



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
QUAD CITY AREA CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2011—Volume XXIV, Number 11

Dear Compassionate Friends,

When our grandson became ill this spring we had to re-evaluate our use of time on many fronts. There were jobs and responsibilities we just could not do because we were away so much helping our son and his family. One of our priorities was to continue sending the TCF newsletter, and while it was a challenge, each month we were able to do so. However it dawned on me this fall that we would be less than realistic to say we continued to produce this newsletter. Each month we generate articles and update the mailing list but it is Bill Steinhauser who organizes and adds graphics. Laurie Steinhauser edits the content for the inevitable typos and disorganized grammar. And Bill and Laurie have been solely responsible for overseeing printing and mailing this year. In a season when Jerry and I have been stretched physically and emotionally, this newsletter would not have happened without the efforts of Bill and Laurie. We are deeply grateful for our partnership with them.

This is also a good opportunity to thank others who share their love with grieving families through TCF. Rosemary and Allan Shoemaker along with Michelle Curtis are responsible for the day to day functioning of the chapter. They not only attend the local monthly meetings but have taken advantage of TCF conferences and trainings and meet with community members to give our chapter visibility and create opportunities to serve more families. Pat Mart also helps with monthly meetings. Larry and Joyce Molitor handle the finances and the record keeping and reports that go along with that task. There are many ways to help in a Compassionate Friends Chapter and many other ways Quad City TCF could reach out to bereaved families if we had some additional workers. If you are a little further along in your grief journey, think about how you might be able to make a positive difference in the lives of newly bereaved parents. If you would like to help but don't know how, we encourage you to contact Rosemary or Michelle and explore possibilities with them. Maybe that could be one of your New Year's goals.

We know the holidays are indescribably tough for grieving families, particularly in the first few years after your loss. It is also a tender, sometimes wistful, time of year for all parents who have had a child die. We encourage you to join us on December 8th for the annual Christmas candle lighting service. The first time this idea was proposed to our chapter in 1988, I did not think it was a good idea. But having attended each year since then, I treasure it as a time to recognize the preciousness and value of our daughter's life, to encourage newly grieving families and to reconnect with families we have met in the past, and be reminded of how we not only grieve but we also grow. We hope you will consider joining us this year.

Sincerely, Jerry and Carol Webb

Who You'd Be Today

Written by Bill Luther and Aimee Mayo and recorded by Kenny Chesney

Sunny days seem to hurt the most.
I wear the pain like a heavy coat.
I feel you everywhere I go.
I see your smile, I see your face,
I hear you laughing in the rain.
I still can't believe you're gone.

It ain't fair: you died too young,
Like the story that had just begun,
But death tore the pages all away.

God knows how I miss you,
All the hell that I've been through,
Just knowing no one could take your place.
And sometimes I wonder,
Who you'd be today?

It ain't fair: you died too young,
Like the story that had just begun,
But death tore the pages all away.

God knows how I miss you,
All the hell that I've been through,
Just knowing no one could take your place.
And sometimes I wonder,
Who'd you be today?

Today, today, today.
Today, today, today.

[Instrumental Break]

Sunny days seem to hurt the most.
I wear the pain like a heavy coat.
The only thing that gives me hope,
Is I know I'll see you again some day.

Would you see the world? Would you
chase your dreams?
Settle down with a family,
I wonder what would you name your
babies?
Some days the sky's so blue,
I feel like I can talk to you,
And I know it might sound crazy.

Some day, some day.



CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

Thursday December 8, 2011
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 service, or if you cannot make the meeting but would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return this form or give Michelle Curtis a call (number below) 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 Curtis
18163 241st Avenue
Bettendorf, IA 52722
309-644-0486

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.

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

The passage of time alone does not cause our grief to end, but its softening touch helps us to survive.

Payne Loder

People say you don't know what you've got till it's gone.

Truth is, you knew what you had, you just never thought you'd lose it.

from the
TCF/Miscatine, IA Newsletter

Wounds do not heal without time and attention. Yet too many of us feel that we don't have the right to take the time to heal from emotional and physical wounds.

