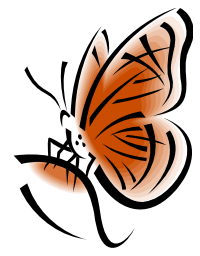


The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

February, 2015 Newsletter



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



*Chapter Leader
Notes from Toni*

PATHWAYS TO MANAGING GRIEF

A recent newsletter, called "Worklife Matters", that is given to each employee in my office, had a brief article called "Five Pathways to Managing Stress". The title sounded intriguing - a quick and easy approach to stress - who doesn't like that idea? I thought I would try to apply the "five pathways" to those of us who live with grief - one of the ultimate forms of stress.

The five channels are **FOCUS, INTERPRET, PREPARE, PROCESS AND DISTRACT.**

FOCUS: recognize that grief is a complex mental and emotional state that you will need to understand and be willing to seek help from friends, family, therapists, and /or support groups. Your loved one is gone and that shock to your system needs to be acknowledged and appreciated for the life- changing effect that it has on you. You need to prepare to reclaim your life as you seek to honor the life of your loved one.

INTERPET: redefine some of the circumstances of your grief so that you can either forgive, release anger, or relieve yourself of guilt. It is necessary so that you can heal and move forward.

PREPARE: take action that will help to ward off stress in the future, such as, not attending a social gathering that will trigger grief responses. Very gradually, reintroduce yourself to social or

family events to minimize your difficult times. Try to anticipate that triggers that you may face in new situations and develop a plan for coping with those moments, e.g. seeing your child's old friends or attending a wedding.

PROCESS: communicate with others about your feelings and thoughts. In the early stages of grief, this is often retelling the story of your loved one's death in an effort to reconcile that the worst has happened. Later, it is necessary to read and talk and listen to other grievors, so that you do not feel so alone and so that you learn what is "normal" when you are a grieving parent or sibling.

DISTRACT: divert your attention from your preoccupation with your loved one's death by listening to soothing music, taking walks, setting up charity events, joining a club, reading or taking up a new interest.

As a grieving parent or sibling, you know that there is no easy way to reduce stress or relieve the painful burden of loss. We know that we have to face it and live through it. We know that other people can help us with the pain of our loss. Most importantly, we, as The Compassionate Friends, can help each other through discussion, acknowledgement, listening, and information.



All who have been touched by beauty are touched by sorrow at its passing ~ Louise Cordana



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 *Mary Ann and Robert Grazier*
for their donation
in loving memory of
James (Jim) Grazier

Thanks to *Carlene Ramsay* for her
donation in loving memory of
Douglas Ramsay

Thanks to *Carlene Ramsay* for sponsoring the
newsletter in loving memory of
Douglas Ramsay

"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 19 – 7:30 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL
Open discussion

Waukegan meeting
March 5 6pm to 9pm
Holy Family Church
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL
Open discussion

Love Stays in Our Hearts Forever

By Flavia Weedn

Flavia Weedn's works are well known throughout the world. But among the many pieces of her background

that contributed to make her the inspirational author and artist she has become were her trials with bereavement as a young mother. Flavia's life's mission is to communicate hope. Her artwork has sold the world over and can be found in the Smithsonian Institute archives, as well as other public and private collections. Her work has been reproduced on magazine covers, in national advertising campaigns, countless non-profit promotions, and on thousands of greeting cards, fine paper products and collectible gifts sold all over the world. Flavia has published 45 collections of her poetic writings and illustrations. Many of her books are used in school systems and self-esteem programs throughout the world and her autobiographical story *Flavia and the Dream Maker* has even been adapted into a successful musical stage play.

I believe that in this life there are no endings; there are only beginnings. I believe that our lives are journeys and that we grow from our experiences on these journeys. I believe we discover through each heartache how to love more and love better. I believe that life has hidden gifts in its hands, the greatest of which is love.

I grew up believing in fairy tales. As a child, my fairy tale dream was to someday have children. I remember looking into the night sky and believing that angels were watching over my unborn babies until it was time for those babies to be a part of me and my life.

Years later when I first learned I was going to have a baby, I was ecstatic. My fairy tale dream was beginning and I remember feeling so happy, I wanted to stop strangers on the street and tell them. I was absolutely filled with love.

But months later my baby boy was born prematurely, and died soon after his birth. I was in disbelief, felt the first crack in my dream, and thought my 25 year-old heart would break. The love that had filled my heart so completely suddenly turned into emptiness and I was touched with the reality that life is fragile.

