
Joe, son of Steve & Lori Kromrey, grandson of William & Shirley Briggs,
and Leon & Rose Kromrey
Kaylen, daughter of Cheryl & Scott Baker
Brandon, son of Dave Esberg
April, daughter of Lori & Bill Englund

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS... LOVED AND MISSED IN THEIR REMEMBRANCE MONTH

February

Christopher, son of Mary Warner
Katie, daughter of Lynn & Bob Pofert
Carlos Manuel, son of Jannette Cruz
Todd, son of Shirley & Don Terhell
Timothy Keith, son of Ken & Diane Olinger
Joe, son of Steve & Lori Kromrey, grandson of Leon & Rose Kromrey,
and William & Shirley Briggs
Kyle, son of Ken & Karen Hannemann, brother of Kristin Garrett

March

3-15-99 Brandon, son of Dave Esberg
3-16-75 Joey, son of Diane Nelson
3-18-07 Cody, son of Don & Deb Nelson
3-21-79 Shelly Buchanan, daughter of Carol Malek
3-24-94 Julia Ann Bartlett, daughter of Carol &
George Konkle
3-25-07 Brandon, son of Teresa Quinn
3-25-99 Sarah, daughter of Randall Bachman
3-26-05 Jamie Agudelo, child of Pat Ossell
3-28-07 Tom Anderson, son of Loretta & Jerry Sopkowiak

April

Brandon Lee, son of Halleigh Hall
Michael, son of Patty Rajala
Luke, son of Shannon Sievers, grandson of Karen McLaren
Bill Achterling, stepson of Steve Wertz
Andrew, son of Steve Dickinson & Catherine Guisan
Lawson Rios, grandson of Linda Bergan

*****Please see page 4 for information regarding the change to the Birthday/Remembrance Day page***

"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 these donations fund our chapter activities, such as meeting supplies, featured speakers, our Candle Lighting and Balloon Release, books/pamphlets/outreach materials for the newly bereaved families, postage and printing for newsletters and flyers, and more.

'Love Gifts' were given in loving memory by the following:

- Joannie Kemling, children Kellie Kaye and Mitchell John
- Cori Clagherty, son Ryan
- Mary Ann Pojar, son John
- Denise & Joe Kirby, daughter Nicki
- Carol Liller White, "niece" Nina Westmoreland
- Jan & Phil Navarro, son Phillip, and Hannah, Nina, Ryan, Sabrina, Jesse, Cheryl, Brenda & Brandon
- Victor Kretch, in memory of Harlan
- Lois O'Neil, granddaughter Erin Como
- Cathy & Greg Seehuetter, daughter Kristina Westmoreland
- Kathy & Al Lesnau, son Charlie
- Sandy & Cliff Romberg, Alyssa Frank, son/brother Jesse Frank
- Colleen Como, daughter Erin
- Tom & Laura Burbach, son Thomas, Jr.
- Ralph & Carol Bauman, grandson Derek Beauclair
- Lori & Bill Englund, daughter April
- Sue Ward, son Levi
- Mardell & Richard Cavanaugh, granddaughter Angela Klover
- Linda Bergan, son Derek, and grandson Lawson Rios
- Rosemary White Shield, son Gabriel Gonzales
- Linda, Mark & Katrina Triplett, son and brother Adam

We gratefully accept these much appreciated gifts with the knowledge that our children are warmly remembered.



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/or a memento to share with the group. You may also bring a birthday cake, cookies or other snack as well. We do this to celebrate our children's lives, and to share them with others who understand our need to remember this very special day.

NEWSLETTER REMEMBRANCE PAGE

Due to the recent policy of The Compassionate Friends, we will no longer print the actual dates of our children's birthdays and death day. Unfortunately, identity theft is running rampant, and there are unsavory people out there who have sadly taken advantage of innocent others through the Internet. We are doing this to protect our members from being hurt any further. Thank you for your understanding of this necessary change. TCF only has the best interest of our members at heart.

WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

For the first time, Mother Nature was less than cooperative for this year's TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program on December 14 with a nasty mix of snow and ice. We are so sorry that this happened, but unfortunately cannot predict Minnesota's weather in December. We still had approximately 100 hardy people come join us. We would like those of you who were unable to be there to know that we lit candles for your children and kept all of you with us in our hearts. We would like to thank Michelle-Marie for traveling from the far northern suburbs to share her lovely vocals, as well as daughter and father, Kristina and Paul Plumb, sharing their musical talents. Thanks also to Beaver Lake Lutheran Church for providing a beautiful setting for our program; to Marlene Keyser for putting together the highlight of evening, the breathtakingly poignant PowerPoint presentation of our children, and Jim of Beaver Lake Church for working behind the scenes with his technical expertise. A huge thanks to all who put together the program, as well as set up and cleaned up. We will cross our fingers for better weather next year!

A "GRIEVING MOM'S CLUB" GETAWAY

Note from Kim, Hannah's mom: This is an invitation for any grieving mom for a weekend away with other moms in the same "club". We are planning a getaway weekend this spring at a scrapbooking retreat. Remember, Crafting is NOT a prerequisite to come for this weekend. Come just to talk, relax, commiserate, watch a "chick flick", etc. with others in the same club as you/we/us. A date will be chosen when we see how many are interested. Please e-mail Kim with any questions and/or to express an interest in coming: kimz1959@charter.net. At this time, the moms of Hannah, Nina, Ryan, Jesse, Phillip, Becky, and Brandon Q. are planning to attend. Please join us!

Pine City Scrapbooking Company, for further info:
<http://www.thepinecityscrapbookingco.com/home.html>

The cost is \$50/night. A deposit for the one night stay is \$21.30, final payment of \$37.28 is due 30 days prior to your stay. Check in time is 10 a.m., checkout time 5 p.m. You can call the store at 320-629-9960 for further info.

Scrapbooking In The Pines
415 2nd Ave SE
Pine City MN 55063

Scrapbooking

I bring the only photos I have of you,
I paste them onto the page to tell a story.
The story is your life.
It may have been a short life, but it is a life.
I want to share you; I want everyone to know you,
just like I do.
I loved you so, and today I love you still.
I wish you were here with me today.
-Unknown Author

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: HUMOR AND GRIEF



At the opening ceremony of TCF's National Conference held in Atlanta on July 4, 2003, Maria Housden, author of the marvelous book, *Hanna's Gift*, was the featured speaker. She began by telling how that morning she had conversed with a man she met on the elevator. When he asked her why she was staying in Atlanta she told him that she was there as a speaker for The Compassionate Friends, a organization offering support and hope for parents, siblings and grandparents who had suffered the death of a child. As oftentimes happens when hearing what TCF is, the man suddenly was at a loss for words. As he got off the hotel elevator he broke the silence by turning to Ms. Housden and said, "Well, knock em' dead!" Of course, the man was mortified after he realized what he had just said; his inadvertent remark was simply a common phrase often used as a send off to someone about to tackle an audience. Unfortunately, not exactly a well-timed or good choice of words considering the situation, but certainly not intentional!

It was easy to tell which people attending the opening ceremony were still quite fresh in their grief and who were the seasoned grievers solely by their reaction to Ms. Housden's attention grabbing opening to her speech. I thought back to my own early grief. I had always considered myself someone with a very good sense of humor, but the days and months following my daughter Nina's death I couldn't imagine finding humor in ANY situation EVER again. I remember witnessing the laughter of strangers and thinking, "Didn't they know my daughter was dead? Hadn't their world been shattered into a zillion fragments like mine?"

My first experience with someone trying to mix a little humor with grief was renowned and much loved speaker, Darcie Sims, a grief psychologist. I saw her at a conference for bereaved parents held in Minneapolis barely a year after my daughter's death. I was shocked at how someone could make me laugh out loud and then bring me to tears in almost the same breath. At first I was uncomfortable with my own laughter. But I think it helped that Darcie was herself a bereaved parent and therefore she had 'been there' too. Just as I had seen the more seasoned grievers in my TCF group enjoy laughter again, Darcie's humorous, yet poignant speech gave me hope that I would one time too hear the sound of my own laughter and be comfortable with it is something I thought was an impossibility.

