



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

December 2008, Volume XXI, Number 11

The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

At a number of our Christmas Candlelight services, Tina McCarthy has shared how the song *Mary Did You Know* ministered to her hurting heart after the deaths of two of her five children, one in 1991 and one in 1993. Knowing how much God must have loved Mary to give her the privilege of being the mother of Jesus and believing God knew how deeply it would hurt Mary when Jesus had to die, Tina came to grips with the fact that God loved her even though He had allowed two of her children to die. The contradictory themes of pain and hope are both part of the Christmas story. In the book of Isaiah, God tells us that the Messiah would come to bring light to those living in darkness.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah:2, 6

The joy of the manger is darkened by the shadow of the cross. But after the cross comes the hope of the empty tomb. I think that Dennis Klass (TCF/St. Louis, Missouri) says it well in the following excerpt.

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them. But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter



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.

You are not alone in your grief.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Christmas Memorial Service

December 4, 2008 — 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.) Call Sharon and Dave Ulseth (792-0529) for directions or information. **The meeting for January is on Thursday the 22nd at 7:00 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) 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 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 Director Carol Kelly at (563) 324-9580 or 563-421-7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web: 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 or moore-jm@sbcglobal.net

CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

**Thursday December 4, 2008
at 7:00 P.M.**
**Bethel Assembly of God Church
3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL**

Our Christmas Memorial Service is for every bereaved parent who would like to have his or her child remembered at our candle lighting ceremony. We will light a candle in memory of each child. (We will provide the candles.) All family members are invited. A time of fellowship will follow the service.

If you plan to attend the meeting, or if you cannot make the meeting but would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return the form below or give Michelle Cauwels an email mcauwels0783@yahoo.com so we will have an idea of how many candles to order. If you have a candle from previous years, please bring it with you.

Child's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Date of Death: _____

Parents' Names: _____

We plan to attend (please circle): yes no

We are unable to attend, but would like our child remembered (please circle): Yes No

I/We would be willing to help in some way (cookies, special music, set-up, clean up).

Name _____ Phone _____

Send to: **Michelle Cauwels (309.755.0783)**

351 15th Ave
East Moline IL 61244.

If you would like to make a love gift to TCF in memory of your child, you may do so at the service or by sending your contribution to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks should be addressed to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Peace at Christmas

By Bruce Conley in *Handling the Holidays*

The greatest gift between you and the one you are now missing can never be worn out, weathered, exchanged or returned. For you gave each other something that can never be taken from you- a treasure of memories – and now they hurt to think of them. Fond, beautiful memories made in love. What if they had never been made at all?

How much worse to have lived without them. No, you take those memories, reminisce over them, let them hurt. They'll probably always hurt; but it does get less. They will become more valuable with time, as will the fondness you hold for those holiday memories you have made. Give yourself a gift this holiday season – peace – as much as you possibly can. Then share it with those you love. No one can ever take away the good times you have experienced.

Although there are no easy five-step plans to coping with the holidays and grief, there are a few things we can do to help ourselves through the holiday season. First, we must recognize that, as grieving persons, we simply may be unable to function or work at our usual optimum. Our minds can only handle so much at one time! So, set some priorities, both short term and long term.

A short-term goal should be simply to get through TODAY...one day at a time. The ultimate long-term goal is to come to an acceptance of your child's death and to lean to make life meaningful again.

Stop. Look at and consider what really is meaningful for ourselves and for those we love. Try having a family conference and consider these points: eliminate the unnecessary and reduce the holiday pressures on yourself and others. Focus on things that really are important to you and your family. Don't over extend. Don't over commit. Be realistic and you won't feel that you have failed. Give special consideration to which activities will help both you and the children...Do you have family traditions? Is it important to continue with them this year, or is it a good time to begin some new ones?

Re-evaluate, discuss and consider ways of keeping traditions, while alleviating some of the pain of loss.

Finally, remember the needs of others and be aware that your greatest happiness may come in doing something for someone else, for isn't that the true meaning of Christmas?



How to Help Me Grieve

Be there for me:

I feel alone, in pain.

I need a friend.