My second little boy was born the next year, also prematurely, and like his brother before him, lived only a short time. It was a different place and a different time, but the same deep heartache and even darker emptiness returned to my world. A part of me had died with each of these babies,

(Continued on page 7)



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>Daniel Garza</i>	February 16	Son of Gloria Garza
<i>David Quade</i>	February 20	Son of Pat & Dave Quade
<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>David Sloop</i>	March 9	Son of Charron Sloop
<i>Rusty Anderson</i>	March 11	Son of Forest & Christine Anderson
<i>Eric Pederson</i>	March 14	Son of Debbie & John Pederson
<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>Douglas Ramsay</i>	February 12	Son of Carlene Ramsay
<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>Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles</i>	February 19	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<i>Mitchell Carlson</i>	February 19	Son of Tina Carlson Grandson of Larry & Cheryl Armstrong
<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>J Daniel (Danny) O'Connor</i>	March 4	Son of Kay O'Connor
<i>Rasheed Mariano</i>	March 5	Son of Joan Mariano
<i>Blake Logan Palmer</i>	March 13	Son of Amber & Brian Palmer Grandson of Lois Cooper Grandson of Gina Palmer

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

A Moving Experience

We are sorting through and packing up for a move. It's worse than your usual move from one home of 10 years to another; the house we live in now is the last one we shared with our son, Aaron. We are sorting through and packing up memories, along with the tools, dishes, and books.



I have heard other bereaved parents talk about moving after their child died. For some, it was too painful to stay in a house that held so many images. They spoke of not being able to get away from the sorrow, of running into the pain every time they walked through the door. We never felt that way about our home. This was a place Aaron loved, and we have been very happy here—the last earthly house that Aaron knew.

I know that we will be happy in our new home as well—but that house won't hold a breath of him, as this one does. Now, I can walk out onto the patio and still see him in my mind's eye, drifting across the pool on a raft. I can easily imagine him coming out of his bedroom door, calling —Mom . . .” as he so often did. The new house won't have any history with Aaron, and so there is a feeling of loss in leaving this old place.

I know that Aaron goes where I go; he is a part of me always and forever. Nonetheless, I will miss walking familiar streets where once he walked. I will miss the feeling of connection as I lie on the side of the hill at the park and watch the clouds drift by. I will miss the scent of his closet and the view from his window. There are stories in these rooms and this neighborhood, stories woven from the fabric of my son's life. I may carry the stories with me, but I am leaving behind the props.

We have packed up his baby book, the special school projects, and the box of cards we received when he died. Hannah still has his treasured rocks in her room, and the boxes of comic books so carefully preserved and alphabetized are ready for transport. Paul is going through the collections of action figures and baseball cards to determine what can be sold or given away, and I expect that his raggedy old “bud” from infancy, No-Way Noah will take up residence somewhere in the new house.

But how do you pack up his passion for life? I know what to do about things I can hold in my hands; what I want to know is – how am I to carry his heart?

I've had a vision of these rooms, empty of all our things: I am doing one last walk through, taking one last look, saying one final goodbye. It is a scene that brings with it a gentle sorrow, and though I know we are moving forward and that all is well, in my heart

there is a sense that I am somehow leaving Aaron behind. It makes me think back to those first months when I could not leave the house, even overnight. I told Paul, I know this sounds crazy, but I feel that if I leave I might come home and find a note on the door that says: “Hi, Mom! Sorry I missed you. Catch you later. Love, Aaron.”

Six years later, I am not anxious about leaving home; I don't worry that I might miss a visit. The shock and disbelief of early grief has passed away and the reality of Aaron's death has settled on my soul. Though I know that I will never again see my son walk through the door, I also know that I know—I will never leave Aaron behind. He goes where I go. Still, I will be leaving a piece of my heart in the old house. Should you visit, listen for the gentle beat. You might sense its rhythm somewhere about—gazing out a tree-shaded window, lingering over a bloom in the garden, or drifting gently across the sky. And you will know that at house holds more than the stuff of memories. A house can hold a heart.

Frankie Wilford TCF Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX In Memory of my son, Aaron

Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Copyright 2000

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS - RENEWALS

The newsletter is sent without charge to any person interested in receiving it. This year I have renewed everyone's subscription to the newsletter. If you not longer wish to receive the newsletter please contact **Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048, call 847-573-1055, or send an email to vszech@comcast.net.**



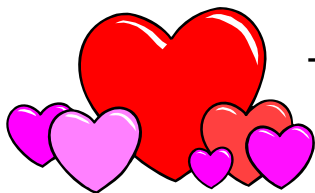


The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dallas, Texas, will be the site of the 38th TCF National Conference on July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Shines Bright ... Deep in the Heart" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great national Conference experience. The 2015 Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas. Please access the national website

www.compassionatefriends.org

as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook Page for updated information regarding the conference as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

The Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference. To make your reservation, please access the hotel's link located on the TCF website which will take you directly to TCF's reservation portal on the Hyatt's website. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of \$129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.