There is, of course disgustingly unsuitable 'humor' where grief is concerned. I am repeatedly appalled at what I see and hear from

the so-called comedians on late-night TV, who seem to find hilarity in the most inappropriate topics: I have heard jokes made about drunk drivers, cancer, suicide, and AIDS with alarming regularity. Obviously, these same 'comedians' have never felt the sting of death of someone they loved that was caused by any of the above causes. My oldest daughter is an actor and used to perform for what are called Murder Mystery Dinner Theaters. For example, one of the advertisements read: "Where Murder is Always on the Menu!" She admitted that until her sister Nina died that she didn't really think about how, though seemingly innocent, these shows could be hurtful to those whose loved ones had suffered such an atrocity, and how personally painful this mockery of death had become to her after the loss of her little sister.

I know what I, in my early grief, thought about laughter truthfully, I didn't care if I ever laughed again. The misconception here is that we oftentimes feel that by laughing, we are somehow dishonoring our children, by appearing as if our renewed interest in enjoyment of life again meant we stopped caring about and loving them. However, we all know deep down that could never be true; we know it is possible to find some humor in unison with the intense forever love of our children, no matter how much we miss them. And though you may not be ready to hear it now, eventually, somewhere down the road (remember: there are no timetables in grief - our grief experience is as individual as we are), you will remember a funny story from your child's life and it will feel good to remember it with laughter. And I truly believe your child will smile and laugh along with you.

- *Cathy Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN*
Written for We Need Not Walk Alone®, Summer 2004

IN CELEBRATION OF LAUGHTER

Today I laughed, a throaty little giggle,
a tiny laugh, this first time since you died.

Today I laughed, no hearty chuckle,
a light laugh, this first time since you died.

Today I laughed a little laugh,
a little laugh, since you left.

Today I laughed, a tinkling laugh,
echoing from my soul, I was happy;
it is a beginning...

Toby Sue Shaw, TCF/Stamford, CT

Our April 10th Meeting on Humor and Laughter

Editor note: The following was written by Debbie Miller & Dale Hunt, leaders of the Mesa County, Colorado Chapter in 2002 to describe what their meeting on the above subject was going to be about. I thought it was well written and gives a good description of what we hope our April meeting to be:

The Compassionate Friends meeting will be Humor and Laughter and how it affects the bereaved parent or sibling (and grandparent). Understandably, making humor a part of your life again after losing a child is more than difficult. In addition, dealing with humor may seem inappropriate and even offensive at times. However, humor may be one way to add some medical and emotional benefit to your life during a difficult time.

Everyone deals with humor in a different way during grief. Obviously, humor is not listed as one of the stages of the grieving process, but most people find humor is healing. At some point, everyone has probably had to deal with humor in one way or another. The effects of humor may be a positive or negative influence.

If you feel comfortable enough to talk about this subject in the group meeting this month, we welcome your participation in an open discussion about humor and how it has affected you personally. Perhaps you have a story about something that has happened to you since your child's death that you would like to share. Maybe you have a memory that makes you laugh. Or, perhaps humor has offended you in some way and you just need to get it off your chest. Either way, feel free to laugh or cry with your friends at The Compassionate Friends meeting.

ON GRATITUDE

My feet were cold from the icy pavement as I waited for the morning bus. The bitter winter was receding and I was working hard on gratitude. I looked past the curb and spotted a penny in the street.

I had just returned from a regional meeting of The Compassionate Friends in Green Bay, Wisconsin. A presenter held up his 'Pennies from Heaven' and declared that signs from our loved ones are everywhere. I wonder...

I picked up that penny and found my reading glasses. I wear reading glasses now. Time marches forward.

