



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



## *St. Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter*

No. 627

7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016

May/June/July 2010

St. Paul Chapter E-mail address: [peachy3536@comcast.net](mailto:peachy3536@comcast.net) or [cseehuetter@pccaonline.com](mailto:cseehuetter@pccaonline.com)

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 Phone No. (toll free) 877-969-0010

The St. Paul Chapter  
meets the 2nd Thursday of each  
month at

Beaver Lake Lutheran Church  
2280 Stillwater Avenue; Maplewood,  
Minnesota  
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

For chapter information call Kim at  
507-351-4042, or Sandy at 651-528-  
6073

### \*MEETING TOPICS:

MAY 13: The deluge of  
spring/summer happenings will be  
discussed; graduations, weddings,  
vacations, etc.

JUNE 10: Open Discussion

JULY 8: Open Discussion

### UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Save the Date/Mark Your Calendar!

August 12: Balloon Release (see page  
5 for details)



October 14: JoAnn Bruhn, Grief  
Recovery Specialist, bereaved parent,  
accomplished composer and musician.  
See [www.sundanceproject.com](http://www.sundanceproject.com)

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"

Each meeting we have new parents, siblings and grandparents. 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!" We welcome your support!

### \*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 bereaved parents, 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

- **Steering Committee:** Cathy Seehuetter, Jan Navarro, Denise Bjerke, Cori Clagherty, Kim ZumMallen, Cliff & Sandy Romberg, Greg Seehuetter, Dave Esberg
- **Newsletter Editor:** Cathy Seehuetter
- **Secretary/Hospitality:** Cori Clagherty
- **Treasurer:** Greg Seehuetter
- **Chapter Webmaster:** Dave Esberg ([www.tcfstpaul.org](http://www.tcfstpaul.org))
- **Library:** Denise Bjerke
- **Special Events Coordinator:** Kim ZumMallen
- **Facilitators:** Cliff Romberg & Cathy Seehuetter
- **Remembrance Cards:** Kathy Lesnau
- **1<sup>st</sup> Contact:** Kim ZumMallen & Sandy Romberg
- **Chapter Awareness Coordinator:** Sandy Romberg
- **New Member Outreach:** Karen Gorz
- **Sibling Contact:** Alyssa Frank
- **Mailing/Folding Newsletters Team:** Carol & Ralph Bauman
- **New Member Followup:** Cori Clagherty
- **Chapter Leader/National Board member:** Cathy Seehuetter @ 651-459-9341

## TELEPHONE FRIENDS

### ACCIDENTAL/SUDDEN DEATH:

Kim.....507-351-4042

Cori.....651-402-9482

**ILLNESS (Jeanne).....651-253-8634**

**ONLY CHILD (Kathy).....651-426-2446**

**INFANT LOSS (Lori).....952-229-4630**

**CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (Lois).....651-777-2342**

**SIBLING LOSS: (Alyssa).....651-528-6073**

& Alyssa's e-mail address is [jessesbabysis@aol.com](mailto:jessesbabysis@aol.com)

## OTHER MINNESOTA TCF CHAPTERS

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month at Calvary Lutheran Church, 7520 Golden Valley Road in Golden Valley. **Contact Carol at 763-542-8528** for more information.

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

**ST. CROIX VALLEY:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> 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:** Meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, 12650 Johnny Cake Rd, Apple Valley. **Contact Shirley at 952-432-5955.**

**HUTCHINSON:** Meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at Oakland Chapel. **Call Jo at 320-833-2300.**

**MONTICELLO:** Meets at 7:00 p.m. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at St. Henry's Catholic Church, 1001 - 7<sup>th</sup> St. E., Monticello. **Call Beth at 763-295-3610 for further info.**

## SUPPORT GROUPS AND NEWSLETTERS

### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL OFFICE

TCF.....toll free: 1-877-969-0010

E-mail: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

National Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### SUICIDE

Survivors of Suicide .....612-922-5830

Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education...952-946-7998

[www.SAVE.org](http://www.SAVE.org)

Crisis Hotline.....1-800-784-2433

### PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

St. Paul Chapter.....651-484-0336

E-mail: [pomcmn@isd.net](mailto:pomcmn@isd.net)

National number.....(toll free)(888) 818-POMC

**The Compassionate Friends, *We Need Not Walk Alone*,** TCF's National newsletter is published four times per year.

The Compassionate Friends

PO Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The St. Paul Chapter enthusiastically welcomes members who are interested in helping with the work of the chapter. If you would like to find out more information about joining the Steering Committee, please call Cathy at 651-459-9341 for the time and date of our next meeting.



\*Articles printed in this newsletter are reflective of the writers' views and not necessarily the opinion of the Editor or TCF. As we each grieve differently, we will also find varying things to be helpful. Therefore, a variety of views, articles and poems are included in each newsletter to reach out to all of our readers.

