

## 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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March 2011

Dear Louis,

All these months since February 5, 2004, in this wilderness of my grief, from time to time I think of what my day was like on that fateful Thursday when you left us. I recall that it was a most pleasant day for me, and I've always marveled that a day like that could end with the horror of losing you.

I remember lying by the pool in the Florida sun feeling ever so peaceful. Later, in the evening, I had a few of those rare moments when I was overtaken with a blessed feeling of well-being. I was grateful for this, since I had such a sense of foreboding about the whole trip because of my concern for you.

Today, as I prepared dinner, I was suddenly struck by the thought that perhaps my tranquility that day had nothing to do with a false sense of security, or the calm before the storm, as I've thought since then. What if my moment of deepest peace was the moment your spirit left this Vale of Tears and stepped into Paradise? What if you were so astonished by that Realm of Light that your rapture reverberated through the one who bore you? What if it was your joyous farewell, your safe-landing call, to your devoted mother, your kindred spirit?



I spoke aloud. "Lou, is it true, was that you?" I went to the refrigerator, plastered with magnetic frames, and picked up a school-days picture of you. When I put it back, the picture kept moving inside the frame. It would not stay in the center. This happened three or four times. I said to you "Is that a yes?"

Others may call me fanciful or over-imaginative, or even crazy, but I know you spoke to me, dear one, and it was one of the most tender consolations I have received in the past twenty months. This will be my new reality, going forward - these bright thoughts mingled in with the sadness of losing you.

I like to think you had a pretty good ride here, even though the dark days were difficult.

1

"Send me out into another life, Lord, because this one is growing faint;  
I do not think it goes all the way."

W. S. Merwin

Your loving mother (Barbara Spadaccini)

## GIFTS of LOVE

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

Kelvin & Karen Cacho  
in memory of Their daughter Shantal  
Walter & Jean Ehmann  
in memory of their son Smauel Collins  
Caroline Figenshu  
in memory of her daughters  
Donna, Laura & Paula Kelly  
Tim & Karen Kelly  
in memory of her son Kyle Kirk  
Jane Keough  
in memory of her daughter Kathleen Pepe  
Dave & Meg Kinsler  
in memory of their son David  
Robert Klotz Sr.  
in memory of his son Rob Jr.  
Mike & Barbara Plummer  
in memory of their son Andy  
Ron & Fran Miller  
in memory of their daughter Emma Marie  
Jane Terry  
in memory of her son Jake  
Hank & Rosanne Teszner  
in memory of their daughter Stacy Lynn

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

### Newsletter Sponsorship Criteria:

We are now accepting 2 sponsors/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.  
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This newsletter is sponsored by  
Meg & Dave Kinsler  
in memory of our son  
David 3/29/1966-2/6/2003



You've been gone for 14 years  
and we've missed you every day.  
Until we meet again, Mom & Dad

This newsletter is sponsored by  
Michael and Clare Dunning  
In loving memory of our daughter  
Laura S. Samuel  
3/29/1966-2/6/2003



With her beloved Will.  
You are always with us through Will and Abbey.

# MARCH CALENDAR

## March 8th

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

## March 22nd

**6:30 pm** **Socialize Pre-Meeting**  
7 pm Meeting - **“Show & Tell”**  
Bring something about your child to share with us.  
It can be anything that has a special meaning to you: clothing, toys, photo, gift, sports, card.

## TCF 34TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The conference will be held in Minneapolis/St. Paul July 15-17, 2011. You will find it to be another great conference with around 100 workshops, sharing sessions, special keynote speakers, a completely stocked bookstore, special Friday evening entertainment and a Remembrance Candle Lighting. TCF's Walk to Remember will be held Sunday morning.

**Room Reservations are now being accepted** at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South for those planning to attend. Specially negotiated rates are available only for those attending the national conference: Room rate is \$129 per night for a King Room or Double Bed Room, single or double occupancy; \$139 for triple and \$149 for quad. These reduced rates are available on stays from July 10- 19 if the reservation is placed by June 21 (subject to availability). Telephone 952-835-7800 and mention you are with The Compassionate Friends. Arrangements are being made for free shuttle pick-up between the hotel and the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport (there will also be shuttles during the confer-



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

**Othell & Bill Heaney**  
**(Sudden Death & Suicide)**  
**(302) 656-9288**

**Mary Mullin**  
**(Suicide)**  
**(610) 497-3447**

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

**Nancy Taylor**  
**(Suicide & Only Child)**  
**234-1654**

### 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 Rd.  
Church is on right side of road next to the YMCA.  
Parking lot and entrance in the back of the church.

## Thank You

To Shelly Dolan for donating Button Machine for our use. We are looking for a volunteer to make buttons from children's pictures.

Thanks also to Kevin Dolan for storing a cabinet full of items during church renovations. We hope the church will soon have room for our cabinet.