I work on gratitude with some skepticism. Was this a treasure or just a muddy little coin? The date imprinted in the copper became clear—1983—the year my son was born.

Surprise and tears triggered by that date immediately washed across my face. I no longer felt cold. I meandered through memories of a day in July some 20+ years ago when I delivered that child.

"Collect yourself," I said under my breath. I might scare

transit bus mates. I hugged myself in the cold air, and turning my face away from the others watched my breath puff into fine icy clouds.

The bus appeared and I boarded with everyone else. I was a penny richer that day and grateful beyond measure for the treasure trove of memories that lay in my hand.

By Monica Colberg

A Compassionate Friend-Mpls Chapter, written March 2008



IN FEBRUARY

In February we celebrate the birthday of George Washington and Abe Lincoln. Lent begins. We wonder if the groundhog will see his shadow, and we have Valentine's Day in the middle of the month. Most people think of Valentine's Day as Sweetheart Day. Candy, flowers, and cards are often exchanged. Many time cards are given and received between parents and children as a way of showing love for one another. Valentine's Day is another holiday on which bereaved parents remember the drawings and cards and gifts received from their deceased child.

Take time out to be good to yourself. Take time out to remember the child who has died. Perhaps you could remember that child with a special flower, a rose or carnation; or perhaps you could do a kindness for someone in need in his or her memory; or send a special card to someone in need of help and understanding.

Most of all, take time out to tell your living children and your spouse or that someone special how fortunate you are to have them and how much they mean to you.

- *Lorraine Bauman*
TCF/Fairmont, MN

Editor's Note: Lorraine Bauman, the lady who wrote the above, died on November 5, 2008. In 1980, Lorraine and Don started the Fairmont Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, a project that they both continued to be very active in. Her son, Thomas, preceded Lorraine in death. The St. Paul Chapter extends its sincerest sympathy to Lorraine's family and the Fairmont Chapter.

Quotes from *Words of Hope and Courage*, by Maya Angelou

"The nice thing about **HOPE** is that you can give it to someone else, someone else who *needs it even more than you do*, and you will find you have not given yours away at all."

"**Hope** and fear cannot occupy the same space at the same time.
Invite one to stay."

GRIEF IS BLACK; HEALING IS COLOR



Coloring Easter eggs was always one of my favorite times. Boiling the eggs, setting out the glasses, adding the vinegar, plopping in the fizzy tablets and then slowly lowering (or sometimes dropping) the eggs into the colors bring back good memories with my kids. Every time we did it, one of them wanted to drop at least one egg (sometimes more) into all the colors. Are some of you flashing back to those fun times? As we went from yellow to orange to blue to red to green to purple and into whatever else was left, and then back again, the egg took on a dark, ugly brownish, almost black color. If for some reason the egg cracked along the way and we peeled it later, the egg looked rotten. It was entertainment to them; it was disgusting to me.

When our kids were alive, they were our glasses filled with color. They were our fizzy tablets of fun. Their lives were vibrant and beautiful. We didn't pass them from glass to glass and change their color; we left them just as they were. You probably have a favorite color and maybe even associate a color with your child. Friends of mine have a son, Fabian (or "Fabulous Fabian" as we know him) who died as a little boy. Fabian is all about the color blue, so they celebrate his life with that color. On his birth and death days, I've sent them a blue crayon, blue paint samples from the hardware store and a string of blue paper clips. They're very appreciative of my simple gifts. It helps brighten their day and reminds them of their colorful, beautiful Fabulous Fabian.

As we all know, the instant we found out our kids had died, all the color drained from our lives. No more bright reds, pinks or yellows of our daughters. No more blues, greens or oranges of our sons. Instead, our lives filled with black. The black of death; the black of grief. Nothing shined anymore; there was no glitter or sparkle. In the additive process of color in painting or printing inks, (or Easter egg coloring) black is the combination of all colors. So, when our kids died and their colors went away, they went into the blackness of our grief. They weren't chased away by our grief; they were consumed in it.

