



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2019

Volume XXXII Number 10

Dear Compassionate Friends,

I don't clean my freezer often enough. It's an unenjoyable chore that I usually put off – to be truthful – for at least a year and a half. Sorting through the freezer-burned food, I feel guilty because I am throwing food away (again).

Then I come to one little half-eaten popsicle. It is light blue, definitely freezer-burned now, but I keep it as though its owner is going to come back and finish it today or tomorrow. In her little girl scrawl, with a heavy dark blue sharpie (I'm sure she wasn't supposed to use that), Maggie carefully printed her name on the plastic bag so none of her brothers would eat the remainder of her treat. It was for her alone.

It takes my breath away every time I come across it. Sitting in the freezer for almost sixteen years now. What made her just-turned-six-year-old mind think she needed to label her half-eaten popsicle? I don't know because it was a few weeks after she died that I first discovered that treasure in the freezer. Just sitting on top of the other food – placed cavalierly as though there was no hurry, no reason to think she wasn't coming back to finish eating the rest of it.

It makes me cry each time I come across it, because in early 2005 our life and expectations were so nonchalant, so regular, so "normal." Just like everyone else I knew. We were busy. Four children under the age of twelve. Maggie, the youngest, only girl, just having turned six, loud and bold and fearless. Her closest buddy, Luke, exactly a year and one half older (they shared their half birthdays – I always suspected it was just a way of each getting to

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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:

Bob & Jo Reade, in memory of their daughter, Robin Leslie Reade.

Dennis and Dianne Swinford, in memory of their son, Dennis.

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 or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa, 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**

Take Your Time

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called “time table.” You are told you should be feeling one way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be “over it.” “Get on with your life.” “Count your blessings.”

All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (a) you don't WANT to “get over it,” (b) you are “getting on” with your life in the best way you know how, and (c) your “blessings” have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss! Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting “normally.” There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months; you may not feel anything except numbness for awhile. That's OK!

The best advice is...take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don't clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally. Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can.

Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child's name to anyone who will listen...take time...your time...to heal.

Sandra Young, TCF/Knoxville, TN

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would. This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.



Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive. Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name, and for that one moment, the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand. For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief. We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery

TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.



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.



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.

About The Compassionate Friends

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.quadcitytcf.org>

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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx . Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.
TCF National Magazine	<i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter is also available from the National Office — to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.
Grief Materials	Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for — or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org . When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.
Amazon.com	When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.
Previous Newsletter Editions	Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.
Alive Alone	A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
Our Newsletter	Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai at climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Grieving Families Gather to Seek and Find the Light

A group of people with the worst commonality gathered to find something.

What we were looking for might have been different for each person. Perhaps solace, peace, comfort, understanding, help, hope, advice, reassurance, or a place to express love. It didn't matter what we were seeking, all we wanted was to not know about this group.

None of us asked for membership. In complete opposition of our desires, we became bereaved parents. This status of being forever brokenhearted caused us to cleave together to honor the lives of our loved ones too soon gone from this earth.

Last year seasoned members of this club created a memorial garden shaped like the wings of an angel, and erected an Angel of Hope statue in Moline Memorial Park. If you circle the statue you will see these words carved into the base:

"Angel of Hope - Annual candlelight vigil
December 6, 7 p.m./ This memorial is dedicated to all those who are grieving the loss of a child. Our children: loved, missed, and remembered."

My heart was changed seeing those words so boldly proclaimed. It cemented the fact that my grief was not going to be a temporary or

fleeting condition. The words carved in stone made my daughter's death, earlier in the year, cuttingly real.

These parents who have learned the impossible tasks of breathing, standing, and getting dressed when falling through the floor feels more realistic, reached outside of their own personal grief to create a hope-filled space of remembrance for all who mourn a child. This is how we happened to be gathered on a cold, windy December 6th to honor, to remember, to mourn our children.

While waiting for the ceremony to begin, parents chatted with each other; there were hugs, tears, and even laughter as the candles were distributed and lit. My eyes were blurring when I realized I had been clenching my teeth as tightly as my jaw allowed. I parted my lips and teeth, inhaled slowly and repeatedly until my jaw loosened and my blurriness cleared. I repeated

"breathe" with every inhalation.

We called out the name of the child for whom we were lighting a candle. Because my head had not exploded, I was able to proudly and clearly call out my daughter's name. Once we knew all the names of our children, it was time to process, with lit candles in hand to the Angel garden.

The garden was aglow from luminaries lining the wings, our candles placed at the feet of the Angel of Hope burned brightly, telling our children, "We remember



you” and “You will always light up our world.”

We placed white flowers for each child. White flowers signify remembrance and innocence. When laid in the garden, at the base of the statue, their purity reflected the candlelight.

I’m not sure what the preferred symbolism is of the Angel of Hope. Maybe it is the hope that our children rest in peace. Or the hope that they will never be forgotten. Or the hope that their lives had meaning. I suppose any hope one conjures is the hope we

are given. That night the hope I was given was the hope of a future without my girl. Seeing the others who have walked in the dreaded bereaved parent shoes for many years and realizing they were breathing, standing, and dressed gave me great hope.

Desmond Tutu said, “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

That night I saw light.

Anne VandeMoortel

The Dispatch-Argus – March 2017

TONIGHT I LIGHT THIS CANDLE

“God wrote this song. I consider myself fortunate
that he trusted me to hold the pen.”