# March Children

# Gone Too Soon

BIRTHS	
WALTER CHANNELL	March 27
TRAVIS EDWARDS	March 13
STEPHEN ELLING	March 20
MAURICE FAULKNER	March 24
LAURA GOVATOS	March 17
PATRICIA C. HALL	March 28
BRYAN HOLLAND	March 20
ROBERT KLOTZ	March 25
BRIAN LEE	March 11
LYNN MIRABILE	March 11
DAVID MORRIS	March 11
ANDREW PLUMMER	March 05
NATHAN SALVATO	March 24
LAURA SAMUEL	March 29
LEWIS SINCLAIR, II	March 05
DREW SOPIRAK	March 24
AMY STEVENS	March 21
MARIKEN STRAUB-KESSLER	March 30
ROBIN THOMAS	March 12
JEFFREY VALENTINE	March 12

DEATHS	
JEREMY BOWDEN	March 04
STEPHEN DONAHUE, JR	March 12
KENNY DUNN, Jr	March 12
KEVIN HEANEY	March 10
EDDIE HOPKINS	March 07
PAULA KELLY	March 07
DAVID KINSLER. JR	March 05
DANIEL LANGLEY	March 21
KATHY NULL	March 17
DREW OETZEL	March 17
JOE PINI	March 06
SCOTT POLASKI	March 10
CATHERINE POLISKI	March 14
BRUNO RACHIELE	March 17
JACKIE SEEMAN	March 04
ROBERT SEIDEMAN	March 21
JIM SNAVELY	March 26
JAKE TERRY	March 05
DAVID VASSALOTTI	March 24
JOHN ANTHONY WYRE	March 17

# Don't Tell Me

Don't tell me that you understand,  
 don't tell me that you know,  
 Don't tell me that I will survive,  
 how I will surely grow.  
 Don't tell me this is just a test,  
 that I am truly blessed,  
 That I am chosen for this task,  
 apart from all the rest.  
 Don't come at me with answers  
 that can only come from me,  
 Don't tell me how my grief will pass,  
 that I will soon be free.

Don't stand in pious judgment of the bonds  
 I must untie,  
 Don't tell me how to suffer,  
 don't tell me how to cry.  
 My life is filled with selfishness,  
 my pain is all I see,  
 But I need you, I need your love,  
 unconditionally.  
 Accept me in my ups and downs,  
 I need someone to share,  
 Just hold my hand and let me cry, and say,  
 "My friend, I really do care."

**I shall pass through this world but once;  
Any good I can do  
Or any kindness I can show  
Let me do it now.  
Let me not defer or neglect it,  
For I shall not pass this way again.**

## **Sand & Stone**

A story tells of two friends who were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand:

**TODAY MY BEST FRIEND  
SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE.**

They kept on walking until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but the friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone:

**TODAY MY BEST FRIEND  
SAVED MY LIFE.**

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you write on a stone, why?" The other friend replied "When someone hurts us we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

**LEARN TO WRITE YOUR HURTS IN THE SAND  
AND TO CARVE YOUR BENEFITS IN STONE.**

**What matters is that  
we be compassionate  
with ourselves,  
with our grief,  
and with the grief of others like us.  
This truly is a living memorial  
to our dead children  
and one of the deepest expressions  
of our abiding love for them**



## **Later Courtney**

A Mother Says Goodbye  
by Susan Evans

The author's adult daughter, Courtney, was killed at the age of 22 in an automobile accident. She was supposed to be on her way to meet her parents to go skiing. Susan Evans tells the story of the accident and the details provided to her by the police. She relates the anger, the questions that ran through her mind, and the surprising calmness she experienced. She was astounded by her ability to take charge and do what needed to be done.

This little book, only 41 pages, tells of her feelings, her frustration with the comments and awkwardness of others, and her many attempts to make sense of her grief. After Courtney's death, Susan wrote frantically. She wrote down every memory, every conversation, and every event she could remember. She admittedly wrote to keep Courtney alive, as a way to fight through the horror, and as a protective barrier against being swallowed up by the grief. Her experiences, from the first call, what she thought, what she felt, and what she wished she had done differently, were all written down. In this booklet she shares all of those writings with us. Sometimes she writes as if she were having a conversation with Courtney, so the reader is able to get a glimpse of the relationship she had with her daughter.

Any parent who has lost an adult child has walked in this mother's shoes. What she writes, what she thinks and feels, makes perfect sense. Same story, different people. One line I particularly liked was, "Maybe I'll just get too worn out to keep feeling this bad".

What was different about this book, and the thing that makes it worth recommending, is that Susan Evans wrote this as she lived it. It's raw, real, and easy to read. And we all felt the same many times, in many ways. She wrote, "It's selfish, you know, this grieving. I say I'm sad you didn't get to live your life, but the tears are really for me. I'm the one who has to keep going." Now, how true is that?

This report submitted by Meg Kinsler.  
The paperback book is available in our Chapter library.  
It is also for sale at Amazon.com for \$4.95.

# We Need Not Walk Alone

By Richard Edler

## Editor's Note:

Usually, we avoid lengthy articles. We hope you agree, this one, written by former president of TCF was worth the exception.