The colors of the lives of our kids can live inside our grief, but more importantly, they can live inside our healing. Every red, blue, orange, green, yellow, magenta and purple child who was created, still lives in those colors, but they can be buried in our grief. The question is, how do we break open our grief and release the colors of our children? How do we get to their colorful lives and bring them back to us? That's where grief work comes in. Or, as I call it, healing work. As we grieve, we heal, but if we don't do our work, it makes it much harder to heal. It's through our work that our colorful children can return; not in the way we want them to return, back in our arms, but in the best possible way we can let them return.

What can we do to rediscover the beauty and color of our children? The other day, I was talking with a group of fellow travelers and the discussion was about memories. For many, the memories really, really hurt because they associated those memories with a child who had died. That's suffering we all know when our kids die. Each memory is a painful reminder that our children will not be back to make more. Our child's life force or soul or spirit (whatever you may call it) also came up in the discussion. It's the child we think of when we put our heads on our pillows at night. It's the feeling we get when we think about their energy, their aura and their wonderfulness.

We also talked about love. The newly bereaved added the "ed" on the end of the word. "I lovED my child so much." That's fine, that's what we all do in the beginning because the death of our child is an ending. They're gone, they're now part of the past. I did the same after my son, Brendon, died. "Brendon "was" my wonderful son. I loved him very much," is what I said, too. At that time I thought I would never again have him in my life in any way, shape or form. I now know differently.

As the discussion about death and grief continued, I threw this out, "It's impossible to have a memory of someone who never lived. We can't have fond remembrances of a child who was never created. Our memories are of the living, the colorful, beautiful living, not of the dead."

"Hmmm," I heard a few people say. I went on. "It's called a 'life force' for a reason. There can't be a life force without a life, right? Our kids have created that wonderful feeling in us because of the beauty of their colorful lives. I've never heard of someone having a death force, only a life force."

"Hmmm," I heard a few more people say. I finished with, "We can't love what we've never known. We can't love someone who never lived, no matter how long or short that was. Our love is because of the lives of our kids. That's why it hurts so much, because we love them so much. We love their colorful lives and want them back."

"Hmmm," I heard the rest of them say. As much as the deaths of our kids have crushed us and swallowed the color of their lives (and ours too), that color still lives within us through our memories, their life force and most importantly, our love. If we allow grief to keep our colorful children, then grief wins, and that's just not acceptable. We can't let the black of our grief swallow up their color. We must fight for them; fight for the lives of our children. If we do, we can once again live a joyful life of yellows, blues, greens, purples, oranges and all the other beautiful colors of our kids. When the colorful lives of our children re-enter our lives, we will smile a smile as big and broad and beautiful as theirs were.

By Rob Anderson - ~reprinted with permission from Grief Digest, Centering Corporation, Omaha, NE 866-218-0101



SPRING THAWS THE WOUNDED HEART

That first Spring
came too soon.
Why did daffodils
show sunny faces
around the gravestone?
Why did warm breezes blow
clouds away?
My world, cold, gray, dismal,
had no room
for this season.
Now years later
the blossoms of love,
hope and healing
have broken through
grounds of utter despair,
warmed by memories of you
I join the daffodils
bringing my own smile
--*Alice J. Wisler,*
mother of Daniel

DAYDREAMS

Once a day and sometimes more
You knock upon my daydream door.
And I say warmly come right in
I'm glad you're here with me again.

Then we sit down and have a chat
Recalling this, discussing that
Until some task that I must do
Forces me away from you.

Reluctantly, I say good-by
Smiling with a little sigh
For though my daydreams bring you near
I wish that you were really here.

But what reality cannot change
My dreams and wishes can arrange
And through my wishing you'll be brought
To me each day; A happy thought.