In accordance with the Principles of The Compassionate Friends, "We treat what is said at meetings as confidential and what we learn about each other as privileged information." In order to protect the privacy of our members, our database, e-mail addresses, and mailing list is used for TCF purposes only,



At the present time, we have a sibling contact (see this page), but do not have a sibling meeting, however, siblings age 16 and over are welcome at our regular meetings. We also do not have childcare available during meeting times.

## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED



*In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and their families  
and keep them in our thoughts...*

### LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED DURING THEIR BIRTHDAY MONTH AND ALWAYS:

#### MAY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Micah, son of Michele & Tommy Thompson       | 14 <sup>th</sup> Charlie, son of Kathy & Allen Lesnau                        |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Owen, son of Shannon and Lucas Arnold        | 15 <sup>th</sup> Sabrina, daughter of Lyle & Jan Lindberg                    |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Brent, son of Nancy & Jim Hendrickson        | 15 <sup>th</sup> Eli, son of Randy & Therese Meyer                           |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Danny, son of Mona Morrissey, brother of Rob | 19 <sup>th</sup> Rita, daughter of Karen Gorz                                |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Indrani Thoreson, daughter of Georgia Skare  | 25 <sup>th</sup> Patrick, son of Julie Niemi                                 |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Trevor Thomas, son of Peggy Theilen Peppard  | 30 <sup>th</sup> Luke, son of Shannon Sievers, and grandson of Karen McLaren |

#### JUNE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> John, son of Mary Ann Pojar                                      | 21 <sup>st</sup> Audene, daughter of Ann Castaneda                                |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Kerri Braun, daughter of Barb & Dave Deters                     | 26 <sup>th</sup> Julia Ann Bartlett, daughter of Carol and the late George Konkle |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> Devon, niece of Kristine Jenson & granddaughter of Linda Jenson | 28 <sup>th</sup> David, son of Jim & the late Bev Franzen, brother of Tom         |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> Nicholas, son of Colette & Jim Carlson                          | 29 <sup>th</sup> Carla Rosenthal, daughter of Elaine Henthorne                    |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> Erin, daughter of Colleen Como, sister of Hunter                | 29 <sup>th</sup> Jami Agudelo, daughter of Pat Ossell                             |

#### JULY

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Blake, son of Katy McCarty                      | 18 <sup>th</sup> Becky Hayes, daughter of Jeanne Vogel              |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> - Katy, daughter of Tom Blehm & Mary McPhertres | 19 <sup>th</sup> Julie Rosenthal, granddaughter of Elaine Henthorne |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Larry, son of Lois Nyman                        | 19 <sup>th</sup> Myles, son of Jenn Berns Marchetti                 |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Britta, daughter of Lori Halvorson              | 23 <sup>rd</sup> Kyle, son of Steve & Sherry Lagoon                 |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> Andrew, son of Patti Fladwood                  | 24 <sup>th</sup> Derek Beauclaire, grandson of Carol & Ralph Bauman |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> Nicole, daughter of Mark & Mary Pagel          | 26 <sup>th</sup> Nicholas, son of Becky & Tom Ogren                 |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> Brittany, daughter of Ron Hosek                | 27 <sup>th</sup> Gabriel Gonzales, son of Rosemary White Shield     |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> Jeff, son of Donna & Chuck Harstad             | 29 <sup>th</sup> Germain, daughter of Laurel Vigeant                |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> Jared, son of Char Kanski                      |   |

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

#### MAY

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> River Daniel, son of Ben & Deanna Wheeler   | 16 <sup>th</sup> Brenda, daughter of Dave Esberg               |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Cheryl, daughter of Denise & Steve Bjerke   | 24 <sup>th</sup> Katy, daughter of Tom Blehm & Mary McPhertres |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Kristina (Nina) Westmoreland, daughter of Cathy & Greg Seehuetter,<br>sister of Lisa, Amy & Dan, and granddaughter of Harlan & Ellie Plumb | 25 <sup>th</sup> Tom, Jr., son of Tom & Laura Burbach          |
|   | 26 <sup>th</sup> Jesse Buchanan, son of Carol & Gary Malek     |

#### JUNE

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jaden, son of Teresa & Jason Karsten           | 15 <sup>th</sup> Andrew, son of Patti Fladwood                 |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Brett, son of Mark & Lonnie Bohnen            | 19 <sup>th</sup> Nicole, daughter of Mark & Mary Pagel         |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Michael, son of Mary McGuire                  | 19 <sup>th</sup> Kelly Thompson, daughter of Bob & Jeanne Walz |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Carla Rosenthal, daughter of Elaine Henthorne | 27 <sup>th</sup> Jessica Swanson, granddaughter of Ruth Krause |

