



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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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.

The Quad City Chapter



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COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

October 2010, Volume XXIII, Number 9

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

"In the depths of winter I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer." - Albert Camus

When you are in the depths of a winter experience like the cold and chill of bereavement it is hard to imagine that winter will ever end. What is happening to us at the moment consumes us. It does not seem as though it is possible we will ever feel differently than we do now, facing each day the cold empty chill within our soul. In one of our Marriage Encounter talks I describe my grief as a feeling of black emptiness as though I am but a shell with the essence of me lost and scattered, never to be retrieved.

However, most bereaved parents who have walked the path of grief for a time (a long time) will tell you that within each grieving parent is a core of strength that will warm them when they least expect it. It may be faith and trust in God, it may be the knowledge that others need you, it may be the realization that your child who has died would still want you to live fully and joyously, it may be your memories and the wonder that this child was yours if only for a little while, it may be the belief that there is much you can do in and for the world in honor of your child as you live on, it may be the combination of these as well as other things. Take each day as it comes. Or more likely, face the future an hour at a time, but we believe in time, little by little, day by day, year by year, the summer sun will overpower the depth of the winter chill.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Grief and Marriage

When our daughter was born with some obvious orthopedic handicaps, the pediatrician said to my husband and me, "You realize that having a handicapped child could destroy your marriage." Many years later our marriage is still intact although having lived through the stress of Anna's many health problems and the pain of her death, we understand a little more where this abrupt doctor was coming from. Grief does not automatically tear your marriage apart nor does pain necessarily draw you closer to one another. The stress of grief as well as the individual ways we each grieve places a big burden on a marriage relationship. Marriage takes daily work and when you are grieving there is not much energy left over for "we." "I" may

require all your energy just to make it through the day. The stress can be intensified when the child who dies is from a blended family where only one parent is the child's biological parent. Communication was the key for us. The more we talked to one another, the more we were able to share our feelings, both similar ones as well as unique ones. Being patient with one another and accepting the fact that we both grieved, but that we did not express that grief in the same way also helped. Now, years later we are uniquely bonded to one another because we alone share the experience of having loved Anna in the special way only parents can love.

Carolyn Webb, Quad Cities/TCF

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.

e-Newsletter Now Available!

An e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter contains notes and happenings 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.

Thank you to **Maggie's Fund and Bethany for Children & Families** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

Facing the memories can be saddening, but memories can be one of life's treasures and to lose them would be tragic. Recovering from grief does not mean erasing all memories of the dead person and your relationship with him or her. Indeed, the most complete healing can take place when you can look at pictures, hear the music, visit the familiar places, handle the favorite toys, wear the last present, and in other ways accept memories as part of the celebration and thanksgiving for having lived a portion of life with this person whom you loved so much. In living with memories, instead of running from them, the pain diminishes and appreciation for what the person gave to you and accepted from you will increase.

From It Hurts So Bad, Lord
by Andrew D. Lester, Golden Triangle Newsletter, Columbus, MS

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.

