



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

March 2008, Volume XXI, Number 3

The Quad City

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Recently we received a phone call from some close friends telling us that their expected grandbaby may have some serious life threatening health complications. The young parents to-be are also friends of ours, and our hearts ached as we heard the news.

Even after all the years since our own baby was born with serious health problems and died at four months old, we can still feel the anguish associated with such news. We are praying diligently for our friends and hope the outcome for their child will be different than our own. But we have also been able to reach out to them and share some of the perspectives we have gained in the accumulated years since our daughter's death.

While we were in China last week, a family with three sons were our host. One of the children referred to a fourth brother and later as we visited with the parents they told us the story of their second son, born with a serious heart defect who died when only a

few days old. Enough years have passed since their son's death that they do not share him with just anyone, but we could see and hear that being able to talk openly about this child they still love was positive for them.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Paul states, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." I do not believe that God chose to "zap" us by taking our daughter so that we could become more compassionate and more caring people. I do believe God has used the pain in our life to teach us lessons that have allowed us to reach out to other hurting families. For that I am grateful – that still many years after she was born, God is still using our daughter's brief life to be a blessing to others.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter
Messiah Lutheran Church
302 11th St. N.
Port Byron, IL 61275

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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.

You are not alone in your grief.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Chapter Meeting

March 27, 2008 at 7:00 PM

Bethel Assembly of God Church

3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL

From John Deere Road, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church will be on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.)

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)263-2737 for directions or information.

Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group

Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. For more information, contact Dave Happ at (563)785-6133.

Mom's Group meets in Aledo

A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at the Happy Joe's in Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kathy Matkovic at (309)314-2485 or Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.

Rick's House of Hope

Located at 4867 Forest Grove Drive in Bettendorf, this community resource is for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call Denise Tatoian at 563.324.9580 or 563.421.7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web at www.genesishealth.com — Keywords: "children and grief."

Quad City SHARE

A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday of each month at Grace Lutheran Church, 1140 East High Street, Davenport, Iowa. For more information, call (309)792-7808.

Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group

For those who have lost someone to suicide, this group, facilitated by a peer survivor and a professional, meets the third Monday of the month in Moline, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)737-1363. moore-jm@sbcglobal.net

Moving on

It's what everyone

Wants me to do.

They all think that I should,

But no one tells me how.

Moving on

Is it some kind of trip?

Does it require a destination?

I hardly ever have any energy

To be where I am.

Where would I feel more?

Moving on

Away from who I am now!

Away from all I have known?

Away from my pain?

Away from your death?

But where could I go

That all of this

Would not go with me?

Nowhere I think.

Now if only they'd leave me alone.

When I am ready

I will feel my own way

To move on

While taking you along.

Deb Kosmer

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** and **Maggie's Fund** for printing this month's newsletter. If you are able to assist in the final preparation for mailing of the newsletter in any given month, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb at (309)654-2727.



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

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

Quad City Chapter

Messiah Lutheran Church
302 11th St. N.
Port Byron, IL 61275

The Quad City Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

meets bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happening of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

THANK YOU TO:

David and Karen Thode, in memory of their daughter Karla Kunzman – 11/21/76-7/2/06

Jean McAleer, in memory of her daughter, Allison McAleer Peters — 2/17/1986 -3/21/2005

Love gifts 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 love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.



Mourning Means Redefining Connections

Grief is an experience as old as life itself. Yet, our understanding of what it means to grieve has evolved over time. For most of the 20th century, it was understood that the goal of grieving was breaking the attachment with the loved one who died. Then in the latter part of the century we were taught to work through the stages of grief so we would accept it and – many thought – be over it.

I will always be attached to those I love. I will never fully get over the major loves and losses in my life. Nor do I want to...nor do I need to in order to live a full, meaningful, and joyful life. And the professional world that studies grieving – the field of thanatology – knows that. In our mourning we are not breaking attachment – we are redefining how we are attached.

This is so difficult to put into words as I reflect on the years since the death of our son, Eric, who died in an accident at age two. All I know is that, though I've said "good-bye" to Eric, my love for him and my feeling of connection with him live on. This is not denial. I am fully and painfully aware that he has died. Yet, I am fully and joyfully aware of the ways I am connected that continue still.

Think of it like this – and here I borrow from the thoughts of Dr. Thomas Attig. Every day I am away from those I love. I say "good-bye"

in the morning and am not back home until that evening. But though I am away for hours, or even days at a time, I still love them and feel a close, personal connection while we are apart. Now...though I said "good-bye" to Eric years ago, I still love him and feel a close, personal connection – though we are apart. From his life I continue to be inspired and enriched.

