March

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.

Jerry and I spend a lot of time traveling in the car. Even a trip to the grocery store or church, or my dad's house requires a half hour in the car each way. When the children were younger, I read to them when we were driving. Now I read books to Jerry while we travel. Recently I have been reading Jerry the book, 41, a biography of George H.W. Bush written by his son George W. Bush. Last week on our way to church I came to the part of the narrative where George and Barbara Bush's 3-year-old daughter is diagnosed with leukemia and dies less than a year later. Without warning my throat choked up and it became hard to read. Tears flooded my eyes. I had to stop reading, take a deep breath, regain my composure. It will be 32 years this March since our daughter died. Even though so much time has passed, reading aloud the account of another parent's grief can flood me, momentarily, with those feelings of loss and sorrow.

While researching this newsletter I read the following statement by Angela Miller. “There will always be a hole in your heart, the size and shape of your child. Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. Nothing will fill the void your child left.” Anna was a precious treasure and will always be part of our family. In the book, George W. Bush writes, “My father never stopped thinking about his daughter. For as long as I can remember, he has kept a three by five photo of her on the desk in his office.”

We have an “Anna” wall in our bedroom. These are our children, loved and remembered.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

You are not alone in your grief.
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.

**At Last, The Spring**

How is it in the winter of my grief that I can notice how the seasons change with their accustomed regularity? Just now I cannot bear the taste of Spring, yet She won't sleep forever. This month she's busy pushing trees to bud, And bidding flowers to raise their dormant seeds to life. All life is reaching for the light. And all my own potentiality In spite of heavy winter's cloak, races to embrace the good, strong harbingers of joy and peace and transformation.

Shirley Cognard Ottman
BP/USA of North Texas
bereavedparentsUSA.org

**Please Ask**

- Someone asked me about you today. It's been so long since anyone has done that; it felt so good to talk about you — to share my memories of you and to simply say your name out loud. She asked me if I minded talking about what happened to you — or would it be too painful to speak of it. I told her, "I think of it every day and speaking about it helps me to release the tormented thoughts swirling around in my head." She said she never realized the pain would last this long — she apologized for not asking sooner. I told her, "Thanks for asking." I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask. But I told her, "Please, do it again sometime soon."

Barbara Taylor
Parents of Murdered Children — Cincinnati, OH

**Meditation**

**At Last, The Spring**

**Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,**
But grief returns with the revolving year.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Anniversaries! They continue to plague us. Each holiday, the remembrance of what we “used to do” – the spring picnics, the Easter trip... And then, of course, the private anniversaries — birthdays, wedding anniversaries, the anniversary of the day of death.

Sometimes we forget. And then wonder, by midaftemoon, why we are feeling so low — until we look at the calendar and remember. The conscious mind may forget, but the unconscious has a longer memory.

Over time it will get easier. But it’s well to be mindful of anniversaries and realize that on some level we will remember and probably be sad.

So acknowledge — This is the day. Perhaps tell an understanding friend. And then — be a little kind to yourself. Perhaps plan some diverting activity. No need to mourn all day. Your loved one wouldn’t want that. You won’t forget. Next year will come around...

**Martha Whitmore Hickman**
from *Healing After Loss*

Scottsdale, Arizona, will be the site of the 39th TCF National Conference on July 8-10, 2016. "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love," is the theme of this year's event. The 2016 Conference will be held at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. We'll keep you updated with details as they become available. Plan to come and be part of this heartwarming experience.
VULNERABLE

I have found in the years that have passed that I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance. The word “anniversary” no longer holds a promise of celebration. Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be emotionally devastating.

You’ll excuse me if the bounce is gone from my step, or the depth of my laughter has changed. Issues that were once monumental now seem insignificant. Please excuse me if I don’t commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed.

You’ll excuse me if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days “to bear” rather than days to share and enjoy.

You’ll pardon me if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and I’ll pardon you for not understanding that my life will never be the same, that although I’ll survive, there will always be sorrow.

Joan Fischer, TCF/Nassau County Chapter, NY

Around the Corner to Spring

The clouds are heavy and gray, the rain is wet and cold, and the hours of the day disappear too quickly into the darkness of night. Winters in the Pacific Northwest can be long and lonely; the promise of spring is a faraway thought.

