



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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

March 2012 — Volume XXV, Number 3

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

When we first started producing the newsletter for the Quad City Chapter in 1988, we used a tiny Macintosh computer and a dot matrix printer. Each issue was hand delivered to a volunteer church or organization for printing and we spent another evening collating and preparing the bulk mailing. Over time there have been other Mac computers, and today I use a laptop. Now the newsletter can be written in Ohio or Minnesota or Iowa, even in other countries as we travel. We send the copy via Email to Bill Steinhauser who works his magic with a publishing program and the newsletters are printed, collated, and addressed all by the same machine.

The families in Upper Rock Island County, first invited to a TCF meeting, received letters via snail mail because we were known personally as bereaved families by a local pastor and funeral director. The mailing list for the early issues of the newsletter were generated by Jerry as he spent most of his Christmas break going through obituaries in the Dispatch archives. Today we find addresses for new families on an internet site, but there are still many bereaved families who do not know that TCF exists or that they could receive this newsletter as a resource.

Some TCF chapters have websites where information about the organization and meetings can be shared and connections with other bereaved parents made. Rosemary Shoemaker is looking for someone with the interest and skill to create a website for the Quad City Chapter. After a website was created for the preschool where I work, I was pleasantly surprised by how many families found our school via an Internet search. If you would like to work with chapter leadership to develop a website, please contact Rosemary Shoemaker at (309-441-5586) or Michelle Curtis at (309-644-0486). Your assistance in helping us better use available technology is greatly appreciated.

Rosemary will soon be meeting with some area funeral directors to share information about our TCF chapter. If you have additional ideas of how we can best get the word out to other bereaved families, please contact Rosemary at shoearb3@mchsi.com

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

**TCF 2012 National/International
Conference
Costa Mesa, California
July 20-22, 2012**

You will be able to mail in a registration form or register online on TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org.

For all the latest information and updates as they become available, and more information about the event keynote speakers, please visit the official TCF National Conference/International Gathering site at **TCF 2012 National/International Conference**.



Four years ago when our son, Paul, took his own life at age 16, the shock of it left us reeling. We didn't understand what had happened, or how we were going to survive. Even though Paul had suffered from severe depression and had been hospitalized for it, we never thought he would take his own life. He was under a doctor's care and we really thought he was getting better. The suddenness of his death was devastating. He was so alive and healthy one day, and he was gone from us forever the next.

The night before he died, Paul had told us that he was feeling depressed. I asked him if he felt he needed to go to the hospital, but he said he thought he would talk to his counselor, and we agreed he would make an appointment the next morning. When I awoke the next day, Paul was not in his room or anywhere in the house. I was terrified.

Although Paul had not seemed suicidal the night before, I nevertheless had taken the precaution of

taking the keys to my car to my room. Several months ago we had seen a television show in which two teenagers died from carbon monoxide from a car running in a garage. I wanted to be sure that wouldn't happen to Paul. Yet when I opened the door to the garage, the car was running and Paul was slumped over in it. I ran screaming into the house, and my husband and older son, who had been asleep, ran to the garage. When my son carried his brother into the house, I could tell by his color that Paul was dead.

In sudden death there is no preparation, no time for good-byes, no way your mind can comprehend the terrifying thing that has happened to you: you are in such shock and grief you hardly know where you are. You want to lash out and blame something or someone for this awful thing that has left your life in such a shambles. You have feelings of disbelief, anger, guilt; you feel you are going insane. All of these feelings are normal

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When I first started coming to Compassionate Friends I would hear people say, "It does get better. You will be happy again," but I didn't believe them. I thought there was no way on earth I could ever be happy or normal again; the sorrow and grief I was feeling would be with me always. But as time went on, and with God's help, the grief did begin to ease. There is no timetable: one day you may get up and say, "I feel better today." The next day you may hit bottom again. When I did begin to feel better, I found that I felt guilty, as though I had forgotten Paul. I know from listening to other parents that this was a normal feeling.

When Paul died, my husband had just retired. For the next six months he hardly moved from his chair. Finally, he said he had to do something or lose his mind. He accepted a job as a security guard at a bank and said it saved his life. I also returned to work and was glad I had something I had to do each day. My husband found also that doing hard, physical labor helped him work through his anger and depression. He put up a chain link fence around the entire back yard, painted the house and garage, rebuilt our back porch, and painted inside as well!

As trite as it sounds, time does help to ease the pain. But I believe, along with time and the help of God, we must have a de-

sire to want to feel better. Grief is exhausting, but there comes a day when we begin to feel resentful for feeling so sad all the time, and decide to fight back. We cannot change what has happened, but we can try to overcome our tragedy without becoming bitter and closing ourselves off from the world.

