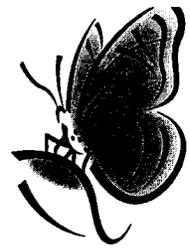


# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

### December, 2009 Newsletter



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

#### Chapter Leader Notes From Jenny & Rick



"We function most powerfully when we are giving love. The world has led us to believe that our well-being is dependent on other people loving us. But this is the kind of upside-down thinking that has caused many of our problems. The truth is that our well-being is dependent on our giving love. It is not about what comes back; it is about what goes out."

Above is a quote from an Alan Cohen, in a publication that I get in the mail. I don't have any idea who he is! But I like this way of thinking, and it got me thinking about all of us Compassionate Friends.

As one of your chapter leaders for the last two years, the giving *has* been the greatest reward. Many a Thursday night I had to dig deep to get the energy to drive the car, set up the room, help in the kitchen, schlep stuff around, and then ponder over what topic to use to get us started for the meeting. But later, as we drive home, we would talk about the evening's sharing, and feel full of gratitude to be part of such a wonderful, comforting, strong, and occasionally surprising group. Of course, we never would have chosen the circumstances which brought us together, but we are better for having known each other.

Through tragic events, we have formed a bond of love with people we never would have had a reason or an opportunity to meet. Now we are all part of each other's lives and memories! As we hand over the reins of leadership to our new leader, Darlene Muno, we thank her for her willingness, and we thank those who are serving the group in

any capacity, as well as those who came before us who brought the group to where it is today. We'll continue to be a part of it and are honored that we can do so.

#### ARE 'HAPPY HOLIDAYS' A MYTH?

Margaret Gerner  
1996 BP/USA St. Louis Newsletter

We all have expectations and ideas of what the holidays should be but, in truth, the idea of "Happy Holidays" is a myth.

Actually, if you stop and think about it, many of your own past holidays, even holidays with your deceased child, weren't so happy.

There were times you didn't get that special something you hoped you would get. There might have been times you didn't have enough money for necessities, let alone decorations and gifts.

There were times when someone was sick. Maybe that happened the last year or two of your child's life. Maybe you were the one who was sick. Sickness makes holiday preparations difficult for everyone.

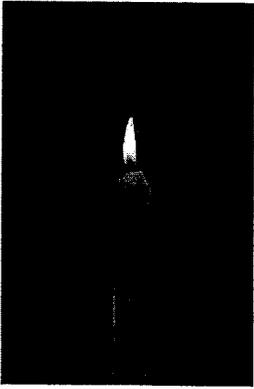
And, inevitably, there were times when Uncle Joe got drunk and caused a fight?

Another problem with the holidays is that we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others.

We think we should have the right gift for everyone, the family should be together, dinner should be perfect, everyone should have a good time and love, peace and joy should prevail. Life is rarely like that, is it? Then, to add to our unrealistic expectations, the media and advertisements compound it all. In the movies, Santa arrives and all is well. Things are always perfect for the television family and everyone in the ads is smiling.

Another problem is that we look back to past holidays when we were children, when our families were young and to the good times with our  
That are gone.

(Continued on page 7)



## TONIGHT I HOLD THIS CANDLE

Written and sung by Alan Pedersen to honor the death of his daughter, Ashley, and used at many Candlelight Memorials

Tonight I hold this candle  
In memory of you.  
Hoping someday, somehow, my love will shine through.  
I close my eyes, lost in the glow.  
There are so many things I want you to know.

This candle says I love you, this candle says I miss you.  
This candle is saying I remember you.  
When I'm holding it toward heaven,  
It feels like you are near.  
If you're looking down tonight and see this candle burning bright,  
It says I'm wishing you were here.

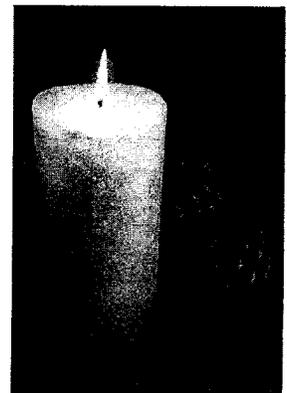
In the glow of this candle, I can almost see your smile  
And it carries me away for a little while  
To another time, another place  
When all it took to light up my world was your beautiful face.

This candle says I love you, this candle says I miss you.  
This candle is saying I remember you.  
When I'm holding it toward heaven,  
It feels like you are near.  
If you're looking down tonight and see this candle burning bright,  
It says I'm wishing you were here.

Someday, someday I'll see you again.  
I'll hold you in my heart until then.

This candle says I love you, this candle says I miss you.  
This candle is saying I remember you.  
When I'm holding it toward heaven,  
It feels like you are near.  
If you're looking down tonight and see this  
candle burning bright,  
It says I'm wishing you were here.