#### JULY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Marit Eldri, daughter of Gregor McDonald | 11 <sup>th</sup> Mieke Johnson, daughter of Maya Nichakawa                       |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Joshua, son of Kim Bielke                | 15 <sup>th</sup> Laura, daughter of Donna Koski                                  |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Derek, son of Jackie Grabinski           | 19 <sup>th</sup> Nic Manolovitz, nephew of Nellie Frascone                       |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Kellie Kaye, daughter of Joannie Kemling | 18 <sup>th</sup> John, son of Marlene and Joe Keyser, brother of Maureen Johnson |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Sabrina, daughter of Lyle & Jan Lindberg | 25 <sup>th</sup> Charlie, son of Kathy & Allen Lesnau                            |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Keith Pearson, son of Mary Paulson      | 30 <sup>th</sup> John, brother of Kristy Schauer                                 |

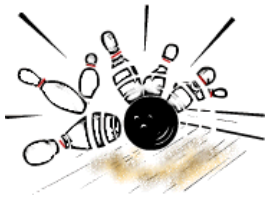
On this page, we try to make sure that the names and dates are correct. If, for some reason, they are not, please let Cathy know @651-459-9341/peachy3536@comcast.net so that we can make the correction and acknowledge the error in the next edition of the newsletter. We know the importance of seeing our loved ones name and want to make sure that it is done correctly.

"**LOVE GIFTS**" are donations given in memory of our children or other loved ones by family, friends, or other caring people to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter. Our chapter is **self-supporting**, and operates entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of our TCF chapter. Your voluntary, tax-deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way to help fund featured speakers; expenses for our annual Candle Lighting and Balloon Release programs and other special events, as well as resources such as books for our library, and pamphlets and outreach materials for newly bereaved families; postage and printing of newsletters and flyers, meeting supplies, and to meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families. We very much appreciate your generosity so that we may continue to provide the support, information, and resources our members need as they navigate through their grief journeys. **THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!**

**"Love Gifts" were given in loving memory by the following:**

- Jan & Phil Navarro - son Phillip (through United Way donation)
- Kim ZumMallen - daughter Hannah Rose
- Susan Taylor, Brian Stark & Michelle Arnold - son and brother Matthew Stark

### **MARCH 14<sup>th</sup> ST. PAUL CHAPTER BOWLING FUNDRAISER**



We also thank our members, listed below, who attended our fabulous Bowling Fundraiser last March 14<sup>th</sup>, and brought with them many supportive family and friends:

- Teresa Quinn, Brandon's mom
- Gary & Kay Yanka, Eric's mom and dad
- Stacy & Joe Kern, Eric Yanka's sister and brother-in-law
- Kathy Higgins and Joanie Dauphinee, Caitlin's mom and step-mom
- Alyssa Frank, Jesse's sister
- Ben & Deanna Wheeler, River's dad and mom
- Carol & Ralph Bauman, Derek's grandparents
- Kim ZumMallen, Hannah's mom
- Cori Clagherty, Ryan's mom
- Denise & Steve Bjerke, Cheryl's mom and dad
- Sandy & Cliff Romberg, Jesse's mom and step-dad
- Greg & Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom and dad
- Jan & Phil Navarro, Phillip's mom and dad

We also want to acknowledge Cedarvale Lanes owner and friendly staff for giving us such a great venue to hold our bowling event. I think all who attended would tell you that they enjoyed their afternoon together and received some great Silent Auction and Raffle items, and had a chance at a fabulous door prize. Many thanks to the people who so generously donated the items for the above and helping to make our fundraiser a big success: **Buford Faust (owner of Viking Auto Salvage, Inc.), Kim ZumMallen, Jan Navarro, Cathy Seehuetter, Cori Clagherty, Cliff & Sandy Romberg, Dawn Brown, Cheryl Clagherty, Sue Denn, and Ralph & Carol Bauman.**

Because of our positive experience at Cedarvale Lanes, we will hold another bowling event next year and we hope to see many more of you there - you won't want to miss it!

### **THANK YOU FOR THE PHOTO BUTTON MAKER!!!**

When some long-time TCF/St. Paul Chapter members learned we hoped to raise money in order to get a high-quality photo button maker so we can make photo buttons for our members to wear to meetings, they generously came forward and offered to pay for one in loving memory of their son, Ian. **Nancy and John Price**, we thank you so very much for your generosity and kindness - the first button we make will be for you! Many thanks from all of us! We will think of you both and Ian each time we make a member a button of their precious loved one.

### **SPONSORING A NEWSLETTER**

Our Chapter members have an opportunity to remember their child, brother, sister, or grandchild by sponsoring the printing **and/or** postage of an edition of our newsletter. It is also a way to greatly help our Chapter with our best means to reach out to our bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents; and provide articles and poems written by other bereaved families and grief professionals. The newsletter is our chapter's biggest expense (mailed 4 times a year), yet one of our most important ways of outreach and support to our present and future members.

