

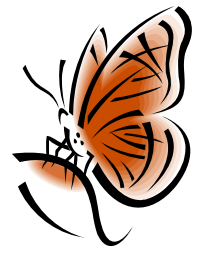


The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

February, 2018 Newsletter

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



Chapter Leader Notes



PLANTING SEEDS IN WINTER

Aaaahh . . . I just received the first seed catalog of the year. Paging through it and seeing all of the photos of flowers and vegetables and shrubs, removes me momentarily from the ice and cold and gray days of winter. It automatically makes me remember the warm, sunny days of May and slow walks through nurseries, picking out the right combination of seeds and flowers. Flowers that will attract honey bees and butterflies and provide a visual resting place for the eye. I know that with plants and seeds put in the ground, there will be at least a few months of relief and calm as I watch everything grow. The seed catalog is my personal, small, mental vacation from the stress of everyday life and the weightier stress of grief. It reminds me of sweeter moments in life. It is reassurance that **Spring will come again**. It is reassurance that I too will continue to recover and be able to function more fully in life.

As grieving parents, we all need to find our "seed catalog" moments. Even if it is just closing our eyes to remember something that warms our heart or paging through books of nature photography. Meditating or reading more light-hearted fare can provide that small relief from what seems like eternal, inescapable grief. When I returned to work after my daughter died, I spent my lunch hour in my car, with the seat back, eyes closed and listened to music. It helped me get through the remainder of the day. It refueled and refreshed.

Grief is overwhelming, pervasive and exhausting. It can be very lonely in a crowd of people. So try to find your "seed catalog" or just "seed" moment,

where you establish a small, personal ritual that calms your mind and your nerves.

The "seed" that you create will help to make you look forward . . . pleasant times will come again. Yes, winter days will come too but the "seed" that you plant will always reassure you that **Spring Will Come Again. Growth will happen. Life will be renewed.**

Wishing you warm thoughts and warm hearts,

Toni

Excerpts from "Seasons of Grief"

*Shall grief's bitter cold sadness consume me,
Like a winter storm on the vast angry sea?
How can I fill the void and deep desperate need
To replant my heart with hope's lovely seed? . . .*

*Shall spring's cheerful flowers bring life anew
And allow me to forget the agony of missing you?
Will spring's burst of new life bring fresh hope
And teach my grieving soul to cope? . . .*

- by Belinda Stotler



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.

Thanks to Sue & Bob Byczynski
For their donation
In memory of Megan Candace Grace

"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
February 15 - 7:30 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL
Open discussion

Waukegan meeting
March 1
- 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Holy Family Church
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL
Meeting in Room 4
Open discussion
Enter 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



The Mended Heart

The heart is oh so fragile;
although the muscle's strong.
It goes on beating even though
continued life seems wrong.
When devastation makes its mark
and chisels in the pain.
It seems as though the heart
will not ever know joy again.
Good News! The heart will mend
itself, but not just like before.
Remember, like a broken bone,
the original is no more.
There is a tender spot in both
where once the gap was wide.
The beating heart that gives us life
has courage on its side.
And as the broken bone
may ache because of rain or cold,
the heart may ache with longing
for the one whose bell has tolled
There is no guarantee
that life will ever be the same,
But when you do find joy in life,
the heart should feel no shame.