Eric was – from birth – what I still strive to be. He was full of life and spirit. He loved to run and laugh and play with that take no prisoners approach to life. He did not fear risks. In a beautiful way that was free of self-consciousness, he was Eric. He was himself, without ever giving it a thought.

I am still inspired by him. I am still enriched by him. Death does not end that. Death does not end that connection. For two years I loved our son. I've loved him for twenty-three since. Just as I valued – savored – loving him in his presence, I have valued and savored loving him in his absence ...as I remember. For in my heart he will always have his place.

We have all said our "good-byes" – yet somehow, thank God, those we love and have lost go with us still.

Ronald J. Greer is a bereaved parent and the author of *Markings on the Windowsill: A Book About Grief That's Really About Hope*.

TCF Bulletin Board

Contact www.preciousparents.org which publishes a newsletter titled HEARTLINE for parents whose infants have died.

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 Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

The March Meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on March 27th at 7:00 PM at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island.

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 The Compassionate Friends national Web site, and a portion of the purchase price will be donated to

We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter
One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families that contact the national office.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 — (877)969-0010
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org
Visit the sibling resource page at www.compassionatefriends.org



Moving On

by Deb Kosmer Kosmer,

Today someone I loved died. I don't believe it; I can't believe it; I won't believe it. Family comes; friends come. The phone keeps ringing. The doorbell rings again and again. The ringing seems far away and I hear it, but I seem unable to answer. My legs won't move. My feet won't move. I am glued to the chair. Others answer for me. They seem to know that I don't remember how.

Tomorrow comes. I didn't want it to ever come. I wanted to go back to the time before you died. There I said it. You died. Does that make it true? "There must be some mistake," I tell myself. Maybe this is just a bad dream I need to wake up from. If only someone would wake me up. When people ask me what they can do for me I try to tell them the only thing I want is you. They look sad, they gently shake their heads, they hug me, and still you're not here.

Your funeral is over. Everyone says I did so well. I hardly cried. Don't they see I can't cry – not yet? I am in shock. I hear someone else say, "Give her time, that's all she needs." I wonder, can it really be that simple. If it is, I just want to run through time, however much time it takes to get to the place where I don't hurt so much, don't miss you so badly. But no, I can't do that. Even if I could I would only be farther from you. My heart cannot bear that.

Days pass. Tomorrow, it will be one month since you died. I wonder how I can just skip that day. I am afraid of it; of reliving every single detail of your death, knowing that one month ago you were here with me and my world was okay. Now I have no world. Everyone keeps telling me I just need to make a new world. But I liked my old one, I never asked to have it taken from me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to start over. I don't know where the beginning of that world is or how to get there. Everything is

so hard and makes me so tired. I just want to stay in bed.

Days pass and turn into weeks. I am stuck in a world foreign to me wondering where it is you are and how you could have left me. I force myself to go through the motions of living and caring for others. They don't seem to notice it's just pretend, and I am starring in the hardest role of my life. If only they had just an inkling of the place I am in, of my fractured and broken heart.

I never used to read the obituaries. Now I feel compelled to do so. I feel like a kindred spirit to others who must also travel the road I am on. I still feel so alone. Now they will feel alone too. I feel like I should say something to them but I don't know them; I only know their pain.

Months continue to pass. I am back at work, back in church, getting my hair done. It all still seems strange, different and doesn't matter like it used to. Friends call. Sometimes I say, "Yes, I will go to dinner." Other times I say, "Thanks for calling, but not today." Many days it's still easier to just be alone where I don't have to hide my tears, when they come where I can talk to you and not feel strange, where I can just be however I am that day and not try to fit into the place others have carved for me.

Finally, one day I surprise myself; I am humming a tune. For a little while, I feel lighter. I almost smile. I begin to judge myself. What's the matter with me? How can I be even a little happy when you're not here? But then I hear your voice in my head or is it my heart, the place where you live, saying you are glad that I am humming, glad I can smile, encouraging me to live again. I don't know whether to laugh or cry so I do both. But later that day I find myself humming again, and I smile and I know that I am going to be okay.

Psalm 118 in the Bible contains this line:

I shall not die, but I shall live.

That's the message the spring of your grief contains:
the discovery that, yes, you *will* live.