But just as sure as winter engulfs us now, spring will come in its time. Daffodils will bravely break the cold ground, colorful tulip cups will catch spring showers, and slowly but surely, trees will bud, birds will sing and the sun will shine.

We have all encountered unspeakable pain in the loss of our child, and the seasons of recovery may also seem overwhelmingly dark and cold. Through this tremendous trauma, each of us finds a way to survive—a strength many could not imagine, yet here we are.

Each day, each season, each year that we survive beyond that unforgettable day, our children beam with pride and send their love from the heavens. It is their prayer for us; much like our prayers that they would “grow strong and be happy.” I believe it is this enduring love that helps us discover life again.

Spring is often known as the “season of hope.” Yes, there will still be spring showers (just as there will always be a tear for our loved ones), but they are often punctuated by breathtaking rainbows stretching across the heavens and the promise of blue skies once again. The air seems lighter and fresher, filled with floral aromas and the scent of “life!”

As we close out these last weeks of winter and look ahead to brighter days, my wish to all families is that you celebrate your strength, honor your tears, and share a word of hope and support to others who are newly bereaved. May we all find spring in our hearts!

Diane Barta, TCF/Portland, Oregon

GRANDPARENTS’ REMEMBRANCE

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren’s lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild and we have lost a symbol of our immortality.

As we walk by our child’s side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together.

We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey, TCF/Rutland, VT

People will speak of “closure,” of “moving on,” of “getting over it,” of grief coming to an end. Smile kindly, and know anyone who says these things hasn’t lived this thing called grief.

To lose a child is to lose the very heart and soul of you. It is overwhelmingly disorienting. It takes a long, long time to find yourself again. It takes a long time to grow new life around the chasm of such grave loss. It takes a long time to grow beauty from ashes.

There will always be a hole in your heart, the size and shape of your child. Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. Nothing will fill the void your child left. But your heart will grow bigger—beautifully bigger—around the empty space your child left behind.

Angela Miller

What she said next offered some hope.

“This was a long, dark tunnel that I would have to walk alone, she said, one step at a time, tear after tear, blindly—but with the certainty that there would be light at the end. I had no choice but to keep walking day by day until finally I saw the first glimpse of light.”

Author and bereaved parent

Isabel Allende in an interview with Good Housekeeping

Please contact the editors, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242:

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.
National TCF has a new Facebook page, TCF - Loss to Suicide. This page is open to parents, grandparents, and siblings who have lost loved ones to suicide. There is no good way to lose a loved one; different causes create specific pain that can be eased by sharing with another experiencing a similar loss. Co-moderators, Cathy Seehuetter and Donna Adams, welcome you to this special closed page.

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.

TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes
TCF - Loss to Suicide
TCF - Loss to Homicide
TCF - Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver
TCF - Loss to Cancer
TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss
TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth
TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes
TCF - Sounds of the Siblings (for bereaved siblings)
TCF – Loss of a Grandchild

continued from page 6

memories, acceptance, purpose, and reinvestment in life. We learn to speak of our loved one without crying, and to begin to accept that whatever time we had with him or her, we would have taken even if just but a moment. We learn that grief is the price we pay for loving our child or sibling so much, and we wouldn’t want it any other way. Our relationships with family, friends, and yes, even God can be strengthened or challenged as we look for new ways to connect with them. We may lose old friends who don’t really understand. We learn that problems in life are not overwhelming. We are handling the worst thing that can happen to us; what else can happen? We learn to more deeply cherish those we love. We help others in grief without batting an eye. Sometimes we pick up “gifts” along the way by becoming more caring, compassionate toward others, and appreciative for what is important in life. New strengths can develop as we find our new selves along the way. Life will be different as we learn to cope, but still have meaning.

For those of you who are new in your loss, we hope that you will continue to share your sorrow with us and learn from those further ahead on the path of grief. Someday it won’t hurt as much as it does now, and you won’t always feel “this elephant on your chest.” We encourage you to ask the family and friends around you for what you need and tell them when their expectations for you are too high. We hope you will explain to them that your grief is not on a timetable and will probably not ever reach what society calls “closure.” Explain to them that you will always miss your child or sibling, but you will learn to live with a broken heart. We hope you will inform them that the mention of your child’s name is music to your ears and it’s okay to talk about him or her. Your TCF friends will be with you and hold your hand every step of the way.

