In December some of you may have joined other bereaved parents to honor the memory of your child at the Angel of Hope Memorial Garden in Moline. We have a little Christmas tree with Anna’s ornaments that we display each year along with her picture and a tiny stocking I purchased for our expected baby the summer before she was born. We smile when we receive the Christmas card from friends that each year includes, along with other family photos, a snapshot of a perky red headed six year old who lives on in the hearts and memories of her family. Another bereaved parent friend shared a special Merry Christmas memory for her son on her Facebook page. Sometimes our memories ache, even years after our child has died. Sometimes they bring a smile and a sense of gratitude for the gift our child was and the joy and fulfillment they brought to our lives, brief though their time on earth might have been. Lucy Montgomery says in her book, *The Story Girl*, “Nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember it.” We are grateful for the gift of our memories.

CANDLES
It is not easy to remember...
But, easy or not, we know that we will not – and do not want – to forget them.
Therefore, we reach out together again, to love our children and to celebrate their memory. Again, we light their special candles, and we say their beloved names.
We remember our children who died. They remain forever part of us, and we are richer for having shared their lives, however briefly.

Sincerely,
Jerry & Carol Webb
Carrying Memories Into The New Year

With the church bells ringing
the new year enters
echoing the days of yesteryear
memories of happiness
the smiles of our children
the sunlight within each face.
Who will remember these dear ones
far from our yearning arms?
Who remembers all they were
the way she danced, the hat he wore?

With the old year gone, will they
no longer be known?
We will remember them, each one.
We will hold them in our hearts
as we carry memories
into this new year.
We will allow the memories to
make us laugh, to make us sing.
Their lives will fill the air
as the church bells ring.

~ Alice J. Wisler, TCF Atlanta

WOULD YOU?

To love is to risk. With risk may come loss, and loss is full of pain. In full knowledge of this, would I want to go back and do it all over again?

That we ever had you was a gift undeserved, unexpected and unearned, an answer to prayers, a completeness and wholeness for which we had yearned.

The time that we shared was the Spring of my life, but I expected Summer and Fall. Still, if forced to choose, I’d take Springtime alone, than to never have known you at all.

Richard Dew, M.D. from Rachel’s Cry

Accepting the New Year

When we are grieving, it is hard enough to live each day as it comes. It can be daunting to face a whole new year stretching out in front of us. We may be afraid of what the new year might bring. We may worry whether or not we can handle any more challenges. Our current experience of emptiness and loneliness may make us reluctant to face a new year.

We might say to ourselves, “I used to be so busy. I used to feel so needed, so useful. Now it seems there’s nothing but empty space and empty time.” It’s bad enough to wake in the morning not sure what we’ll do with the day; what will we do with a whole year?

Longing to recover the past can sometimes make us resistant to accepting the new year. The past was where we were comfortable, where we felt safe, felt good. Grief burdens us today and we fear the new year won’t hold anything different for us. We pine for the person we miss and the precious past we shared. We think about how it was, and wish we were back there.

The approach of a new year may mean different things for different mourners. Whether we welcome, dread or ignore a new year probably depends on where we are in our grief process. The question is not whether, but how grief will show up, and how we’ll work with it.

VITAS Hospice
What Makes Suicide an Especially Difficult Loss?

Suicide is a reaction to overwhelming feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness and depression. It occurs when a person's pain exceeds his or her resources and ability to cope. It is the third leading cause of death for people 15-24 years of age.

The suicide of a loved one raises painful questions, doubts and fears. Cultural and religious interpretations of an earlier day are responsible for the stigma associated with suicide. The knowledge that your love was not enough to save the person you loved, and the fear that others will judge you, may raise feelings of failure, of shame and blame in addition to the sorrow of loss.

Here are things you can do when you have lost a loved one to suicide:
  • For those with concerns of a spiritual nature, do try to find a gentle, non-judgmental member of your faith, and open yourself to that person.
  • Rather than being concerned about the stigma surrounding suicide, concentrate on your own healing and survival.
  • It is important that you confront the word suicide, difficult as it may be. Keeping the cause of death a secret will deprive you of the joy of speaking about your loved one and will isolate you from family and friends who want to support you.

If you don’t allow yourself to have that experience, you are blocking your healing. Instead of trying to deny or medicate the pain, realize that the hurt is necessary in order for you to heal. Our experience of mental suffering offers us the chance to grow stronger in the process.

Author unknown; Submitted by David Terrell, TCF/Tyler, Texas

Tips to help face the upcoming New Year

We begin by getting needed rest. If we’re still exhausted from caregiving or from acute grieving, we need to focus on physical recovery. We may need to talk with our doctor about how to rebuild ourselves physically.

We also need to give ourselves mental rest. We can replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations about ourselves. We can soothe ourselves with music, prayer, uplifting literature, tears and laughter.

We can notice any desires stirring within ourselves and find small practical ways to give ourselves new pleasure.

