



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

January 2009, Volume XXII, Number 1

The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Thank you for all who assisted or participated in the Christmas Memorial Service. It was a special time of remembrance and reflection. Special thanks to Michelle Cauwels and David and Sharon Ulseth who planned, coordinated, set up, and took down. Thanks also to Alan and Rosemary Shoemaker. Thanks to all who contributed refreshments. As we begin this New Year we want to express our deep appreciation to Bill and Laurie Steinhauer whose able assistance have improved the newsletter immeasurably and expanded our outreach.

The following quotes from the founder of The Compassionate Friends, Rev. Simon Stephens, are a reminder as we move into a new year of the purpose of Compassionate Friends and why each of us who are involved continues to reach out to each other.

“The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets

them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.”

“At the very heart of our TCF logo is a pair of hands stretching out to each other over grief’s abyss. Our prime objective is that those hands should meet, should touch, and hold firm. Because only together can we make it.”

“I cannot carry this burden alone, the road is too steep and the pain too great.

I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder Whose strength lies in the reality of the feet, which bear its weight.

The sharing of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age.

To share a person’s sorrow is to accept their reality and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.”

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

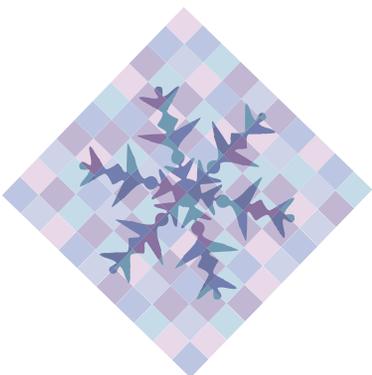


THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter



1830 6th Avenue,
Moline, Illinois 61265



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Rock Island, Illinois

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

Monthly Meeting: January 22, 2009 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.) Call Sharon and Dave Ulseth (792-0529) for directions or information.

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 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month 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, is a 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, still-birth, 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 Suicide Support Group, Fulton	Location: Second Reformed Church, 703 14th Ave., Fulton, Illinois This support group meets the second Monday of each month and is open to anyone who has lost a loved one through suicide, it's a safe place where survivors share their experiences and support each other. The group is completely free and light refreshments will be served. For more information, call 589-3425.
Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group, Moline	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 the Moline Library, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore 309.235.7174 or qcsos@yahoo.com

New Beginnings

The holidays are behind us. We look to the beginning of a New Year in which we have the opportunity to grow and move through our grief journey unhampered by presents, gatherings, extra demands, and traditions.

What will your first steps into the New Year bring to you and how will you achieve it? Will you be helping others? Will you be reaching deep into your soul through therapy to come to a place of peace? Will you be educating yourself about your grief journey by reading the writings of other bereaved parents and professionals? Will you be falling into the embrace of nature by being out of doors and exercising? The choice is ours to make and whatever choice you do make is the right decision for you. Our journey is that 'ours.'

So as you embark on a New Year with emptiness in your heart, look for what gives you comfort and seek ways to find solace in the support of others. Together we can make it and move beyond 'making it' into a safe place where we can feel healing energy through remembering the good times and the blessings.

Take care of yourselves.

Sue Anderson Kirkland Eastside TCF, WA

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.

A New Year

by: Shirley Ottman, Bereaved Mother, Denton, TX

*A time for looking ahead
and not behind.*

*A time for faith
and not despair.*

A time for long great gulps of hopeful expectation.

*Drink deeply friend so that
fortified with the promises it brings,
This New Year will keep you
near fresh springs of healing love,
Where you may come to weave old and loving memories
with new understandings and acceptance...
And find peace.*

from *A JOURNEY TOGETHER*,
www.bereavedparentsusa.org.



Rose in the Cradle

There's a rose in the cradle where you should have been.
A tiny faded bloom and our tears for you,
Are laid to rest in this quiet empty room.