---

The most painful death in all the world is the death of a child. When a child dies, when one child dies... not the 11 per 1,000 we talk about statistically ... But the one that a mother held briefly in her arms... He leaves an empty space in a parent’s heart that will never heal.

Carole J. Dyck, R.N.
TCF/Verdugo Hills, CA
In memory of my son, Chris

Thomas H. Kean
48th Governor of New Jersey
The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter
Monthly meeting: Thursday, March 24, 2016 at 6:30 pm at Bethany for Children & Families
1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois
Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.
Next month’s meeting: April 28, 2016 at 6:30 pm

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 linmac67@mchsi.com.

Rick’s House of Hope
This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director, at 563.324.9580, or egordon@rhoh.org or go to www.rhoh.org.

MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)
A peer group for suicide grief support meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggnor Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loeher, 563.843.3655 or at there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org.

MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)
Survivors of Suicide Support Group
Meets on the second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm. Contact Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425, or laura@secondreformedchurch.net.

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):
❤ Kay Miller 309.738.4915
❤ Kirby White 563.271.5908 kombo100@msn.com
❤ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com
❤ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearbt3@mchsi.com
❤ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com
❤ Gina Glassford 309.517.3664 citrusg@gmail.com

Kay, Kirby, Doug, Rosemary, Judy, and Gina 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.

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
We Need Not Walk Alone 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.

Our Newsletter
For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

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

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, climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.
In the Quad Cities, in the Moline Memorial Cemetery, the Angel of Hope Memorial Garden has taken form. After four years of planning and fundraising the Memorial Garden is close to being completed. The wing-shaped planters rise from the earth flanking the two sides of the central circle. The last phase of construction was finished this past December, and the final push is underway to obtain the Angel. The final cost to purchase and install the Angel is $16,800, and only $2,000 remains to be raised before reaching that goal.

We are making a final appeal to bring this very special angel to the Quad Cities. You can help create a place of solace for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings throughout the Quad City Area.

In the area before the angel lie the inscribed bricks that spell out the names of local children who have died before their time, remembered by parents, siblings, grandparents, and relatives who daily live with the absence of a loved child. These stones are available to parents, siblings, and families who would like to remember a deceased child, adult-child, sibling, niece, nephew, or grandchild. The order form is found on the TCF website. Please go to http://www.quadcitytcf.org to download the order form.

The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden
5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois, 61265

Closure: Is it a Reality?

The use of the word "closure" is often heard in public circles or in the media especially after a tragedy and implies finality. The word comes with the sense that there will be a time, day, or event like a funeral that marks when a grieving person will be "healed" or "over it," as though it were a disease and you could magically take a pill to be cured. There is an expectation that when the eulogies are said and the casseroles are gone, the grief somehow magically goes away. The truth is that those of us who are in TCF realize that the death of a child or sibling changes our lives forever, and we will never truly "be over it."

Yes, we will not have the intensity of the pain and sorrow we had at the beginning of our grief. We will go on with life and find a new normal for us, but life will never be as it was before the death, and we will never be fully "healed." Sometimes those around us have attempted to comfort us by pointing to deadlines, replacements, or "at leasts." We have heard it said, "At least you have other kids," or "You can have another baby," or "Hasn't it been 6 months?" Many see "comfort giving" as a short-term support effort, and soon we will be "over it" as we are kept busy returning to the tasks of daily living and focusing on our blessings. These comments hurt rather than provide the comfort they are meant to provide. Grief follows no plan, no stages, timetable, formula, or schedule. There are no road maps; there are no absolutes.

We learn in TCF that everyone grieves differently. Grief is like being lost. The familiar things we relied on to live each day are gone. We must find new anchors or stabilizers along the way and learn a new way of relating to the world and people around us. We are forced to live without our child or sibling. The reality of our loss often far outweighs what we have remaining. Grief and nobody really cares that our child, sibling, or grandchild died. All of these feelings are normal and part of the grieving process. And yes, we also need to realize it is a process — a very long, gradual, and difficult process. Time does not heal all wounds, but time softens the intensity of the grief. What helps is finding those who will listen with their hearts and give us hope and understanding. Those who will spend hours, days, and months with us as we tell our story over and over so we can somehow believe it ourselves. What helps is to surround ourselves with those patient people and meaningful activities that comfort and support.

Gradually, the cold darkness of grief begins to give way to the warmth of the