We can get the support we need by attending a support group, by talking with friends and family who can listen to us and share our memories.

We can seek spiritual support from a local minister, rabbi, priest, imam.

Most important, we’ll find courage to live into the future, into the new year, by living in the present, one day at a time, doing the best we can to care for ourselves and others today.

VITAS Hospice
The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

**Mission Statement**
The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is when a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

**Vision Statement**
The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

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**About TCF...**

**The Compassionate Friends** is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

**TCF National Office**
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Toll Free (877)969-0010
TCF National Web site — www.compassionatefriends.org
http://www.quadcitc.org

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**The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter**
One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (877)969-0010.

**email:** NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Website:** www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the sibling resource page at www.compassionatefriends.org. It is also available to read online without charge.

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**e-Newsletter Now Available!**
An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.
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“Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter. Be my song to sing that guides me on my way. Be the arms that hold me. Be the love that enfolds me, be my light, be my ray of hope today...” Paul Alexander, songwriter

Snowflakes drift silently to earth. A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended. As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life — a thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for “recovery” in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life — a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Time Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does this new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

Can we be kind to ourselves? Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say “NO!”

Can we enjoy life again? Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago? By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

Wayne Loder, TCF/Lakes Area, Michigan

“Inside of me are all the answers. Everything I need to know lives inside of me. Come behold my miracle, Come and hear my story. Come and paint a memory with me...” P. Alexander

“Ray of Hope” by Paul Alexander on the CD “The Best of Paul” at www.griefsong.com (Paul wrote “Light a Candle” which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs). Permission to use excerpts from “Ray of Hope” granted by Paul Alexander.
Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children’s presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren’t setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child’s life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year’s, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child’s presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin – TCF/Katy, Texas – In memory of Todd Mennen
# Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

## The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

**January 25, 2018, at 6:30 pm at**

Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

The next regular monthly meeting is Thursday, February 22, 2018. Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.


### The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine

Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linnmac67@machlink.com.

### Rick’s House of Hope

Rick’s House of Hope serves children ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. At this time, Rick’s has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick’s House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to [www.rhoh.org](http://www.rhoh.org).

### SHARE

A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or chalyn@shareqc.com or [www.shareqc.com](http://www.shareqc.com).

### Loving Listeners

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):

- Doug Scott 563.370.1041  
  doug.scott@mchsi.com
- Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738  
  shoeartb4@gmail.com
- Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895  
  delvecchiojudylhotamil.com

Doug, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don’t feel alone.
Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a beloved child, and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Thanks to:
Brad and Sheri Hilligoss, in memory of their son, Tyler Bradley Hilligoss
Bob and Jo Reade, in memory of their daughter, Robin L. Reade
Doug & Barb Scott, in memory of their daughter, Abby Scott
Linda Pearson, in memory of Jimmy Pearson and Aaron Morford
Pam Serra

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue.

If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it to our chapter leader, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa, 52806. Checks should be made out to The Compassionate Friends. Your gifts are tax deductible.

41st TCF National Conference July 27, 2018 - July 29, 2018 - The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National Conference on July 27-29, 2018. “Gateway to Hope and Healing” is the theme of this event, which promises more of this year’s great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. Details will be posted on the national website as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook Page as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Contact the Editors
If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.
If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, send us your new address.
If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and address.
If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.
Please contact:
Jerry and Carol Webb
390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 49022
CarolynPwebb@gmail.com
To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to the parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

*Shame and guilt.* Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

*No memories.* Parents may only have "souvenirs of an occasion" (birth certificate, ID bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

*Loneliness in grief.* It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn they may give the impression that you are grieving unnecessarily over a non–person. They hope that you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

*Neglected father.* Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby too.

*Mothers vs. fathers.* Since the mother has bonded with her child all during pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

Claire M. & Sue S., TCF/St. Louis, MO
Life Must Go On
Grieve for me for I would grieve for you
Then brush away the sorrows and the tears.
Life is not over, but begins anew,
With courage you must greet the coming
years.
To live forever in the past is wrong;
can only cause you misery and pain.
Dwell not on memories overlong,
with others you must share and care again.
Reach out and comfort those who comfort
you;
recall the years, not only for a while.
Nurse not your loneliness; but live again.
Forget not. Remember with a smile.

Navaho Prayer

where grief is
still very fresh,
the most important
resolution made may
be the dedication to
survive each new day.

Bruce H. Conley

Where grief is
still very fresh,
the most important
resolution made may
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survive each new day.

Bruce H. Conley

Grief is neither an illness nor a
pathological condition, but
rather a highly personal and
normal response to life-changing
events, a natural process that
can lead to healing and personal
growth. The transition through
this difficult time is the
courageous journey.

Sandi Caplan and Gordon Lang, in Grief's
Courageous Journey: A Workbook

Angela Miller

missing my child is
not me living in the
past.
it’s called loving my
child in the present.

Angela Miller
To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.