

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child.

BRANDYWINE HUNDRED CHAPTER

www.BrandywineTCF.org

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June 2011

The Father's Grief

At my second meeting of The Compassionate Friends three years ago, one of the mothers said how nice it was to see a man attending, since "men grieve differently from women."

Her remark was no doubt meant to help put me at ease. I hadn't said a thing so far, and might have been intimidating in my silence. But it caught me off guard. What I was feeling after George's death was so absolute, so awful, how could it possibly come with any "differences?" Would one grieve differently for an infant than for an adolescent? For a son than for a daughter? Surely grief was absolute for both mothers and fathers.

Over time I came to acknowledge the differences the well-meaning mother had in mind:

- ◆ Neither I nor the other men who occasionally attended talked much; the women talked freely.
- ◆ I sensed I was better at compartmentalizing my grief than the mothers, better at keeping a lid on it socially and at work.
- ◆ My male friends seemed less comfortable talking about George, bringing up his name or even looking at his pictures than female friends.
- ◆ I came to see how intensely I felt I had let my son down as his protector, the father's primary role.

Shortly after becoming editor of my chapter newsletter, I sent a copy to my friend Jack Knebel in California. Jack and his wife, Linda, had been involved with a TCF chapter after the death of their daughter, Hollis. He replied, "It's good to see that a man is taking an active role in the group." Then he went on to write movingly about those male-female grieving differences. The rest of his letter, which touched me deeply, follows:

"... Several years after Hollis died, Linda and

I were being trained by TCF to be "buddies" to newly bereaved parents. One of the exercises was to list all the unhelpful things that others had said in trying to comfort us, so that we wouldn't make the same mistakes. The other trainees, all women, made long lists and did it with enthusiasm. When the lists were read aloud, they nodded knowingly at every entry and eventually hooted and howled with derision at the worse (some of which were pretty bad). When it came my turn, I held up an empty page and said:

"People may have said such things to me. I just don't recall. What I do remember is that people tried to tell me how sad they were for us, how much they loved Hollis and how much they cared about us. I remember one of my partners hugging me in the halls of my very stiff and proper law firm. I remember men who had never told me anything more personal than their reactions to a Giant's loss crying at our loss and their fears.

"You women are used to talking about your emotions and about personal things. I wasn't and my friends weren't either. So the fact that we could do so was a great gift, and it wasn't marred in the slightest by someone's choice of words.

"Now the shell has been broken and I find it easier to talk about my emotions, my hopes and fears, about those things that are really important. And that for me was one of Hollis' greatest gifts.

"I know that even after George's death, he is a major part of your life. My guess is that you're becoming more open to the gifts that he and those who care about you are able to give.

"With compassion and friendship, Jack"

David Pellegrin TCF, Honolulu, HI

This newsletter is sponsored by
Tina Terry
in memory of Tiffany Hutchinson
2/16/1986 - 6/20/2008



To Our Forgettable Angel Up Above,
We Love & Miss You Deeply,
Even Though Your Not Here,
We Learned To Cherish One Another
& Our Memories
Love Mom, Asia, & Cin Cin

This newsletter is sponsored by
Debbie & George Ferguson
in memory of Kim
8/15/1970 - 4/2/2001



We miss you more than words can say.
Love from your whole family.

LOVE GIFTS

This month we thank the following
for their continued support of our local chapter

Steven & Victoria Conley
in memory of their son Shawn
Steven & Eileen Grimshaw
in memory of their daughter Katherine
Bud & Jane Hurlock
in memory of their daughter Elizabeth
Michael & Mary Kolodziejcki
in memory of children gone too soon
Charles & Tina Mitchell
in memory of their son Brian
Judy Pantalino
in memory of her son Jimmy
Lee Wickham
in memory of his son David

If you would like to send a donation please send it to:
TCF
PO Box 114
Rockland, DE 19732
make check payable to
The Compassionate Friends.

Newsletter Sponsorship Criteria:

We are now accepting 2 sponsors per month.
\$100 Donation to BHCTCF Newsletter
(this still only covers part of cost)
Email a jpeg photo of your child
or send a photo.
Include a short note to go with the photo.
Please submit by the 1st of the month
preceding the newsletter (i.e. May 1st
for the June Newsletter).
Or earlier if you want a specific month.

E-mail: othellTCF@verizon.net
Phone: 656-9288

Did You Know?

**You can make a donation to our chapter
through your United Way Donation.**

**We are a “write-in agency” therefore, please
write on the pledge card
The Compassionate Friends, Inc. (TCF)
Code number 9016
PO Box 114
Rockland, DE 19732-0114**

June Calendar

June 14th

6:30 pm Social Time with **Birthday Cake**
To celebrate June birthdays
7 pm Meeting - General Sharing

June 28th

7 pm General Sharing

July 15 - 17

34th National Conference, Minnesota
Make reservation ASAP!
Contact Othell for details

July 17th

10 AM Local Walk - Banning Park

Local TCF Walk

July 17th
Banning Park Pavilion
Boxwood Rd & Route 4
(S. Maryland Ave)

Meet & Register 10 am
Walk 10:30 am

Lunch Hotdogs
Hamburgers

We need to order food & balloons etc.
Shirts are available for \$15
So please,

RSVP Patti Still
8 Alvil Road.
Wilmington, DE 19808
998-6996
or
Othell at 656-9288

Let us know

if you would like to bring a side dish
Also Shirt Size and quantity

Enclosed is a
Walk To Remember Sheet
If you can not join the walk,
but would like to send a donation,
we will add your child's name to the banner.
This is a way to let
your friends & neighbors
know about TCF and
to help the chapter
raise some money.

