



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

February 2010 Newsletter

Volume II; Issue VII

WNY Chapter #2303, Batavia, NY 14020

THE MISSION

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

We are pleased, yet saddened, to have you join us at our meeting of The Compassionate Friends. We hope sharing your stories of the aspects of your journey through grief will enable you and your families to find a "new normal" in your life. We wish that you would eventually reach a state of peace where the wonderful memories you have of your children are more in the forefront of your heart and mind than the pain of your loss.

Upcoming Meetings

February 18, 2010 – exactly at 7:00 PM

March 18, 2010

New Meeting Place:

Holland Land Office

133 Main St., Batavia, NY 14020

National: The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

PO Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Toll Free 877-969-0010 • Fax 630-990-0246

www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends of WNY

447 Ellicott St., Batavia, NY 14020

Co-Founder, Parent Contact, Meeting Facilitator:

Pat Wheeler • (Home) 585-219-4570

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Wwpatuw@aol.com

Co-Founder, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor:

Margi DuBois • 3233 Pratt Rd., #7312, Batavia, NY

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Margi_d@yahoo.com

Our Regional Contact, Al Visconti

Email: altcfny@gmail.com

Visit our local web site: www.tcfowny.org

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again."

—Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends

To include your child or children on our web site, bring a photo along with a short story about them to a meeting. Pat will forward the information to our Webmaster.

Our Birthday Table ~ Parents/Grandparents: you may bring photos and other mementos to the meeting during your child's birthday month. You may also bring a birthday cake or your child's special treat to share with those attending.

Your Vote for The Compassionate Friends in Chase Community Giving Round 2 Could bring TCF \$100,000/\$1 million.

When The Compassionate Friends finished as a top 100 vote-getter in Round 1 of the Chase Community Giving program, a \$25,000 grant was awarded and will be received shortly by TCF!

Now the stakes are even higher in the second round as the charity that receives the most votes will be rewarded with a \$1 million grant. The five runners-up will each receive a \$100,000 award. Your vote and that of other TCF members and supporters will decide if The Compassionate Friends receives one of these six major grants, which can be used to help our organization improve its outreach and public awareness, as well as other areas that are of tremendous importance.

Go to our National Web site and look for this box on the front page. Click on it and follow the directions. Let's all help TCF become another big winner!!




 **May you find
peace and comfort in
your lives.**

Our Children ~ Loved and Remembered

Let us remember our children
who have left us too soon

♥ February Birthdays

- ♥ Matthew J., young adult son of Nancy & Jason Kota
February 1
- ♥ Michael Metcalfe, adult son of Mary Jane Metcalfe
February 4
- ♥ Josephine Helen, infant daughter of Vicki Becker
February 5

♥ February Remembrance Days

- ♥ Josephine Helen, infant daughter of Vicki Becker
February 5
- ♥ Paul, adult son of Richard and the late Kathryn Seymour
February 17
- ♥ Christopher, young son of Laurie & Eric Claus
February 18
- ♥ Victoria, young daughter of Laurie & Eric Claus
February 18
- ♥ Michael E. Pittaro, infant son of Margi DuBois
February 23

Please contact Margi DuBois if any of your child(ren)'s information is incorrect or missing. Phone 343-2590, email her at margi_d@yahoo.com or mail her at 3233 Pratt Rd., #7312, Batavia, NY 14020

We thank the following for their Love Gifts and Donations

- ♥ Love Gift from Bev Thomas in loving memory of her adult son, Jason M.
- ♥ Anonymous Love Gift in loving memory of Wyatt Zuber, adult son of Pat Wheeler
- ♥ Love Gift from Deborah Blake, Saco, ME in loving memory of Michael E. Pittaro, infant son of Margi DuBois
- ♥ Love Gift from Margi DuBois in loving memory of her infant son Michael E. Pittaro
- ♥ Gift Card from Target in memory of all our children
- ♥ Love Gift from The Bank of Castile in memory of all our children



To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over.

Through the months (and years), I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know – because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends – that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.

Karen Schendel, TCF, Houston, Texas

♥ = the love we will always have for our children who are no longer with us.

☽ = the peace we hope you will eventually find in your hearts.

ANOTHER YEAR

This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.

Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there.

With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain. We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death.

We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

*Alice Weening
TCF, Cincinnati, Ohio*

Valentine Message

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX*

Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

*... by Eva Lager, TCF/Western
Australia (Eve's daughter Milya
Claudia Lager died by suicide on
4 March 1990.)*

Get Well Soon Poem

By Sibling Alyssa Flora

I know our loss is very great
but I'm sure many people can
relate

I know it's hard to say good-bye
don't hold back your tears! It's ok
to cry

Just hold my hand and we will
stand up high
We will gather strength from one
another

hugging and holding each other
we will find each other and
together we will be
once again, a family

*By Alyssa Flora, age 13
In memory of her brother Bryson, age 9*

HOPE

My heart has been broken.
My soul has been crushed.
My mind has gone to depths I never knew existed.
Places where only God,
In his most infinite Love, could understand.
And even He could not console me at times.
But I am here on earth,
For whatever reason I still do not know;
And I have hope that, in time,
God will show me the way
And give rhyme to my reason.
So I wait in hope for a future
And a new beginning.

By Kathleen Leeper ~ TCF, Valley Forge PA

Last Moments

Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all decades...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.
Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment—
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter—
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.
We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.

By Diane Fields TCF, Westmoreland, PA

♥♥♥ Precious Valentine Memories ♥♥♥

The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by the uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters. I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years.

February is a middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the Great North, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets, and it's warmer in the closet (although not by much!) So, armed with a dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in...not really about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

But, that first box sent me spinning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift bought for my sister last year and then so carefully had hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip something "important"). I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive.

I found a half a chocolate-covered cherry and part of a deck of cards. It was quite a treasure box, filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me.

I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "someday" would probably not arrive in my lifetime. The too short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows.

When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down, now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet and did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained, piece of construction paper, I felt a connection with other valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT.. it had become lost in the pain.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of the scrapbooks. I found my own laughter and that of my friend, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts. Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet...as if when I opened the door, the give of this Valentine would still be waiting!

Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting - waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have.

The snow had drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace is faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and though the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones die, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and the memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE - and what a sweet treat that will be!

- by Darcie Sims

lovingly lifted from Sunflower Chapter, Wichita, KS Feb Newsletter

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Your voluntary tax-deductible donation is our only source of funds and is used within our Community for outreach and support of bereaved families. All gifts are greatly appreciated. They may be given at the monthly meeting or mailed to Treasurer Margi DuBois, 3233 Pratt Rd., #7312, Batavia, NY 14020.

**TCF "Online Support Community"
Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing**

The Compassionate Friends national web site 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 rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "Men Only Sharing Session," "No Surviving and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

**We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes.
But our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope
becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many
different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent
many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young and we are old. Some of
Us are far along in our grief but others still feel a grief so fresh and
so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found
our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate
an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of
The Compassionate Friends. It is pain we will share, just as we share with each other
our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking
and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building a future together.**

**We reach out to each other in love
To 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. We Are the Compassionate Friends