- Cost of printing the newsletter: approximately \$200
- Cost of postage: approximately \$150

Your sponsorship will be listed on the front page. If you would like to sponsor a future newsletter, please contact Cathy at 651-459-9341 or e-mail [peachy3536@comcast.net](mailto:peachy3536@comcast.net)



### **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 picture(s) and/or a memento of your child to place on the table. If you wish, you may also bring a birthday cake, cookies or other snack to honor them. We do this in celebration of our children's lives, and to share this special day with others who understand our need to do so.

## 33<sup>RD</sup> TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



"Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope" is the theme of The Compassionate Friends 33rd National Conference which will be held in Arlington, Virginia July 2-4, 2010. The event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City promising a beautiful venue for the 33rd TCF National Conference. Independence Day will not only feature our Walk to Remember, but will include a world-class display of fireworks over the National Mall, visible from Arlington.

It will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, host hotel for The Compassionate Friends 33rd National Conference in Arlington, Virginia July 2-4. Reserve your accommodations online at Hyatt Regency Crystal City. For those wishing to make reservations by telephone, please call 1-800-233-1234 and specify you are with The Compassionate Friends. Further info available at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### Sponsor a Reflection of Love

For the first time, online submission of photos of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, and ordering are available for a very unique fundraiser, the Reflection of Love. The conference official logo captures the local flavor of the area by depicting the Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol, Jefferson Memorial, the National Mall Reflecting Pool, and beautiful cherry blossoms. This year our conference committee offers a unique 5"X5" ornamental Reflection of Love based on the original logo design and encased in a durable acrylic picture frame. Each Reflection of Love ordered will bear the child's photo and name, with his or her image lovingly cast across the Reflecting Pool. They will be displayed at the conference in a special area designated for that purpose. **Note from Editor: Check TCF National's web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) to see how absolutely stunning these are!**

The minimum donation for each photo submitted remains \$10 again this year for those that will be picked up at the conference. Those being mailed home will require an additional \$5 donation to cover postage and handling. Please see the Sponsor a Reflection of Love flyer on the download registration packet on the web site. These will make a great gift for friends and family to remind them of a special child always remembered!

## ST. PAUL CHAPTER'S ANNUAL BALLOON RELEASE

THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2010 (regular meeting date)  
@ 7 PM - Further info will follow this summer.



*The excerpt below was taken from the "Bulletin Board" from the St. Paul Pioneer Press 9/2007 - photo taken by Mitch Carmody at our 2006 balloon release as two balloons sail off, side by side, on their way to our children.*

'This Sunday will be the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friend's annual balloon release. I have attended 12 now, one balloon release for each year since Nina's death. For those who do not know what a balloon release is, the members of our chapter gather together and each write a short message to our child or sibling or grandchild who no longer reside on this earth. "I love you" and "I miss you" are no doubt written somewhere on each missive, mixed in with salty tears. We tenderly tie each one to the ribbon on the balloon. Our group gathers behind the church where we meet, each holding tightly to the vessel holding our message of love. After a reading or two, music will play. Oftentimes, it is the hauntingly beautiful song, "Fly", angelically sung and written by Celine Dion. Even though you may not be a fan of hers, the words are perfect: 'Fly, fly do not fear/Don't waste a breath, don't shed a tear/Your heart is pure, your soul is free/Be on your way, don't wait for me/Above the universe you'll climb/On beyond the hands of time/The moon will rise, the sun will set/But I won't forget/Fly, fly little wing/Fly where only angels sing/Fly away, the time is right/Go now, find the light...'

After the leader releases his or her balloon, one by one, each person, when ready, will do the same. The balloons ascend upward, carried by the brisk wind. Amazingly, they all stay together as a cohesive group, just as we are. Someone commented that they look like a group of children scurrying across a play field. The balloons glide, swoop and dive on their way to the heavens. We stand together and each person watches his or her special balloon as it gets smaller and smaller, becoming a mere dot in the sky, until each disappears from our sight.

We truly believe as the balloons disappear from our view that as our children watch from Heaven joyously awaiting our messages of love, they become larger and larger. The thought of that concrete connection with our child is a bittersweet and poignant moment unmatched by anything.'