Karan Longbrake - TCF Hardin
County, Ada, Ohio

~reprinted from TCF Troy, MI February 2004
Newsletter

*Borrowed from The Compassionate Friends E-
NEWSLETTER - January, 2018*

OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN FEBRUARY & MARCH

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

<i>Kevin Pomianek</i>	February 4	Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek
<i>Aaron Barrera</i>	February 6	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
<i>Roderick Young</i>	February 13	Son of Scarlet Austin Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
<i>Heather Donnelly</i>	February 26	Daughter of Daniel Donnelly
<i>Megan Candice Grace</i>	February 24	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
<i>Anne Thomson</i>	February 25	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson
<i>Kyle Glueck</i>	March 4	Son of Dolores Krason
<i>Elizabeth Mary Foresta</i>	March 8	Daughter of Al & Mary Foresta
<i>Justin Perez</i>	March 9	Son of Traci & Carlos Perez Brother of Samantha (perez) Przybylski
<i>David Sloop</i>	March 9	Son of Charron Sloop
<i>Rusty Anderson</i>	March 11	Son of Forest & Christine Anderson
<i>David Spannraft</i>	March 18	Son of Elizabeth & Dan Spannraft
<i>Adam Rubin</i>	March 28	Son of Linda Rubin Brother of Nicole Rubin

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Rob Petit</i>	February 2	Son of Nancy Ervin
<i>Susan Nesheim Allbee</i>	February 5	Sister of Toni Nesheim
<i>Darien Wilson</i>	February 11	Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera
<i>Douglas Ramsay</i>	February 12	Son of Carlene Ramsay
<i>Ravael Villanveva</i>	February 12	Son of Victoria Villanveva
<i>Michael Stice</i>	February 13	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
<i>Kelly Klawonn</i>	February 14	Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn
<i>Ashley Seay</i>	February 18	Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley
<i>Mitchell Carlson</i>	February 19	Son of Tina VanderMeer Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<i>Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles</i>	February 19	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<i>Zachary Taylor</i>	February 24	Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor
<i>Edgar O Villareal</i>	March 1	Son of Guadalupe Villareal
<i>Jeremy Govekar</i>	March 2	Son of Maggie McGaughey
<i>John "Jake" Mosansky</i>	March 12	Son of Darlene & John Mosansky Sister of Veronica Steif
<i>Blake Logan Palmer</i>	March 13	Son of Amber & Brian Palmer Grandson of Lois Cooper
<i>Roderick Young</i>	March 27	Grandson of Gina Palmer Son of Scarlet Austin Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson

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 - 847-573-1055

Grief and the Super Bowl 2012

by Alan Pedersen



For those of us who have lost a child, we quickly learn that life in general is a reminder of our children. Holidays and birthdays and anniversary days and seasons and sunny days and rainy days and windy days all remind us of very specific events and times with our kids. So it is not a stretch to find ourselves transcended back in time at any moment as we walk this journey.

Now most of you would think that only a man could find a way to write an article on Super Bowl week and find a connection to grief. This week however, takes me back in time to the good times with my daughter. I love football, not with the passion and vigor I did before my Ashley died, but I love football. I was given the gift of an only daughter who loved football too. Her favorite player was the late Reggie White; I often think that he is keeping an eye on her up in heaven.

So, here it is the week of the Super bowl and so many people are filled with anticipation for the big game. If Ashley were here I am sure we would be planning our Sunday menu with dad's chicken wings and her favorite guacamole cheeseburgers as part of the comfort food fare. We would talk about who we like in the game and she would probably pick just the opposite of whatever team I picked just so we could root against each other for those few glorious and festive hours.

As I was thinking about writing this something very interesting occurred to me about this game and how it relates to our lives and grief. As I thought about the New England Patriots and the New York Giants, the comparison of these two teams reminded me a lot of our lives before and after the death of our child.

The New England Patriots are undefeated, every article written about them talks about their perfect season thus far. They are trying to be the first team since the 1973 Miami Dolphins to go undefeated in an entire NFL season. They play together almost effortlessly and at times seem completely invincible on the field. When the Patriots do struggle, the ball just seems to bounce their way and so the money is on them to win it all in Phoenix this Sunday.

In many ways our lives were like that of the Patriots before the death of our child. Everything seemed so right, so on track, we felt blessed and could see no end in sight to the dream we were living. We couldn't imagine that life would be any different and we expected to sail off into the sunset living the dream that was our life with our precious kids. And of course the money was on us to live happy and uninterrupted lives.