Birthday Cake

Provided by Othell



Nancy Taylor
(Suicide & Only Child)
234-1654

Mary Mullin
(Suicide)
(610) 497-3447

Mary Welch
(Long Term Illness)
(302)475-7050

Need someone to talk with?
Having a bad day?
Give us a call.
We also suffered
the loss of a child.
So we know you are in pain.
We care about you
and want to help

Where Do We Meet?

Brandywine Valley Baptist Church
7 Mt. Lebanon Road

From I 95
go north on US 202 (Concord Pike)
Turn left onto Mt. Lebanon Rd.
Church is on right side of road
next to the YMCA.
Parking lot and entrance
in the back of the church.

SCHEDULED MEETINGS:

Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.
on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month

MEETING PLACE:

Brandywine Valley Baptist Church
7 Mt. Lebanon Road

DIRECTIONS:

From I 95 go north on US 202 (Concord Pike)
Turn left onto Mt. Lebanon Road.
Church is on right side of road next to the YMCA.
Parking lot and entrance in the back of the church.

June Children Gone Too Soon

BIRTHS	
CHARLIE ANDREWS	June 28
PAUL BARON	June 15
MACOLM BROWN	June 24
MICHAEL COLLINS	June 01
SHAWN CONLEY	June 15
ALLISON DeMAIO	June 01
STEVEN GERACIMOS	June 27
SHAUN GRANT	June 13
MARK HANAK	June 29
JEFF KRONFELD	June 13
PAUL MCCUSKER	June 29
JENNIFER NEYMAN	June 12
KATHY NULL	June 18
SCOTT POLASKI	June 30
NICHOLAS REGER	June 23
JAMES RIEDY	June 09
LOUIS SPADACCINI	June 01
NICHOLAS STIRPARO	June 16
JAKE TERRY	June 10
BILLY THOMAS	June 24
JOHN WYRE	June 08

DEATHS	
RUSTY BAIOTTO	June 28
GABRIEL BOWMAN	June 12
SHANTAL CACHO	June 03
MICHAEL COLLINS	June 27
MICHAEL FITZPATRICK	June 04
ANNA GALLAGHER	June 17
ANGEL GARRETT	June 09
LAURA GOVATOS	June 01
ELIZABETH HURLOCK	June 19
TIFFANY HUTCHINSON	June 20
LISA KIRK	June 13
JEFF KRONFELD	June 26
JEFFREY KULAS	June 05
KEVIN KWIATKOWSKI	June 09
BRIAN LEE	June 17
WENDY MILLER	June 15
JOSHUA MILLER	June 06
BRIAN MITCHELL	June 10
MARK MULLIN	June 14
JAMES RIEDY	June 14
TRAVIS SAVORY	June 25
MICHAEL SHAW	June 15
KIMBERLY SIMIONE	June 28
EDWARD SKLODOWSKI	June 23
ROB WELDON	June 10
MAYA WILLIAMS	June 28

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while and leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same.

Let me know if you find an error or omission.
Othell1@verizon.net

Men Do Cry

I heard quite often "men don't cry"
though no one ever told me why.
So when I fell and skinned a knee,
no one came by to comfort me.

And when some bully-boy at school
would pull a prank so mean and cruel,
I'd quickly learn to turn and quip,
"It doesn't hurt:" and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years,
I learned to stifle any tears.
Though "Be a big boy" it began,
quite soon I learned to "Be a man."

And I could play that stoic role
while storm and tempest wracked my soul.
No pain or setback could there be
could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby
and helplessly watched my son die.
And quickly found, to my surprise,
that all that tear less talk was lies.

And still I cry, and have no shame.
I cannot play that "big boy" game.
And openly, without remorse,
I let my sorrow takes its course.

So those of you who can't abide
a man you've seen who's often cried,
reach out to him with all your heart
as one whose life's been torn apart.

For men DO cry when they can see
their loss of immortality.
And tears will come in endless streams
when mindless fate destroys their dreams

Written by Ken Falk, Northwest Connecticut Chapter TCF

Advice For The Bereaved

Realize and recognize the loss.
Take time for nature's slow, sure, stuttering process
of healing.
Give yourself massive doses of restful relaxation
and routine busy-ness.
Know that powerful, overwhelming feelings will
lessen with time.
Be vulnerable, share your pain, and be humble
enough to accept support.
Surround yourself with life, plants, animals, and
friends.
Use mementos to help your mourning, not to live
in the dead past.
Avoid rebound relationships, big decisions, and
anything addictive.
Keep a diary and record successes, memories, and
struggles.
Prepare for change, new interests, new friends,
solitude, creativity, growth.

