



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



NEWSLETTER

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 to help others be supportive.

July -August 2015



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Vol. 20 Issue 4

YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the library of St. Mary's Parish Center, Route 16, Washington St., Holliston. The parish center is located between the church and the rectory. Our next two meetings will be on:

July 21st August 18th

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. ***Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last Monday or earlier if you plan to attend.***

Directions....On Route 16 (Main St.) going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at Tedeschi's Market on the left, take a left at the lights onto Winter St. The parish center is the last building before the church.
Going south on Route 16 (East Main St.) after Sacred Heart Church on the left, bear right on Main St., continue past Dunkin' Donuts on the right, proceed to the next set of lights and take a right onto Winter St. There is parking on both sides of the street. Look for Compassionate Friends signs to meeting room. Our next two meetings will be on:

July 28th August 25th

WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings for those who wish to understand. Our objective is to help members of the community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers, and professionals to be supportive.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

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. ©2015

Weather Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:

**Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

* Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239
 * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

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Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

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Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/620-0613
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

The Compassionate Friends
 Metrowest Chapter
 26 Simmons Dr.
 Milford, MA 01757-1265

Regional Coordinator

Tom Morse
 66 Atwood Avenue
 Middleboro, MA 02346
 Phone (508) 572-3038
 tjmorse521@gmail.com

The Compassionate Friends has a national office that supports and coordinates chapter activities. The national office can be reached as follows:

The Compassionate Friends
 P.O. Box 3696
 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
 Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010
 Fax (630) 990-0246
 Web Page:
 www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Web Page
 www.tcfmetrowest.com

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

There are no dues or fees to belong to *The Compassionate Friends*. Just as our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, your voluntary, tax-deductible donations enable us to send information to newly bereaved parents, purchase pamphlets and books, contribute to the national chapter and meet other chapter expenses.

THANK YOU to the friends who help keep our chapter going with their contributions.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Boudreau in loving memory of their son **Nicholas L. Boudreau** on his birthday June 19th

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Chick in loving memory of their daughter **Betsy Chick-Grant** on her anniversary May 5th

Sheila Casey in loving memory of her son **James David Simonis**.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Draper in loving memory of their daughter **Shelly A. Draper**.

Mr. Shawn Garvey in loving memory of his son **John W. Garvey**.

Ms. Tracy Dullea-Juliano in loving memory of her son **Christopher Marc Dullea** on his anniversary June 9th.

Robert Hudson in loving memory of his sister **Elaine Hudson-McAuliffe**.

Mr. & Mrs. Alan Kennedy in loving memory of their daughter **Kaitlyn E. Kennedy** on her birthday July 24th. "Happy Birthday Kate, we can't believe you would be 28! We love you always. Love Mom & Dad."

Mr. & Mrs Harold Murphy in loving memory of their son **Michael Patrick Murphy** on his anniversary May 31st.

Mrs. Beverly A. Marks in loving memory of her son **Shawn P. Marks**. Loved and missed very much on your birthday July 12th.





Our Children Remembered

As a regular feature, the newsletter acknowledges anniversaries of the deaths of our children/siblings and their birthdays. This issue covers the months, July and August. If information about your loved one is missing, incorrect or our chapter files are in error, please send the correct data, including your name, address, and telephone number, the name of your loved one and the birthday and date and cause of death to the newsletter editor, Ed Motuzas, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265.

Anniversaries

July

- CHARLES J. GHERA III
- WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
- KELLY ANNE DAVIS
- SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
- CHAD M. G. DIGREGORIO
- RYAN J. McCUSKER
- DIXON BERGMAN

August

- WILLIAM O. COHEN
- WILLIAM H. BARDOL Jr.
- ANTHONY V. BOTTCHER

Birthdays

July

- ROY RANDALL
- JUSTIN BAILEY
- SHAWN P. MARKS
- CHRISTOPHER SHEA
- CHRISTOPHER STEVENS
- ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr
- KAITLYN KENNEDY
- DEVIN J. EHRMANNTRAUT

August

- ERICA BLEAKNEY
- TIMOTHY JOHN O'NEIL
- CHARLES J. GHERA III
- MATTHEW BARRON
- MATHEAU VIRCA
- JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
- LILIANA PROVOST
- DAVID A. SCHNEGG
- KEVIN HOLLAND
- SEAN RYAN HASWELL
- CLIFFORD CROWE
- GREG BRUNO
- DAVID A. JONES
- KELLY ANNE DAVIS



Save a tree

To all members that receive this newsletter via snail mail. If you would like to get your newsletter a week earlier thru e-mail please send your e-mail address to: headly@comcast.net. This would save a tree and reduce postal cost.





THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

"Siblings Walking Together." We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

A SIBLING SPEAKS OUT

What happens to the children when a brother or sister dies? In some ways it is a very different experience from that which parents go through, while in others it is very much the same. Part of the reason for the difference is that the child who has died has a unique relationship with each family member. Part of the reason for the similarity is that all have suffered a loss.

One of the strongest desires expressed by siblings is that they are much more likely to want to return to a normal routine. They want to return to school fairly quickly and to go out with their friends. They want their parents to stop crying, not because they don't care but because they do care and want to see the hurt stop. Just because a child wants to go to a movie doesn't mean he isn't grieving. I think that children are much less exposed to socially "appropriate" behavior after someone has died and may do things that do not fit into an "appropriate" role.

Another strong feeling I see is that of guilt. As much as parents know about their children, there are some things they will never know. A child's private thoughts or an exchange between children may never come to the parents' attention. The source of a child's guilt is frequently the result of an argument, a hastily shouted "drop dead," or a similar fleeting thought. These incidents come back to haunt children as though one such incident had something to do with the death.

There are a few more concerns that may develop. One is how to take over for the dead child, for example, the household chores that were always done by him or her, but that now have to be done by someone else. Related to this concern is a situation in which a child always shared a particular activity simply because the sibling did it too.

Many children realize this fear to be groundless but find themselves wondering if they will survive. Consequently, birthdays are often occasions with unexpressed conflicts.

Children also share some of their parents' feelings: the loneliness, the looking for comfort, the feeling that no one else really knows what they're going through. They also share the unanswerable questions: "If I could have" . . . and "What if?" . . .

A child's life is changed forever when a brother or sister dies. If I could advise parents, it would be to say, "children do not grieve the same way as parents do because of different relationships. Keeping these differences in perspective will help you understand why children sometimes do the things they do. It helps to consider a child's point of view when you are hurting so much. During such an emotionally draining time as grieving don't leave anything to chance; don't assume anything. Making sure you and your children are aware of each other's feelings will mean less confusion, less tension, more sharing, and more growing together as a family."

***Julie Peterson
TCF, Pawtucket, RI***

NOT THE SAME

He was a very nice man, like so many others, and yet he was so different. His quick smile and gentle ways were like those of others and yet, he was so uncommon.

He was kind and loving with unshakeable faith like others, and yet he was so unique.

He was a dutiful soldier who gave his life like many others, and yet he was so special. The same as others? No. Not to those who knew and loved him.

He was himself, an individual, and he was my brother.

***Pamela Miller Farrell
TCF, Evansville, IL***



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



How I Managed My Grief and Loss of My Child to Live a Life of Hope and Joy

How did I manage my loss so well, how did I make sense from such brokenness?

Truth be told, once a grieving mother, always a grieving mother. And forever a permanent sister of The Wailing Tent. Grieving is a horrible process that imprisons us. It's like someone stole the Technicolor from the movie of our life. But I believe that if I can find my way through the darkness of grief, anyone can.

So I'm happy to answer the inquiries, readily share how I broke free from my sorrow to create a life rich with blessings that include silly songs, moments of laughter, and an occasional salt-rimmed glass.

First, I give a good chunk of the credit to those who surrounded me in my darkest hours. But it's also true that in the first long stretch, I unapologetically honored my need to tend to my brokenness in private. Like a wounded animal in the wild, I allowed very few in, mainly for their own protection.