(If you wish a copy of the music for this song and other ones helpful for the grieving journey, contact Alan at [www.everashleymusic.com](http://www.everashleymusic.com) or 720-218-6238.)



**OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN DECEMBER AND 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.

**BIRTHDAYS**

**Mark Yates**  
December 20  
Son of Linda Hegg

**Barry J Grazier**  
December 22  
Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier

**Raphael E Vidal**  
December 24  
Son of Raphael & Mirtha Vidal

**Anna Smith Miller**  
January 3  
Daughter of Carol Smith

**Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick**  
January 13  
Son of Jan Frederick & Michael Hamilton  
Grandson of Sharon Frederick

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

**GIFTS OF LOVE**

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to 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.

**Gifts for the Year**

Tim & Marilyn Grace in memory of Megan Grace  
Carol Semple in memory of Anna Miller  
James & Mary Lou Miles in memory of Maggie Miles  
Terry & Jeanette Powell in memory of Renee Powell  
Judith Ruff in memory of Geoffrey Ruff

"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

**ANNIVERSARIES**

**Mike Reardon**  
December 6  
Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon

**Matthew David Stolarick**  
December 6  
Son of Kathy Stolarick

**Gina Ross**  
December 8  
Daughter of June & Nick Ross

**Michael Furman**  
December 13  
Son of Mary-Jo & Gerald Dempsey

**Jeremy John Thomas Hoth**  
December 11  
Son of Vernon & Norine Hoth

**Andrew Muno**  
December 15  
Son of Darlene Muno

**David Quade**  
December 23  
Son of Pat & Dave Quade

**Rachel Elizabeth Szech**  
January 2  
Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech

**Roberto Gonzalez**  
January 4  
Son of Celia & Javier Gonzalez

**Christopher Campos**  
January 11  
Son of Marina & Scott Lipp

**Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth**  
January 16  
Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise

**Adam Roach**  
January 26  
Son of Michael & Nancy Roach

**Renee Rochelle Powell**  
January 30  
Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell



## Can Hurting Hearts Be Thankful?

As the holidays approach, many bereaved parents feel that they have nothing to be thankful for at this festive time of the year and honestly wish that the holidays would disappear altogether. Three months after my two oldest children, twenty-one year-old Dennis and nineteen year-old Peggy, were killed in the same automobile accident, I had to face the festivities of Thanksgiving and all the traditions that my family savored each year.

I decided to peek into my heart, even though it was broken and hurting terribly, to hopefully find a blessing or two that would inspire me to feel thankful. When I took the time to search deep inside my heart I was shocked to discover some beautiful blessings, which would enable me to feel the beauty of Thanksgiving, even in my fragile state.

Counting my blessings opened my heart to be thankful for:

The strength to get up each day--as hard as it was.

The love of one special person, whether it be spouse, child or friend, keeping the spark alive in us.

Someone needing our love--a spouse, a child, a friend, a neighbor--forcing us to perform routine activities keeping us functional.

A special hobby or interest that consumes our time and keeps our mind busy like crafts, piano, poetry, writing, golf, gardening, or reading.

A job that keeps our attention and makes hours, days, and weeks pass quickly.

Pictures that make special moments treasures in our hearts.

The years we had with our loved ones--truly a gift.

Someone who has reached out to us in a meaningful way--phoning us, writing to us, sharing with us.

Music or poetry that soothes our soul, giving our

hearts a moment of blessed peace.

A pet that makes us laugh, or feel needed, or curls up with us and eases our pain.

Clergy or doctors who try to help us heal.

A linking object--a favorite piece of clothing or jewelry or item of our loved one that brings joy to our heart.

Special recipes that bring smiles to our faces and delight to our taste buds and maybe dear memories of our loved one.

Thoughtful relatives and friends who have tried to understand our needs and "be there" for us.

Religious ceremonies, traditions, and rituals that bring a moment's healing to our hearts.

A pretty flower, a sunset, a gorgeous ocean or mountain view--for cheering us.

Cards and letters with just the right message, letting us know someone cares.

The phone--to minister with us when we're feeling low and need to talk to someone else.

Books that bring a soothing message to our weary hearts, giving us thoughts to carry us through difficult moments.

Prayer--to keep us going through the 'the valley of the shadow'.

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful. Just remember that having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wondrous reason of all.