Share my sorrow:

Speak from your heart.

I have to talk about my feelings.

Let me grieve:

Listen to me; I need to cry.

We all grieve in our own way
and in a different time frame.

Keep the memory alive:

It is always on my mind.

I have so many memories.

I need your help:

Help me, call me, pray for me.

Do whatever you can.

Don't desert me:

Don't desert me after the first or second week.

I need you especially on holidays.

Take care of yourself:

I need to depend on you.

Help me heal:

Involve me; listen to me months later.

I need your interest and invitations.

Be my friend:

Don't be afraid of me or my grief.

It's okay to cry.

Lastly, please don't criticize

unless you've walked in my shoes.

Instead: **Pray for me.**

Vivian Sagert

TCF/Minitonas, Manitoba, Canada

The time of Christmas

rings with tears and laughter.

And if you listen deeply,

you will find the sound

Of every voice you ever knew.

Sascha Wagner

Who Is This Child

Who is this child

For whom so many tears are
shed?

Who is this child

For whom empty hearts and arms
yearn?

Who is this child

Who was destined to live and love
in the future?

Who is this child

Who has no future – only a short
glorious past?

This child is our child

Child of this world

Humanity's hope for the future

The death of this child –

Diminished our world.

This world is poorer

Future hope is lessened.

But I say with pride and love

This child is still my child

My life the richer for that child's
being...

Sonia Eastwood, Victoria, Australia

**One thing you can do
is start some new tradi-
tion that is so different
from the old celebrations
that it has no painful
memories for you.**

by Helen Fitzgerald,
The Mourning Handbook

TCF Bulletin Board

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

The monthly meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on December 4th 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. 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
Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org
Visit the sibling resource page at www.compassionatefriends.org



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.

Thanks to:

Janis Hamdorf, in memory of her son, Kelly, 5/1/1968-11/18/2007
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser, in memory of their niece, Beth Hagerty, 1/22/1980-11/25/1986 and Anna Webb, 11/26/1983-3/27/1984.

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.



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

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.

The Angel Tree

Lori and Mike Devanney – East Haddam, CT

Last December I went into a store and saw beautiful china angels to be placed on Christmas trees. I thought for a minute whether I should buy a few and put them on Michael's tree at the cemetery. Michael was five when he died from complications associated with open-heart surgery in 1993. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that they would probably be stolen and decided against buying them. Later that same afternoon and while at my office, I looked out the window through the winter air and thought silently of our precious little boy and those china angels. I then began to write:

“As Christmas approaches, many of us forget that the true meaning of this holiday is to give. We know that Michael would have given his last toy to a child without one. In remembrance of our child; those of you who come to visit Michael may take an angel from his tree and hang it in your home to help keep Michael's spirit alive.”

I left my office that evening and went immediately back to the store and bought every single china angel they had. Last year, we went through 200 angels. We could not keep them on the tree long enough. We received notes and gifts at the cemetery from strangers who said they could not take something without leaving something in return. And how special our child must have been. Even six months later a stranger approached me at the cemetery and asked if I would be putting the angels up again this year because every time she got to the tree they were gone.

The joy we received in giving the angels was insurmountable. We know that there is a part of our son in so many homes and every time these people look at their angels, they will think of Michael.



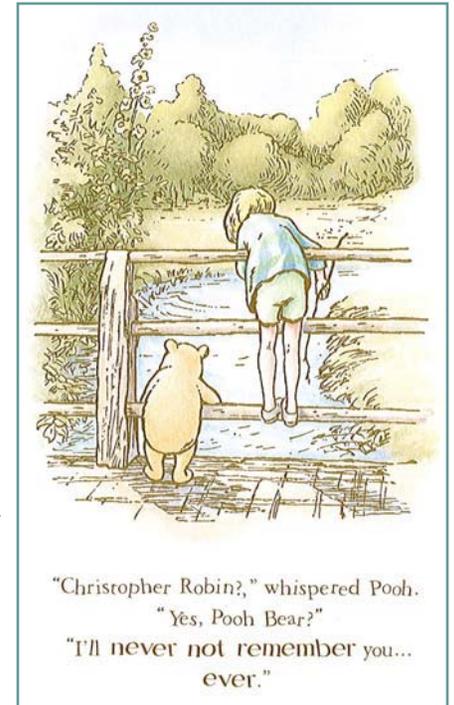
Remembering Your Loved One at the Holidays

