



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 2018

© 2018 The Compassionate Friends, All rights Reserved Vol. 23 Issue 3

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 15th & June 19th

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 the Town Hall on the right 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.

May 29th & June 26th

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. ©2018

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.

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
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Dennis Gravelle
 638 Pleasant St.
 Leominster, Ma. 01453-6222
 Phone (978) 537-2736
 dgctcf@aol.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.

Love Gifts

Mr. & Mrs. John Brovelli in loving memory of their son **Christopher J. Brovelli** on his birthday April 28th and his anniversary July 18th.

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Marshell in loving memory of their son **Steven "Chris" Marshell**. Always loved, never forgotten.

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

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

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Anderson in loving memory **Kimberly Anne Anderson** on her birthday June 14th, and their son **Timothy Michael Anderson** on his birthday April 30th.

Carmela Bergman in loving memory of son and always loved **Dixon Bergman**.

Mrs. Laurel Berks in loving memory of her son **Michael Christopher Berks**.

Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan R. Stuchins** on his birthday.

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Prouty in loving memory of their daughter **Lillian "Lilly" Prouty**.

Mr. & Mrs. Brian Donovan in loving memory of their son **Andrew Joseph Donovan** on his first anniversary March 24th.

Mrs. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran** on her birthday May 21st.

**A Special Evening With
 Alan Pederson
 Music and Messages of Hope**

**Wednesday May 9th. 7-9 P.M.
 Milford Senior Center
 60 North Bow St.
 Milford, Ma.**

**For Information Call Ed or Joan @
 (508) 473-4239**



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, 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

BETSY CHICK-GRANT
COREY S. VAUTIER
ADAM SCOTT COLE
LEA M. SIEBERT
LISA RANDALL
ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr.

June

JOHN B. DOWD
CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEO
RUSSELL J. TERES
IAN GREENBLATT

Birthdays

May

MICHAEL P. McLAUGHLIN
ALISSA ZALNERAITIS
MONICA MICHELLE CURRAN
TARYN MARIE NORTON GAVELIS
JOHN B. DOWD
KATHLEEN ANN STETSON

June

ADAM N. YOUNIS
SCOTT MOTUZAS
JUSTIN MAYER
STEVEN GRILLO
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU
MOLLY ELIZABETH ANDERSON



My apologies to Mr. & Mrs. Brian Donovan
for omitting their sons name
Andrew Joseph Donovan in the
March / April Newsletter.



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.

The Aftermath of Suicide

I had never experienced the death of a close loved one before my brother died. When David died, my world came crashing down around me, shattering me into a million pieces. My brother and I were close, but I had no suspicion that he was contemplating suicide and had been for a long time. The night my sister called to tell me he was dead is etched in my memory forever. If I shut my eyes, I can go back to that time and place almost three years ago and still hear her voice. It is a very painful memory and one that I don't call up, but it is there nonetheless.

The overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, despair, and sadness are very vivid. At the same time, I was outraged at what he had done to us, to me. How dare he do this! I couldn't even begin to guess how many times I said, "I can't believe this is happening."

The first six months was a confusing and emotionally draining period for me. I was obsessed with wanting to have answers, especially from him. I read many books on suicide and finally after reading Iris Bolton's book "My Son, My Son," I came to realize what she said was true: "You can ask why a million times but you finally have to let it go, because the person you need the answers from is not here to give them to you. If only for the sake of your own sanity, you have to stop asking why."

Our family drew closer together from this tragedy, and it made me more aware of how much I value and love them. I also had the support of a good friend who was willing to spend hours talking and crying with me. I still get very angry at my brother for changing our lives so irrevocably.

He was an intelligent, warm, sensitive and caring young man, and I was eager to see what direction his life would take. I can't help but wonder what he would be like today. I miss him very much.

I will never agree with his solution, but it was his choice to make and I have to learn to live with it. I am absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will see him again. Only then will I get answers to my questions. I have no choice but to wait until that time. That anger inevitably turns into sadness. I cannot see his smiling face, or hear his laughter, or watch him grow into adulthood. Yes, I had dreams for him, too.