Second, pain hurts, and it hurts deeply. And it's human nature to flee from that which hurts us. Yet almost instinctively I understood that my wound was simply too profound to run from. So I paid my dues and endured my sentence in the dark, lonely prison of deep sorrow. At the same time, I hung on to the hope that there was no expiration date on the joy that waited for me when I was ready to seek it.

I also recognized that the effort to move through the grief was entirely my responsibility, and mine alone. Every morning I was faced with the choice of whether to get out of bed. It took all my effort and I certainly didn't feel like it, but I forced myself. And much like strengthening a muscle, my ability to face the day grew stronger until it eventually took no effort at all.

In the meantime, I found a number of gratifying outlets to keep me busy. I love creating projects and endeavors that touch the lives of others, and it fills my heart with gratitude to do so. But in the early days of my solitude, I could barely function so I started with mindless, repetitive projects like beading and knitting. Grief is terribly distracting, so I kept to simple projects for my own safety.

Also, I embraced humor and amusement, because one laugh can scatter a hundred griefs. From the golden oldies like Erma Bombeck and Carol Burnett to modern day comedians such as Carol Scibelli and Tina Fey, they all possess the gift of humor, the ability to make us laugh. And laughter is like an old fashion remedy: it's good for all that ails us. Including a sorrowful heart.

I also found comfort by reaching out to others who were struggling. It didn't matter what their loss was, for grief comes in many forms. Supporting others is a powerful way to lift our own hearts, and offers us many benefits. This step singlehandedly is so life changing, that I continue to practice it to this day.

Lastly, I work hard to create hope. It is said that without grief, there would be no need to have hope. And while it too is a four-letter word, it is on the opposite end of the spectrum.

In fact, hope is so much more than just a simple word in the dictionary. It is the life force of our heart and soul, the food source for our dreams. When it rains, we long for the sun. When we're hungry, we crave a good meal. When we live far from loved ones, we yearn to see them. Hope is the foundation of all our desires.

So without grief, there would be no need for hope. They go hand in hand. Which is why I created an entire event around it, the National Grief and Hope Convention. Maybe creating a convention is a bit extreme but quite simply, so is grief. And grievers need hope. But this isn't your average bereavement event. It is filled with nationally known personalities. Some have earned awards, some have written bestsellers, some are famous. But they all have two things in common: loss and healing. And they know that the power of sharing their inspirational journeys offers the gift of comfort and hope to those who are hurting. As the late Christopher Reeve once said, once you choose hope, anything is possible. And no one needs it more than grievers.

So you see, I am and always will be a grieving mother. My sorrow is a lifelong sentence and, from time to time, one can still find me among my sisters in The Wailing Tent. But I worked hard to process my loss, to break free from my prison cell, so I could spend more time seeking joy.

The kind that comes from singing silly songs to my grandchildren, laughing with family, and enjoying a good margarita with the sisterhood. And if I can do it, I believe anyone can. Cheers.

Lynda Cheldelin Fell

This Mixed-up Grief

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless; on the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatterbrained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing, and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet, if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares.



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You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow. Grief presses on you like a steamroller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the sun is shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed ... and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still ... there. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.

And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT to remember. And tender memories of Love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

Dana Gensler
TCF, Louisville, KY



A very special thank you goes out to those people that facilitate our meetings every month. It is through their unselfishness in stepping up, that makes our chapter a safe place for the newly bereaved to get through the grieving process.

Thank you for your involvement and continued support.

- Mitchell Greenblatt (Ian's Dad)**
- Linda Teres (Russell's Mom)**
- Rick Dugan (Larry's Dad)**
- Janice Parmenter (Tyler's Mom)**
- Judy Daubney (Clifford Crowe's Mom)**

Another "First"...The First TCF Meeting

Here we are again, at the start of another year. Another year that we brought in without our beloved children as a part of. For many of our members, it will be the beginning of those dreaded "firsts" without their child, brother, sister, or grandchild: the first birthday, the first anniversary of their death; the first holidays such as Valentine's Day, Easter, and the agonizing blitz starting with Halloween and ending with New Year's Day. Or the unexpected firsts such as the first phone call to your home perhaps from a tele-marketer who innocently asks to speak to your child. To say that the many "firsts" that we are confronted with are difficult would be a gross understatement.