Grief

GRIEF is sometimes silent - like snowflakes
falling on a dark winter's night - but never
peaceful or serene or pretty like the pure white
snow. When grief is silent, the tears seem to
turn to ice, like the snowflakes, before they
reach our eyes.

GRIEF is sometimes raging - like a monstrous
thunderstorm - with all its fury and bolts of
lightning striking our hearts at every angle.
When grief is raging, the tears come in torrents
like the rain and flood our soul.

GRIEF: Whether it be silent or raging ... IT
HURTS.

Verna Smith, TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

Preview

TCF National Conference

Mary Rondeau Westra, recently published her memoir *After the Murder of My Son*, created following the senseless and brutally violent death of her son Peter in 2001. She has written numerous short stories and articles for grief publications and presented at the Art of Recovery Workshop sponsored by the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Office of Justice Programs. **Mary will be the Sunday closing ceremony speaker**

Book Review

After the Murder of My Son

Mary Rondeau Westra

Reviewed by Carol Hoyer, PhD

No parent should ever lose a child to death regardless of the circumstances, but for Mary and Mark Westra their child should have never been kicked to death. How do you handle the news that your child has died when you just saw him a few days before? How do you get the real information of what happened and what do you do when the justice system lets you down?

The Westra's were a wonderful, close knit family who enjoyed doing things together. The parents were always loving and understanding of their children. Their son Peter was a successful investment banker in New York; he was handsome, fun and loved life. After he attended his grandmother's 90th birthday celebration, he flew to Atlantic City to meet college buddies for a bachelor party. Even though the place chosen to party wasn't something Peter or his friends normally did, they were having fun and not bothering anyone. And as Mary says "does it really matter where the party was or if the young men were drinking?" What really is important is what happened when Peter and a bouncer got into a conflict and Peter ended up being stomped to death and left in the gutter.

Even though the actual events were hard to come by, the bouncers went to trial. Trials in themselves are torture in that you have to recount in detail what others think happened. How do you sit there and listen to the inhumane events? The Westra family was still grieving and had a hard time trying to understand how someone could so callously take the life of another human being. Even though the system is in place to take care of the victim, sometimes it fails and those who are perpetrators get off with little or no prison time.

"After the Murder of My Son" is a wonderful memoir about the process of grief, shock and finally some healing. It is told with great passion, honesty and emotion. You can feel the family's pain, and how they eventually began to help others who have had the same thing happen to their child. Mary takes her grief and healing and puts it to a good use to remember her son and others. Readers will be stunned at what happens in the criminal justice system and question everything that was done in the trial and leading up to the trial

Thank You

TCF Founder, Rev. Simon Stevens & all TCF

for

Tender

HOPE

when I believed in none anywhere.

REASSURANCE

I'm not "crazy"! Confusion, displacement, preoccupation, forgetfulness, timelessness, panic, my journeys into hell - all part of "normal" parental grieving. OK to feel and express feeling, or remain silent.

ENERGY

An infusion via newsletters, a note or phone call when I'm exhausted, depleted, flat, not able and not caring to function.

UNDERSTANDING

my bitterness and rage, there by miraculously reducing both.

CONTINUING GENTLE REMINDER

to accept that most despairing of facts - my child died!

WATCHFULNESS

Strive not to get stuck in denial, anger, etc. My child would not want this for me.

RESPITE

a release of tension from desperately "holding myself together" .

COMPASSION

" I know your pain". TCF members truly do.

FORGIVENESS OF SELF

for real and imagined commissions and omissions as I'm forced to review my life, accept my humanity.

Comforting

LOVE

doesn't die. My significant others do not replace my child but do expand my caring.

SELF ESTEEM

Slow rebuilding of a destroyed self. I will be worthwhile again and able to help others someday.

AWARENESS

I am blessed! - My child lived and we loved.

FAITH

My child, and your child, is in another dimension in peace and love.

SHARING

I'm not alone. In my stark despair, others reach out or will reach out. Grief is very personal, but others are in a parallel lane.

ENCOURAGEMENT

I'll fall back but I'll move forward again.

PATIENCE

First with myself, then with others; only Time, Time, Time can dull this agony.

REFUTES

my desire for and attempts at isolation.

ACCEPTANCE

I'm a different self forever -the death of my child was the death of so much of me.

HUMOR

can again be part of me despite the underlying devastation, the never ending awareness of this most searing, irreplaceable loss. My child smiles with me.

THANK YOU - TCF LEADERS

for giving so much of yourselves, for all your work behind the scenes.

Friendship

*Ellen Bruno / Valley Forge, PA TCF
dedicated to her son J.B. who died at the age
of 29 of a massive heart attack 9/15/84*



The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
Brandywine Hundred Chapter
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**Please join us in our
WALK at Banning Park
Sunday, July 17th
at 10 AM.**

**By walking, you let others
know you want to keep
alive the memories you
and others shared of your
sibling.**

**Sibling
Page**

**Please RSVP so we will know
how many will be there.**

