



*The Compassionate Friends*  
Quad City Area Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

## Jerry and I

and our younger son left Michigan the day after Christmas, headed south for time with family and warmer weather. On the way, we stopped at the Oklahoma City National Memorial which honors the lives of the 168 individuals killed when a bomb was set off on April 19, 1995.

As I walked through the rows of empty chairs, one for each person, my heart ached for the parents of the 19 young children who died. Some lost two children on that terrible day. Many of the adult victims also left behind grieving parents.

It has been almost 28 years since the event, but as I read stories about the surviving families, they still deeply mourn their losses. I'm sure that does not surprise any of you. Many have found a measure of healing by creating change, promoting building safety, reaching out to the family of Timothy McVeigh, and actively making the choice to forgive the heinous act.

In several places throughout the memorial, these words are engraved. "We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity."



Deniece Bell-Pittner, whose 15 month-old daughter, Danielle, died that day, shared the following thought two years ago. "The world doesn't stop. The world keeps going. You stop for a while, but then you have to start walking again. You just have to do that. You have to live."

And so we do. We grieve and we grow. We reach out to others. We choose ways to love that honor our child's life. I am reminded of these words in the Credo of the Compassionate Friends.

*We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together, as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.*

*We need not walk alone.*

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb



I thought I could describe a state, make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however turns out to be not a state, but a process. It needs not a map but a history.

CS Lewis

**Jesus wept, John 11:35**

Whatever situation you find yourself in this season, God sees you in your grief. He is deeply moved. In fact, I believe that He weeps with you today, just as he wept with his friends. And He offers HOPE. Hope that the story is not over. Hope in an outcome you could not predict. Hope that life and miracles can come from death and darkness. Hope that you are not alone in your tears.

Jen Ludwig

I will remember that moving forward doesn't happen through getting trapped in the pain of what could have been, or what should have been. It happens through some of the hardest work of grieving: remembering that the life we feel we "should" have lived with them here is not the only life worth living. So, I can step into another day, another year, creating the space to hold the memories of the past while still allowing a meaningful life to grow in the present.

Whatsyourgrief

I challenge us all to refuse to allow the moment of their death to steal away the memories and celebration of their lives.

Allie Sims Franklin,  
Austin's sister

There are three needs of the griever:  
To find the words for the loss,  
To say the words aloud, and  
To know that the words have been heard.

Victoria Alexander

## Reflections of a Stepparent

I watched my mate go through pure hell. And I felt helpless, useless and sometimes... invisible.

Other times I stood strong while bearing the brunt of my love's anger that lashed out at the world, as an angry God would open the heavens with roaring thunder and lightning.

I was accused of not understanding, and surely, I could not.

I felt heavy pain for my stepchild, the one I took as my own. I grieved for the good times we had together, the tugs at my heart that always pierced through any resentments.

The guilt weighed heavily on my shoulders for the times we didn't communicate, and I wondered if I could have made it better.

At the funeral home, I felt even a pang of – Yes – jealousy toward the natural parent of my beloved stepchild, knowing that he and my mate shared a private room from the past that I could never-ever-enter.

Life must go on – this day-to-day existence, but things are different now.

I offer my support as I see eyes staring off into a distant land. I hold a hand and kiss away the tear drops.

With added sorrow, I wonder if my love will return to me or stay in that far-off land forever. Deep in my heart I know that this tragedy will bring us closer together or tear us completely apart.

**Peggi Hull**  
**TCF, Houston Bay Area, TX**

## The New Year

Time is both a friend and an enemy after our child dies. Time is our friend when we realize that each passing day brings us closer to the time of reunion with our child. Time is our enemy when the moments become as days and the days seem like years as we try to adjust to our child's death.

We may see the New Year as a hopeless wasteland with no reprieve from our grief and emptiness. For some of us, the official "New Year" has lost its significance because we now measure the years from the date that our child died. Whatever the case for each of us, hopefully we will find a way to make a peace of sorts with time. And trust that as the years pass, we will develop ways to cope with the death of our child, which will enhance the quality of the life we have left.