However, I would like to share with you a "first" that, for me, has been a lifesaver. That would be the first time I went to a TCF meeting, which I attended approximately three weeks after Nina died. I remember after I heard that there was such a group specifically for bereaved parents, I counted the days until that meeting. I desperately needed to be around other people who felt the same devastation as I did. I needed to see that there were others who weren't going on about their daily lives as if nothing happened. I knew somewhere there must be other parents who could comprehend how hard it was to get out of bed in the morning and start another day without their beloved child. Those anxiously waiting for their child to come through the door, hoping that it had all been a bad dream, only with the sobering realization that it was not.

However, even though I eagerly awaited that first meeting, when that day actually came I began to feel apprehension, for a number of reasons. I suddenly realized that I really had no idea of what to expect. Rather than feel camaraderie with these other parents, would I feel worse after I heard their own tragic stories?

When I pulled into the parking lot of the meeting place, I sat in my car for what seemed like forever. When I finally made the decision to go inside, I trudged up the sidewalk and saw the sign on the door that said, "The Compassionate Friends Support Group" and suddenly my legs felt as if weighted with concrete. Ever since the day I became a mother, my daily prayers included telling God that he could do whatever he wanted with me, but please don't ever let anything happen to my children. By entering through that door and going to that meeting I was acknowledging that I now was eligible to be part of a group of people that I had hoped never to be a part of...the reality was that I was now one of "them." I remember my heart pounding as I dragged myself into that meeting room. It wasn't long before my fears were calmed. The lady who greeted me at the door gave me a comforting hug.



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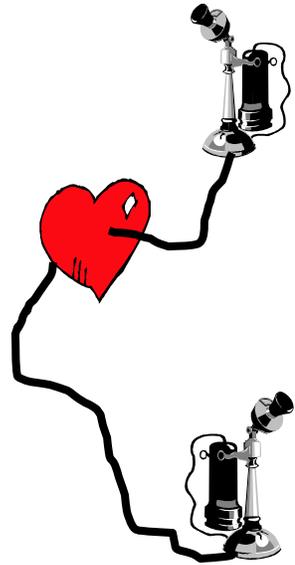
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Phone Friends

Sometimes it helps to just be able to talk to someone; maybe at a time when pain or stress seems too much to bear. We maintain a list of Telephone Friends; people who are willing to listen, to commiserate, to give whatever support they can. In a time of need, feel free to call one of our Telephone Friends.

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942.
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,....**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan C. Plunkett**, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106



It is always useful to have more Telephone Friends; individuals who are willing to provide support and comfort via the telephone. The chapter provides guidance for those who want to help. When you listen and talk to the bereaved, you make a difference. A longer list of Telephone Friends increases the likelihood that someone will be available when needed. Call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 if you would like to be a Telephone Friend.

Support Resources

TCF Online Chat Groups:

WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online_Support.aspx

- For questions, please contact Diana Jorden, 925-432-3854, who moderates the general grief and suicide loss rooms on Friday nights and Sunday. TCF online offers several specialized chat rooms, all moderated by moms who have been in chat for at least 2 years or more. We offer a sibling-only chat, loss under 1 year, loss over 2 years, loss of only child, suicide survivor, infant/pregnancy loss, and every night (and Monday mornings) there is a general loss room open to parents, step and grand, and siblings.
- You can sign up for the online TCF National newsletter at www.compassionatefriends.org
- You can reach our TCF National Facebook page through the link on the same home page of our national website. You will be asked to join Facebook if you are not already a member, and we hope you'll find our Facebook page as interesting as do the more than 11,000 fans who have already found us!