- *Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom*  
*TCF/St. Paul Chapter*

## Suicide: How Do We Say It?

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had "taken her own life" or that "she died of suicide." An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable "committed suicide," with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today's enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, "completed suicide," but as a parent who witnessed my child's 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don't care much for that, either. "Died of suicide" or "died by suicide" are accurate, emotionally-neutral ways to explain my child's death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30's, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hard-working, highly respected individuals who died this way. I've facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn't handle the group's reactions to the dreaded "s" word. I've known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity*, *Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (October, 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father's suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. "We are as sick as our secrets," he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

© 1999 by Joyce Andrews, TCF/Sugar Land, Texas

*Two years ago, TCF officially adopted the terms "died by suicide" or "died of suicide" to replace the commonly used "committed suicide" or "completed suicide" language. In its press release encouraging other organizations to adopt the new language, TCF noted that "... many suicide deaths are the result of brain disorders or biochemical illnesses such as clinical depression, but the stigma associated with suicide often forces family members to choose between secrecy about the death and social isolation. Their hesitancy to seek the support of the community increases their pain and makes their healing more difficult. Families who have had a child die by suicide are helped in their grief by the use of nonjudgmental language."*

## The Storms of Grief



I sometimes feel like my mood is reflected in the weather, albeit differently now. Before Nina died, I used to dread those dreary cloudy days and felt my best when the sun shone brightly. Physically and mentally, I could feel the difference. However, in the early years after Nina died, my outlook flip-flopped. I was better able to tolerate those days where the sky turned a lackluster shade of gray. I felt in tune to the drabness of the skies, as it went along with the darkness in my heart and soul. I welcomed it. Luminously brilliant summer days, which I used to thrive in year's past, became the enemy. I felt it was an affront to my psyche. How dare the sun shine when there was so much desolation and blackness in my heart! My world became one-dimensional - void of beauty and joy. Hadn't the world lost its radiance and pleasure for everyone else, and shouldn't the weather follow suit as well?

Especially in the summer, it is easy to find yourself confronted with many of these emotions when so many things become glaringly conspicuous. During the cold winter months we are indoors much more and therefore able to hide ourselves away from the goings on around us, cocoon ourselves from the hustle and bustle of other people's lives that have been untouched by this grief that has become our constant, unwelcome companion. I remember one of our members told how in the summer she couldn't bear to open the windows because she would hear the sounds of the neighborhood children's laughter as they played outside, knowing that her son was no longer among them. Those who have lost a school-age child are particularly aware of their loss when the children are on their summer vacation from school. When school was in session I could play tricks with my mind, convincing myself that Nina was still in school to account for her absence, but not so with the advent of summer vacation. Everywhere we turn there is the steady reminder of summer's past, those days that were blissfully innocent - building sand castles at the beach, camping trips, walks to the park, impromptu backyard softball games, family picnics, summer vacations to the cabin, days spent together at the State Fair - endless possibilities.

Seven years later, my grief is more like a summer storm. For example, last weekend the weather was unpredictable; one minute the skies were cloud free, but within minutes, they took on an ominous dark hue followed by booming thunder and drenching rains. In a matter of minutes, the storm subsided and the skies became cloudless again, only to be followed by another tempest. Back and forward, the pendulum swung, never knowing what to expect - much like the grief storms that I now encounter and have become well acquainted with on this often tumultuous journey I have traveled since my daughter's death.

They sneak up when you least expect them. The relentless waves of these grief storms dash you against the rocks and leave you Breathless and shaken, only to hurl you again with their tremendous force, only to subside. I know the fury of these storms and have come to respect their power. As a dear friend said, "For having loved, Grief demands her payment."

On the seventh anniversary of Nina's death, I decided that I would do something that reminded me of our life together. She loved to go shopping with me. I have learned that oftentimes the anticipation of days such as our children's birthdays and anniversaries, and the major holidays is worse than the day itself; therefore, I felt confident that this year I could manage this and that it would be a good way to celebrate her life and, at that juncture in my grief journey, less so her death. Therefore, I headed to the shopping mall that we frequented often. I seemed to be muddling through the day as well as could be expected when - wham! A storm of grief raised its ugly head, suddenly and without warning, as all grief storms do. I became fixated on every mother and daughter shopping together. In particular, I noticed the mothers and daughters enjoying each other's company as they walked side by side discussing their latest purchases, having lunch together at the food court, doing all those kinds of things that my own precious Nina and I did years before.

The storm growing within me welled up from somewhere deep inside and progressed to a deluge of tears that drenched my shaken soul. There was no getting away from it, no protective umbrella that would shelter me from its force. Just as I have no control over the weather, I have learned that I have no control over these sudden storms of sorrow. When they occur, I have learned to give into them, and let those cleansing tears fall. Moreover, when the storms of summer sneak up on us unexpectedly we can be ready for them with the knowledge that their intensity ebbs and they become rarer with time. We can and will survive them if we work through our grief, remembering we can't go over grief, under it or around it; we need to face it head on - only then will we see the sun. Even better, we may actually look forward to it shining again! As grief psychologist and bereaved parent Darcie Sims says, "Live through your hurt so joy can return to warm your heart and light your life."

May you be well on your way to finding some warmth and light again in your lives these lazy summer days. Please remember to be patient with yourselves - it will happen.

