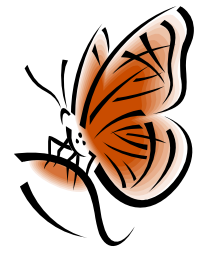




# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

December, 2015 Newsletter



A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents



## Chapter Leader Notes from Toni

It is difficult to celebrate the holidays when you have lost a loved one. Holidays magnify the loss. I recently read an article that said that grief is your truth and to pretend that you are not grieving during the holidays will worsen the pain. It is the pain that you want to minimize, not the grief. Grief is the way out of pain. It was suggested to "lean into the pain." **Grief is our internal feelings and mourning is our external expression** of that grief.

So try to "lean into" your true feelings of grief over the holidays by allowing yourself and others to participate in a prayer before a holiday dinner, which includes your loved one or light a candle at the dinner table in memory of your child or sibling. You can have a prayer said or flowers donated at your church or synagogue in your loved one's name or ask family and friends to share a story about your loved one.

If your presence is required at a holiday gathering about which you are unsure, have a Plan B. It may be something of an escape plan but that's ok. Tell your family ahead of time that your time with them may be brief and then go to a movie or read a book at home.

Feel free to cancel the holiday altogether. It will always come around next year and you may be better equipped to handle it then. Leaving town during the holidays is another way manage the pain of it.

The holidays will never be the same for you. So you can take this as a time to create a new tradition or modify the old traditions to fit your new family dynamic. Most importantly, there is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays.

Remember to be gentle with yourself and protect your fragile feelings and frame of mind. Do only what will serve your heart and soul and your loss. This isn't selfish. It is learning skills for physical and emotional health after the death of your child or sibling. The holidays are some of the most difficult periods of time that grieving individuals and families experience.

Wishing you the most gentle of holidays,

Toni

## WHEN WINTER COMES

By Glenda Fulton Davis

When winter comes into our lives  
With its uncertain sound  
To strip us of our warmth and joy,  
Our petals on the ground,  
We may be tempted to give up;  
To fold beneath life's storm  
We may be tempted to forsake  
The hope which keeps us warm.  
But, we must learn to stand up tall;  
To always face the sun,  
And patiently await the day  
When winter's work is done.  
For winter winds will cease to howl,  
The snows will melt away.  
Then we shall see the beauty of  
Another summer's day.  
And we will have renewed our strength  
When summer's wind first blows,  
For God will whisper once again  
The promise of a rose.

~reprinted from St. Louis Chapter of Bereaved Parents  
Newsletter November/December 2006





## GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given \* the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of your chapters. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Thanks to Astrid Reinhard  
for her donation  
in loving memory of  
Sven Christain Reinhard

"Gifts of Love" in remembering our children and siblings help to pay for Newsletters, Postage, Books for our Lending Libraries and Resources, Memorial Services, Candle Lightings, Telephone and Outreach, and Dues to the National TCF Office. Thank you.

## Meetings

### Northern Illinois Chapter TCF December 19 – 7:30 p.m.

Millburn Congregational Church  
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL  
Open discussion & Show & Tell

"Bring any memento, photo, toy, artwork, writings, etc. of your loved one and share it and its significance to you with the group"

### Waukegan meeting

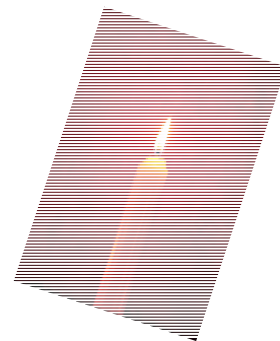
January 2 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m

Holy Family Church  
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL  
Meeting room Room 4.

Entrance by church office then down the hall to Room 4 on right.

"Tenemos un cuarto nuevo para las reuniones- Salon 4. Entre por la oficina de la iglesia y sigue en el pasillo al Salon 4.

## Holiday Lights



During the holiday season, both Christians and Jews light candles in celebration of their respective faiths, and as they do so, even the darkest of rooms become warm and bright from the glow of the candle. Then, we can ask ourselves how powerful and sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle?

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us, and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of winter night, we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as Compassionate Friends must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but, oh, we need that little bit so badly.

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much. □ TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.

Bettye and Sam Rosenberg

Loving borrowed from The Compassionate Friends of the Greater Kankakee Area – December 2015



## OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN DECEMBER & JANUARY

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, as long as we remember them and celebrate their lives. Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered.

[vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) - 847-573-1055

### BIRTHDAYS

<b>Joey Frase</b>	<b>December 11</b>	Son of Cathy Frase
<b>Anthony Clemente</b>	<b>December 12</b>	Son of Becky Wolf
<b>Ryan James Nichols</b>	<b>December 12</b>	Son of Jackie & Jim Nichols
<b>Kerrin Fleming</b>	<b>December 16</b>	Son of Barbara Fleming
<b>Zack A Maslanich</b>	<b>December 18</b>	Son of Karen Zimmerman
<b>Mark Yates</b>	<b>December 20</b>	Son of Linda Hegg
<b>Barry J Grazier</b>	<b>December 22</b>	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
<b>Anna Smith Miller</b>	<b>January 3</b>	Daughter of Carol Smith
<b>Tim Curtis</b>	<b>January 4</b>	Son of Sonya Curtis
<b>Michael Lee Brandon Frederick Hamilton</b>	<b>January 13</b>	Son of Jan Frederick Grandson of Sharon Frederick
<b>Matthew Tisch</b>	<b>January 17</b>	Son of William & Barbara Tisch
<b>Brain Scott Engle</b>	<b>January 19</b>	Son of Louise Engle
<b>Sandra Elena Varela</b>	<b>January 31</b>	Daughter of Sandra Prez

### ANNIVERSARIES

<b>Mike Reardon</b>	<b>December 6</b>	Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon
<b>Andrew Muno</b>	<b>December 15</b>	Son of Darlene Muno
<b>Scott Ewing</b>	<b>December 16</b>	Son of Alan & Renee Ewing
<b>Rachel Elizabeth Szech</b>	<b>January 2</b>	Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech
<b>Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth</b>	<b>January 16</b>	Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise
<b>Joey Frase</b>	<b>January 20</b>	Son of Cathy Frase
<b>Alyssa Carranza</b>	<b>January 22</b>	Daughter of Luz Barrera Granddaughter of Angel & Raquel Gasco
<b>Reneé Rochelle Powell</b>	<b>January 30</b>	Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell
<b>Michael Sean Gaede</b>	<b>January 31</b>	Son of Maureen Gaede

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered. [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) - 847-573-1055

Surrendering to my grief means allowing myself to feel. It's about trusting in my capacity to come out on the other side of my overwhelming hurt. Instead of defending against my pain, I must release myself to the flow of experiencing it.

—Alan Wolfelt, PhD: *The Journey Through Grief, Reflections*





## Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every

memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

~written by Jim Lowery, Sugarland, Tx

In Memory of His Son, Eric 12/18/75 - 6/10/95



## December Grief

### Living With Loss While Others are Celebrating

It may be tempting to do a seasonal hibernation and mutter, "Wake me up when it is over." Many grievors have remarked at the start of this season, "I wish I could go to bed and wake up and it would be January."

Indeed some will use numbing instruments such as alcohol, food, shopping or being constantly on the go to do just that.

(Continued on page 7)

## Another Year Without My Child

By Annette Mennen Baldwin  
 In memory of her son, Todd Mennen  
 TCF, Katy, Texas  
 January 2007



It's a new year and I am marking it, for the fifth time, without my child. Last month was the fourth anniversary of his death. This is one more milestone in the journey of a bereaved parent. The New Year brings the promise of new adventures, happiness and prosperity to others. To bereaved parents it adds another dimension to our loss. It also brings the opportunity to look at where we are and how far we have come.

I remember the first New Year's Day without my son. What an empty, hollow feeling I had on January 1, 2003. My world had ended, the shock was still systemic in my mind and body, and I counted the days since he last walked, talked and laughed on this earthly plane, dwelling on the passing of days, hours and minutes since the moment of his death. I was frozen.

Looking back at that time, I recall just how the pain felt; unlike other pain, the pain of losing a child is never forgotten. I feel the familiar jolt that rocked my mind and body each time I awoke to remember that my son had died. I remember the misery of slogging through endless, meaningless days. I remember the tears, the second-guessing, the anger, and the guilt.... I remember it all. I still bounce in and out of those emotions; this will never end. It has moderated greatly, but it never ends.

Now I am more focused on my son's life. Details about his life spring into my mind.... happy times, maturing times, good times and funny times. I remember it all with the clarity that only a mother can possess. And so, that is how I will begin this new year.... remembering the life of my child but never forgetting the loss.

I am a different person than I was before my son died. I feel as though a lightning bolt struck me on the day of his death, and now I perceive the world from a different vantage point. I have simplified my life from what it once was.

I have many new friends who share the experience of losing a child; I have permanently removed old friends from my life who simply couldn't accept my grief and were fearful of talking about my child. I have a new understanding of the problems that other parents face... problems that a mother of one never has to address. I have become more solidly spiritual. I have gone

through Dante's unique person I should have been all along. People change. Bereaved parents change a great deal.