***Nicki Wright
TCF, MO-KAN, Ks***

Life Is Something That Comes and Goes

*Life is something that comes and goes
As silently as the gentle wind blows - one day here,
the next day gone.*

You try to understand the reason of it all,
Why some remain when others are called.
The purpose is there it only you see
That only God knows what will be.

*Life is something that comes and goes as silently as
the gentle wind blows.*

I pray and pray for the day
When I will hear my brother say,
"I love you kid sister, I'll see you soon.
Think of me when you look at the moon."
I look outside and see the moon so bright,

(continued on next page)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

As full as can be, shedding its light.
I stare at the stars and the heavens above
And remember my brother so full of love.

He was my friend, my father, my keeper,
And since he died, the road seems steeper.

But I must have faith in Jesus, My Lord,
Who helps me understand the truth of His word.

Life is something that comes and goes

As silently as the gentle wind blows - one day here, the next day gone.

***Breta Dodd, Age 16
TCF, Grand Junction, CO***

***Three Years and Many Tears:
Another New Perspective on Grief***

When I attended my first meeting of the Compassionate Friends in March of 2003, I was numb with shock, heartbroken and overwhelmed with the loss of my only child. Entering the meeting room on that first night, I was met by Melinda, whose sweet voice and caring attitude touched me with reassurance and a new hope. She asked about my child. Her sincere sorrow for my loss was apparent. Instantly I connected with Melinda and with this group. While I could say nothing more than my child's name at that first meeting, I felt I had found a kinship that would help sustain me on this journey that was thrust upon me.

It's been three years since I attended that first meeting. I am now working with Melinda to reach out to newly bereaved parents and offer them the comfort and hope that only one who has walked this lonely road can provide. My outreach is through writing, editing and printing our newsletter and helping to find resources and plan meetings through the steering committee.

Steering committee? I had no thoughts of how this organization ran on that first night or even for that first year. I was so traumatized, so deep in my grief, so lost in my emotional whirlwind that I didn't think about the very basics that allow TCF to function. I only knew that I needed these people who wanted to know my child, listen, cry with me, care about me and help to heal my wounded psyche. I began to reach out to them, to find out about their children, to hear their story, to understand their loss and to discover how they found the hope to go on.



Now I am beginning to realize what goes into making Compassionate Friends an organization that is always there, ready for bereaved parents. It doesn't happen magically. The national organization establishes the guidelines and offers help to the local chapters. Local chapters must plan their meetings and special events, take the calls of parents who are newly bereaved, do their own fundraising, purchase their own library, set up their own web site, establish an outreach to their own community and send specific information to the national organization in order to comply with national rules and federal law. This takes effort, and those who do this are all members of the local chapter.

As a self-help group we charge no dues. We make no demands of our members. Some choose to attend meetings and participate; some choose not to participate. Some choose not to attend meetings but want to receive the newsletter. Each one of us must do what is most comfortable personally as we work our way along the grief path. Some of us will want to participate in the structure of the organization; others simply will not be able to do this.

At some point in this process, I realized that in giving back to this gentle group, my personal discovery was one of a duality of emerging benefit. As I move forward on this never-ending path of grief, I seek new ways to memorialize my child and to honor those who saw me through my darkest hours of despair. Working to help others whose grief is raw or whose grief started long before mine, is a choice I have made.

Not all of us are able to do this. But if you are one of those parents who feel the need to become active in the organizational structure of TCF, don't hesitate to step forward. Our chapter, sadly, continues to grow with newly bereaved parents who come to meetings choking back tears; they are greeted by the sweet voice and concerned heart of another bereaved parent who has walked this road.

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

Tabloids

The line in the grocery store was long that day, leaving plenty of time to scan the magazines positioned near the checkout counter to catch the attention of restless, impatient customers. "Flatten Your Tummy," "Lose 40 Pounds in 30 Minutes with Our Amazing New Diet," "Eat Prune Pits for a Healthy Sex Life," and on and on.

I thought about parents in grief. And I know the response most of us have in the early weeks, months and years of grief: What does it matter?



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Why should I be concerned about health? Life takes on a different meaning after a child dies. We feel like we will never again care if our tummies are flat and our muscles are strong.

If there had been an article on the rack that day about getting up when I'm not sure if I can walk, drinking water when I cannot even swallow, breathing in and out without sighing, waking up or going to sleep without flashbacks, staying silent when my heart wants to scream... I would have bought it.