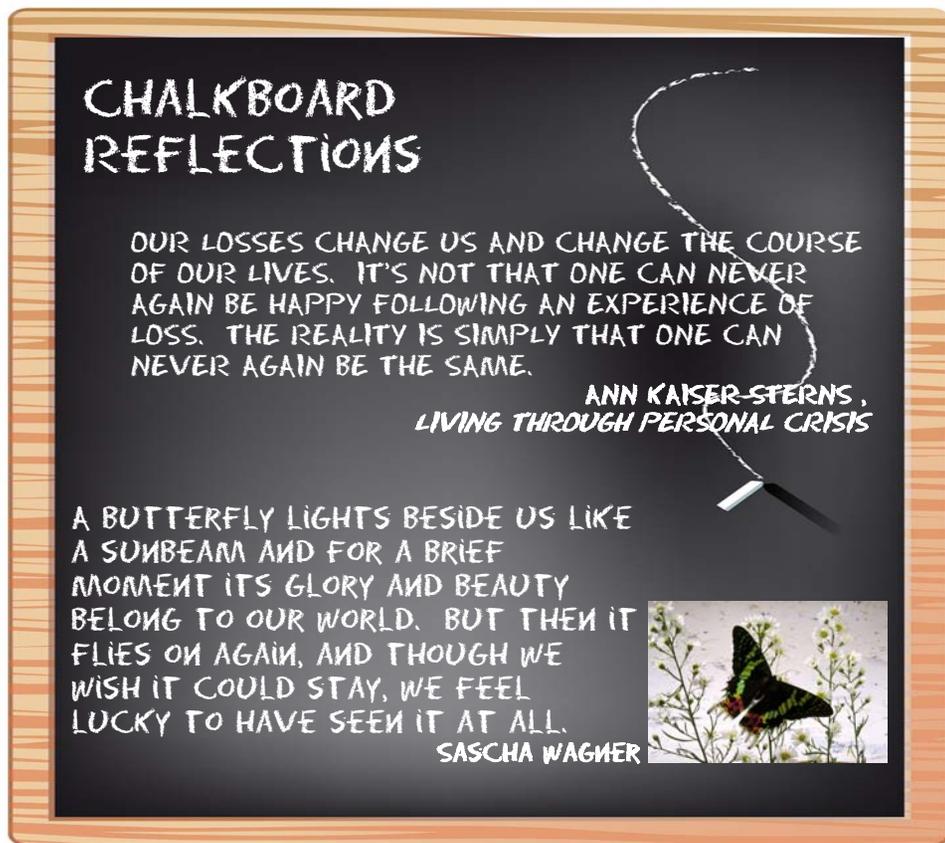
Love Gifts

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:

Bob and Mary Jo Reade in memory of their daughter, Robin.

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.



Those who have recently lost children might feel that never again will hope, joy, fulfillment or anything positive exist in their lives. Slowly, after months or years that may seem agonizingly long, a glimmer of happiness, contentment, or satisfaction occurs to foster optimism that life can once again become purposeful or meaningful.

It is not unusual for a bereaved parent to resent the suggestion that it is possible to feel better. Any thought of improvement requires a degree of energy and commitment not present in newly bereaved persons. The length of time needed to reach the point whereby the desire to rebuild develops is different for each individual and cannot be rushed. Each person must find his own space struggling with disappointment, reversals and difficult hurdles that hopefully will become fewer and more easily surmountable as time passes.

TCF/Sacramento Valley, CA

Two Ideas

I want to share two ideas that have helped me since the death of my 24-year-old son, Ben, in April 2004. The first is writing: writing about your fears, your anger, your faith, your dreams, your questions, your loss, your hope, your emotions, and your feelings. Most of the things I put down on paper (or computer e-paper), I never share. But I have found that the steps (recording, revising, thinking, and remembering) take a lot of thought and tears to get it right. Although it does not change the outcome, for me, writing helps me “organize” a little corner of the chaos that seems to fill our minds and our world after our child dies. By going through the pain instead of around it, I think more clearly and feel less out of control.

My personal grief journey has also led me to the skies. I love looking at the stars on a dark clear night and love looking at pictures of real stars, galaxies, and other heavenly bodies.



When I see the stars, I think of a verse that gives me hope about the future: “Maybe they are not stars, but holes in the floor of heaven where the love of our children shines down to us.” It gives me comfort to think of so much love still existing that heaven can’t hold it all, yet it makes me sad thinking about how many of our children are waiting for us. I use the constellation Orion as one of the places I look for “Ben’s star” to represent his love shining down. Pick a star. See the light. Feel the love.

Herb Lanerd,
Co-leader TCF/Huntsville Area

Small Things

Small things can be great comforts.

Remember the smallest things. They will make you smile soon.

When our special sadness comes to call, when we remember more than we can bear. when courage falters – shadows everywhere: Then let us reach and touch and share, we, who are friends.

Trust yourself!
You will recover your courage in your own time, at your own pace... Trust yourself!

Behind each dark flower of sorrow waits a memory of the blessings you shared.



Grief cannot be conquered like an enemy. Grief can only be changed from pain to hope from hope to deeper life.

