



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

May 2008, Volume XXI, Number 5

# The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

I was struggling for inspiration this month and decided to go back into my notebooks of old Quad City TCF newsletters and see if there was something written previously for this front page article that might be helpful. The following is an excerpt from the piece we wrote for the April 1991 newsletter.

Universally the question of "why" and dealing with the "whys" of our child's death is something uppermost in the minds of bereaved parents. I remember a time when "Why" consumed most of my waking thoughts. Our daughter had died in late March. In September we found out we were expecting a baby, but a few days later I miscarried that child. I remember lying in my

bed crying out, "Why?" overwhelmed by the seeming unfairness of our situation. At the end of that year after my grandmother had died in October and my aunt in December, I said to my family (and anyone else who would listen), "When I get to heaven the first thing I am going to ask God is 'Why?'" I do not know when it happened, but as time passed I found myself much less consumed with a need to have an answer to my unanswerable question, "Why?" I think a positive step in measuring our progress through our grief journey is when we can focus our attention and energy on "What next?" more than we do on "Why?"

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb

**When we walk to the edge of all the light we have  
And take that step into the darkness of the unknown,  
We must believe that one of two things will happen –  
There will be something solid for us to stand on,  
or, we will be taught how to fly.**

Patrick Overton

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

«WholeName»  
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«City», «State» «ZipCode»



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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

**May 22, 2008 at 7:00 PM**

**Bethel Assembly of God Church**

3535 38<sup>th</sup> Ave., Rock Island, IL

From John Deere Road, turn right at 38<sup>th</sup> St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38<sup>th</sup> 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 38<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](mailto:moore-jm@sbcglobal.net)

**And so it's over!  
Finally everyone has gone away  
to turn their lives back on again  
like radios;  
leaving us to talk too loudly  
trying to soak up the silence.  
Sometimes I see you turn away  
so that I won't see your tears  
and we build this incredible wall of  
grief  
first started with her empty chair.  
I can't believe that I could ever be  
so alone with you:  
each of us guarding our pain  
jealously  
as the last thing to hold of her.  
And people said,  
"You're so lucky to have each  
other."**

Author unknown

Hope is not an easy word for griever  
But we, more than most others,  
need to understand  
what hope can mean for us.  
Hope means finding the strength  
to live with grief.  
Hope means nurturing with grace  
the joy of remembrance.  
Hope means embracing  
with tenderness and pride  
our own life.  
And the gifts left to us  
by those we have lost.

Sascha Wagner  
From *Wintersun* (1996)

**T**hank 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](http://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.

**Neal and Lynn Chapman in memory of their son, Carey, who died 2/23/06.**

**L**ove 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.

## Volunteers for Healing Friends for the Future

31st National Conference of the Compassionate Friends  
July 18-20 — Nashville, TN

Check [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
for the latest information as it becomes available

### The Significance of Mother's Day

**I** don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I, myself, became one. My life would never be the same, and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my child, a love greater than any I had known before. So as Mother's Day approaches — a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood — I, too, want to be remembered as a mother.

Ginny Smith Charlottesville, VA

## Myths About Grief and Marriage

### **Myth 1 - Since the same child has died, each parent experiences the same loss**

Each parent has experienced the child differently and had a unique relationship with that child. Both parents are mourning different losses. These losses are what will influence what one misses and when one misses it (e.g.: talking after school, watching football, helping in the kitchen, coaching ball, etc.).

### **Myth 2 - Spouses will tend to be more similar than dissimilar in their grief.**

Grief is highly individualistic. Just like fingerprints, spouses are no more alike necessarily in their mourning than strangers. Loving one another or living in the same house does not make individuals respond to loss similarly. It has to do with type and quality of the relationship with the child; personality and coping behaviors; past experiences with loss; social and religious backgrounds; support received; reliance on drugs and alcohol; physical health. Spouses must give each other wide latitude for their differing experiences of grief.

### **Myth 3 - Once a couple can learn to manage their grief, they will be back to themselves again.**

Major loss always changes the bereaved. Parts of us die when someone we love dearly dies. We are altered by the impact of the loss and the adaptations that are required of us. We have to learn how to relate to a world, including our spouse, in ways that accommodate the changes in us. During the acute grief in which we are reminded painfully in a repeated way that the child is absent, we may find it very difficult to relate to our spouse. Communication deteriorates; sexual relationship is not what it was or may have disappeared entirely. Couples who manage to weather this successfully manage to (A) keep the communication as open as possible; (B) recognize their distress and the changes in themselves and work to express these in the healthiest way possible; (C) ensure their expectations of each other are appropriate and give each other permission to grieve individually; (D) find ways to slowly integrate all of the changes into the marriage.