Elaine Stillwell, TCF - Rochville Centev, NY  
~lovingly lifted from Carrollton-Farmers Branch,  
TX November Newsletter

**Websites for the holidays from the Compassionate Friends Atlanta Website:**

Holiday Memories  
<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/HolidayMemories.htm>

Holiday Suggestions  
<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/HolidaySuggestions.html>





## Surviving the Holidays After the Death of a Child

Submitted by Alice Wisler on November 21, 2009

Alice J. Wisler, founder of a grief-support organization, Daniel's House Publications, is a full-time writer and author of two novels. In 1997, her four-year-old son Daniel died from cancer treatments. Since then, her writing focus has been on how to help others in grief. She gives Writing the Heartache workshops across the country. Through her organization, she designs and sells comfort cards/remembrance cards. When she isn't writing or speaking, she is promoting her novels, *Rain Song* (2008) and *How Sweet It Is* (2009), and two cookbooks of memory, *Down the Cereal Aisle* and *Slices of Sunlight*. Her cookbooks contain stories of food and memories of children who have died. In 2009, Alice married Carl in Las Vegas, and they live with her three children in Durham, NC. To learn more about Alice visit her website: <http://www.alicewisler.com> or go to her blog: <http://www.alicewisler.blogspot.com> Alice J. Wisler <http://www.alicewisler.com> Author of *Rain Song & How Sweet It Is* -- "Fiction with a Quirky Southern Tradition" Designer of Remembrance Cards Cookbook Author Writing Instructor Open to Hope Cancer Editor <http://opentohopecancer.com/>

That holiday-pang hit my stomach the first October after Daniel died. Greeting me at an arts and craft shop were gold and silver stockings, a Christmas tree draped with turquoise balls and a wreath of pinecones and red berries. What was this? And was "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" playing as well? It was only October.

I had anticipated that Christmas and the holidays would be tough. In fact, I'd wake on those cold mornings after Daniel died in February and be grateful that it was still months until his August birthday and even more months until Christmas. I dreaded living both without him. I would have preferred to have been steeped in cow manure. At least then I could take a hot bath with sweet smelling bubbles and be rid of the stench. But bereavement isn't that way. As those who had gone on before let me know, you have to live through it.

Christmas came. I did live through it. It continues to happen as do the other significant days of the calendar year. Daniel never arrives at any of them although his memory lives on. By incorporating him into these days of festivity, I can cope.

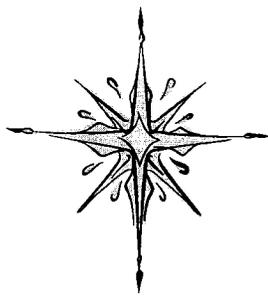
Some of you have your child's birthday and/or anniversary day within the November through January season. These days, in addition to the holidays everyone else is celebrating, make the season even more complicated and painful, I'm sure.

I offer eleven tips I've used to survive the holidays. Some are my own suggestions and some are borrowed from the many who walk the path of grief.

1. Know you will survive. Others have done it and you will, too. Keep in mind that your first Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day will not be easy.
2. Find at least one person you can talk to or meet with during the holiday season. Perhaps this person has gone through a few Thanksgivings and Christmases before and can give you some helpful ideas that have worked for her.
3. Things will be different this holiday season and perhaps for all the rest to come. Don't think you have to do the "traditional" activities of years past when your child was alive. Your energy level is low. If no one in your household minds, skip putting up the tree. Forget spending hours making your holiday cookies.
4. Spend the holidays with those who will let you talk about your child. You will need to have the freedom to say your child's name and recall memories, if you choose to do so. Your stories about your child are wonderful legacies. Tell them boldly again and again.
5. If going into the mall or stores brings too much pain, shop for gifts online or through mail-order catalogs. Thinking everyone is happily shopping at the malls with intact lives while your heart is crushed is terribly tough. Go easy on yourself.



(Continued on page 7)



Brian  
Abrahamson  
Aiden Allen-Hazelwood  
Rusty Anderson  
Christopher Campos - Roman Gabriel Cano  
Bryan Cantafio - Mike Cantafio  
Carlos Cantu - Edward G Davis III  
Elizabeth Mary Foresta  
Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick  
Johnny Garcia - Jeremy M Govekar  
Megan Candice Grace  
Barry J Grazier - Jill Grider - Jeremy Hoth  
Jammi Shonlei Hui - Donette Klawonn  
Kelly Klawonn - Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth - Michael Klopp - Heather LaMarche  
Robert Joseph Landers - Nick Lindsey - Brian Scott Ludlow  
Selene Martinez - Naomi McBride - Shannon McCarty  
Presslley McHugh - Matthew Merritt - Anna Smith Miller  
Scott Harris Miller - Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles  
Aaron R. Moore - Melinda (Mindy) Lynn Morell - Andrew Muno  
J Daniel ( Danny) O'Connor - Jim O'Connor  
Andrew C Perkins - Rob Petit - Renee' Rochelle Powell  
David Quade - Douglas Ramsay  
Mike Reardon - Sven Christian Reinhard - Adam Roach - Dan Rowe  
Gina Ross - Geoffrey Ruff - Lila Ruffolo - Philip J (PJ) Ryan  
Jeffrey David Sabatino - Rachel Salomonson - Roger Alan Segebarth - Carrie Seger  
David Sloop - Christine Span - David Spannraft - Jane Sprouse  
Michael Stice - Renaldo Curtis St. James - Matthew David Stolarick  
Josh Summers - Rachel Elizabeth Szech  
Zachary Taylor - Anne Thomson - Raphael E Vidal  
Edgar O Villareal  
Liz Wilding  
David Worley  
Mark Yates

## GINGER

By Mary Cleckley  
BP/USA



It was a few days before Christmas and I had gone to the cemetery to put some flowers on my son's grave. At any other time of the year I am usually alone but at Christmas there are people all about, remembering in their own way the ones who have died.