The New York Giants on the other hand have struggled mightily this year. They got on a roll late in the season but early on they were dismal and seemed to be imploding in turmoil and strife. There was talk of benching their prized quarterback Eli Manning, firing the coach, and the Giants faithful were getting very restless after a blow-out loss at home to the Minnesota Vikings earlier in the season.

Injuries plagued the Giants this season too, Jeremy Shockey their All Pro tight end is out for the season, their defensive secondary was nearly depleted as they limped into the playoff.

Nobody really gave them a chance yet here they are after beating a powerful Dallas Cowboy team and the destiny driven Green Bay Packers against the odds, playing for a world championship.

Our lives after the death of our children is a lot like these Giants. Many of us lost hope that we could ever rise again. Those around us questioned if we had the right stuff and wondered if we would make it through. We could have easily just given up, as all looked bleak in our world. We were the underdogs constantly fighting just to maintain our sanity, dignity, and the will to keep moving forward. Yet, like the Giants and against the odds we kept clawing, and digging, and reaching until little-by-little we gained some ground that has led us to where we are today. And yes, we are still the underdogs, fighting to maintain what momentum we have gained, but like these Giants I wouldn't underestimate us in the big game!

I don't know who will win the Super Bowl on Sunday, the Patriots look mighty good. The prognosticators will tell us all how the Giants have little or no chance. So as I sit watching the game eating a guacamole cheeseburger my guess is those Giants will play hard, give it their best and I will be proud of them win or lose. Ashley always loved the underdog, so my guess is as her and Reggie White are watching the game she will be pulling for the Giants to defy all the odds and win. This year she and I will be rooting for the same team. Go Giants!

FOR THE NEW YEAR

Posted on January 11th, 2018



Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

1. Let's not try to imagine the future – take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it – don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged when it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type multiple vitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends (or other groups you may choose) and let them share with you.

As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell – a very healthy sign. I know following these suggestions won't be easy. But it's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

Borrowed from The Compassionate Friends E-NEWSLETTER - January, 2018

THE HOLIDAY ARE BEHIND US

Posted on January 11th, 2018

Borrowed from The Compassionate Friends E-NEWSLETTER - January, 2018

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory. Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throat tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart. If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we, too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love. These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deeper way.

Marie Andrews, TCF, Southern Maryland



HOPE DEFINED

Posted on December 18th, 2017 Borrowed from The Compassionate Friends E-NEWSLETTER - January, 2018

After my daughter Rachael died in 1992, my husband and I received a letter from the local TCF Chapter. Rachael died in March, we went to our first meeting in July. We sat outside in the car, debating whether or not we were even going to go in. We wondered how on earth it could be any help to us to sit in a room full of people who were all so sad. But we did go in. We sat silent and shell-shocked – as I am sure many of you did at your first meeting. But as the meeting progressed we heard other parents tell about their child and about how they were managing on their grief journey. We saw (and felt) the encouragement members gave to one another. We saw and felt the understanding focus that was put on each parent as they spoke of their beloved child.

I don't remember a lot of details about that first meeting, but I do remember thinking – as I saw and listened to – those who were two, five and even ten years down the road on their grief path, that somehow this monstrous event that had overtaken our lives must somehow be survivable and that these caring people would help me find my way back to life. That night they lent us some of their hope and that was a gift beyond measure.

HOPE can stand for many things. Hope is like a scout that goes out ahead into that unknown territory known as grief. That scout lets you know that you can travel there, you can survive this "landscape without gravity". Let's take a brief look at some of the possibilities of what TCF members offer when they lend us some hope:

H -

1. TCF offers us help in learning how to heal when we don't know where to begin.
2. TCF offers us a hand to hold when we feel lost and a reassuring hug when times are tough.
3. TCF offers us an opportunity to be honest about our feelings without fear of judgment or censure.
4. TCF shows us that happiness can again be possible as we move once again into life honoring our child's memory as we go.