Holidays can create feelings of dread and anxiety in those who are bereaved. The clichéd images of family togetherness and the often unrealistic expectations of a season filled with picture perfect, joyful gatherings can cause tremendous stress for those who are not grieving – let alone those in the midst of the painful, isolating experience of loss. How does one celebrate the holidays when a loved one is so sorely missed? Creating new rituals and new traditions that pay tribute to the memory of the deceased is one way to survive, and perhaps even embrace, the holidays when a loved one has died. Here are some suggestions of what you can do.

- ☼ Tell the stories behind the ornaments on the Christmas tree and the role your loved one played in making those memories. Create a special ornament labeled with the name of the deceased and hang it on the tree.
- ☼ Decorate a candle and light it at mealtime in memory of your loved one. If you celebrate Hanukkah, recall a memory of the deceased on each of the eight nights that you light the Menorah.
- ☼ Make a book of pictures and memorabilia about the deceased to give or simply to share with one another. This is a good activity for children as well.
- ☼ Make a donation to a favorite charity in the person's honor. Create a scholarship to keep the memory of the deceased alive and announce it at a holiday gathering of family and friends.
- ☼ Purchase a holiday book – perhaps a favorite of the deceased – and donate it to your local library or school. Ask your librarian to place a label in the front cover inscribed, “In memory of (your loved one's name).”
- ☼ Bring your loved one's favorite food to share at a holiday dinner. Mention their name in the blessing over the food or propose a toast to their memory.
- ☼ Decorate and hang a cut-out star in your home with your hopes and dreams for the future. Thinking about tomorrow is part of your healing.

Then once you've remembered your loved one, make sure you remember yourself. Take care of yourself. Be gentle. Do what you can do – no more and no less.

TCF/Central Iowa Chapter newsletter



Tie a Red Ribbon

December.. the month of traditions. What did you used to “*traditionally*” do with your holiday season? What will you do “*traditionally*” now, without your child to share the time with you? These questions still plague me, even as I begin my second time around. I changed some traditions last year, kept some the same, and started a few new ones. The important thing to remember is to do what feels right, not what other people think should make you feel right.

Most of my new holiday traditions are memorials I’ve created for my son, things I do “in memory” of him. To some, they may seem... well...crazy. But to me, they are now as much a part of my holiday season as the Christmas tree and Santa. In order for it to be possible for me to participate at all in the season, I must be allowed to include Bryan. Basically, if he isn’t in some way a part of things, neither am I. If this is your first holiday, it’s up to you to set the standards. You must let your family and friends know how you feel, let them know you plan on talking about and remembering your child, then let them know how you’re going to do it. There are so many ways to create memorials, anything from placing a candle and fresh flower on the holiday table to putting a decorated, lighted Christmas tree at the cemetery. They all say the same thing, “We remember you...we love you!”

One tradition we started last year was tying a big red ribbon around the tree in front of our house. This was our “Bryan” decoration. It was there to tell the world (or at least the little bit of it that drove down Morningside Drive) that we were thinking of our son. The neighbors, or course, asked us why we had hung this big red ribbon on our front tree. It was kind of an odd decoration, in kind of an odd location. Well, we explained it to one neighbor, and they explained it to another...and so on. Soon, many of the front trees on Morningside Drive were decorated with big red ribbons. It gave me a very heartwarming feeling to drive home each day and see these ribbons. They told me that the neighborhood was thinking about us, and thinking about him.

So, go ahead..light those candles, play that favorite song, decorate that special place at the cemetery. Discover what it is that you can do this year to bring your child a tiny bit closer and make your heart a tiny bit more peaceful. Maybe you could even “*tie a red ribbon ‘round the old Oak tree.*”

Cindy Fisher TCF/Cincinnati, OH

Snow

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind, No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special, some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

Denise Falzon,
TCF/Lake Area, MI

