



# 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.*

**May-June 2016**



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### 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:

***May 17th June 21st***

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford parish center at 17 Winter St. **Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last weekend 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:

***May 31st June 28th***

### 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. ©2016**

### *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

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

### Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

### Senior Advisors

\* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

### Steering Committee \*

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942  
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715  
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085  
 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

**Chapter Web Page**  
[www.tcfmetrowest.com](http://www.tcfmetrowest.com)

**Regional Coordinator**  
 Tom Morse  
 66 Atwood Avenue  
 Middleboro, MA 02346  
 Phone (508) 572-3038  
[tjmorse521@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## 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.

### Love Gifts

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldridge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldridge** on his anniversary March 24th.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Gallivan in loving memory of their son **Jon C. Gallivan Sr.**

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Marshall in loving memory of their son **Steven "Chris" Marshall.**

Mrs. Jean Garvey in loving memory of her son **John W. Garvey** on his anniversary April 1st.

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Lauder in loving memory of their son **Andrew T. Lauder.**

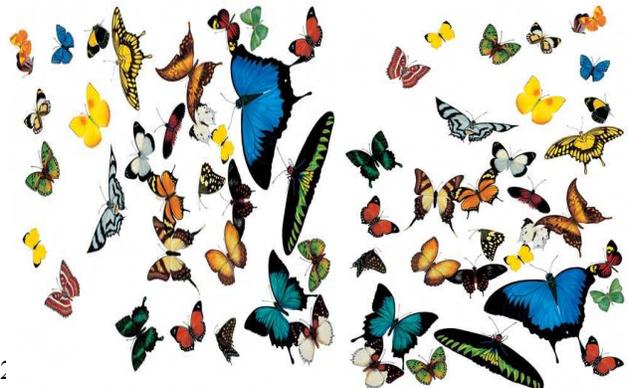
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Grillo in loving memory of a true Compassionate Friend **Marilyn Rossetti.**

Janice Brann in loving memory of **Marilyn Rossetti.**

Elaine Ford on loving memory of **Marilyn Rossetti.**

Ms. Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce-Tagoe** on his anniversary July 6th.

**Thank You, You keep us going.**





# 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 of May and June. 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*

### *May*

IAN MacINNES HODGMAN  
BETSY CHICK-GRANT  
COREY S. VAUTIER  
ADAM SCOTT COLE  
LEA M. SIEBERT  
LISA RANDALL  
ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr.  
MICHAEL PATRICK MURPHY

### *June*

DANIEL R. ADILETTO  
CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEO  
MATTHEW PISAPIA  
RUSSELL J. TERES  
LAURIE SLOPEK  
DANICA SCHNAIBLE  
MAJ. ROBERT M. RANERI  
IAN GREENBLATT  
MATTHEW MOSHER

## *Birthdays*

### *May*

MICHAEL MINTO WALLACH  
MICHAEL P. McLAUGHLIN  
MAJ. ROBERT M. RANERI  
LILY ANN HALEY  
MICHAEL PATRICK MURPHY  
WILLIAM C. LEWIS  
MARC P. LEWIS  
ANTHONY V. BOTTCHER  
MONICA MICHELLE CURRAN  
TARYN NORTON GIVALIS  
KRISTEN DONOVAN

### *June*

ADAM N. YOUNIS  
DONNA ANN WOLFSON  
ERIC L. BOTTCHER  
JOSEPH MICHAEL McGRATH  
SCOTT MOTUZAS  
JUSTIN MAYER  
STEVEN GRILLO  
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU  
MOLLY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

**Go Green**



**Green goes with with everything**

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To our wonderful e-mail subscribers, Thank You! By receiving your newsletter in this format, you are saving trees (to make paper), chemicals (to produce ink), money (for postage), and waste products from printing and from newsletters that are only printed if you need the hard copy. Our chapter and the world appreciates your generosity.