In a tape called "To Touch A Grieving Heart" there is a wonderful reminder of the Winnie the Pooh story by A. A. Milne. Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbits hole he gets stuck tight - so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and, offer words of comfort - and thus to help "a bear wedged in great tightness."

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think grief is like being "a bear wedged in great tightness." And while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that "we need not walk alone. "

I am centering my thoughts around the TCF creed. It is the centerpiece of what brings us together in this club with the highest dues in the world. The creed was written by TCF Board President Joe Rousseau in the early 1980's. In our chapter the reading of the creed opens each meeting. It always begins the same way ...

**We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate**

**Friends.** These ten words are also how the creed ends. They represent the single thought that bookends our philosophy. We may be wedged in great tightness like Pooh bear, but we have others beside us. I think a key word for me in this first sentence is the simple word: walk. As Charles Heuser, a minister in Oregon, once said, "When you grieve you have to *walk* through the valley, you cannot camp there."

**Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, . .**

**We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes.**

At our regular meeting I looked around at the circle. The ages of the children and siblings lost ranged in age from five months to 46 years. The causes included car accidents, a jet ski accident, a boulder that fell on a car, cancer, heart attack, murder, airplane crash, suicide, drug overdose, drive-by shooting, sniper fire, AIDS, drowning, falling. What a list. What a club. Why does the creed point out the range of ages and causes? Why

do we go around the room and tell how our child died? I think it is for several important and healing reasons. Telling our story gradually lets the truth in to ourselves. Second, there is a healing catharsis in telling our story to people who care and will listen "with love and understanding." And by telling our story we remind everyone else in the room that they also are not alone. And finally, I think we tell our stories because they need to be told long after the rest of the world has gone on and doesn't want to hear them.

**- - but our love for our children unites us. Your pain becomes my pain.- - just as your hope becomes my hope.**

I know that hollow empty feeling that won't stop. I know your pain and I also know your hope. I understand why you have butterflies all over your house. You understand why I have them on my tie tonight "I know how you feel" - - the single most often spoken five words in this organization, and the most important.

**We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.**

Before TCF I had rarely met

any new acquaintance without finding out what he or she "does" in the first five minutes. Not so with TCF. In my own chapter both I and most of the other members do not know or care what each other "does" for a living. Instead, we are instantly bound at the heart. Race doesn't matter. Creed doesn't matter. All masks are checked at the door. We know what matters. We know what doesn't because we know what is irreplaceable.

**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 we feel helpless and see no hope.**

Look what has happened to our concept of time. Being young or old no longer matters - - it is replaced by the day the world stopped. Time is now forever divided into those two distinct demarcations-before and after - - and measured by "how long it has been since our child died."

**Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace**

We are a non-sectarian organization. We expound no religion. And our creed holds out all options as okay. Yet there it is - this mention of faith right up front in the creed. Why? I think it is because, while we expound no religion at TCF, we deeply embrace spirituality.

Rev. Richard Gilbert of Valparaiso, Indiana, a frequent TCF resource, suggests the difference between spirituality and religion - "Spirituality is the coffee and religion is the cup it comes in. Too many people are walking around with an empty cup." I'm not sure God cares what building you talk to Him from or what cup you hold. Like most of you, I can't figure it all out. But I can figure out enough to trust that I will see Mark again. I think Alfred Lord Tennyson said it best: *Because of what I can see, I trust in what I can not see.*

**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 our children.**

In sharing there is healing. Perhaps the one universal truth about support groups of all kinds is that when you reach out to help someone else, you help yourself. Who helped you? You can't say thank you enough, so you just try to pass it on to others.

**We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and 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.**

At first we see no tomorrows and want none. The concept of a

"future" is just getting through the next hour, then the next day, then a week, perhaps. Gradually we begin to let go of our single-minded focus on the death and begin to cherish the memories we have. We go through the grief wheel cycles of anger guilt, disorganization, and finally reorganization. Eventually we do reenter life, but at a different point and as different people than went into the valley. We will never again be the person that we were the moment before we got the call, saw the accident. met the doctor, felt the life go out, found the body, answered the doorbell, walked into the room, heard the sirens, held the hand, said good-bye. This new life will never be like the old. Gradually, we begin to look ahead, not backward. We come to realize that the simple truth is that our children are gone, and we have to put our lives back together or throw them away And so we go forward, step by step, realizing it is toward a different life and that we are now different people.

**We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.**

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# Questions and Answers

Compiled by Bereaved Families of Ontario



**Q)** "I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am."

**A)** Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

**Q)** "Why do I feel so empty?"

**A)** Sometimes we try too hard to control our feelings. This is especially true with pain. It is normal to long for the return of someone you

love, and to feel sad, angry, and even to cry. These are all painful emotions. To try not to feel, Leaves you empty. Other people can help you to ease the pain. Seek out a sensitive friend, a friend's parents, a sympathetic teacher, a counselor, a group of people who have experienced these feelings.

**Q)** "All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control my crying."

**A)** You have the freedom to cry when you need to - and to leave the room when you wish.