O –

1. TCF gives us an opportunity to be open and forthright in expressing our deepest emotions.
2. TCF gives us an outlet for our anger, frustration and guilt.
3. TCF provides ongoing outreach and support when those in our other support systems may have receded or disappeared altogether as our grief journey moves from days and weeks into months and years.
4. TCF offers us a sense of optimism that life can be good again and that the intense pain of early grief will not last forever.

P –

1. TCF helps us gain perspective on what we are experiencing, yet has the patience to listen to our story as many times as we need to tell it.
2. TCF offers us a place where we may feel safe and protected as we share our pain and our memories.
3. TCF offers us the promise of more inner peace as we move towards a place of remembering more about our child's life and dwelling less on the circumstances of the death.
4. TCF helps us understand the need to pardon ourselves for any mistakes we may feel we made as parents and not to blame ourselves for our child's death.

E –

1. TCF provides education about the grief process so we may better understand and cope with what is happening to us.
2. TCF offers encouragement that our pain will not always be so great and that we will survive.
3. TCF members provide the true empathy that only those who have walked our path can know.
4. TCF offers us a chance to express what is in our hearts and embraces us with understanding.

TCF's Vision statement is "That all who need us will find us, and that all who find us will be helped" HOPE is a huge part of that help.

~Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom
Topeka TCF Chapter, Topeka, KS

Borrowed from The Compassionate Friends E-NEWSLETTER - January, 2018

SOMEONE ASKED ME ...

Posted on August 21st, 2017

Someone asked me about you today
 It's been so long since anyone has done that
 It felt so good to talk about you
 to share my memories of you
 to simply say your name out loud
 She asked me if I minded talking about
 what happened to you
 or would it be too painful to speak of it
 I told her I think of it every day
 and speaking about it helps me to release
 the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head
 She said she never realized the pain
 would last this long
 She apologized for not asking sooner
 I told her, "Thanks for asking"
 I don't know if it was curiosity
 or concern that made her ask
 But told her, "Please do it again sometime - soon"

~ Barbara Taylor Hudson

GROWING HOPE

Posted on October 18th, 2017

It's been just over three weeks since becoming Executive Director of the best grief organization in the world. I may hold a slightly prejudiced view of our organization as it was the lifeline that allowed us to hold onto hope after the drowning death of our son in 2011. I became acclimated to The Compassionate Friends by typing my feelings to concerned readers in TCF chatrooms. It was there I first learned that we were not alone in our journey and others would in fact walk with us, and even want to talk about Tony!

We tried a few different counselors and some grief groups. Each helped us a little, but talking in the chatrooms with others who had a child die helped, by far, the most. From the TCF website, we learned there was something called a national conference. We talked about it and wondered what in the world it would be

like to be around so many sad people. We wondered if we could emotionally endure such an event. We decided to load in the car and drive the 1,400 miles. This decision was one of the best decisions we could have made!

We learned that how we were grieving was how we should grieve, and that there is not a right way or a wrong way but really only your way. We met friends that filled the void of those who we thought had been our friends, but who now seemed like strangers in a faraway land. We learned that we were just entering a "new normal". We made friends, good friends that understood and did not shy away when we wanted to tell a Tony story.

The national conference was the first of many to come for us. It is now our annual vacation with Tony. It is not a group of sad people but rather families celebrating the life of a child. If you haven't gone to a national conference, please consider the journey to one. As winter moves in and you start thinking of next summer, consider attending the TCF national conference, "Gateway to Hope and Healing" in St. Louis, MO from July 27 to 29, 2018.

Tony's mom, Debbie

Debbie Rambis

debbie@compassionatefriends.org

877-969-0010



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 **Tammie Barrera, 821 Roberts Way, Winthrop Harbor, IL.** Julyson2@gmail.com

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 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

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The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org

There are seven TCF Internet chat sessions weekly. To participate, visit the TCF home page and select the "Chat" button.

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