--*Stephen A. Wright*
TCF, Champaign-Urbana, IL

A HEART WEEPS

This is a level of loss
That numbs every part of my being
My heart is bound so tightly
That it cannot even weep.
Will this ever end?
The ground lies bare and brown
Covered with last year's leaves.
The earth is cold and hard
As desolate as my heart.
Sustain me in this hour!
Today, from that barren earth
A clump of green appeared
White snowdrops clustered there.
And I saw, once again, a fragment of
beauty!
I weep with thanksgiving
For this beauty that has warmed me.
For this heart that leapt, and now knows
That joy can enter once again.

- *Marie Andrews TCF*
Southern Maryland



ON NOT SAYING IT

I never got around to saying it.
There was always tomorrow,
When the time would be more appropriate.
Besides, you hated "embarrassment,"
Or was the embarrassed one really me?
Now I say it a lot,
To the sky, to your photo, to a gravestone.
Knowing facts say you cannot hear it,
But believing, inside me, you can.
When a child, a youth, then a young man,
I remember how you watched my face.
First as your god, then as your mentor,
Finally, I hope, as a friend.
But "I love you," as years went by,
Were words we kept bottled inside.
Now that you've left, the bottle overflows.
Until I, too, cross the divide,
I have to believe you knew.
And forgave me for not saying it.

- *Leonard Ruppert*
TCF, Atlanta, GA

TAKE THIS THREAD

Take this thread
Of hope
And let it be
A new beginning -
A thread in the new fabric of life
You must now weave.
Choose your colour:
You have known the blues
And sunk deep into them
Yet also known the calming
Of a cloudless sky
You have known the reds
Sublime sunsets
Flashes of anger
Flames of passion
What about green?
You have known the gentle cushion
The balmy restfulness
Of a grassy verge
Known also the green-eyed monster
Jealous of those who still have
What you have lost.
You have seen the sunny yellows
Absent for a while now
Overtaken by the grey

Choose these threads of hope
Draw them together;
Take the positives
Turn the greys to silver.
Remember how it was
And know you will
Once again, some time,
Come to that place of harmony.
But first choose your threads carefully
And much later
Much stitching later
Weaving, working
After much hard work,
Love and care
Your fabric will glow again
A different fabric
For it can never
Be the same
But it will be beautiful
A new form of beautiful.

© *Carolyn Salter,*
TCF Walcha New South Wales



From Alan Pedersen (songwriter, musician and bereaved father; Alan performed at our last two balloon releases:



I generally write a poem about our journey several times a year. The other day I was listening to a talk radio show here in Denver and the host mentioned how his daughter is a little older now and this year he will buy her roses for Valentines Day for the first time. I thought to myself how much I would love to give Ashley roses again. I began to think about roses, and then about Ashley, and then I just sat down and wrote a few lines that I am honored to share with my friends here. I wish you all a gentle Valentines Day, this holiday of love always reminds me of how much we truly love all of our children.

A DOZEN ROSES

If I had a dozen roses, I know just what I'd do.
I'd give each one a name that reminded me of you.

The first rose I'd name "sunshine" cause you brighten every day.
The second would be "beauty", the kind that never goes away.

I'd name the fourth one "silly", oh how funny you could be.
Rose five, of course, is "patience", something you have helped me find.
The sixth rose I'd call "memories", the precious gift you left behind.

The seventh and the eight rose would for sure be "faith" and "grace".
Nine would be "unique" because no one can take your place.

The tenth rose, well, that's easy; I'd simply name it "love".
Eleven, I'd call "angel"; I know you're watching from above.

I'd think about that twelfth rose, and I'd really take my time.
After all these roses are for you, my Valentine.

I'm sending them to heaven in every color that I know.
So number twelve I'll name "forever", that's how long I will love you so.
- Alan Pedersen

What Siblings Think About:

AS I REMEMBER HIM

Whenever I answer an e-mail from a newly bereaved sibling, I say "My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25, 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him."

The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40. As the ninth anniversary approached last year, I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August, our birthday month, but last year was worse.

As my birthday neared I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me it would be easier than being with all of the family, all except Alan. I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan for nine years, I now realized that I couldn't continue without help. Twice a week for the two weeks before my birthday, I received counseling. I had decided I would have a birthday party if I could make the guest list. It turns out everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan but they could see his picture button while speaking to me.