**TCF, Cape Fear, NC – January**  
**1993**

**TCF's Facebook Page** is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

**Closed Facebook Groups:** The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

## The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

**email:**

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Website:** www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). It is also available to read online without charge.



**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 Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

## About The Compassionate Friends

**The Compassionate Friends** is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. 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 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

**TCF National Office**

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Website:

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Mission Statement**

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is that when a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

**Vision Statement**

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

## When my daughter Madison died,

I did not think I would ever be able to survive the intense, excruciating pain that came hand-in-hand with her death. It wrecked me down to my core, and it took me months before I thought I would even breathe normally again. The pain felt like a black cloak hanging on me, one I couldn't take off no matter how hard I tried. And I'll be honest, for a while I quit trying. Instead, I sat back and decided the black cloak was there to stay, and I just had to wear it. As I began to look at what I was left with, I searched for just one thing I could feel grateful for. I had another daughter, so it seems like that would have been an easy answer. But when you are hurting so intensely, the obvious isn't so obvious and what might be possible feels impossible. Happiness seems impossible

But there she was, a bouncing, energetic, joyful three-year-old. My Makenzie. I knew she deserved more. She deserved a joyful mother. I didn't realize it at first, but recognizing this was the first small step toward climbing out of my hellacious pain – the first hint that I would eventually remove the black cloak.

At first my smiles were forced, my expressions of happiness were fake – all disguises of my horrific pain. Then one day, they weren't. They were how I authentically felt. I didn't notice it immediately when it happened. I just looked back one day and saw that in all the pain, happiness had found its way through.

I chose to model for Makenzie a parent who was happy and joy-filled, rather than one who was continually gripped in sadness, hiding in the sheets of her bed. I chose to get up, to laugh with her, to take and pick her up from school. It wasn't easy, but I was determined. I saw a counselor and I took medicine. I did everything I could to try to be what she deserved.

**Dawn Barton**

## Giving of Myself

The other day I sat alone and realized my heart was not as heavy. Oh, there are still times when I miss my child desperately—but I seem to rebound sooner now.

Then the phone rang, and another mother called to lean on me—she must have known that I was ready.

I listened, she shared, and oh! How I felt for her. When we said good-bye, I sat again—but not as alone this time.

New strength and pride came in the knowing I had lent a helping hand. My child's death has taught me so much new—a lot I wished I'd never known.

But since I do now know what others face, perhaps the bumpy road I've traveled can be made a little smoother for another.

**TCF Portland OR**



## We All Think About It

How old is your child? Do you miss him or her for the child they were or the child they would now be? Isn't it confusing when you see a child three years-old? He reminds you of your little Timmy, same color hair, same build, same mischievous grin. You think of your son, and you miss his sweet little arms around your neck. Then you realize Timmy wouldn't look or act like this anymore; he wouldn't be three; Timmy would be eight now. Not climbing on your lap, but climbing trees. Not a toddler, but a little man. You wonder how he would look, what his voice would sound like, who his friends would be. Would he be a Cub Scout or playing soccer? Then your mind swoops back to reality, the little boy that reminded you of Timmy is gone. You're glad you noticed him; it feels good to think of Timmy. But there's confusion in your thoughts about him also. The pain mixed with the warmth of his memory is confusing enough. But that reoccurring wondering about what your child would have been like today is even more confusing. And you're wondering if you should even think about it...he's not eight...and he's not three. He's in heaven and he's not here. But he's in your memory and he's in your heart and it's ok to remember him as he was...at three. It's ok to think of him as he would be...at eight. It's ok to think over this confusing feeling of the loss of both the Timmys you miss. The toddler at three, and the boy at eight. It's ok to think about it, we all think about it.