***Alice Monroe
TCF, Colorado***

We Get By With A Little Help from Our Friends...

I realize that the title of this essay, modified from an old Beatle's tune, definitely dates me, but it really says it all. When I was much younger, a few years after this song was popular in the late 60's, and feathering my nest, I used to religiously read, "Hints from Heloise". She was the lady who would give you all kinds of helpful advice on how to maintain your household; like the best way to get a spot out of the carpeting, or get crayon off the wall or gum out of your child's hair, etc. I believed that she had the answers that would establish me as "Susie Homemaker". Of course, that was back in the days when it was of paramount importance that my house was the cleanest one on the block, where I lived in mortal fear that someone would drop over and find it less than perfect and whatever would they think of me??? Now it sounds so shallow and insignificant to the point of embarrassment. But that was before my daughter Nina died, and the tidy little world I lived in came crashing down around me and ceased to exist.

Once I started to thaw out from the shock and disbelief, it sunk in that I was truly and sadly a bereaved parent, that there was no going back, and no magic words that would whisk me away from this horrific nightmare I was now living, I wondered where were the helpful hints on how to survive being a bereaved parent. Where was the Heloise of Bereavement who was going to have some answers for me? I wanted step-by-step guidelines on how to help myself and reassurances that I wasn't losing my mind. I needed someone or something to give me permission to grieve for my daughter in whatever way felt right for me.

I would like to share an abridged version of a handful of hints that I and other TCF members I have met on this journey over the years have used to get through the day the best we can:

1) If you can possibly do so, get an answering machine or voicemail. Just because the phone rings doesn't mean you have to answer it. There are so many times when you just don't have the energy to even talk on the phone. Most often people are calling to tell you they care and are thinking about you, which you need to hear, so let them leave you a message, and when you feel able then you can give them a call back if you want.

2) Have a supply of Kleenex always handy, in every room in the house, in the car, and, for the ladies, in their purses (also a helpful aside for the ladies, two words to remember, an absolute necessity: Waterproof Mascara!). I was lucky enough to have a bereaved parent friend who knew that I had a knack for forgetting to put Kleenex in my purse so she would carry an extra purse-size packet for me too. You just never know when a grief storm will hit and it's good to be prepared. And if you can find them, preferably get ones with Aloe in them.

3) If you want to go to the cemetery multiple times a day, or you like to take a lawn chair and a book and sit at your child's grave site for quiet reflection, go right ahead. Some people will discourage you from this and tell you that it is unnatural and unhealthy to do this. I was five minutes away from the cemetery and in my early grief if the need hit me I could and would go out there whenever I wanted, and that may have been one time or five times in a day, even at midnight. Gradually, without consciously realizing it, my need to be at the cemetery daily became less and less as time went on. I stopped thinking of Nina as being there and more about my belief that wherever I was she was there also.

4) Do whatever you need to do (short of harming yourself or anyone else, of course!) to get through the especially tough times; whether it is the major holidays just around the corner, the first day of school, the change of seasons, or seeing your child's friend graduate/get married/become a parent, or any of the other milestones in life that you weren't privileged to see them accomplish. The best helpful hint here is to do what feels right for you. That can mean that you decide 5 minutes beforehand whether you want to go to an event/celebration or not, and then change your mind again if you need to. And if you find yourself at that event/celebration, feel free to sit close to an exit door or have an escape route so that if you feel you just can't stay then you can leave quickly and quietly. You don't need to explain or make excuses; you have every right in the world to feel how you feel, and do what is best for you. You are truly the only person who knows what that is.

5) Turn to the invaluable voices of experience. For me, I was lucky to have a caring funeral director point me in the direction of The Compassionate Friends, and attending the meetings where I listened to others with a similar loss became a lifeline for me.