I no longer dread each new day. I no longer weep silently every night. I no longer ache from head to foot with the pain of losing my child. I read, I write, I stay active in the community. I work in my small business, doing what I want to do and what I must do. I go to museums, to movies, to stage plays. I listen to music, watch television and work in my home and yard.

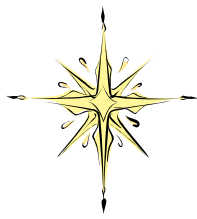
Amazingly, my word recall and memory are returning. Forgetting names, events, people, destinations and other critical factors of daily life was something I dealt with for over three and half years. I thought I had lost my mind until I started talking to other parents. I have begun doing memorization exercises...something I probably should have done three years ago. I am learning that the journey through grief lasts for a lifetime. Each stage is different, each sudden, poignant memory is paralyzing and each new day brings an opportunity to evaluate progress.

Much has changed during the past four years. Much will change throughout my life. Each of us experiences the loss of our child at the deepest level of our psyches. Yet each of us comes to this place with a different set of experiences and a unique genetic composition. I cannot compare myself to others. I can only mark my tiny steps forward with a sense of wonder at the resiliency of the human mind and spirit while simultaneously accepting that I am not in control...at any moment a flash of the past might bring me to my knees. I have learned to go with it.

I have found hope for the future. It certainly isn't the future I had envisioned. There will be no late night talks with my son, no holidays or birthdays shared, no participation in my son's children's lives, no cards, no handmade gifts. That door was closed by lawsuit happy former in-laws who have no standing in my life today. I have crawled through the

(Continued on page 7)





Rusty Anderson

Amy Jo Baldwin

Aaron Barrera - Joshua Bowman

Roman Gabriel Cano

Mike Cantafio - Mitchell Carlson

Alyssa Carranza - Amanda Cecchi

Anthony Clemente - Robert Corbett - Tim Curtis

Edward G Davis III - Brian Scott Engel

Ryder Erickson - Scott Ewing - Kerrin Fleming

Elizabeth Mary Foresta - Joey Frase

Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick

Eric Friedle - Amy Fry-Pitzen - Michael Gaede

Johnny Garcia - Daniel Garza

Marleea Gerfen - Kyle Glueck - Miguel Gonzales

Jeremy M Govekar - Megan Candice Grace - Barry J Grazier

James Grazier - Maria Guadalupe - José De Jesús Hernandez

Jammi Shonlei Hui - Christopher Jackson

Rogelio Lopez Jr - Brian Keough - Donette Klawonn - Kelly Klawonn

Michael Klopp - Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth - Adam Michael Laufer

Brian Scott Ludlow

Tony Malic - Rasheed Mariano - Bryan Casaca Martinez

Selene Martinez - Zach Maslanich - Hugh Mathis

Kathy Mazur - Shannon McCarty - Pressley Suzanne McHugh

Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles - Anna Smith Miller - Aaron R. Moore

Andrew Muno - Ryan James Nichols - J Daniel ( Danny) O' Connor - Jim O' Connor

Justin Cody Ortega - Blake Logan Palmer - Nicole Parfitt

Marissa Pederson - Andrew C Perkins - Rob Petit - Kevin Pomianek

Renee' Rochelle Powell - Douglas Ramsay - Mike Reardon

Sven Christian Reinhard - Alexander Rettinger - Lisa Roseman - Adam Rubin

Lila Ruffolo - Mark Sailor - Rachel Salomonson - Alexandria (Alex) Scarbro

Ashley Seay - Roger Alan Segebarth - Carrie Seger - David Sloop - Steven Sostre

David Spannraft - Michael Stice - Josh Summers - Rachel Elizabeth Szech - Zachary Taylor

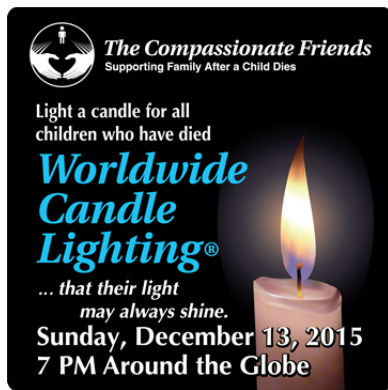
Anne Thomson - John Thumel - Matthew Tisch - Tony Trejo - Sandra Varela - Raphael Vidal

Edgar O Villareal - Daniel Wang - Karli Brooke Weidenhagen

Lindsay Wilczynski

Liz Wilding

Mark Yates



## 2015 Worldwide Candle Lighting in Memory of All Children

Please mark your calendars. The 2015 Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held on December 13 at 6:30 p.m. at Millburn Congregational Church. The church is located at the intersection of Rte. 45 and Grass Lake Road, Millburn, Illinois. The Candle Lighting is open to anyone grieving the loss of a child of any age. We welcome all family members and friends to join us. Candles are provided to all. For more information you can go to our website at [www.iltcf.org](http://www.iltcf.org) or you can call Toni Nesheim at 847-204-7585.