Little one, you left too soon for me to hold,
Before I even knew your name.
Little one, you left too soon,
But not too soon for me to love.

Now the One Who created your delicate form,
Has welcomed you in His home,
Where no baby cries, or rose ever dies,
And you're cradled as His own.

Little one, you left too soon for me to hold,
Before I even knew your name.
Little one, you left too soon,
But not too soon for me to love.

Someday I'll hold you, know you, call you by name and take your hand,
When we're together ... together again.



Donna Gassett

Taking Stock

by Margaret Gerner , bereaved mother and bereaved grandmother ,
St. Louis, MO

Happy New Year!!! "How can it ever be again?" "How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?"

When we are hurting and so terribly depressed it is hard to see any good in our New Year, but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable. That we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe but even when we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true, BECAUSE IT IS! Many parents whose children have died some years in the past will attest to this. Remember also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering right now.

Second, we must face the New Year with the knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE. Whether we will be on our way to healing by this time next year, or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we chose to be on the way to healing by the following year we must work to get there. And that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief, to cry, to be angry, to talk about our feelings of guilt, and do whatever is necessary to move toward healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on, and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life.

Let us not waste this new year!

from *A JOURNEY TOGETHER*, www.bereavedparentsusa.org.

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 January 22nd 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:

Carolyn Reid, in memory of her son,

Justin, 2/27/1981-8/18/2004

Herbert and JoAnne Ufheil, in memory of

their son, Kurt, 4/28/1972-12/18/2006

Carol and Richard Watters, in memory of

their son, Robert, 6/5/1968-1/1/2007

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.

Resource Notes: As I was surfing through Internet sites I came across this information about Alan Pedersen on another TCF Website. Many bereaved parents find music to be comforting and healing. I have not listened to Alan's music but thought it might be something some families would like to investigate further.

C. Webb

Alan Pedersen has been performing for more than 25 years. An accomplished singer and award winning songwriter, he spent several years writing and recording music in Nashville, Tennessee. Alan has had several songs recorded by other artists. His writing has not been limited to music, he has written commercials, radio news copy, and collaborations for television shows and other comedy projects. His performing credits are numerous as well. Alan has worked as an actor, stand-up comedian, keynote speaker/emcee, and in radio as a network news and sports reporter for Westwood One Communications. Currently living in Englewood, Colorado, Alan is the father of four boys and an angel. In August of 2001 Alan's life took a tragic turn, his 18-year-old and only daughter Ashley was killed in an automobile accident. This tragedy would take his life in a direction he never imagined. Struggling for months to find answers and trying to cope with tremendous pain and anger, he entered a grief program in Denver, Colorado and began attending monthly meetings of a support organization (The Compassionate Friends.) Alan credits these organizations with saving his life and inspiring him to honor his daughter's life by helping others. In July of 2003, Alan released a CD of songs he had written about his walk through the valley of grief, titled Ashley's Songbook. In 2006, he released a follow up CD titled "A Little Farther Down The Road." Alan now helps others by sharing his story of faith and hope. His message is simple; grief and loss offer the opportunity for ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. He believes that healing begins when we once again give of ourselves by helping others.

www.everashleymusic.com

Sorrow

master teacher,
etching on the soul
profoundest truth; increasing love,
compassion, care;
throwing light
on what endures
and what does not;

on what is worthy of our time,
and what is not.
Let me learn
my lesson well
so that the sorrow,
in the end,
be not in vain.

Joan Splettstoesser

“The final gift bestowed by any loved one who is torn from your grasp is a clear and unforgettable awareness of what is permanent... and what is temporary.”

My second book, which is called *Packing for the Big Trip*, was written because conversations I had with people about the first book made it so crystal clear that the reason we are all so completely blind-sided by death is that we live in a "death-denying society," a society where the death rate is 100 percent, but where no one wants to mention it.