But it's more than a discovery – it's also a decision:
"I shall not allow myself to die; I choose to live again."

You may trace that shift within you
to a particular moment in time.

Perhaps it's a sense of optimism
that awakens with you one morning.

Maybe it's hearing yourself laugh
for the first time in a long, long time.

Perhaps it's being captured by a dream
that leaves you feeling freer and more at peace.

Something buds, something opens up – and it's you.

You realize your attention is being drawn to the future again.

You feel a spirit reforming, a spirit you have missed.

You sense an energy re-gathering, one you have longed for,

Your "best self" is on its way back.

From *Seasons of Grief and Healing* by James E. Miller

During the Victorian era, when a child died, the mother would take a rose and break it in two. She would then place it on the coffin. This would signify that her heart had been broken...

In honor of James Michael Everett...

From the tears of my heart to the pages of my journal, I now share my struggles in hopes of helping others during their own tragedies. Come journey with me through tears, loss, and glimmers of hope in my first book.

Monica M. Everett, author of *The Club*

This information was sent to me by a personal friend of Monica Everett whose son died several years ago in an auto accident. This book can be ordered through Barnes and Noble either at the store or on their website.

Carol Webb - Quad City TCF

Blessings Inside Sorrow

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told. I am not sure I always agree. At times I can see the gifts I have been given. Love... without measure...fills my heart when I think of you. But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart. And I miss you now. The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by any blessings I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still I wonder. Are there blessings? Would I have known how much I cared for you...for your brothers, for your Dad, were it not for your coming, and so suddenly, softly, leaving, without a good-bye? Would I treasure the life I have remaining if it weren't for your loss? Certainly I loved, and treasured before you left, but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that love and to treasure more highly those around me? I KNOW I can't take for granted that they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me...still was there not a glimmer of hope? That life would go on, and, somehow, we would survive, and build on the ashes of our broken

hearts. Building somehow in spite of our pain. Mixing the cement of our love with tears, we bound ourselves together even more tightly than ever before. And our love grows stronger. And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson! And still, the emptiness will never be filled. There yet remains a hole in my heart...and in all our hearts. Dear son, we will never forget you. The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in the fabric of our lives. It remains open, a testament that you mattered, and that your coming and softly going made a difference. And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow. We were blessed to have held you for a time, even though you could not stay. And even through our tears, we smile at the memories. And we know that you are not completely gone. You shadow our lives, affecting them in big ways and small. And though I would trade these blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms, I am indeed grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

Lisa Sculley, 2/25/99,
in memory of Joey

A Letter

February 7, 2007

Dear Compassionate Friends,

I enjoy reading your words of support. We lost our daughter last May in Iraq. I read about the family that lost their son in Iraq and have been suffering through the Holidays. We have two other older children and decided that we needed to be more positive with our suffering by helping others. Grief will eat you alive if you allow it to. I am not saying that we love our daughter any less. I am saying she would not have wanted us to make the Holidays a sad time. We looked for positive ways to remember Katie. Cleaning out the closet I found her Beanie Babies she used to collect, my sister-in-law asked if she could send them to her daughter that is now serving in Iraq to give to the children at the orphanage. What a great idea. They sent me pictures of smiling children holding the Beanies. I cried and laugh at the same time; it made me feel so good. My employer has also been a great support throughout our grieving. We sponsored an Iowa National Guard family through the Holidays. The soldier was hurt in Iraq and still in treatment through the holidays. He has a wife and six children at home praying for his recovery. The children's ages were from 3-15 years of age. My company raffled off items, purchased items and collected a considerable amount of money to help them through their difficult times. We gave them everything from their list and then some. The representative from the Guard had never seen such a generous gift; she commented on how grateful the family was. I had never seen such a selfless gift from all my co-workers. Their gift came from the heart. I was proud to be a part of this experience and can't tell you how much it meant to me. God has given us a great family and beautiful friends. Helping others is my healing grace.

Sincerely,
Mary Ann Soenksen
Gold Star Mother
PFC Katie M. Soenksen



Should be sweet remembrances of those things which so delighted us when he was alive afflict us now? Since he gave us so much pleasure when we had him, so we ought to cherish his memory and make that memory a glad rather than a sorrowful one. Because one page of your book is blotted, do not forget all the other leaves whose reading is fair and whose pictures are beautiful. We should not be like a miser who never enjoys what he has, but only bewails what he loses.

Plutarch, Greek Writer 46-125 AD



If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

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, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.