Continued on page 9

# TCF Bulletin Board

Contact [www.preciousparents.org](http://www.preciousparents.org) which publishes a newsletter titled HEARTLINE for parents whose infants have died.

The May Meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on May 22th at 7:00 PM at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island.

## 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](http://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 The Compassionate Friends national Web site, and a portion of the purchase price will be donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

## 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](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
Web site: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
Visit the sibling resource page at  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)



## Myth 4 - If a parent or couple is “healthy,” the mourning will last longer than most people expect – up to a few years.

The duration of mourning varies according to the particular loss, its circumstances, etc. However, it is known that mourning may take years of acute grief and that long-term mourning takes much longer...some aspects may never be entirely finished. Certain experiences trigger upsurges in grief for our child...Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, family milestones, etc. That does not mean that the grief is pathological or unresolved. Bereaved parents must recognize that mourning the loss of a child will mean that throughout the rest of life you will encounter times when the pain of the loss is brought back and the pain more intense at that moment. As long as this does not interfere with your continuing to move into the new life without the loved one, such reactions need not be incompatible with healthy adaptation.

## Myth 5 - Parental grief declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion

Parental grief fluctuates much more than society expects. Parents may initially be more similar in their grief and then grow further apart before becoming closer again. It is suggested that a mother's grief often increases for several years after the two-year point following the death, while the father's tend to decrease. Therefore, for a period of time, they become more discrepant from one another. It is important to realize this.

## Myth 6 - Parents who lose children usually end up with a divorce

It is positively untrue that parents whose child has died inevitably end up with divorce. The death of a child places an enormous strain on a relationship but it has not been proven to destroy it. Sometimes because people survive this and have positive growth, they may choose not to remain in what is an unhealthy relationship. Often the divorce can be related to problems that were already present. Some parents actually become closer after the death.

## Myth 7 – Loss only brings pain and devastation

Many bereaved parents have worked long and hard to develop some positive gains out of their loss (support groups, reordering priorities, better family communications, closer relationships, etc.). While no one would choose this loss, one can determine to choose healthy responses to it.

Jane Eure, MSW  
TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL May 1999

## Back Into the World

*There would always come those moments when a bright red top found under the lilac, a snatch of tune, a small mitten at the back of a closet, a child's footprint in the soft earth of the back yard would cut into me, sweeping Teddy back with terrible force, and I would go down into the basement and sit on one of the sawhorses and give way to long shuddering sobs, until the seizure finally wore itself out and let me go again. And then I would wipe my face and climb back upstairs again, where the world – impossibly, capriciously – was going along exactly as it had before. Anton Myrer, **The Last Convertible***

Like the character in Anton Myrer's novel, all of us have had the experience of having to pull ourselves together in order to face the things that seem to continue in spite of our every wish for them to stop. I remember going back to work, sitting at my desk and staring blankly at the walls. The people I worked with struggled to say the right things, but they continued, also, to do the same things they always did. And I guess I wished or expected or wanted something to be different, because my world had changed so drastically in the days I had been gone.

I remember seeing my friends again. And they were kind and brought food or said they were sorry, or they hugged me and maybe cried with me. But they were still the same friends, eating the same foods and reading the same books; and I guess I thought they would change, for certainly I had changed since I had last seen them.

And the news on TV and the time of year and the color of the sky and everything else must surely change, but it didn't and it doesn't, and the world "impossibly, capriciously" continues just as it always has.

The death of a child has probably changed each of us more than any single other event in our lives. And the world seems cruel sometimes to not allow us the time to adjust and catch up.

But no amount of hoping will stop the goings on around us. Slowly, strongly and eventually, we must make the effort, on our own, to catch up.

Gerald Hunt TCF/White River Junction, VT

## The True Meaning of Compassionate Friends

### A Chassidic Tale

A man had been wandering in the forest for many days and was nearing the end of his water and food supply. With each passing hour his sense of fear and despair was increasing. His body was weary with fatigue, yet he was unable to sleep.

Slowly it became clear to him that he had been walking in circles and retracing his steps. He knew that his end was near.

Suddenly, in the distance, he noticed the figure of a be-draggled fellow wanderer approaching him. His joy was boundless as he thought to himself, "At last, a way out of this dark and foreboding forest." The man gathered all of his remaining strength and ran towards the stranger and exclaimed, "My brother, I can't begin to tell you how happy I am to see you! Which way leads out?"