# 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.

## **PLEASE DON'T DISCOUNT SIBLING GRIEF**

I have come to think of sibling grief as "Discount Grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" comforting line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of a sibling may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of the siblings are also often discounted when decisions are being made, on things ranging from funeral plans to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services.

First, their in-put helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

**Jane Machado  
TCF, Tulare, CA**

## **HE LIVES FOR ME**

I shall see him  
In the beauties of the earth,  
In the loveliness of summer sunsets  
And in the loneliness of winter winds.

In the delicate new life of springtime trees,  
In the blazing glory of fall's bright leaves.

I shall see him  
In the ocean's mighty power.  
I shall see him in the wonder of the stars.  
I shall see him in the face  
Of happiness and care.

I shall always see him everywhere.

**E. Rita Asher  
TCF, Cape Cod, MA**



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## ***Four Things About Grief That Never Change***

***By Lori Ennis***

This year, my son would turn seven...if he lived. He died the day after he was born, after years of infertility and adoption failures and a perfectly-perfect and healthy full-term pregnancy.

A rare labor 'fluke, and my world has not been the same. I have not been the same.

The years have given me perspective; allowed me to experience joy and contentment in a way that I never dreamed possible in those first days of despair.

But they've also taught me that there are some things about grief that will never, ever change. It's hard for those who have not walked this path to understand, and yet...these are inescapable truths for those of us who have.

### ***There are always triggers.***

They come when you least expect them, and they often pack a powerful punch that many can't understand. You may be in the middle of the most benign situation ever, and then...something that takes you right back there comes out of nowhere and makes you need to quickly leave the room, gasping for air. It doesn't matter if you have been missing your loved one for one day or 30 years, life happens, as it should. And, life happening is bound to remind you sometimes of the harsh reality of the life NOT happening as well.

### ***The intensity of grief doesn't ever completely disappear.***

It is often assumed that time allows the raw, gut-wrenching intense pain that accompanies fresh grief to dull some...to not be as heavy and suffocating as it is in those first days. And, to an extent, I believe that to be true. That said...there are days, even years later, that something will make your heart stop and your body explode with sobbing you've not had in a while. Recently, I've sadly watched another mother suffer through something very similar to what I did as I watched my son die. This time, I watched the happenings without the fog and chemical reaction of shock in my body, and I've had more panic attacks in a week than I have probably had in several years. My choice every day is to pick joy and gratitude and hope, but some days??? The sheer intensity of remembrance is just too powerful and needs to be expressed.

### ***People become less and less tolerant of your grief.***

Again, there's something about time that people think should erase your loss, your emotions and your heart-break. Yes, time gives perspective and distance and some relief to the constant in-your-face pain of your loss, but...it doesn't erase your loss. It can't erase your scars and it can't undo what has happened.

Others have not had to assimilate this trauma in their life as you have, and they simply cannot understand how every day of your life since then has been changed and is colored with a different outlook. While their worlds may have been truly affected by your loss... they kept spinning. Yours stopped. It may seem odd to them that years and years later, knowing you've been able to pick up the pieces and bravely face your new world, you still expose the wounds of this new, open heart you have. For many, black is black and white is white, and it's hard to understand that for those who grieve. Black and white exist together in a million different shades.

### ***Your grief is part of who you are, but does not DEFINE who you are.***

This is a hard one for people to understand, even in communities of loss where many have suffered similar tragedies. There is simply no way for someone to experience the trauma and grief associated with the loss of his or her child, or any traumatic loss, for that matter, to be unaffected. Loss changes the course of many lives, and colors the lens through which every situation forthcoming is looked at. Every single situation. But that doesn't mean that for the rest of my life, I remain grieving. I don't have to be ashamed of being happy or hopeful, just like I don't have to be ashamed of aching for my sons or being sad when I may think of what I miss with them. My losses, my grief, they are part of the fabric of who I am, there's no denying that. That fabric, though, it has a lot of different colored-threads and patterns, and on a daily basis, I show a different part of a beautifully woven cloth. I choose what I show. You choose what you show.