**Connie Miles**  
TCF, St. Louis

**The first time I laughed.** I paused and thought to myself, how can I be laughing? My son is gone and I'm laughing. I felt guilty. But then I realized my laughing didn't mean I have forgotten he was gone. It didn't make the pain in my heart hurt any less. It didn't make me not miss him any less. What it did mean is that I was still alive and that I could miss him, be heartbroken and in pain, but still experience joy. Brian had a mother who was full of life. Who was ditzzy, funny and who didn't take life or herself too seriously. What kind of mother would I be if he was looking down from heaven watching me deteriorate? Brian hated when he saw me upset. I know he would not want me to live the remainder of my life in sorrow, every single day. I had to accept joy and happiness again, just like I had to accept the sadness and pain. I had to accept that while I was sad and crying that at the same time it was okay for me to laugh and enjoy life. Not an easy task to do hand in hand.

It literally is like being on a roller coaster, which is funny because I hate roller coasters. Brian, for years, tried to get me on one, but that's what this journey is like. One minute I can be laughing having a good time, and a couple hours later be on the couch crying because I miss my son so much. It took time to accept and truly understand that for me, in my life now, that sadness and happiness go hand in hand with each other and that's okay. It was okay for me to cry, but it was also okay for me to laugh. I wasn't betraying my son or his memory by still enjoying life. Because of the relationship I have with my son, the opposite would be true. I would be dishonoring him, our relationship, the bond and love we have, if I chose to crawl into a ball, hide in a dark room, and let what is the remainder of my life pass me by.

Our love is too deep for me to allow that to happen. The first day I laughed after Brian's passing was the day I realized there was HOPE.

**Lisa Heath**

## Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<b>TCF's Grief Related Resources</b>	<p>There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to <a href="https://www.opentohope.com/tv/">https://www.opentohope.com/tv/</a>.</p>
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <b>TCF e-Newsletter</b> is also available from the National Office to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
<b>Grief Materials</b>	<p>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 website at <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
<b>Amazon.com</b>	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of the Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<b>Alive Alone</b>	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</p>
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="https://bereavedparentsusa.org">https://bereavedparentsusa.org</a>.</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai at <a href="mailto:climb@climb-support.org">climb@climb-support.org</a>. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting**  
**January 26, 2023, at 6:30 P.M. at**  
**Bethany for Children & Families**  
**1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265**  
*The next monthly meeting of the chapter is*  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.**

<b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b>	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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.
<b>Rick's House of Hope</b>	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org.
<b>SHARE</b>	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.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.
<b>Phone Support</b>	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, Kay, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.



## HOW LONG?

How long does it take to put yourself back together? That's one of the questions in the early days of bereavement. There's no answer that's always right. It's not  $64 + 36 = 100$ . It all depends. Maybe the sun is shining. Maybe a flower blooms. Maybe something is funny and you laugh. Maybe the storm ends with a rainbow. But there are also days when none of those cheering things happen.

Do you really have to be 100% every day? Be reasonable with yourself. You knew your child would stumble now and then when he learned to walk. Figure that you have to do the same as you try to learn to walk without him.

Take just one step at a time. It will help you to walk through one hour at a time, and one day at a time.

As the days go by, perhaps into the thousands, you'll realize you have some energy. Your action have some semblance of shape. Not the way it used to be; but better than it has been. Some things seem to get done; surprising, and pleasant.

Remember, there will be down days. Nothing goes right; nothing gets finished. If you do demand of yourself some daily success, a small list of mindless jobs for those days might be useful. Mine includes pulling weeds (yard looks a lot better this summer!), washing floors or windows, polishing silver or copper pans. You probably have some good ideas to add.

The point is to be reasonable. Set no goal. One weed pulled, one pot polished—that's an accomplishment.

You don't need to meet someone else's standard.

**Joan Schmidt**  
TCF, Central Jersey

## Faces of Grief

For bereaved parents, a new year brings feelings of "unfinished business." For most of us, time seemed temporarily to stop the moment

we learned our child had died.



The very order of our existence had been transposed – our child preceded us in death.

The dawning of a new year feels unnatural, for a part of us is riveted to the last days of our child's life, in a year not of the current numerical value. Well-wishers who wish us health and happiness only emphasize our sense of loss and distancing. The calendar years will continue their numerical ascent and a new number propels us into a new chapter of our lives.