Judy Tatelbaum
from *Courage to Grieve*

At this season of lights,
We remember the light
you brought into our lives:
The light of your wit and intelligence
The light of your love.
May the time not be distant when
the memory of these lights
will illumine our hearts and minds
And eradicate the darkness therein.

Stephanie Hesse,
TCF/Rockland County, NY



Love Gifts

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

Thank you to:

Steve and Mary Gibbs, in memory of their daughter, Lindsay Anne Bradley and Sheri Hilligoss, in memory of their son, Tyler Bradley

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.



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.

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.

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families and Maggie's Fund** 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.

Alive Alone provides bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. This is a self-help network and publications including a bi-monthly newsletter to promote communication and healing.

Email: alivealone@bright.net
Website: www.alivealone.org
Alive Alone, Inc.
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, Ohio 45891



Even in normal times, tradition isn't what it always is cracked up to be, and sometimes "tradition" gets in the way of sanity. Often we cling to tradition because it's easier, we don't want to offend others, we don't want to be embarrassed, or we don't know what else to do. When you are you are a grieving parent, giving in to tradition can drive you over the edge.

I found myself in the "tradition predicament" regarding putting up a tree the first Christmas holiday after my son, Chad, died. I didn't want, need, or have the energy to put up a tree. Yet other family members wanted a tree and they wanted it as it always had been, big, bright, and decorated with ornaments they had purchased or made through the years. What eventually took place, with regard to a tree, changed our holiday forever and it has been a good thing for everyone involved.

I don't know the exact circumstances of how our "new tradition" came into being that first year. But I do remember frustration, tears, and upset people. I also remember my daughter saying to me it was her Christmas too and *she needed a tree*. It was her older brother, the one she remembered getting up with every Christmas morning when she was little, that was dead and she had to have something so she could deal with the emptiness. So she came up with a plan. She and her father would go find the tree and she would take care of the decorations all by herself.

That was ten Christmases ago and this year, once again, my husband and my daughter will leave early in the morning a week before Christmas and hunt for a tree, just the two of them. When they come home, I will prepare breakfast while they get the tree in the holder and move the furniture. We will sit down together

and enjoy our meal and then my husband and I will leave for several hours. During that time we will do whatever we feel like doing. We have gone to the cemetery, gone for walks, gone to the bookstore, visited friends etc. When we return my daughter will have decorated our Christmas tree and the whole house!

Every year the tree has been different limited only to my daughter's imagination and the budget we keep her on. She didn't use our regular ornaments for a while and when she did, she told me ahead of time and said how meaningful it was for her to be the one who put Chad's ornaments back on the tree.

We have continued this "new tradition" to this day. Now, I find angel ornaments to put on the tree to honor our missing angel, and enjoy with my husband, sons, and family my daughter's traditional tribute to her brother.

This "changing tradition" has been so healing. Our family has had the brightness and beauty that a lighted tree can provide, and I have been able to save my energy for other things I wanted to do.

During the next few weeks, I hope you will make the activities of the season as stress free as you can. I hope that you will feel free to experiment with new traditions, knowing there is no "right way" to go through this season, only "your way." I hope that you will remember Christmas is only one day and that the time leading up to that "one day" will probably be more difficult than the actual day. And finally, I hope for peace in your hearts if not today then tomorrow or the tomorrow after, or the tomorrow after that. Take care ...

Sue Anderson - In memory of Chad
Tuscaloosa Area TCF/Newsletter

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, December 8, 2011 7:00 pm Candle Lighting Service

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL
Call Rosemary Shoemaker (309.441.5586) or Michelle Curtis (309.644.0486)
for information and directions.

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 meeting: January 28, 2012, at 6:30 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)260-3626 for directions or information or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm in HomeRidge Inn Suites in Bettendorf east of the Bennigan's Restaurant. Please check at the front desk for room location. Please contact Kirby White ahead of time to verify the meeting location: kombo100@msn.com or (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	This is a community resource 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 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and the third Thursday at 6:30 pm 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
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support that meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggnor Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

I see the countless Christmas trees
around the world below,
With tiny lights, like heaven's stars,
reflecting on the snow.
The sight is so spectacular; please
wipe away that tear,
For I am spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that
people hold so dear,
But the sounds of music can't com-
pare with the Christmas choir up
here.