Don't give death or social norms or expectations or people's judgements that power. You define it. And that never changes.

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)**



## ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST***



### ***Put the Brakes on Anxiety***

There is a direct correlation between the frantic acceleration of the advertising for gifts for mom this week and the increasing anxiety that many of us feel as Mother's Day approaches. Some ads will be heartbreaking, some will be goofy, some will be trendy, some will be timely. Each ad on television, in the newspaper, in the mail, on the radio, in our e-mail, on web sites, adds to the increasing anxiety in each of us, mothers and fathers alike.

Here are some suggestions on avoiding the advertising bombardment: a good book, a good movie (no commercials), a nice walk in the park, a visit to a museum, clean out the garage, an evening with friends and an evening alone, buy potting soil, run your hands through it, smell the sweet fragrance of mother earth and do some special work in the garden and yard; hand watering plants is especially therapeutic. The water is relaxing, our plants are happy to receive it and our thoughts often move into a more harmonious state. If you have a fountain or pond...indoors or out...now is the time to use it. Listen to it, read by it, let the running water sweep into your mind and gently carry away the stresses and anxiety of this fragile moment.

When you watch commercial television, keep the remote nearby. Switch from anything related to Mother's Day. Find channels that do not broadcast commercials at the same time. When I watch television, I usually watch two shows at once. Find several channels that do not broadcast their commercials at the same time. Consider PBS, C-Span and the various entertainment and movie channels that have no advertising.

When you read the paper, do not look at the advertisements. Read the headline, the story, and move on in the text area. Stay away from that which could start an anxiety swing. When you listen to the radio, be ready to button push if a commercial is orienting towards Mother's Day. When the direct mail comes to your house, sort it quickly, keep the first class mail and throw away the rest. Somebody's bound to be trying to tug at your heart with cleverly disguised advertising.

Why avoid the commercialism? Why seek peace at this time? There are two very important reasons for this. The first, and most obvious, is the fact that the anxiety can and will build all week long if we let it. Don't feed anxiety.

The second, truly most important reason, is that Mother's Day is a very special day for us. Whether we choose to make organized plans or do nothing, our thoughts will be where they belong: with our beautiful children. We must keep that place in our heart safe from the attacks of crass commercialism.

The memories of our child's life and the unconditional love we feel as Mothers (and fathers) must not be demeaned by the marketing genius of Madison Avenue.

The love of our children is ours and ours alone to nurture, to protect, and to keep in our hearts as our fondest treasure. For each of us Mother's Day has a deeper meaning now. We must approach this week with an effort at balance and low anxiety and awaken on Mother's Day with sweet memories in our hearts of our beautiful children.

If you have thoughts about how to handle this week that you would like to share with our Compassionate Friends, please e-mail me. There are many paths up the mountain.

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

### ***Our Child's Birthday***

Many bereaved parents begin to have trouble as the time of their child's birthday grows near. Even those whose child has died a number of years ago. The ache that is in their heart is always there and the yearning for their child is never more strong than around the time of their child's birth.

The greatest gift you could give to a parent who has lost a child is to listen intently as they reminisce and share memories of their child. Call a special friend who has lost a child on that child's birthday and encourage them to talk about him or her. Or better yet, invite your friend to coffee or lunch so you can look into their eyes and they can feel your compassion and empathy.

Many parents relish the opportunity to share pictures of their child with others. If your friend likes doing this, ask that they bring photos, a scrapbook or mementos of their child. It will help to spark fond memories of a happier time.

Make your list ahead of time. Ask your friend questions in order to draw them out such as; do you remember how you felt when you were anticipating the birth of your child? How did you feel when they were born? How did you come to pick your child's name? What was your child like as a baby? How old was your child when they took their first step? What was their first word? Do you remember your child's first day at school? What was their favorite color? What was their personality like? Did your child take after someone in your family? Did your child have a beloved pet? Did your child enjoy a special hobby or activity?