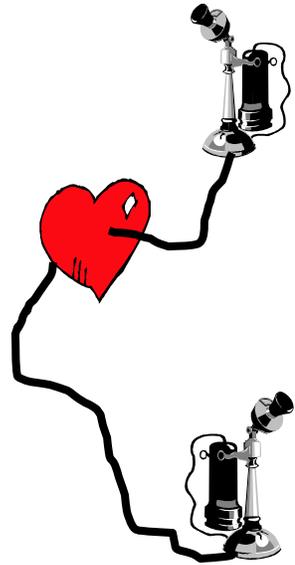
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)366-2085
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
- Sarah Commerford....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



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)

Here is where I learned about the “new normal” and found people who could relate to my grief experiences. These same wonderful people told me that I could talk about Nina all I wanted no matter others reactions. They told me that I never had to “let go” of her memory and that they too bristled at the word “closure” just as I did. Realizing that support groups aren’t for everyone, staying in touch through the newsletter and other grief resources gives you another valuable connection.

Like the above “helpful hints for the bereaved”, I have learned so many things from those I have met from TCF since the unthinkable tragedy of May 11, 1995. Nothing “little” about it, I am eternally grateful for the “...help from my friends.”

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

What Is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow?

Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left.

And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent, to one who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left.

You read books on bereavement scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the questions of what is left?

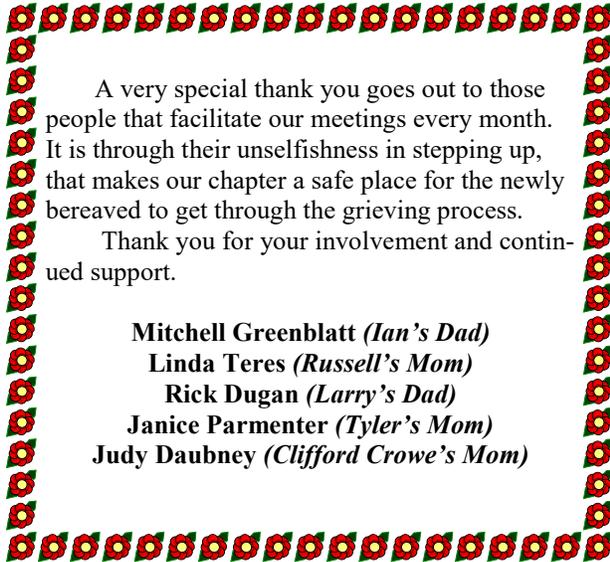
For me it does. The answer was 13 months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That’s it! I *am* left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott’s. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott’s love with you.

Betty Stevens
TCF, Baltimore, MD
In Memory of my son, Scott



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)**

Why We Come

The mind does strange things.

As I sat at the opening ceremony, enthralled by the Love in Motion signing choir's moving rendition of the National Anthem, I was transported back in time. It was 1967, shortly before our deployment to Vietnam. I stood at attention with 500 Marines as the National Anthem introduced a film, *Why We Fight*. Some version of this has been shown to four generations of young men about to be sent into harm's way. Its purpose was to explain to us why we were there and what we were fighting for.

The crowd's applause snapped me back into the present. I looked around at the throng of people, any with small red hearts, butterflies or various ribbons on their nametags, and I wondered, "Why are we here?" I spent the better part of the next two-and-a-half days trying to discover *Why We Come*.

Although they cannot be neatly boxed and sorted, it appeared to me that there were five major groups of people at the conference. While there is much overlap, each group came for a specific purpose.

The Seekers

"Hope" is a thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops, at all.

Emily Dickinson

The newly bereaved comprise the largest group. They are identified by their haunted expressions and the red hearts on their nametags. "It's been eight months, and I feel as if I'm sinking deeper and deeper into despair." "Will it ever get any better?" "When?" "My future is gone."

"I can't talk to anyone without crying." These were typical comments on Friday of the conference.

By Saturday afternoon there was a perceptible change in many.

"The workshops, the speakers, the music and sharing sessions have given me a small glimmer of hope." "At the Capitol Steps performance I laughed for the first time since Robbie died." "If all these other people can survive, so can I."

And on the Walk to Remember Sunday morning, many with the little red hearts strode with a fresh spring in their steps and a new gleam in their eyes.

The Mending Ones

In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.

Albert Camus

Another large contingent has moved beyond the red heart nametags but are still struggling. They smile spontaneously, but they still tear up easily.

"My husband doesn't understand why I'm still grieving." "My parents are still so depressed. I don't want to add to their burdens." "I turned a corner at last year's conference, but the justice system still sets me back." "I've come a long way, but it's still so hard at times."