I wrote in *Packing for the Big Trip*, "Every person who dies gives a priceless gift to those who stay behind. That gift is awareness of death and its manifold implications for our lives. Death awareness is about living. It brings the maturity we need to live our lives with wisdom and joy ... to stop cringing at the thought of eventual death... and start living with the daily enthusiasm of those who are packing for big trip."

Maybe you are still so close to your child's death that you are not ready to see that there could ever be anything good to come from it. That's fine. Maybe you are still wishing you could wring that kid's neck for leaving you here with all this pain. That's fine too. But maybe, you are beginning to realize that you have new eyes for the upside down values of our culture, that your "death awareness" has given you greater "life wisdom," that your child's death has given you a gift of life.

Charlie Walton, author of *When There are No Words*

Faith does not always come from quiet contemplation or meditation. It is sometimes born among the raging of questions with no answers, pain with no relief, hope that has no reason to exist.

Randy Becton



How Can I Improve Communication With My Spouse?

I believe in marriage and the value of communication. Years ago we met, fell in love and chose this special someone to share our life with. Our children were born out of that love.

After the death of our child, it becomes a greater challenge to keep the lines of communication open. We know it requires time and effort from both partners to work at keeping the marriage alive and healthy, but how do we do it? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Have you seen the movie, "The Story of Us" with Bruce Willis and Michelle Pfeiffer? The Jordan family had a ritual every night going around the dinner table telling each other what their own high and low was for the day. Think back what happened during your day. What made you smile and what made you sad? That is your high and low.
- 2) Read a grief book together – take turns reading a chapter each night. Then discuss what you have read sharing what you agree and disagree with what the author has written.
- 3) Schedule a meeting to tell each other what you need from one another. If it is difficult to talk about your feelings – organize your thoughts first onto paper, then set up a time for both of you to share face to face.
- 4) Make plans to go on a date once a week – it does not have to cost

- 5) Cry wrapped in each other's arms. If this opportunity presents itself – go with it. Tears are healing and wonderful to share with someone who loves your child just as you do.
- 6) Take time to reminisce about how you first met and fell in love with each other. Remember the funny and touching moments when you were dating. Talk about the good times you have shared over the years since the day you were married. Listen to the old songs, "your special song" and dance holding each other close.
- 7) Do an anger exercise. Buy a large package of Styrofoam coffee cups. On each cup, write one reason why you are angry. After you have finished writing, go outside on the driveway or a hard surface. Take turns reading one of the cups out loud and then stomp on the cup smashing it.
- 8) Talk about your child. Remember and laugh about the day your child was born – their first step – their first day of school and all of the other wonderful memories that no one can ever take from you.

Continued, next page.

- 9) This may sound so simple, but touch and hug each other. Tell the other that you love them. Tell them why you love them. This sounds so simple, but often we forget to touch each other, a squeeze of the hand, an arm around the shoulder, a soft kiss.
- 10) Work together on a Memorial in memory of your child: a college scholarship fund in your child's name or plant a garden in memory of your child. Develop an idea of your own and work together on it. Oh, one last thing, be kind and love each other.

Susan Van Vleck – Marc's mother,
May 21, 1973 - July 18, 1992
TCF/Marietta, Georgia

"You are so strong"

Empty words
That don't touch the reality
That my life has become.
Walking through fog
Incredible pain
Searching for the beloved face
I crave to see
The voice that I strain to hear
over the noises
Of people who have no idea
Of what the world has lost.

Charisse Smith, TCF/Tyler, TX



The New Year

Where there is pain,
Let there be softening.
Where there is bitterness,
Let there be acceptance.
Where there is silence,
Let there be communication.
Where there is loneliness,
Let there be friendships.
Where there is despair,
Let there be hope.

Ruth Eiseman, TCF/Louisville, KY

As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look
at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh
with the birds, I will sing with
flowers, I will play to the
stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will re-
member how many things
on this earth were your joy.
And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as
long as I can.

Sascha (Sascha's son,
Nino, drowned at age 3; years later, her
daughter, Eve, died by suicide at age
21.)