Other Grief Support Websites

- agast.org - *for grandparents*
- alivealone.org
- aliveinmemory.org
- angelmoms.com
- babysteps.com
- bereavedparents.org
- beyondindigo.com
- childloss.com
- goodgriefresources.com
- griefwatch.com
- GriefNet.org
- healingafterloss.org
- Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org.
- opentohope.com
- pomc.com - *families of murder victims*
- save.org
- survivorsofsuicide.com
- Taps.org - *military death*



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After hearing my story, she led me to another woman who had lost her daughter suddenly in an accident just as I had and I knew, for the first time, I was not alone. All the parents went around the circle and introduced themselves and their child; some had been there as long as ten years. Some were even laughing! I thought to myself, these people couldn't have lost a child, for I knew that I would never laugh or find joy in living again. I remember having conflicting feelings. I thought that they must not have loved their child as much as I loved my daughter. On the other hand, maybe this was a hopeful sign, for of course they loved their children too. Maybe this meant that I too would survive the "worst loss", that I too would find reasons to laugh and smile again.

It didn't take me long to realize why there were still people who had been there for so many years. It wasn't because they still needed the support of TCF, but they were there to give support back to the newly bereaved, showing them that there was still life after the death of a child. I will be forever thankful for those compassionate friends who helped me take those first wobbly steps down the grief road and continued on that journey with me.

I left that meeting wishing that I could go back again the next day, and the day after that. I felt safe there; I felt understood there. I didn't want to leave that protective cocoon of understanding and go into the outside world that did not recognize that the world, as I had known it, ended when my precious daughter died.

I am so glad that I took the chance that day back in that tumultuous spring of 1995 and walked through those meeting room doors. I have been doing the same ever since, rarely missing one. I have met people there whom I cherish and know will be lifelong friends. When I tell one of them I am having a difficult day, they don't chastise me, but rather understand the emotional roller-coaster ride of a bereaved parent and offer me their support. When they say, "I know exactly how you feel", I know that they truly do.

Years from now, I still plan to be there to greet that newly bereaved parent with an empathetic and reassuring hug, just as I had been welcomed six and a half years before. I know that I will look in their eyes and see the same hollow look mirrored in my own when I was newly bereaved. And I will be there to let them know that if I have survived the unthinkable, they will too.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN

Rekindling the Spark

Don't let the chain of love end with you. Clay Walker.

Carl believed in the Big Bang Theory...the bigger the bang, the better the 4th of July celebration. He would orchestrate the whole event...from how to get the biggest bang for the buck, to how to arrange them on the street for the most fantastic show on the block. He had this intuitive knowledge of how to run the whole event. Even his sister Carrie would agree that Carl knew what to buy to make the day special...although she always added her special order to the event! So, as the day approached, the family would hit all the fireworks stands in Visalia. You name them, we bought them! When it came to putting the sparks in a 4th of July celebration, Carl was in his element. For the finale, Carl would grab our ladder and have fireworks on each wrung for one spectacular wrap-up. At the end, when all the fireworks were lit and the cleanup was done, the family carried this glow inside our hearts. Oh, how I wish those good times would return.

When Carl died, my spark for life was gone also. He gave sparkle to my life. He put fireworks in the fun activities we did as father and son. After his passing, I had no desire to reinvest in life. It was so easy, so painless, at least I thought, to plop myself down in front of the television and vegetate. Zone out!! Way out where pain couldn't reach me. I could numb myself and not think. But like all solutions of this kind, the hurt would not be denied in such a simple fashion. The hurt was not properly dealt with, only pushed down. When it came back, it always came back with a vengeance.

My wounded spirit needed something to make it come back to life again. Or, if not quite that yet, at least to feel the stirring of life in me. As my wife, daughter, and I shared the early deep struggles of living without Carl, ideas began to form. Our conversations took us to a very unforgettable aspect of Carl's life, that being how he made an indelible impact on our lives. Carl gave us new dimensions in love as he shared his triumphs and trials after his brain injury. He fleshed out the meaning of charity when he so often gave his own belongings to others, yet he was so needy. His examples sparked some ideas, which will be shared later.

In our TCF meetings we say, grief won't be denied. Well, grief also needs a place to go. It needs to be dealt with appropriately. Building on Carl's legacy allows me to deal with my wounded spirit constructively. Part of the healing of my wounds has come in finding meaning in his short life and tragic, unexpected death. If I can find a way to extract the meaning of his life and share it properly, then I can deal more effectively with my wounded spirit. Maybe start kindling a tiny spark.