This group is plowing through the necessary grief work one difficult step at a time. They know they have made progress, but the future remains daunting. Learning how others with the same problems are coping gives them insight and hope. Their choice of workshops and sharing sessions is now focused on specific problems they are struggling with. One small nugget of wisdom can open new vistas of healing.

Mary told me of just such an epiphany. The workshop presenter had said, "Someday I fully expect Jenny to come up to me and ask, 'Dad, what did you do with the rest of your life after I died?'" "And," he continued, "what am I going to say?" Mary choked up a bit. "When I get home, I'm going to try to live the life Jack would want me to live. I'm going to make him proud."

The Helpers

Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Just walk beside me and be my friend.

Albert Camus

"Jim, what workshop are you going to?" Jim and I had met at our first national conference when we both were wearing the little red hearts. We had renewed our acquaintance every July for the next seven years.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

"I don't do workshops anymore. I've been to them all," he replied. "What do you do?" "I pick up strays." "What do you mean?" I asked. "I just walk around until I see someone with that deer-in-the-headlights look in their eyes and I sit down and talk with them."

Jim is not alone. I know many who do just as he does. They see someone having a hard time in a workshop or sharing session. Afterwards they share a cup of coffee, some stories about their children, and perhaps a tidbit that they found useful during a particularly hard time. I know of no one who gives a workshop for any reason other than to help.

Do these people just need to be needed? I think not. They do this to honor their children. And they remember a time when they were struggling and without hope, and someone took the time to listen. Now, they pass it on.

The Learners

Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.
Proverbs 4:7

A significant number of attendees come primarily to learn. This is where newsletter editors swap ideas and learn their trade. A lady approached me after my homicide workshop. "I'm a chapter leader," she said. "I had never talked with a parent whose child was murdered. Two families have started attending our chapter in the last six months. Could I buy you a cup of coffee and pick your brain for a few minutes?" Many like her attend workshops totally unrelated to their child's death just to learn how to better help those with whom they come in contact. Others come to learn better how to educate church, lay, and professional groups about the grief process following the death of a child.

The Workers

Work is love made visible.
Kahlil Gibran

The Crystal City conference was a stunning success. It's easy to forget how this came about. It didn't just happen, but was accomplished by probably the smallest group numerically. It was the result of a year's work of the conference committee and the local chapters. They stuffed the bags, raised the funds, checked us in, operated the gift shop, served the coffee and did the myriad behind the scenes jobs, large and small, which we who attend little notice but take full advantage of. There are grizzled veterans of ten, fifteen, twenty conferences who ask only one question, "How can I help?"

The Executive Director and staff of the national office are just a blur as they dash from one job to another. The Centering bookstore staff arrives early and leaves late. By Sunday afternoon they are spent and exhausted, but it has been a labor of love.

There are as many reasons for coming as there were attendees. But ultimately the overarching reason is stated in our credo: Our love for our children unites us. And in the end, this is *Why We Come*.

Dr. Richard Dew
TCF Knoxville HOPE Chapter, TN
In Memory of my son, Bradley Dew

Richard Dew's youngest son, Bradley, was 21 when he was murdered. Richard is currently a chapter leader and has served on the National Board of The Compassionate Friends. He is often a workshop presenter at TCF national conferences. He has authored two books, *Rachel's Cry* and *Tunnel of Light*.

Memories . . . A Time for Smiles . . . A Time for Tears

As I wondered in my mind why the ache in my heart was worse than it had been for a while, I suddenly remembered. In my memory I went back to September 20, 1991. It was the last time Greg would be in the hospital. He was five months into his illness.

When Greg's doctor examined him at the clinic, he told Greg that he would have to go into the hospital again. We had long ago lost count of the times he had been in the hospital. When his doctor left the examining room, Greg looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "When is this going to end?" As I put my arms out to him, with tears in my eyes and my heart breaking, I said "I don't know, Greg." He hugged me so tight.



While at work on September 24th, I got a call from Greg's doctor. He said Greg was ready to come home from the hospital. He told me in these exact words, "Greg's heart is failing fast, he is going to die." I will never forget those words for as long as I live. I felt like a knife had been put in my heart.