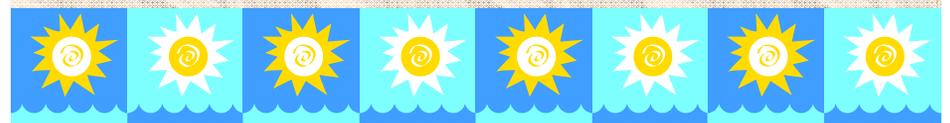
The stranger responded, "My dear friend, I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I too have been wandering in this forest for days on end. I can't save you – I too am looking for a way out."

In a fit of despair, the first wanderer shouted, "Then all is lost. It is over. There is no use in continuing," and fell to his knees in a fit of tears.

The stranger responded in a deeply caring and comforting voice, "My friend, why are you giving up hope? Let us journey together. I will show you the paths I have taken that have led me nowhere, and you will show me the paths that you have taken that have not brought you to your destination. Let us walk together and find a path home."

**At Compassionate Friends, we don't have all the answers, but together we can work out our grief. If you have not attended a meeting or convention, you are missing out on some good fellowship. Come join us.**

Cape Cod Chapter, MA/TCF June-July 2007



## The Legacy of Our Children

In his celebrated American play “Our Town,” Thornton Wilder explores with great tenderness, the common human frailty of taking life for granted. When the leading character, Emily, dies in childbirth, she decides, against the advice of her fellow spirits, to relive a day of her life on earth. Emily chooses one of the birthdays of her childhood. She discovers that everyone she loves is so busily absorbed with daily routine that they fail to take time to really see and hear each other. This blindness to the beauty of life is too painful for Emily to bear. She returns quickly to the peace of her grave.

For Emily it is too late. For us, it is not. Our children left us a special gift, a legacy that will last a lifetime if we permit it. It is the gift of awareness. Only when touched by death do we begin to realize the preciousness of life. Unlike Emily, we cannot go back in time. We cannot relive the moments of our lives. We cannot have our children back. But we can go forward with a heightened awareness of those we love and of life itself. We can take the time to smell the roses. We can accept the loving legacy of our children.

**Candy Mc Laughlin**  
TCF/Minneapolis, MN

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**Kathy's Day** George Washington was a special person to our nation. So, too, were Christopher Columbus, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

In our country, we recognize these and other special people with specific days set aside for us to honor their lives and memories. Official events are held, and most of us usually do something different from our daily routine. Often we do something extra special and traditional.

Within a few years after Kathy's death, I decided that I would set aside a special day for us to honor her life and memory. I chose the anniversary of her death. It was a day I already would be thinking about her in a special way. Over the years, the day has acquired a certain tradition. If it is a workday, I take the day off. In the morning, I visit her grave and talk to her – kind of bring her up to date on what has happened and what I am doing. Then for the rest of the day, I do something special.

One year I went to the seashore and walked on the beach. Other years I have gone to a museum of art gallery. When I was single, I usually was alone – now my wife (even though she never knew Kathy) joins me. We celebrate Kathy's life and memory. I don't expect the world to join in this celebration, but neither will I let the year be complete without this special day being included in the calendar of hearts.

**Bill Ermatinger — TCF/Baltimore MD**

## Reflections about Time and Change

I often wonder what people are thinking when they say, “You'll get over it.” Sometimes it sounds to me as if they are talking about a case of mumps or my despair at income tax time. But what can they mean when they say it about my grief? Maybe they mean that grief is just an interruption in life. Their theory seems to be that life is basically happy – buying stuff, working, watching TV – but that a time of death and grief is an unnatural sad time in that happy life.

I cannot agree with that view.

Time can lessen the hurt; the empty place we have can seem smaller as other things and experiences fill our life; we can forget for periods and feel as if our child didn't die; we can find sense in the death and understand that perhaps this death does fit into a bigger design in the world; we can learn to remember the good and hold on to that.

But we cannot “get over it,” because to get over it would mean we were not changed by the experience. It would mean we did not grow by the experience. It would mean that the child's death made no difference in our life.

There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish writing. Those Jews had the custom of rending their garments – literally tearing their clothes – to symbolize the ripping apart that death brings. But the question was raised, after the period of mourning, could you sew the garment up and use it again? The teachers answered yes, but when you mended it, you should not tuck the edges under so it would look as if it had never been torn. This symbolized the fact that life after grief is not the same as before. The rend will show. The next question was, can you sell that garment? The teachers answered no. The rending and mending of our life is ours and others cannot wear it.

No, we don't get over it. We change and grow. Our life has a difference which is ours alone. Perhaps as compassionate friends we can help each other make that difference the kind of difference that increases the world's supply of compassion, love, and healing.

**Dennis Klass – TCF/St. Louis MO**