We cannot stop time, but we can use it. For time will allow us to remember the details of our child's life, to grieve our loss, and to adjust to our altered lives.

**Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia, MI**

## Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a

way to remember a beloved child and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Thanks to:

Sandra and Ron Sacco, in memory of their son,  
**Anthony James Sacco.**

Pam and Jeff Schoults, in memory of **Jacob Thomas Schoults.**



**Donations** 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 donation or love gift, please send it or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806.** Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**

### Contact the Editors

**If** you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it...

**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, send his/her/their name and address.

**If** you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email...

**Please contact:**

**Jerry and Carol Webb**

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or  
email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



## What Happens After Christmas?

"I spent a lot of energy anticipating and dreading the holidays," Chris told me over the phone one evening last week. "I pushed myself to be with people, even though I didn't want to be. I even shopped for presents and decorated the house as I had always done before Jim died. I guess it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be – though I have to tell you it wasn't great. But now I'm wondering, what happens after Christmas? What happens to me now that there aren't a lot of people visiting me, there are fewer distractions and there is much less running around? What happens now that I've worn myself out physically and emotionally trying to cope with the pain of my first Christmas without Jim? How can I get through these next few months?"

Chris's questions are very familiar to those going through "separation pain" due to the death of a loved one. There are many "Chrises" who have kept themselves overly busy, running from store-to-store or house-to-house, stuffing down old memories, traditions and expectations. They find that once the holidays are over, they are tired, nervous, distraught and fearful of the long winter months ahead of them.

We certainly can't change the nature of the winter that is upon us. No matter what we do, there will be days with fewer hours of sunlight. It will be cold, and snow and ice may well keep us inside more than we would like. Though none of that can be changed, what we can have complete control over is "slowing down" in mind

and in body and giving ourselves some time to heal from the pain of loss.

Winter is, in itself, a "slow" time. Life seems to come to a halt for a while; trees are bare and new life is dormant under snow-covered earth. There is a quiet that hangs on the air. It can be in the quietness, in this slow-paced expectancy of a spring that will eventually come, that we can begin to open ourselves to the gently prodding of beginning a new life. But in order to do that, we must indeed "slow down."

We can truly do something with these days after Christmas. They can be quiet times in which we can work at our healing and growth. The healing will never be perfect, and there will always be scars, because love has the capacity to leave scars. But the scars can produce a growth beyond just survival.

The growing may be difficult. Indeed, the grieving was and is. But as nature survives the winter and moves into freshness of a new spring, we, too, can use this time before us to begin to nurture ourselves, listen to inner yearnings, and realize that this time can be put to growth.

What happens after Christmas? We take the time to pay attention to ourselves and to the possibility of using the cold and dreary months, as nature does, to begin to heal and grow. Spring always follows winter no matter how harsh that winter has been. So, too, can strength follow suffering, if we try to work through the suffering to new life.

**Maureen O'Brien, Hamden, Connecticut**  
**Bereavement – A Magazine for Hope and Healing –**  
**January/February 1996**



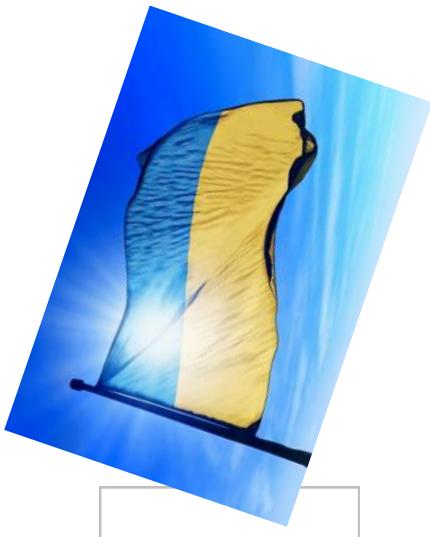
**The Compassionate Friends**  
*Quad City Area Chapter*  
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**To** those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. 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.***