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Getting back into the rigors and routines of life has been slow. Achingly slow at times. I am now seeing my recovery from Carl's passing as a lifelong recovery. Someone once said, "The journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step." Yep, that's my journey, one step at a time. I wish I could be all better again and back to my jolly old self. It is not to be of course. A new me is here.

Little acts of kindness have created tiny sparks of life. After Carl's initial accident, I learned to take someday out of the family vocabulary. Special family trips, vacations, and celebrations were planned and done. Carl's last spoken words are etched in my memory forever. They are simple words. "I love you too, Dad." So conversations with my forever friend Debby and my lovely daughter, Carrie, end with those words.

I would like to now share some ideas for kindling a spark in life. Reinvest in life on your timetable. In the first year after a son or daughter's passing, much time is needed for dealing with the loss and the overwhelming feelings that come with it. I said the first year. It could be longer than that. At least it was for me. I used to marvel at others who, when their children passed away, accomplished great deeds like starting foundations for missing and murdered children, or MADD groups. My timetable was different. I started with little projects.

Learn to listen to that still small voice. Call it the gut feeling. Grieving family members move on at different times. On the third anniversary of Carl's death, I heard that still, small voice whisper, "Now." I vowed to God, and to Carl, that I would start a TCF chapter in Visalia. That still, small voice let me know I was ready to take on the task of forming a TCF chapter.

In TCF circles, the term *stuck* is used. It refers to grieving parents who remain stuck at a certain point in grief recovery. They are no longer growing through the grief recovery process, but have stagnated.

Here are suggestions to get unstuck and feel a bit of spark for life again. Find a simple project that is significant of your child. Plant a tree. Give a donation to a charity or church. Work in a soup kitchen or rescue mission.

Find a way to tell your son or daughter's story. This is so important. This is a very cathartic experience. My healing occurs for me when I write my columns. Debby echoes this sentiment as editor of our newsletters. Don't leave out the siblings of your child. They enjoy writing memories of their brother/sister. Write that story and submit it. It could even be a poem or a song. Recently, an older member of our chapter wrote about his son, who died at 57. This father worked a fulltime job and then came home to the fulltime job of caring for his disabled son. That story touched several readers. They said, "Wow! That's our story. That's how we felt. Tell the writer he has helped us so much!"

Dedicate a newsletter to your child. Our newsletter reaches a wide audience of readers across the country. The feedback is wonderful. People read of our beloved daughters and sons and they are helped in their own recovery. Each time hurting people reach out, they get helped within.

Finding that spark in life will not be easy, trust me. It will even be necessary to reignite that spark. That's pretty normal. Each time the spark of life gets reignited, recovery is a little easier.

Be good to yourselves. Aaron.

Aaron Pueschel In Memory of my son, Carl

Other Area TCF Chapters

- ♥ MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
- ♥ Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
- ♥ (508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
- ♥ South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
- ♥ Martha Berman
- ♥ (781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
- ♥ Worcester Chapter
- ♥ Chapter Co-Leaders: Lisa Holbrook
- ♥ (774) 482-6066.....sixholes@charter.net
- ♥ Mary Vautier....
- ♥ (508) 393-7348....mjvautier@msn.com
- ♥ Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
- ♥ Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
- ♥ (781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com

I Can See You

I can see you when a friend visits your grave,
I can see you when I hear your favorite music,
I can see you when your dog howls as you taught him,
I can see you when the stars shine brightly,
I see you in my mind's image when the summer rain
cools the desert brush, When spring buds emerge with
new growth, When winter chills the air, When I see
young lovers look into each other's eyes and make
promises, have goals and dreams.

In my intense pain, I hear you whisper, "I'm O.K."
I cannot see you when others are uncomfortable with
me. When I can't even mention the anniversary of your
death.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

When someone unwittingly said I have two children and I wanted to scream that I have three, now and always.