When I went to the hospital to get Greg, he was sitting in a chair in his room. We looked at each other and I said, "I need a hug!" As my son was hugging me, he said that he didn't want anyone feeling sorry for him. And he wanted to live as normal a life as possible in the time he had left.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Greg chose to die at home. It was his last wish. He was afraid to die alone, but he was never afraid to die. There were many times over the next few months that he said he was ready to die. I promised him that he would not die alone. We were with him day and night.

When I spoke with Greg's doctor a few days later, he told me that when he told Greg he was dying, the most peaceful look came over Greg's face. Greg knew it wouldn't be long and he would be free. He would be at peace and he would no longer be ill.

Three and a half months later, on January 4, 1992, Greg was at last set free. He died peacefully and we had kept our promise. He did not die alone. Our lives changed forever. As I held our son, who was now in God's hands, I didn't think our lives would ever be normal again. Our hearts were broken and part of our future was gone. Though our hearts may never be mended, we have picked up the pieces of our shattered lives and we struggle on. Our life is as normal as it will ever be.

Then there are times like these. A memory bringing me to the brink of tears. Then I wonder if I will ever get through the memories of Greg's illness without tears. There are so many memories of those 8 1/2 months. Some memories make me smile, but most make me cry.

This grief business is a strange thing. It can creep up on me and bring tears, sometimes before I realize why those tears are there. But then I remember, and once again I work my way through it. The ache in my heart isn't as sharp as it used to be, but it isn't gone. It probably never will be.

But our child is gone. How thankful we are to have been Greg's parents. How thankful we are that Greg gave us 20 years of memories. Twenty years of love.

**Jean Van Ruth
TCF, of Madison, WI
In Memory of my son, Greg**

An Ugly Pair of Shoes *Author Unknown*

I am wearing a pair of shoes.
They are ugly shoes.
Uncomfortable Shoes.
I hate my shoes.
Each day I wear them, and each day I wish I had another pair.
Some days my shoes hurt so bad that I do not think I can take another step.
Yet, I continue to wear them.
I get funny looks wearing these shoes.
They are looks of sympathy.

I can tell in others eyes that they are glad they are my shoes and not theirs.

They never talk about my shoes.

To learn how awful my shoes are might make them uncomfortable.

To truly understand these shoes you must walk in them. But, once you put them on, you can never take them off.

I now realize that I am not the only one who wears these shoes.

There are many pairs in the world.

Some women are like me and ache daily as they try and walk in them.

Some have learned how to walk in them so they don't hurt quite as much.

Some have worn the shoes so long that days will go by before they think of how much they hurt.

No woman deserves to wear these shoes.

Yet, because of the shoes I am a stronger woman.

These shoes have given me the strength to face anything.

They have made me who I am.

I will forever walk in the shoes of a woman who has lost a child.

Forget Me Not

Forget me not, for I am with you
In the beat of your heart In the depth of your soul, too
Forgive my parting too soon and leaving you there
Feel my presence in your next breath on the whisper of your prayer

My spirit is with you on good and bad days
I share each moment with you still

Let me count the ways

Cry for my help when you need to and reach for my hand

I will be there to lift you up when you can not stand
Live each day in the moment and remember to smile
I will be waiting for our reunion, it will just be awhile
Forget me not for whatever you do, is a reflection of me...

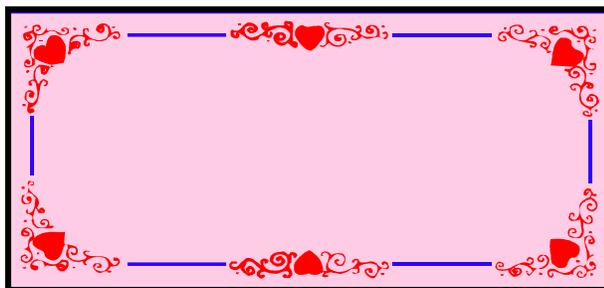
my memory is living in you

By Christine Lechowicz

*A friend is one who knows you as you are . . .
Understands where you've been . . .
Accepts who you've become
And still gently invites you to grow.*

author unknown

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



*This newsletter is printed
through the generosity of
The Copy Stop
Milford, MA*

Address Correction Requested

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.”*