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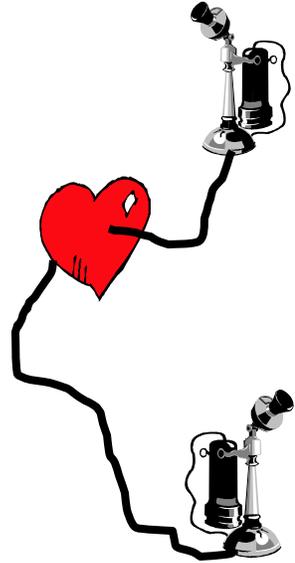
# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## 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.

(continued from last page)

## A Father Mourns Too

Do you have any stories to recant about a memorable family vacation or gathering? What was their favorite holiday? Did your child have a favorite book, song or movie? Do you remember any heartwarming or funny stories about your child? What was your child's personality like? The list could go on and on. Just stop and think about it for a moment. You can also make your own list and give it to a trusted family member or confidant to ask you when it's time for your child's birthday. The point is to draw the parent out. Try and get your friend to remember the beautiful sweet story that was their child's life and not to focus only on their passing. Once they get started they will recall wonderful things that were once forgotten. A child's death is only a small moment of time in their short lives. Remembering a child's life in this way can be a very cathartic and healing experience for a parent whose child has died. As bereaved parents, we know all too well that most of the people in our lives do not want us to speak of our child. I can't think of a better gift to give to another parent who is like we are than to talk about, honor and celebrate the life of their child.



**Janet G. Reyes**  
**TCF, Alamo Area Chapter, TX**

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen, my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son. This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die.



Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.





# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE (THIS PAGE WILL BE PRINTED EVERY OTHER EDITION)

We continue to update our mailing list. We want everyone who reads our newsletter to receive it; however, mailing costs make this update necessary. We want to send it where it is being read. Your donations allow us to print and mail this newsletter and to reach out to hundreds of parents and siblings.

*Please fill out this form now if you wish to be added to or removed from our mailing list. This form should be filled out annually. If we don't hear from you in a year's time you will be notified through the newsletter that your name will be removed from our mailing list unless we hear from you.*

If you are able to make a donation at this time, it will be gratefully received. Please mail to address below.

### PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

I (do\_\_\_) (do not\_\_\_) wish to continue receiving the TCF newsletter.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

(Parent / Sibling / Grandparent\_\_\_) (professional\_\_\_)

(Donation included\_\_\_) Make checks payable to "The Compassionate Friends" or TCF

If there are any errors in spelling or other information in this newsletter, please call it to my attention so that I may correct it. Please use this page to send back information, reverse side is addressed for your convenience.

**Mail to: TCF Metrowest, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265**

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS?**

**PLEASE ADVISE US OF ADDRESS CHANGES TO INSURE YOUR RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER, THEY ARE NOT FORWARDED BY THE POST OFFICE.**

Fold & Tape

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

Fold & Tape

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## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. "Nothing will fill the void your child left. But your heart will grow bigger - beautifully bigger - around the empty space your child left behind. "

The love and pain you carry for your precious child will be woven into every thread of your being. It will fuel you to do things you never dreamed you could do. Eventually, you'll figure out how to live for both of you. It will be beautiful, and it will be hard.

But, the love you two share will carry you through. You'll spread this love everywhere you go. Eventually, you'll be able to see again. Eventually, you'll find your way again. Eventually, you'll realize you survived.

By Angela Miller

Angela Miller is the author of *You Are the Mother of All Mothers: Grief advocate, founder of A BedForMyHeart.com A Message of Hope for the Grieving Heart*, which has comforted over 7,500 grieving moms worldwide.