Thoughts of Alan were never far, and as I walked the last friend to his car, I realized that it was an enjoyable day but each milestone would be an adjustment.

As I approach my 41st birthday, the tenth without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car's license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal; each new state I visit I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone, and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, created an AIDS quilt, web page and a backyard garden. I devoted a room, "Alan's room", with posters and articles by and about him. I donate items for AIDS & TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan's memory. As long as I live I will continue to find ways to honor his memory, as I remember him.

- Daniel Yoffee, August 4, 2002



FOR BABY

Like a miracle, you happened
You were there.
I was a flower, beginning to bloom, bursting with life.
Then you were gone,
like music never written,
existing only in my dreams.
And I love you still...

- Stacy Hooks, TCF/Savannah, GA



GRIEVING TWICE

(grief from a grandparent's perspective)

When a grandchild dies, grandparents who are experiencing their own sorrow also must witness the agony of their own child. It's a double whammy - two heartaches at once. And in both, they feel powerless. At the same time, they feel the need to be strong for their child.

The primary concern of grieving grandparents is usually their own child. Parents of bereaved parents dig deep into their years of experience to pull out added strength—their own powerful grief must be secondary to the pain of their child. So the grandparent plays out the role that's expected of them and often that means dealing with their own grief in private. Friends and family may forget that the grandparent is also grieving—often grandparents don't even receive sympathy cards.

There is such a feeling of helplessness and frustration—a parent wants to be able to "fix" everything just as they did when their child was small and came to them with a skinned knee or with a broken toy or was in need of help with a math problem. But this problem can't be "fixed" - all the parent can do is be there for their child. And yet that is the most valuable gift that can be given a child who has now taken on the role of "bereaved parent." Being there to listen and keeping an open heart is so important to both parties. The grieving parent will open up or ask for advice or support when they are ready, not necessarily when grandma or grandpa thinks the time is right. Patience and understanding are so vital to maintaining a healthy relationship with a bereaved child.

A newly bereaved parent may express the need to change or adjust "traditional" family and holiday celebrations. In fact, they may choose to not be present for some gatherings - flexibility in accepting their wishes is also essential to the healing process. Grandparents may feel slighted and think that hurt feelings are present. Again, remember that respecting their wishes and showing great patience provides the best support possible during difficult times. And with the passing of time and an ability to adapt and accept, it will once again someday feel more "normal" for all.

- *Linda Bergan, bereaved mother of Derek and grandmother of Lawson*
TCF/St. Paul Chapter

THE WOUNDED HEART

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of "Bereaved Parents". But for now ~ right now ~ it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending. Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss, to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt and anger, and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life. A wounded heart not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be an abscess ~ to swell and undermine ~ erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, it will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed. The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

- *Nancy Green*
TCF, Livonia, MI

TREASURES

Is this the first day
when you can bear to
remember
how you smiled
together,
that day in spring,
that morning in the
rain?

Are you discovering
how many gifts of
comfort
he left behind,
this child who died
too soon?

His life is gone,
but he endows your
time
from this day
forward,
with all the faithful
treasures
of remembrance.



SPRING IS NOT FAR AWAY

There is a smell of growing things
about.

The snow looks somehow
even more perishable now.

Spring is not far away -
And memories move to another place,
Remembering: a squeaky swing
in the garden, going back and forth,
back and forth...

Remembering a bicycle taken out
for its first ride...
Remembering: incredibly wet boots,
cold hands, kissing-fresh face...

So many things remembered,
How many lost?
Not one, not one.
The heart remembers always.

Spring is not far away.

Above poems by Sascha Wagner



SPRING - A TIME TO GROW

After the snow, sleet and ice of winter, spring is a welcome season and one of new beginnings. If you are like me, there is a feeling of elation as the sun slowly warms the earth. I eagerly search for the first buds. Perhaps it is a tree groaning with sap, sending new life to the branches or a tulip leaf bravely searching for warmth as it peeks above ground, but when it happens, I rejoice. Spring is here!