Please be kind and allow me to see him in my own way because he exists in my world and I see him when you let me.

Cindy Nevins
TCF, Tucson Chapter, AZ

Muster

Ceremonies and tradition mark the milestones in our lives. My son learned early in life that tradition and ceremony are the anchors in an ever changing, faster-paced world. Traditions remind us of our roots, our loyalties and reinforce the deeper values of the generations of our family.

My father, the WWII Marine, was a speaker at many Memorial Day commemorations in our little hometown. When dad died in 2000, ceremony and tradition were strictly followed. A priest led us as we said the rosary. The KC Black Knights were present at the rosary and the mass the next day. Dad's cousin, also a priest, was one of three celebrants of the mass of dead. As the mass ended, the Marine Corps hymn was played in the little Irish Catholic church of my childhood. Todd and his son were honored as special participants in the celebration of Dad's life. With tears in his eyes, Todd stood next to me as we walked behind Dad's casket while the organist played a very slow, single note version of McNamara's band.....a song that Dad sang at every party. Marines presented a 21- gun salute at the gravesite, Taps was played and the priests said their final prayers and blessed Dad's casket as we said goodbye. Following Dad's mass and funeral, we all went to the fraternal club that was Dad's favorite. There our family and Dad's many friends gathered for a fine traditional Irish wake. Food was served in abundance, music was played, and great stories were told. The Marine Corps League announced that they would begin holding a Golf Tournament in Dad's memory to raise money for Toys for Tots, the one charity that Dad devoted his heart and soul to each year. A life well lived and guided by tradition was celebrated in the most traditional and fitting way.



It was during Dad's wake that Todd talked to me about the tradition of Muster at Texas A&M. I had a vague idea about Muster, but Todd clarified the meaning of Muster and many other traditions at Texas A&M.

Tears glistened in his eyes as we talked of each Aggie remembering all the other Aggies who died during the past year. He explained how honored he felt to be an Aggie, to be part of these traditions and to be one of many throughout the world who always remembered their fellow Aggies, both living and dead. The tradition of Muster is sacred and time-honored.

Todd's memorial service was held in a modern church in a very wealthy part of Austin. Evidently the church is non-denomination, and Todd had attended occasionally. The congregation was large, in the top 1% financially, and still in the process of deciding what they wanted to be. I felt cold emptiness in that church. I could not feel the presence of my son, of tradition, of ceremony, of honor. There was something hollow about the entire memorial service. A cousin of my son's widow rambled on and on about Todd and his wife and how they had influenced him. I remembered what my son had told me about this man and couldn't really understand why he was speaking. The minister didn't know Todd, and his "sermon" was empty of any personal messages beyond condolences to the family. I left that church feeling as if we hadn't marked the death of my precious child in a way that truly honored him.

In keeping with Todd's wishes, I contacted the local A&M Club about the Muster Ceremony that is held every year on April 21. Aggies all around the world attend Muster, honoring those who have gone before them. Over 300 Muster ceremonies are held each year from College Station to Kabul, from Houston to Heidelberg. Wherever Aggies gather, a Muster Ceremony is held.

On April 21, I drove to the VFW Hall in Katy, Texas, to honor my son. I had sent letters to some friends and family members who were not able to attend Todd's memorial service to invite them to the Muster. I thought one or two might want to attend. When I walked in the door, I saw familiar, tear-streaked faces. Friends of Todd's from junior high school and high school were there with their parents. Friends of mine whom I hadn't seen in years were there. People who had met Todd along life's pathway were there. I could not believe the number of people who had come to remember and honor the life of my child.

The Muster ceremony includes the Muster prayer, specific readings honoring the Texas A&M traditions and a speaker. Then the Roll Call for the Absent is read. For each Absent Aggie, a response is made and the person making the response lights a candle and stands with others who have lost their Aggie during the past year. I waited for Todd's name, hoping that I would be able to respond loudly enough to be heard. But when Todd's name was called a thunderous "Here" resounded through the building.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Over 60 voices, in unison, responded for my Absent Aggie son. All nodded at me as I walked up to get my candle and light it. Tears streamed down my cheeks when I took my place next to the other parents, families and friends who held their candles. After all names had been called, the room was darkened. As Echo Taps reverberated within the building and then repeated from a distant place outside, we each held the tiny candle that represented the life of our loved one. When echo taps ended, the candles were extinguished.