I have no words to tell you the joy
their voices bring,
For it is beyond description to hear
the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me. I see
the pain inside your heart,
But I am not so far away. We really
aren't apart.
So be happy for me, dear ones. You
know I hold you dear,
And be glad I'm spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

I send you each a special gift from my
heavenly home above.
I send you each a memory of my un-
dying love.
After all love is the gift, more precious
than pure gold.
It was always most important in the
stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other as my
Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessing or love
He has for each of you.
So have a Merry Christmas and wipe
away that tear.
Remember, I'm spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

**Shared by Judith Siegfried in memory of
her son, Kenneth**



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 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.



Helpful Holiday Ideas

Last year was our first Christmas without our son Joe. We lost him in 48 hours on May 20, 1999, to meningococcal septicemia. He was just 15 years old. We had no desire at all to celebrate Christmas. It was especially hard since Joe was the biggest Christmas person in our family. He was the first to want to put up the tree and all the decorations. He loved having family around and spending time with cousins and relatives we never seemed to spend enough time visiting. He also had many friends that missed him as much as we do. In order to help us survive our first holiday without him, we started what we hope will be a long tradition. We put up a small tree that we always put in our front window, but this time we invited his friends to come and help us decorate the tree. This would be "Joe's tree." We asked each of them to bring an ornament, either store bought or hand made, in honor of Joe. It was so touching to see what they brought that reminded them of him and it was amazing how much comfort it was to us to have them around. We talked and laughed and played cards and shared stories of Joe. The kids asked us if we could do this every year, and we gladly agreed. This year the holiday seems even more unbearable to us than last, but I know that these wonderful young people will once again bring us comfort and love, and hope that we can survive this tragedy.



A wreath is a traditional part of the holidays in most homes. For this ceremony, place five candles around a simple wreath. The wreath may be placed on any table or fireplace mantel. As you light each candle this year, you may create a new ritual that will become a lasting tradition. We hope this memorial will help you honor your loved one.

As we light these five candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, and one for our memories, one for our love, and one for our hope. This candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you. This candle represents our courage – to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, and change our lives. This candle is in your memory—the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things you did, and the caring and joy you gave us. This candle is the light of love. As we enter this holiday season, day-by-day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us. And this candle is the light of hope. It reminds us of love and memories of you that are ours forever. May the glow of the flame be our source of hopefulness now and forever.



I put up all the kids' stockings, including Justin's. And on Christmas Eve, after everyone is asleep, I sit in the living room with only the tree lights on and write Justin a letter. After I am done writing him I put it in his stocking. This has become our time together. This year there will be 5 letters in his stocking. Maybe, in years to come on that Christmas Eve night I will open them and Justin and



I could share them all. But for now I am still writing.
From the website Helpful Holiday Ideas - <http://www.angelabode.com/>

Handling the Holidays

There are many suggestions on how to handle the holidays. Only you can decide what is right for you. Maybe you can find a few suggestions that will help bring you some peace this holiday season. That is my prayer for you.

Know that Christmas will NEVER be the same again and take control of it. Plan the day. Don't just let it happen.

Make changes in the activities and rituals that you feel are necessary. Let family and friends know this is the way it has to be - at least for now.

Shop all year long, or at least several months before the holidays, so you aren't thrown into the happy, merry crowds during that last mad rush.

Join a Bereaved Parents Support Group. Let them help you through the difficult times. They've all been there and faced the same ghosts you will face.

Light a candle in your home during the Holiday season in memory of your



child. You could also put flowers at church or a memorial in the paper in your child's memory. Hang your child's stocking, if you wish. If others protest – that's their problem. Know you have the right to remember your child in whatever way is right for you.

Reach out to others, whether it is another bereaved parent, a needy child (or family) or an elderly person in a nursing home. I've found that when you help others, you tend to help yourself. It will make you feel good and, I'm sure your child sees you and is proud of you.



There are many more ideas – too many to list. But the main idea is to embrace life in memory of your dear child. Many have found that the anticipation of the day is far worse than the day itself.

Remember you are not alone! You can survive and be happy once again!!!

**Tanya E. Carlson
 BP/USA, Hernando, FL**