Tonight I hold this candle In memory of you
Hoping someday, somehow, my love will shine through.
I close my eyes lost in the glow
There are so many things I want you to know.

Chorus:

This candle says I love you—This candle says I miss you.
This candle is saying I remember you.
When I’m holding it toward heaven,
It feels like you are near.
If you’re looking down tonight,
And see this candle burning bright,
It says I’m wishing you were here.



In the glow of this candle I can almost see your smile
And it carries me away for a little while
To another time, another place
When all it took to light up my world was your beautiful face.
Someday, someday I’ll see you again
I’ll hold you in my heart until then.

Alan Pedersen

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

This month instead of a meeting, we will have the Candle Light Service on

Friday, December 6, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Moline Memorial Park Cemetery, 5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

Please call 309.736.6601 for information and directions.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Next month's meeting is held on **Thursday, January 23, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.**

1830 6th Avenue, in Moline, Illinois

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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 linmac67@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@verafranchmhc.org or go to 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 .
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 shoearthb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvechio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.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.

ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Chapter's Annual Candle Light Memorial Service is for every bereaved parent who would like to have his or her child(ren) remembered. All family members are invited. You may light a candle in memory of your child. (You can bring a favorite candle or one will be provided. You can also bring a photo of your child to share.)

If you cannot attend and would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return this form to Lisa Rains, 2341 7 ½ Street, East Moline, Illinois 61244, or email Lisa at AngelOfHope@gmail.com.

Child's Name: _____

Parents' Names: _____

**Friday, December 6, 2019
at 7:00 p.m.
Angel of Hope Memorial Garden**

**The service will be held *inside*
the Mausoleum at
Moline Memorial Park Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue, in Moline, Illinois.**



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, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

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 or email
CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



celebrate twice in a year) who did anything she asked – or anything she commanded. Matt, ten years old with lots of friends and not much time for an annoying little sister. Mark, serious but funny, patient and kind, just turned twelve. Bill had just begun as president of a two-state child welfare agency, a promotion he had patiently sought and finally secured the August before. I was a stay-at-home mom, just beginning the graduate program at Western Illinois University, having decided to earn my masters in early childhood and get back into teaching after very-many-years hiatus.

Normal. Every day exciting, boring, busy, loud, normal. Normal is a word I hear many grieving parents use, but now with much regret. Wishing our lives could get back to being normal because “We didn’t know.” We didn’t know it would be her last birthday. We didn’t know it would be her last Christmas. We didn’t know it would be her last Valentine’s day. We didn’t know it would be her last day of kindergarten. We didn’t know.

There is no resolution of our longing for Maggie every day; no healing the deep hole in our hearts. But those feelings force us to remember how blessed we are to have had her for so, so short a time. Now we just have to live with our memories and be overjoyed when we find unexpected traces of our Maggie – like the half-eaten blue popsicle in our freezer.

*Sincerely,
Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser*

Frost

On a cold winter’s day, frost etches a beautiful artistry on everything it touches, every blade of grass. It glitters and sparkles, and for moments, before the sun comes out, and the masterpiece evaporates before our eyes, we stand



mesmerized, cherishing the wondrous sight.

Like frost, our children were only here for a brief moment. But while they were here, whether it was moments in the womb, days, months or many years, they etched their beautiful artistry of love on our hearts and lives and all of those they touched.

Unlike frost, what they etched is forever. It is something that we can cherish and hold onto always. We stand here tonight, lighting a candle to remember children we will never forget. Their light, their spirits, their artistry lives on. And like the flame of the candle gives warmth on a cold winter’s night and light in the darkness, the love our children gave us still remains. It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow. It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness that we feel. And it gives us hope.

*Julie Short
In Loving Memory of Kyra 2007
Southeastern/TCF*

Notables

People have similar grief symptoms, yet each journey is unique, and no grief journey is like yours. As someone who experienced four deaths in six months, including the death of my daughter (mother of my twin grandchildren), I can assure you that sunshine will return to your life. Your loved one would want you to be happy. So make the conscious decision now, at this moment, to let happiness back into your life. Do this in memory of your loved one. You are worthy of happiness and can claim it for yourself.

Written by Harriet Hodgson on
Tuesday, August 21, 2018

I have found it to be true that most of the time the anticipation of a holiday is worse than the actual holiday.

The best advice is to continue to take this journey one day at a time and to honor the memory of your child in your own way.

Debra Reagan

People who pray for miracles usually don't get the miracles...but people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. Their prayers helped them tap hidden reserves of faith and courage that were not available to them before.

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

In time, we learn there is no loss without gain and no sorrow without joy. As death closes doors behind us, new doors open before us

Joanetta Hendel

I Wonder - When did sadness stop covering everything? I don't know. It must have first been for moments, then maybe hours, days eventually. Then for a long time no longer ever-present, but just below the surface waiting for a thought to trigger it. Now I live with more joy than sadness but even now sadness surfaces unexpectedly as the dark shape of loss stirs the cauldron and tears are added to the soup of life, salty still, but not as bitter or overpowering, adding an important flavor to the whole of me.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry
*Catching the Light, Coming Back
to Life after the Death of a Child*



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Bethany
for Children & Families

1830 6th Avenue

Moline, Illinois 61265

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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.