(Another Year Without my Child continued from page 5)

minefields and dodged the bullets of some pretty mentally unbalanced people and survived. I have faced the abyss of losing my only child while enduring the cruelest of sniping, the worst of intentionally inflicted pain. I did none of this with grace and finesse....I merely got through it. I survived. I became stronger



go of my anger. I found hope by remembering the goodness that is my son and by leaning on friends who had lost their children. These friends were there for me when I so desperately needed the comfort of kindred souls: Compassionate Friends who reached out to me gave me the glimmer of hope when all seemed forever lost and living was almost intolerable.

Now the healing process has completed its circle. I am here for those parents who need me. Strangely this helps me to heal as well. I reach out to others who are new to the process of grief, and I tell them that there is hope.

One day the sunrise will again be beautiful and you will find peace within yourself. You will remember your

child's life, you will honor your child's life and you will forever be changed by your child's death. But always, always, your child will remain in your heart. This is my truth to all who wish to know. Lean on us, for we have been where you are today. We will walk with you on your journey toward hope, peace and resolution. It is in this place that the healing will begin.

(A Decembered Grief - □Living With Loss While Others are Celebrating continued from page 4)

Kris Kristofferson sang, "Help me make it through the night." Grievers may well sing, "Help me make it through the holidays."

But the holidays have serendipitous moments — those wonderful emotional and spiritual ambush- es, moments when joy sneaks up on you. In the midst of great grief, there are small moments that break through to our hearts. We need those to buffer our souls and spirits for the tough times.

Some times "One day at a time" needs to be translated into "one hour at a me." □—Harold Ivan Smith

From the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Fall 2004 newsletter:

[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org).



A life that touches  
The heart of others  
Goes on forever

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Vicki Szech at [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) or 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Libertyville, IL 60048.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its' mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive  
 TCF National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 3696 - PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246  
 Regional Coordinator, Mary Seibert PH: 815-468-6443 [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
 The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
 There are seven TCF Internet chat sessions weekly. To participate, visit the TCF home page and select the "Chat" button.

**CHAPTER LEADERSHIP** Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 [tnesheim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tnesheim@sbcglobal.net) *Rachel Salomonson* Age 19 – Auto accident

**TREASURER** Tammie Barrera 847-872-9684 [Julyson2@gmail.com](mailto:Julyson2@gmail.com) *Aaron Barrera* Age 29 – Auto accident due to Diabetes

**SECRETARY OPEN – PLEASE VOLUNTEER**

**REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY** Thelma Perkins 262-279-6178 *Andrew C Perkins* Age 17 – Auto Accident

**LIBRARIAN** Kathleen Rettinger 847-922-7456 *Alexander Rettinger* Age 18 – Of suicide

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR** Vicki Szech 847-573-1055 [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) *Rachel Szech* Age 16 – Horseback-riding Accident

**NEWSLETTER PRINTING & MAILING** Mary Foresta 847-986-4133 *Elizabeth Foresta* Age 11 – Septic Shock, Heart/Lung failure

**OUTREACH/INFORMATION** Tammie Barrera 847-872-9684 [julyson2@gmail.com](mailto:julyson2@gmail.com) *Aaron Barrera*, age 29 - insulin reaction subsequent auto accident

**STEERING COMMITTEE** Marilyn Grace 847-395-8597 [grace.marilyn@gmail.com](mailto:grace.marilyn@gmail.com) *Megan Grace* Age 15 – Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Charon Sloop 847-623-2264 [charronsloop@AOL.com](mailto:charronsloop@AOL.com) *David Sloop* Age 33 – Motor Cycles accident

Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 [mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com](mailto:mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com) & Raphael Vidal [rvidal1027@yahoo.com](mailto:rvidal1027@yahoo.com), Raphael, age 17, suicide

## LOVE GIFTS

Enclosed in a check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor the newsletter for \_\_\_\_\_ (month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library \_\_\_\_\_

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be included in the "special days" list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are making a donation please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends**. Return to **Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048** or call 847-573-1055 or send an email to [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net).