Today, four years later, I can say that I do feel better, I do have happy days, and I do have an interest in living again. I still have a sadness in my heart, but it is a gentle sadness. My thoughts of Paul are more of the good memories, the good times, and the love we had for him. We will always miss him, and there are still some days when the tears will come, but they do not last long. We can look back and say that we went through the worst life has to offer and we survived. Together, we have learned to accept Paul's death, to treasure the happy memories of our son, and to rebuild our once shattered lives.

Carolyn Sims



CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

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.

*Rev. Simon Stephens, Founder,
TCF/United Kingdom, 1969*

And when we have remembered everything,

We grow afraid of what we may forget.

A face, a voice, a smile?

A birthday? Anniversary?

No need to fear forgetting.

Because the heart remembers always.

Sascha Wagner

On holiday occasions we expect to be visited by memories. But sometimes memories are like uninvited visitors. We never know when they will arrive. They come at unexpected moments and catch us off guard.

~Bettie V. Steelman

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.

Hope

gives us vision for regaining the tenderness of memories.

Hope carries us through to survival and healing.

Hope offers us courage for acceptance and overcoming.

Hope gives us new spirit and new laughter.

Hope is among the greatest gifts to be found in time of sorrow.

But hope cannot restore on earth what is lost to death.

Hope can only go forward and make us new.

Give space to hope in your life.

*Sascha Wagner
From LARGO, Fall 2001*

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:

♥ Bill Steinhauer and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauer, in memory of Matthew Ronquillo

♥ Bill Steinhauer and Laurie Boyce-Steinhauer, in memory of Anna Webb
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.

I hear you

stumbling for words. Relax.

There are no words. I hear you remembering a funny story about my loved one, and looking embarrassed because you are laughing. Share with me. Let me laugh. It gives me something to hold onto in the middle of the night when I feel only pain.

Be your happy self, and let me be me. On days when I can laugh, I will. On the days I can speak of my loved one, I need you to

My Husband, My Friend

The times I have started to say,
Remember when ... remember the time ...
But, you would not remember,
You were not the one there.

Your grief and mine,
So different, so far apart.
Sometimes I believe you grieve for my pain,
Rather than his death.
Your guilt of not loving him,
Nor he you, and the grief that caused me
Even when he lived.

You hold me, you listen,
Even when sometimes you have heard enough,
You cry with me and for me,
You help me grieve,
My husband, my friend –
His step-parent.

**Becky Logsdon
TCF/Cheyenne, Wyoming**

share my memories. You don't have to give me answers, for I will learn to live without them. You don't have to pretend my loved one never existed, thinking I will forget if you do.

Let me speak his name. And you speak it, too. He is always there, the one I love so deeply – always part of who I am. If you take that from me, I will be less than who I am.

**Jacqueline L. Rogers, from
*I Want to Help But I Don't Know How***

At first
my very name was grief.
my eyes saw only grief,
my thoughts were grief.
And everything I touched
was turned to grief.

But now
I own the light of memories.
My eyes can see you,
and my thoughts can know you
for what you really are;
more than a young life lost,
more than a radiance
gone into night.

Today you have become a gift beyond my grief,
a treasure to my world –
though you have left
my world and me behind.

Sascha (from WINTERSUN)

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



Sign up for National Monthly e-newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its more than 625 chapters.

Published once a month (as well as occasional special editions), the e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

Each e-newsletter also includes a story specially selected from a past edition of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. For the siblings, the e-newsletter features a past question and answer column by Dr. Mary Paulson.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on e-newsletter at the top of the Home page.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, March 22 2012, 6:30 pm

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: April 25 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 whose child(ren) have died 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 Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

Journey Toward Healing

Eventually, time ceases to stand still for grieving parents. Painful moments still occur—striking, poignant, but in some ways comforting reminders of the child who died. At some point, parents realize that there can be happy and beautiful moments, and it does not seem impossible or wrong to smile or laugh. One day, bereaved parents may come to be “surprised by joy.”

When are parents ready to live again? There is no list of events or anniversaries to check off. In fact, parents are likely to begin living again before they realize they are doing it. They may catch themselves laughing. They may pick up a book to read for pleasure. They may start playing happier music. When they do make these steps forward, they are likely to feel guilty at first. And yet, they will feel as though they are being nudged in this positive direction. They may even have the sense that this nudge is from their child.

www.sidscenter.org

You do not heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes; you heal because of what you do with the time.

There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept; things we don't want to know but have to learn; and people we can't live without but have to let go.

Author Unknown



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.

Who was that Person? An 8 year retrospective . . .

Who was that person? He looks like me. He talks like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone Rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply "before," and "after."

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he was going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often: "Why did he live?"

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF he also helps himself.

Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.

Rich Edler/TCF Palos Verdes Estates, CA – author of *Into the Valley and Out Again, the story of a father's journey through grief.*

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . **IT** happened. Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically – my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died first that spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate.

Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Well's time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

Pat Loder
TCF/Executive Director