**Cathy Seehuetter**  
TCF/ St. Paul, MN



## I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR DAD

By Alan Pedersen

Years have come and gone and time has surely drifted by  
I've searched for any answer yet I'm left to wonder why  
The only thing I know for sure through the happy and the sad  
No matter what the circumstance I will always be your dad

Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart  
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart  
These empty arms remember all the good times that we had  
I may be standing here alone but I will always be your dad

Some won't understand so I don't bother to explain  
They look into my eyes but they can only see the pain  
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear  
If only they could know a father's love won't disappear

So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems too hard  
And I get to feeling sorry that I didn't get a card  
If I close my eyes I can almost hear you say  
I love you and I miss you daddy....Happy Fathers Day.



### HEALED?

It has been almost three-and-a-half years since Marty, our fourteen-year-old son, was killed. The family still grieves, we still have the physical and emotional problems associated with the grieving processes, but we have survived. The pain is not as acute as it was, but it's still there. We don't cry as frequently now, but we still cry. The days we could think of nothing but Marty are mostly gone, but we still remember him daily. The lives of the family members do go on, but there will always be one person missing. Marty is still a big part of our lives, as he should be. Marty is the family member who has moved on to a different time and place, but he is still a part of us. As people and family members, we must move on, too. We still hurt and grieve, but we must accept the fact that there is nothing we can do to bring the person back. We are once again members of society. Those who know us in passing believe us to be "over it," "healed," and "back to normal," or any one of the many platitudes used to describe someone who can function again.

Yes, we can work again. Yes, we can think rationally again (most of the time). Using these criteria, I guess you could say we're healed. You could say it and be wrong. We will never be healed to be the people we once were. Changed, yes, healed, no. We will always cry more easily. We will be more sympathetic and empathetic in dealing with our fellow man.

As time goes by, I believe we can transfer the love we gave to Marty to those who are alive now and in need. Most of us have become much more selfless and now give where we could never have given before. Most of us, with time, become much better people.

Healed? No.

Changed? Yes.

Perhaps because we have changed, we can now help to change the world around us. Our loved ones made a difference, now it should be our turn. We have had our needs, but now we can see the needs of others more easily. We must always remember that we lose nothing in giving with love.

- *Ray Davies, Iowa City, Iowa*  
*Bereavement Magazine, September 1993*

### A FATHER ON FATHER'S DAY

Fatherhood is a wonderful and privileged word. I am a father, a bereaved father, who lost a son. Although it will be eight years in August of this year, I still miss him every day. Maybe I should miss him a little more on Father's Day, because someone, somewhere once decreed that Father's Day be a special day to honor your father. So, according to that mandate one might suppose that I should because I may have subconsciously (or forcibly?) calibrated the threshold of that pain, of that missing, so it is constantly within me every day of the year, but at a lower level than in the beginning, and not as devastating. In life, and with minor fluctuations, it is there. Yes, I wish my son were here on Father's Day, but so do I wish he were here every day.

However, I will celebrate Father's Day this year, because, thank God, I have a remaining son whom I cherish. For you bereaved fathers who have lost your only child, more than one of your children, or all of your children, there are no words that can adequately express my sorrow for the depths of your grief and anguish. There is no way that I can truly feel the pain that you feel, but as someone wisely and compassionately said to me in my despair, "I wish I could take your pain away from you."

Perhaps some of us might agree that Father's Day is a cruel day for bereaved fathers, just as Mother's Day is a cruel day for bereaved mothers. If that be so, I hope we can elicit some sweet memories of our beloved children from kinder days to treasure, to help alleviate the pain, and to enable us to pass the day with some degree of serenity.

May I repeat that which was said to me, which was of consolation to me when I desperately needed it: "I WISH I COULD TAKE YOUR PAIN AWAY FROM YOU."

And bereaved fathers, may you find peace, as much as is possible, on Father's Day and on every day of the year. I hope next Father's Day will be better.

*Dave Ziv, TCF, BucksMont Chapter, Warrington PA*

## JESSE'S BABY SIS

October 31, 2006 started like any other day. I never would have guessed how it would end. That morning I got ready for school, said bye to my mom and my dog, and went out to my taxi that took me to school every day. My brother Jesse always left for work before I even woke up, so I never got to say bye to him in the morning. My school day was pretty routine until about five minutes before the end of my last class. One of my teachers came and told me my aunt was there to pick me up. When I saw her and the look on her face, I knew something was wrong.

After I got in her truck she told me Jesse had gotten into an accident at work and we had to go to the hospital. Two miles never took so long to drive. When I got to the hospital I found out my brother was in a medically induced coma. On November 4, 2006, he was pronounced legally brain dead. The nurses talked to us and told us Jesse was a donor. We didn't really understand much about it. Life Source sent someone over to explain it and work with us. After we understood and had talked with them we felt pretty good about that.