### *Graduation Is A Bittersweet Time*

In August my son's oldest child, Clay, graduated from Texas A&M. As I waited for the ceremony to begin, my mind drifted back to another time, another graduation at Texas A&M. My son, Todd, graduated in 1995. My grandson was young, his sisters were in ICU, weighing about three pounds and still in incubators. Todd's daughter, Caitlin, had died less than a month earlier. What an emotional roller coaster we were on in 1995. Yet Todd persisted and earned his MBA from Texas A&M. This was the milestone in my son's life, the capstone in his education and a time to remember always.

Todd and his son were different in interests yet similar in thinking processes. When my son died, Clay felt abandoned in the world. I can still remember his hand reaching for mine at Todd's Memorial Service, his skin was cold and clammy. I could feel his hope and expectations draining from his body as he looked straight ahead, eyes fixed on nothing. "What will become of this?", I thought. "How will he get through high school and college?"

Time passed and Clay was a senior in high school. Living on his own in Austin, commuting to his suburban high school, life was difficult. I remember the day that he and I went to Texas A&M when he was a senior to talk about admission to the University; he looked so thin, so drawn. Would he make it? When he was accepted, I felt such relief. Stage one had been completed. Now we would push on.

And here we were: Graduation Day. A little voice in my head told me to quell the anxiety.

All would be well. Fifteen years after his father graduated from Texas A&M, Clay would walk in his footsteps. What an auspicious day for a bereaved mother. Joy and sadness were mixed into one emotion as we listened to the speakers and then watched other graduates walk across the stage and receive their degrees. Finally the moment was at hand: Clay's name was called. He walked across the stage in a dignified fashion. He had changed so much in four years; he was a different person than the rail-thin youth I accompanied to A&M in his senior year of high school. Confident like his Dad. Not arrogant, very respectful. Very aware of the significance of this moment. Very much a man ready for the next challenge in life.

As part of the family ritual, we took pictures at special places on the campus. One was the spot that Todd had selected 15 years earlier, an eagle statue surrounded by a fountain. As the picture was taken, I could hear Todd's voice. "Good job, Clay. I'm so proud of you. From here you go forward into the world. Do what you love and you will find success. Make a difference in the world, stay true to the values of A&M and always keep love and compassion in your heart."

We enjoyed that day as we have enjoyed every few since the death of my son, Todd. This was a milestone for Clay. Another milestone in another generation.

As we were driving home late that night, I thought about all that had transpired since Todd's death nearly eight years ago. Clay had changed so much; he is now a man, ready to make a man's decisions. He will always have our unconditional love, but he won't need us as much as before. And that is how it should be.

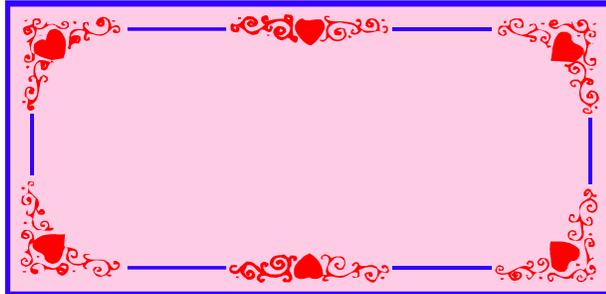
I reviewed my grief journey: the shock, the horror, coming to grips with my son's death, the deepest loss a human can face, the slow, steep road back to my new normal life. The parents who were there for me when I first came to Compassionate Friends, wiser than their years, offering guidance, support, encouragement, affirmation and understanding. There were days when I didn't think I could go forward, days when storms of extenuating circumstances brought me to emotional lows; on these days I would call one of the "elders" and just talk. Those conversations and the support of my TCF group aided me tremendously in maintaining the even keel our family needed.

Clay's Graduation Day will remain forever etched in my mind as a day of celebration, accomplishment and joy. I know Todd would be pleased with this milestone. Yet, bittersweet are my memories.

**Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF, Katy, TX**

***In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen***

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