



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

March 2010 Newsletter  
WNY Chapter, 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 for you 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.

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.



*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



## 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.



Please remember that we have a scrapbook started and would like all who wish to add their child to do so. We recommend placing pictures and/or short stories or headlines on the pages. You can pick up your own scrapbooking paper and design your page(s).



we

**Annual TCF National Conference  
Arlington, VA  
July 2-4**

For more information about registration, check the National web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

## Our Compassionate Friends Library

We are adding to our library of informative, comforting books available for checking out. If you've found a book that you found helpful and would like to donate it, we would appreciate it. We have bookplates to put on the first page indicating the donor and whom it is in memory of. They *do not* have to be new books. We also suggest writing a book review for the newsletter if you have found a particular book helpful.

<p>⊗ Upcoming Meetings ⊗          March 18, 2010          April 15, 2010          May 20, 2010          Meetings held at The Holland Land Office Museum          131 W Main St, Batavia, NY from 7-8:30pm</p>
<p>The Compassionate Friends, Inc.          PO Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696          Toll Free 877-969-0010 • Fax 630-990-0246  <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a></p>
<p>The Compassionate Friends of WNY          447 Ellicott St., Batavia, NY 14020          Founder, Parent Contact, Meeting Facilitator &amp;          Newsletter Editor          Pat Wheeler • 585-219-4570 or  <a href="mailto:wwpatsuw@aol.com">wwpatsuw@aol.com</a>          Treasurer :Reed Vogel 585-535-7783          Secretary: Genevieve Mahoney          Hospitality: Mae &amp; Larry Wheeler          Our Regional Contact: Al Visconti          Email: <a href="mailto:altcfny@gmail.com">altcfny@gmail.com</a>          Visit our local web site: <a href="http://www.tcfowny.org">www.tcfowny.org</a></p>



**There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Your voluntary tax-deductible donation is our only source of fund. All proceed given to our chapter are used within our Community for outreach and support of bereaved families. All gifts, monetary as well as postage, printing or other office supplies are greatly appreciated.**

*We thank the following for their  
Love Gifts and Donations*

♥ ♥ **Love Gift from Bev Thomas in memory of her son Jason.**

♥ **Office supplies from Pat Wheeler in memory of her son Wyatt**



**Our Children ~ Loved and Remembered**

Let us remember the children who have  
left us too soon.

**March Birthdays**

Jason Thomas Son of Bev & Roland Thomas

Kaisie Jean Dana Daughter of Linda & Charlie Dana

**April Birthdays**

Jeremy Brunner, son of Mel & Guy Brunner

**April Remembrance Dates**

Kaisie Jean Dana, Daughter of Charlie & Linda Dana

Torry Yahn, Daughter of Joann & Don Yahn

Aubry Kubik, Daughter of Jennifer Kubik



**Wisdom to live by  
Written by Linda Dana in memory  
of daughter Kasie Jean Dana**

Laugh your heart out,  
Dance in the rain,  
Cherish the moment,  
Ignore the pain.  
Live, Laugh & Love,  
Forgive & Forget,  
Life is too short  
To live with regrets.

**Common Bond**

We have a common bond  
Silver lining that binds each heart  
It unites us in the end and teaches a brand new start

We've each experienced heartbreak  
Like a rushing river's flow  
We've felt such tears of sorrow  
And we become afraid to just let go

Overwhelmed by such grief  
That reveals great aches in our soul  
Wondering why love hurts so much  
As we lose our sense of whole

Our sunny days become cloudy  
Our nights bring on a chill  
We pray for a bright tomorrow  
As we try to just get over that hill

We try to stay busy  
Busy enough to forget our pain  
And put that smile upon our face  
And wonder if we're insane

We understand each other  
Without ever saying a word  
And with one small touch  
We know that we were heard

I'm grateful to the Lord  
That in His love we can depend  
And I pray for each of you daily  
That your hearts will truly mend

Although our lives have changed  
And the pain will somewhat subside  
I'm truly grateful for this group  
With hugs and support to be your guide

This thread that binds our hearts  
A bond that will not fray  
I thank you all for sharing  
In your special way

My words so small I give as a gift  
To this group so proud and strong  
But remember when all is said and done  
God bless you all life long.

Michele

***"It has been said that time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it's never gone."***

- Rose Kennedy



## Self Help

For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends Group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process. Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, and time with friends, meditation or intense spiritual conviction. Each day we should take some time to center ourselves, to find a place of peace. If you haven't already done so, start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even 'terrible. Days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF, Katy, Tx  
IN Memory of my son, Todd M Mennen  
July 24, 2005

### Reflections on Grief by Pat Kennedy - TCF Rochester

I'd like to think I could go back to once upon a time when grief was a word and not a sentence. But I know better. This once upon a time never existed except within the tightly controlled confines of my own ignorance. Grief hits. It hits hard. It isn't until it hits hard that we begin to understand what suffering is, the kind that can't be remedied. Only endured.

I'd like to think that I learned something some thirty-five years ago when our first born son died after only a few days of life. I still remember the anger. If I go back to certain places, I can still relive the bitterness I felt. I don't know how many years it took before I realized I just had to surrender to the inevitable, to let go, to let him be at peace so I could find some sense. I had a real grudge against God. I thought I'd come to a point where I could forgive him for what he'd done. What I didn't realize until years later was that I'd come to a point

where I could forgive myself for my own sense of failure.