After all that was done and the funeral had passed I tried to find other siblings to talk to. My mom got involved with a grief support group called, The Compassionate Friends. I am also now very involved with them. I have gone to three of the national conferences and found it a very good place to meet other siblings and talk with people that understand. I have also become the sibling contact for the St. Paul chapter and I am working on getting a sibling group started for regular meetings. If any siblings would like to contact me, my email address is [jessesbabysis@aol.com](mailto:jessesbabysis@aol.com).

On a quick side note, we have corresponded with Jesse's heart recipient and look forward to possibly meeting him someday.

- *Alyssa Frank, TCF/St. Paul Chapter*

## FISHING WITH MY SON

What father doesn't enjoy introducing his son to fishing? Many, I'm sure, but here in the Northland, fishing with your son is as common as nagging him to mow the lawn. Many of my fondest memories of my son David occurred while fishing or on fishing trips.

I will never forget the first time we went out when he was just about 4 years old. He and his sister each had new little Zebco rods and reels, just the right size for a 4 and 6 year old. We went with Grandpa, and only two lines went in the water, because Grandpa and I were so busy untangling the kids' lines and putting on fresh worms. Oh what fun! When he finally caught one, he insisted, as only a 4 year old can, that we leave it on the line and go show Mom right away!

When he got to middle school, he had earned the right to go along on a father and son trip to Canada. Nine or ten father/son pairs went along as we drove all day far to the north. The senses were filled with naps in the car, the exotic border crossing, the odd manly smells of a van crammed full of bodies and gear, but underlying it all, the excitement of lakes with northerns as big as children, and epic fights with huge walleye. We made that trip many times, caught many fish together and had many stories to share. We bonded deeply as father and young man. We became fishing buddies. We added grandfathers on some trips, and tried it with crutches another. Every night there was a magical campfire surrounded by talk and tales. We befriended a Canadian Frenchman, son of the voyageurs, and listened to his exotic accent as he spun tales of hunting moose and mining for gold in the far north. What a deep well of memories....

We didn't know it at the time, but the last weekend we spent together was a fishing weekend. We met up in northern Minnesota and did some work together on our cabin. We fished hard the weekend after the opener, with Grandpa and some cousins. He wanted to be sure to catch enough fish that he could practice cleaning fish, in order to be proficient when he started his summer job a week later in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. He had the hot hand that day, and caught enough for all of us. A great fish fry, bed, then I had to head back to work in the morning. One last good-bye, not knowing it would be the very last of this lifetime. A week later he was dead.

Since then, fishing hasn't been the same at all. At first I was ready to give my gear away, but gradually I got back out there again. I'm not sure I'll ever make another trip to Canada. Ironically, he was buried on the day we were scheduled to head to Canada that year. I now fish early in the morning, when I have the lake to myself. I do a lot of sitting, looking and thinking. I cast and reel. The first fish I catch is always his fish. I always release it, and give it the second chance that he didn't get. I cast, I think, I somehow feel connected to him, and somehow, gradually, the world is beginning to feel like a decent place again. I find that I catch more fish when I'm peaceful than when I'm angry, but there's plenty of that too. Splitting wood is good for that, but that's a different story.

This one's for you, Bud.

*Written by Don Bodeau, in memory of his son, David  
Chippewa Valley Compassionate Friends*



## MY MOM IS A SURVIVOR

My Mom is a survivor,  
or so I've heard it said.  
But I can hear her crying at night  
when all others are in bed.

I watch her lay awake at night  
and go to hold her hand.  
She doesn't know I'm with her  
to help her understand.

But like the sands on the beach  
that never wash away ...  
I watch over my surviving Mom  
who thinks of me each day.

She wears a smile for others ...  
a smile of disguise!  
But through Heaven's door  
I see tears flowing from her eyes.

My Mom tries to cope with death;  
To keep my memory alive.  
But anyone who knows her knows  
it is her way to survive.

As I watch over my surviving Mom  
through Heaven's open door ...  
I try to tell her that angels  
protect me forevermore!

I know that doesn't help her,  
or ease the burden she bears.  
So, if you get a chance, go visit her.  
Show her that you care.

For no matter what she says ...  
no matter what she feels.  
My surviving Mom has a broken heart  
that time won't ever heal.

*~Author~*  
*Kaye Des'Ormeaux*  
*Copyright 2001 Kaye Des'Ormeaux*

I Love  
You Mom

## TO SINK OR SWIM

"To sink or swim" are not the only  
alternatives in life. Many survive just by  
FLOATING. There were many times  
after my son died that I did feel as  
though I was sinking below the waves of  
grief and I was just too exhausted to try  
and swim to the other side of that lake of  
pain.

It was at those times that I just  
simply FLOATED. By floating, it may have  
taken me longer to reach the shore than  
it would if I had tried to swim; besides,  
the shore seemed just so far away that I  
wouldn't have made it by swimming  
anyway.

But by just floating along with the  
current, I did not sink and the other side  
is getting closer all the time.