As I gently blew out Todd's candle, I felt a deep sense of honor for my child. My son accomplished much, was well loved and remembered by many whose lives he touched during his short time on earth. In my mind I could see the tears in his eyes when he told me about the meaning of Muster and the traditions which he valued so highly.

When the Muster had concluded, I felt that I had finally provided my son with the tradition, ceremony and honor he deserved as those whose lives he had touched came to pay respect to him in a fitting, time honored and beautiful ritual. Todd would have been both proud and humbled. He is a very special son.

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

The True Meaning of the Meeting

A misty, cloudy Thursday night in March found me, once again, driving to The Compassionate Friends meeting. Tonight a friend would meet me; she lost her 21 year old son seven years ago in an automobile accident. She has never sought counseling or attended a group meeting. She was always an introvert; the death of her son increased that tendency.

Together we walk to the meeting room. She's asking a few questions, but I'm doing much of the talking. A mom whose only child has been dead for 63 weeks is explaining to this woman who has endured so much for so long about coping with unimaginable loss. There's an irony here. There's also a reason.

Attending my first TCF meeting one year ago was not easy. The pain was brutally raw. The loss was unimaginable. I was reliving the death of my son in my mind, over and over and over and over. I wasn't angry. I was devastated. I wasn't blaming anyone but myself. Could I have done something differently and changed the course of events? This was my big question. My soul was an empty void, my heart broken, as another friend pushed me along into that first meeting. I'm glad she did. It made all the difference.

So tonight my friend signs in for the first time and makes a nametag. We look at the books and brochures. We talk. Melinda greets us: as always, welcoming the newcomer, extending her sincere, sweet and pure condolences to my friend. Other parents talk with us and soon the meeting begins.

Tonight's topic, ironically, is "letting go of the if only's." We all talk about our regrets, how we dwelled on them. Some are still dwelling. Others are moving away from the darkness of regret into the light of affirmation: affirmation of our love for our child, affirmation of the decision to go on and make the best life possible, affirmation to remember the life of our child and honor our child's memory.

My friend joins in, hesitant at first, but soon contributing. Talking of death, of loss, of going forward, of focusing on the positive, of not dwelling on the horror, of eliminating the negative (including people) from her life. I begin to think about her losses (there are many) and her classically introverted personality. Yet here she is openly talking about private pain. And then it hits me. She is among kindred souls in this room tonight. Each of us has had losses of a magnitude that cannot ever be measured.

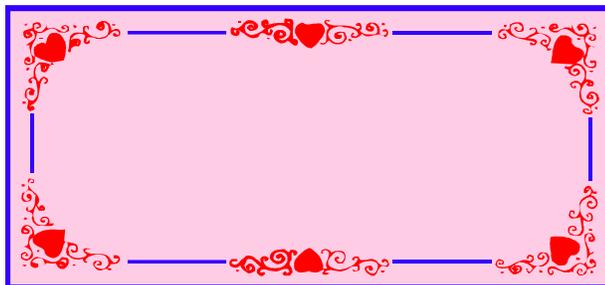
She is comfortable with these gentle people who weep for their dead children, whose voices break in mid-sentence, whose silences often say more than any words could possibly convey.

The meeting goes by quickly. My friend has to leave to pick up a toddler grandchild. We say quick goodbyes to the others and walk quietly to the parking lot. I mention the Mothers' Retreat, but I know she has made commitments to care for grandchildren while her daughters work. Getting here tonight required a lot of juggling, but I am glad she did it. Her lonely, private struggle has come to an end. Now she knows she is not alone, there are others just like her: kindred souls who need her as much as she needs them. We go our separate ways in the parking lot and she shouts, "I love you." I love you, too, Sherri, my kindred soul.



Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF, Katy, TX

The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person - or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

*We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK...** what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”*