Now is the time to come out of hibernation, buy seeds, prune vines, and start afresh. This is symbolic of our lives, after we come through a period of winter in which loneliness and heartache plagued or stagnated us, we cherish each new glow of warmth. Or perhaps the winter of your life has been a time of contemplation and rest in which you felt you could catch your breath and relax. Whatever way we view the wintertime of life, spring will come. New relationships develop projects that have overwhelmed us before we now have the energy and courage to begin. Volunteer work, making new friends, swimming, golf, tennis among other activities are all ways we can use to break the barrier that kept us immune to the rest of society in "our wintertime."

However spring may come, it requires work, and it is no different with our grief. In order to function again we need to break the soil, smooth out the rough spots and fertilize in order to see new growth. At times this may cause more hurt, but remember, just as in the garden, we will not see growth without special effort on our part; so it is in our lives. We need to cultivate and weed to encourage a healthy garden. The areas, which need fertilization, get special care, while other areas seem to grow smoothly without effort on our part. As we rejoice in the spring of the year, and in each new bud that appears, lets appreciate the good moments, and when hard or stagnant times come, affirm one another in love and share each other's joys and burdens.

Happy gardening to you all!

by *Lorraine Weaver*
Anne Arundel County, Md.

IS IT EASING?

I heard your name today and my heart did not skip a beat, nor was my mind flooded with the emotion of losing you. I heard your name today and it did not bring back the terrible hurt feelings of when you first left me.

I heard your name today with a calmness that surprised me. Many another child carries your name, and it had been torture hearing it and seeing the smiling faces on those little girls.

But today I knew—I found out—what others in my footsteps found out and tried to tell me. The hurt will ease; but the memories, the love, the good times will never go away.

- *Phoebe C. Redman ~ TCF, Bradenton, FL.*

MARCH

It is March. What a strange time of the year. Once day spring, and the next day it is winter again. And yesterday, when the wind picked up some forgotten leaves and whirled them around my feet, I felt as if fall was in the air. I've never liked March very much. Maybe it reminds me too much of my own life, my own grief process. One day up and the next day down. Many times up and down all in one day! I felt as if I could never enjoy the good days, because I knew a bad day would follow. Just like March, never trust the sunshine and warmth because tomorrow a bitter wind will blow and clouds will darken the sky.

Sometimes I would even rush through a happy moment just to get it over with, just to hurry on to the grief. Or even borrow tomorrow's grief to avoid today's joy. Why trust the happiness when I know that I will be crying soon? Close the windows, block out today's sun because it will probably rain tomorrow.

How long did I live like that? Years. For years I hid from March's sunshine. I can't tell you when I realized that I could live one moment at a time and accept what was in that moment. If I am crying and in pain, okay; that is what is in this moment. On the other hand, if I am smiling and cheerful, that is what is in that moment.

If the sun shines today, throw off your coat and enjoy it. Yes, tomorrow you may have to put the coat back on, but that is tomorrow. Today's sunshine is a gift, accept it and enjoy the warmth.

March, what a strange time of my life.

- *B.J., TCF/Bloomington, Indiana*



What Do I Do With the Silences?

What do I do with the silences,
Pressing ever against my heart?
The loss of you is unmerciful.
Where do I start?

I sit staring off into nothingness,
But inside my thoughts run wild.
How do I deal with the silences,
When the silence means losing my child?

I beg for sleep, but the dreams come.
I wake with a terrible cry.
I am tormented by your memories
As they slowly go marching by.

I'm so tired, and my heart ached with loneliness
In this house with its silence profound.

What do I do with the silences?
My sobs are the only sound.

-*By Brenda Penepent*

(permission to print given to the St. Paul Chapter)

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

PLEASE FORWARD



Let this cool and gentle month of the heart
remind you not only of lost treasures, but also
of riches, past and present, in your life.

- *Sascha Wagner*

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: _____		
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 _____		

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