- Verna Smith  
TCF, Ft. Worth, TX



## SUMMERTIME

With summer comes more time for  
relaxation and more time for get-  
togethers with family and friends. After  
our son died it left a void in all those  
family activities and lots of time for  
thoughts of summers gone by - vacations,  
4th of Julys, Bible schools, camps,  
baseball games, swimming lessons, skiing  
at the lake, and many other memories.

It still seems important for us to  
participate in those same activities  
because on each occasion some memory is  
stirred of a time when our son was a part  
of these activities that made summer  
such a special time for us. At first those  
memories made us so sad, but now when  
we remember what he did or said in  
certain situations, our hearts are a little  
lighter and even sometimes a little smile  
appears on our faces.

These memories are what we have left  
and they are so very precious. Summers  
are a good time to relax and remember  
our happy times together.

- Carol Lynch  
TCF/ LaGrange, GA

## MY DAD IS A SURVIVOR

My dad is a survivor too...  
which is no surprise to me.  
He's always been like a lighthouse  
that helps you cross a stormy sea.

But, I walk with my dad each day  
to lift him when he's down.  
I wipe the tears he hides from others.  
He cries when no one's around.

I watch him sit up late at night  
with my picture in his hand.  
He cries as he tries to grieve alone,  
and wishes he could understand.

My dad is like a tower of strength.  
He's the greatest of them all~!  
But there are times when he needs to  
cry...  
Please be there when he falls.

Hold his hand or pat his shoulder...  
And tell him it's okay.  
Be his strength when he's sad  
Help him mourn in his own way.

Now, as I watch over my precious dad  
from the Heavens up above...  
I'm so proud that he's a survivor...  
And, I can still feel his love~!

*~Kaye Des'Ormeaux*  
*October 16, 1998*  
*Dedicated to the dads who have lost a child.*



## "YOU ARE SO STRONG"

Empty words  
That don't touch the reality  
That my life has become.  
Walking through fog  
Incredible pain  
Searching for the beloved face  
I crave to see  
The voice that I strain to hear over the  
noises  
Of people who have no idea  
Of what the world has lost  
*Charisse Smith, TCF ~ Tyler, TX*



## Create a Memory Garden

The physical activity of working and tending to a garden can give comfort and quiet time to remember the special memories that you once shared. Creating a memory garden will help you feel closer to those you lost and create a tribute to the one you loved for the rest of his/her friends and family members to heal. To begin a memory garden, find a private place or choose a location that has meaning. Remember to plant from your heart. Choose plants that evoke memory, fond regards and celebration of life.

### Things to Consider When Creating Your Garden:

- Start simple. Plant a few things each year.
- Plant their favorite flowers or choose flowers that you loved or has special significance
- and plant those.
- Plant during their favorite season and choose flowers, plants or trees that are in
- season at that time. For example, if they loved spring, plant bulbs.
- Plant the flower of their birth month, namesake plants, or plants that represent their initials. Select flowers in colors that he/she loved.
- Choose flowers with their favorite fragrances or certain scents they loved. For example, if they loved the smell of lavender, include a lavender plant in the garden.
- Select flowers and plants with special meanings. For example, pink carnations mean "I'll never forget you" and yellow roses represent friendship. Roses have names that might describe your loved one.
- Include statues and remembrance gifts throughout the garden. If they loved dogs, include a small statue of their favorite breed.
- Add a small plaque describing what is in the garden and its significance, or simply put their favorite phrase or poem.
- If possible, try and include a bench in the area. This way, friends and family have a place to sit and reflect on special times that were shared.
- Your memory garden project can involve the whole family. Not only could the best "memory flowers" be chosen, but once in bloom, flowers could be pressed as mementos for the family album or scrapbook.



### GRADUATION TIME

It's June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring "Pomp and Circumstance." Now there will be a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. So, go if you'd like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others.

Just remember that your own instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think of you.

It was your child who died. This is your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way - and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

- *Peggy Gibson, TCF/Nashville, TN*



They say that time in heaven is compared to 'the blink of an eye' for us on this earth. Sometimes it helps me to think of my child running ahead of me through a beautiful field of wildflowers and butterflies; so happy and completely caught up in what she is doing that when she looks behind her, I'll already be there." ~*Author Unknown*

*Unknown*

'Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."'

- *Mary Ann Radmacher*

'Grief is not a problem to be cured. It is simply a statement; a statement that you have loved ...'

- *Barbara Baumgardner from A Passage Through Grief*

'To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die'.

- *Thomas Campbell*

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PLEASE FORWARD



A butterfly lights beside us like a sunbeam and for a brief moment, its glory and beauty belong to our world. But then it flies on again, and though we wish it could have stayed...  
We feel lucky so to have seen it. - *Author Unknown*

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 and Chapter Website.

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

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