Sascha Wagner

Dear friends,

Since the beginning of Gabe's illness, Matt and I made a conscious choice to use this for the glory of God. We chose to be positive, choosing the most encouraging life verse on which to stand - praising God for ALL things, no matter how scary or sad or hard... These choices did not come easily. It was not always easy to "be joyful" or "give thanks" throughout those 16 months that went way too fast. It was definitely something we had to work at, especially the day we saw our son take his last breath and felt his last heartbeat.

Our thought always was, if Gabe for some reason needs to go through this according to God's plan, we were going to bring glory to that plan - make the whole thing worth it! Maybe we went a little too far, stayed too positive, weren't real enough when our hearts were breaking and our world was crashing

down around us. In all honesty, was the Plan worth the loss of our son??? Only God knows what the big picture looks like, and though we get glimpses of it when we see how his short life impacted so many others, it does not feel like Gabe's life was worth God's plan to us sometimes!

Science tells us that emotions, such as love or sadness, come from the brain - not the heart, despite all the expressions we hear at Valentine's Day. But, why then, do I get a physical pain in my heart when I am feeling my saddest? Why, when a loving memory of my boy hits me out of the blue, do I get a deep clenching in my chest that takes my breath away? It is so interesting to think about how little we actually know about God's creation - so many things that can't be explained... like why an incredibly GIFTED and loved and appreciated boy would be stricken with cancer and lose his battle...

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Vine and Dine

Wine Pairings Dinner and Silent Auction

Friday, November 5, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.

Davenport Country Club
Fundraiser for the Iowa SIDS Foundation

For more information, call
(563) 332-6265 or visit
www.iowasids.org

The Iowa SIDS Foundation provides support to families touched by SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), educates professionals and the public of ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and funds research into the causes of SIDS.



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

Mission Statement

The mission of the Compassionate Friends (TCF) is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child at any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Quad City Area Chapter of The

Compassionate Friends meets 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.



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.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.

Amazon.com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, October 28, 2010, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL
For information and directions, call

Rosemary Shoemaker (309-441-5586) or Michelle Cauwels (309-644-0486).

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church is 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.) Next month: November 18, 2010.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at (563)260-3626 for directions or information or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com .
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. Please call ahead to verify the meeting location. Contact Kirby White at (563)271-5908.
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 403 SW 10th Avenue, 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 (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 first Thursday of each month – 6:30 p.m. in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL and the 3rd Thursday at 6:30p.m. in the Adler Room # 1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at (309)373-2568 or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com
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 .

How Many Children Do You Have?

Shortly after my son died, I realized that this question was going to be bothersome. Each time someone asked me about the number of children, I struggled with the answer. I soon decided I was not going to let this become a problem. I thought about how I felt about my choices of answer and chose the one that met my needs in the beginning. I had a surviving daughter, but I knew for me to say "one" would seem a denial on my part that my son had lived, and that wasn't right for me.

In the beginning, when I still needed to tell people that my son had died, I would tell in detail about his accident when the question about how many children came my way. As the months passed and I had told the story enough times, I found that it wasn't necessary to go into detail anymore. My needs had changed, and I rethought my answer.

Now, when I am asked how many children I have, I answer, "I had two children." The criteria I used in determining if I go any further is whether the person asking is going to be a continuing part of my life. If so, they need to know about my son, and I tell them. Otherwise, we will be constantly dancing around that fact. Better, I think, to have it out in the open. It then loses its ability to interfere with the relationship.

If, on the other hand, the person asking is simply passing through my life, then I feel no need to go any further than, "I had two children." Seldom does anyone catch the "had" instead of "have," and pursue it. If they do, or if they ask follow-up questions about ages or professions, I tell them first that my 26-year-old son was killed in an accident. Then I tell them about my daughter who is alive and doing well. This gives them a choice. They can either acknowledge my son's death and ask questions, or they can ignore that and ask about my daughter. I am comfortable either way. If they are embarrassed, I see that as their problem. Just to show you how different we all are, however, my husband feels comfortable answering, "We have one child." That is what is right for him and that is what he should say. You decide what is right for you – then say it. That way you defuse that powerful question and it loses its ability to traumatize. Don't let it be a problem.

Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA/TCF

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I think the pain in my chest is caused by the piece of my heart that went missing when Gabe died (obviously this is not a medical explanation.) Interesting story about the word "piece." It was actually the *only* spelling word Gabe missed on a spelling test in first grade... He knew how to spell "peace," but when his teacher asked if he knew of another way to spell that word, he couldn't think of it. Makes me think now that, like Gabe, what I should focus on is the "PEACE" of God, not the "PIECE" of my heart that is missing, but to be honest, that is much easier said than done. Truth is, that "piece" will NEVER be healed, no matter how much time passes or how much joy we find in life otherwise.

So then, how do we get through each day? How does Matt manage to get up and go to work and "be" there for his students? How do I get out of bed to complete the simplest tasks of caring for my girls and "kind of" maintaining the house? How do we go out in public and answer the kind inquiries of so many caring people???

I guess the phrase, "fake it until you make it" comes to mind... that is the expectation people have of us - because of our choice to always glorify God and trust in His plan - that we should be doing better than we actually are. How can we possibly answer honestly to the question of, "How are you doing?" What would everyone think if we actually said, "We

are doing horribly"... or "This is the hardest time of our lives"... or "We are devastated, our hearts are broken, and we are constantly on the verge of tears at any given moment." How do any of those more honest answers glorify God at all? How can I honor God when I confess that I am struggling spiritually with WHY we had to lose our son... WHY our amazing gift was taken back... WHY I feel abandoned by the very God I trusted to bring us through...

Some people after losing a child "feel" them from time to time... they have dreams or they see a "sign" that the child is with them. I have not had a single dream about Gabe, despite my deepest desire to see, hear, and feel him again... I have not recognized a sign from him or even "felt" his presence around me. I think of him every minute of every day - he is still the first thing I think about when I wake up and the last thing I think about when I go to sleep. His memory is in the songs I hear, in the pictures I see, and even in the pajamas he wore that last day that we have not washed... (he had the sweetest smell from not eating any solid foods for 2 months - like cantaloupe).

I know that life must go on - despite my every attempt to stop it months ago... part of me completely realizes that the days will go on, we will get through them, and each one that passes gets us closer to seeing him

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again. But, I also resent time passing... the world is moving on, but without an incredibly special person in it. Truth is, no one - not even our girls someday - will feel this loss like us. Everyone - including our girls someday - will continue to live and eventually maybe "forget" that there once was a little boy named Gabriel who lived for a short time here on earth. Only Matt and I will feel this sharp pain in our hearts 20, 30, 40, even 50 years from now when we remember his incredible wit, his artistic talent, his beyond-his-age intelligence, and his amazing faith.

This is so different from any other type of loss anyone can experience. We EXPECT to outlive our grandparents and parents, we are not as close in any other relationship as with our children. Our children look to us to protect them, they DEPEND on us... Gabe trusted with his whole heart that the decisions we were making for him were the right ones... he never questioned the medicines or the procedures or the appointments.

He was an innocent child who endured so much - and for what? To lose his battle... and there was nothing else we as his parents could have done to help him... Maybe THAT is what makes losing a child so much harder than any other loss. They trust us to "make it all better"... before, there wasn't a problem we couldn't solve (we could find that lost binky..., clean up that

spilled milk..., fix that broken toy..., even kiss that skinned knee). This baby that we brought into the world and doted on, tucked in at night, read to, talked with, laughed with and played with now had a problem bigger than we could fix. We taught him to look both ways before crossing the street, to wash his hands often, to never play with fire and to avoid anything dangerous - but then he got into a mortal danger we could not avoid. That is our pain, our loss... and that is my heart, exposed truthfully to you all today.

Don't get me wrong, I love God with all my heart - I am shocked and saddened by my own feelings as I struggle spiritually. I do have genuine joy from many things... but the pain is always there, just under the surface - and likely always will be. So when we answer that we are "doing OK" when asked, we probably are - just doing ok... some times may be better than others, but we are always just "OK." And right now, "ok" is actually a gift from God... considering where we could be after losing a piece of our hearts forever. (If that were to physically happen, can a person survive with a chunk of their heart missing?) So we are grateful and thankful for each blessing and gift. For our community and our family and our friends... for the support and the love.

God Bless you and all you love,
Leslie and Matt

Written by Leslie Perkins , Moline, IL. Used with permission.