One of my neighbors is also buried in the same cemetery and, since her family had moved away, I took some flowers for her too. As I wandered about looking for her gravesite, I saw the many different ways that people had chosen to honor their loved ones. The graves of the young people naturally caught my eye. Some had small Christmas trees, complete with garlands and tinsel; others had strings of fruit, popcorn and berries so the birds could enjoy Christmas, I imagine. One family had selected special cards and they were hanging on their tree. There was tree-shaped greenery in one urn and others had simple pine boughs, pine cones and poinsettias. Some graves had no decoration at all, but I knew that did not mean they were not loved and missed. It simply meant that, for whatever reason, someone couldn't or didn't want to come. It had nothing to do with loving, caring and remembering.

Then I came upon this small, new grave, so new that there was no grass or marker except for a hand-lettered sign that simply said, "Ginger." Stuck in the soft earth above the sign was the smallest Santa Claus I have ever seen. He couldn't have been over two inches tall, in keeping with the size of the grave. I stopped there, touched more by this grave than anything else I had seen and wept for Ginger and her parents.

I recognized all of the anguish spoken by this simple scene. I remembered by own pain that first Christmas and wanted to put my arms around somebody and tell them that it would be better—never the same, but better than now with the fresh, raw and bleeding pain that is a part of the newness of grief. I am thankful that I can say it is better now.

Lovingly borrowed from "A Journey Together"  
Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA Fall  
2009

(ARE 'HAPPY HOLIDAYS' A MYTH? Continued from page 1)

So, you see unrealistic expectations of what "should" be, the media hype that's all around us, and the sadness of what "used to be" but is no more, can make the holidays difficult under the best of circumstances.

You have no energy, everything you have to do is too much. You have no interest in anything. You feel like "the Grinch Who Stole Christmas." You can't concentrate. You can't remember what you are supposed to do or where you have put things. What you would like to do is to go to sleep now wake up in January.

Then there is the pressure from those around you to have a happy holiday and self pressure not to spoil the holidays for others around you.

And, finally, you feel depressed, confused and out of control. Let me assure you that THESE FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS ARE NORMAL AND UNDERSTANDABLE.

But you can help yourself.

Know that no matter what you do it is still going to hurt, but you can lessen some of the fear and confusion. The secret is to prepare and plan ahead.

Share your ideas, feelings and thoughts about the holidays with other family members (even extended families) and ask them to share theirs with you. Work out a holiday plan together, hopefully one that will please all of you.

Know that, as a grieving parent, you have physical and emotional limitations. Evaluate your priorities and decide what you want to do and what you are capable of doing.  
Share and delegate holiday tasks

Share and delegate holiday tasks.

Remember that holidays often magnify feelings of loss of a child. Experiencing the sadness that comes is important and natural. Blocking such feelings is unhealthy.

If you have had one holiday without your child, people in your life might expect you to be "over it," but the experience of many bereaved parents is that, eventually, they enjoy the holidays again.  
(Continued on page 9)

## NOW IS THE TIME TO RENEW YOUR PLACE ON OUR MAILING LIST

The newsletter is sent without charge to any person interested in receiving it. Each year, in order to be sure we are sending it only to those who truly want to be on our mailing list, we ask that everyone who wants the newsletter return this form. We also accept LOVE GIFTS to pay for some of the chapter's expenses. Your voluntary, tax-deductible donations make it possible for us to mail out the monthly newsletter, contact newly bereaved parents, purchase brochures and other grief materials, continue our participation in the TCF/National organization and meet other chapter expenses. Perhaps you would like to make a gift in memory of your child's birthday or remembrance day. It is a meaningful way to honor our children and we are grateful to members who are able to support us with their contributions. 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).

I/We are ( ) bereaved parents ( ) grandparents ( ) siblings

Please ( ) keep sending the monthly newsletter. Please ( ) add to the mailing list. Please ( ) remove from mailing list.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Remember my ( ) child(ren) ( ) sibling ( ) grandchild on special days  
 (You do not have to list the cause of death. We list this only so that parents whose children have died in similar ways may reach out to one another.)

NAME OF CHILD:	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Cause of Death
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

### LOVE GIFTS

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

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

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

Sponsor the newsletter for \_\_\_\_\_ (month) (\$25 pays 1/2 monthly cost)

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

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.