I'd like to think that it wouldn't happen again. But it did. Not quite two years ago our daughter, a wife and a mother of four, settled onto the sofa one Sunday morning for a nap before the kids woke. She suffered a severe stroke. When her daughter couldn't wake her up, she was rushed to the hospital. Within thirteen hours, all we or anyone else could do was to disconnect her from life support and be with her as she died.

I don't know if there is a place to turn for relief when all you can manage is a shocked stare as you wander aimlessly within yourself across a field of sorrows where children used to play. I still draw breath. Life is all we know. I see life in the eyes of others. And in those eyes I can see the hurt I feel when they look off into some distance only they can see and remember why we meet here. I have outlived a son and a daughter. I am obliged to live out my life as they have lived out theirs, to go on. And to go on means to accept the moments of anguish that loss will not let go of..

But along the way, I learned something. I learned to take a hard look at the pain. The anguish. The sorrow. Somewhere along the way, I decided to let grief do what it had to do. I reasoned that the worst it could do would be to kill me. But grief carries a much sharper sword. It aims for the will to go on. It lays open wounds no one can see, and through them bleed the energy needed to give life meaning. Yet, when grief hits hard, at least I am aware now that I am climbing into the ring with death's twin. It isn't that it knows enough of me to, batter me to the mat - it knows enough of every element of human nature to scorn the will of anyone who has dared to love another in this life and faces an excruciating goodbye.

And from the perspective of this one very little life, making its way through a world teeming with life, I begin to sense that grief, like its twin, is an illusion, a very powerful illusion. I hope one day to see those who have touched my days and given them meaning beyond my ability to put into words. Grief lands a punch and swears, "You never will. I lost a best friend. 'Grief lands another, what good is friendship if only to lose it? I Our son died as an infant. I still visit his grave, and I still remember. Our daughter was thirty-five years old. A lot more to remember. And it seems everywhere I look I see some tangible memory of her intrinsic sweetness. Yet grief goes for my temples and wants to thrust it all into the misery of one day, one event, one overwhelming wave of sorrow, one goodbye.

Someone once said that the only way virtue ever

appears on the face, of this earth is in a mortal's attempt to stand up for what is inherently noble. I sense truth in this. It takes courage for us to believe beyond the pain. It takes courage to remember such deep friendship, a warmly sincere smile, a quick and witty sense of humor, a temper it would be wise to consider, a thoughtfulness rich and deep and sweet in words yet reaching beyond words towards the unspeakable mystery of love in so many countless casual acts of caring. Grief wants to swallow this treasure whole and leave nothing but the misery of an unfillable emptiness. We heal, but we heal slowly. We heal, but we bear the scars where a part of us was taken against our wills.

We feel pain, because we have loved. We remember, because we have loved. We wonder beyond our own unbelief if we may one day see again these kindred spirits who shared our very hearts. And we wonder, because we have loved.

I can only imagine the unutterable sorrow others have endured through these losses. When our daughter died, I felt some of the most intense pain I have ever experienced, shards of raw emotion so pitiless that death would have been a relief.

Yet, even in the midst of this, as I watched my own life fill with such confusion and senselessness that I didn't know if I could put one foot in front of the other, I sensed this place within me that the grief could not enter. I have no way to explain this other than to say that this is the place where I have believed, since that day, where love born, then borne away, dwells, unthreatened, untarnished, and unending. A place where I sense more now, through remembering my daughter's life, the presence of a son who lived only a few days. These lives live on because we live on.

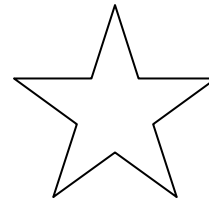
So, while grief does what it has to do, I want to make the effort to remember why it arrived in the first place. If there had not been joy, if there had not been hard times to bear together, there would be little pain. Many times I have to force myself to step back and remember - remember the treasures these lives have been in our own. So many times, we learn the most from our most difficult decisions, when all is said and done, we still have the ability to choose, and it can be so tough to choose to focus on the treasure rather than the tragedy. But I've known my daughter for a long time. And this is what makes me wonder about the illusion. I have wished her such peace in her heart; beyond anything I could ever be able to give her. And she has wished such peace for me, I mean moments as ordinary as a phone call, where we could just wish the world to go away so nothing but the hope we held for

each other existed. Well, this is what now sustains me, that the world has gone away for her, that all that exists now for her is that hope fulfilled and I cannot believe that she wishes anything but the same for me. The grief can still tear me up" it still has to be endured. But I begin to understand, even through the darkest hours, that the anguish makes little difference if we truly believed in each other.

So I hope. And I light a candle in memory of her life. She loved candles.

We speak the simple truths of life plainly enough, but what is most dear to us so often remains hidden behind the cloistered walls of our deepest and most cherished beliefs - beneath our smiles, our small talk, sometimes even our tears.

We light candles to light the way between our deepest hopes and prayers, and these loves of our lives we remember - to show what words cannot say, to speak with light what can only be spoken in silence.



***Enclosed is a registration form and questionnaire. Please fill it out and send it to Pat Wheeler at  
447 Ellicott St  
Batavia, NY 14020 or email me at  
wwpatsuww@aol.com***

***Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass.  
It's about learning to dance in the rain.***