The Valentines of Yesterday

In my lifetime I have received many Valentines. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, school friends, boyfriends, good friends, acquaintances and my husband have showered me over the years with lovely Valentines which I have so appreciated. The tradition of declaring friendship and love on Valentine's Day is a very fond memory.

However, the sweetest Valentines I have ever received

are from my son. From the first days in nursery school when my son made a hand plaque and a drawing on construction paper to the final Valentine in 2002, I have cherished these gifts of love from my only child. I have kept every Valentine my son ever made for me or bought for me. I have every Valentine gift he ever gave me. These are the treasures that remind me how special a parent's love truly is. There is no love to compare with the unconditional love we give our children. I think my son knew that nobody in the world would love him as much as his mother did. Yet, he also knew that he would love his children in just this same way. This unconditional parent's love that we give our children is the most precious love in life. It is always our hope that they, too, will find the joy of this love with their children.

When our child dies, we cling to our unconditional love as we feel the anguish of a final separation on this earthly plane and a tsunami of betrayal as the devastation of this incomprehensible loss sweeps over us. The pain is real. It is physical, emotional, psychological and forever embedded on our psyche. Yet, without that unconditional love, there would be no pain. Who among us would trade the most infinitely rewarding love and the subsequent pain of loss for a life of lukewarm relationships?

And so, as Valentine's Day once again comes into my life, I will look back at this love, at the good times, the wonderful handmade childhood Valentine cards and gifts and the carefully selected cards of adulthood that my son gave to me. His words, his love, his appreciation for all that we had shared as mother and child will be reflected in these treasures. There will be tears, certainly, but these are tempered with the many wonderful, sweet memories of my son and his life. It is these sweet memories which sustain me, give me hope, and bring me gratitude for all that was given to me. My son is forever in my heart. He is with me every day and every night, and especially, he is with me on Valentine's Day.

Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen



THIS MONTH OF FEBRUARY,

I WISH YOU LOVE

This is the month that a whole day is dedicated to love. In our sorrow, let us not forget that one emotion which, above all else, can comfort and console us.

Let us think of the things we love--

1. Our child--whom we loved--still love--and always will love--here in our hearts as long as we live.
2. Our families--hurting like us--lonely--needing each other--needing us.
3. Our true friends--listening--trying to help--wanting to lighten our load, but not knowing how--not always understanding, but there.
4. Our memories--of wonderful times gone by--some that make us laugh--some that make us cry--but all part of the fabric of our lives and of our love for each other.
5. Our quiet times--to get away by ourselves and think--to read--to note again the world around us--to let peace enter.
6. Our Compassionate Friends---who are there---who know---who understand when others do not.

"Love makes the world go round" and when our world comes to a sudden, grinding, heart-shattering stop, love is the glue that keeps us from falling off.

Fran MacArthur, Southern MD, TCF

1/20/08

Waiting for Answers

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I should do anything to ease the ache I my soul. But when I walked out into the spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been con-

firmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory? During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed. My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise? As I walked to my car after the first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me, "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen too." Sometimes the best advise is none at all.

Mary Clark, TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter from Atlanta TCF Newsletter Jan/Feb 2000

A FRIEND IS A TREASURE

A friend is someone we turn to,

When our spirits need a lift.

A friend is someone we treasure,

For our friendship is a gift.

A friend is someone who fills our lives,

With beauty, joy, and grace.

And makes the world we live in,

A better and happier place.

(Love Stays in Our Hearts Forever continued from page 2)



and I could not find the words to explain how I felt. I kept my feelings unshared and hurt buried deep inside.

I had not yet learned that from every loss, there is something gained. Even living through the loss of a child leads us to a kind of strength we never knew we had, and a knowledge of life we never knew before. The time came when I could no longer dwell on questions which had no answers, and I searched for insight and a right of passage to change my focus toward positive memories and feelings. I realized I could not have felt this sadness about losing my babies, unless I had first been blessed with the joy of loving them . . . and that the real emptiness in my heart would have been never having had them at all.

As I worked through my grief, I was beginning to learn some of life's lessons. The pain of losing a child never really leaves us, for it is a part of our lives that will always be left unfinished and unexplained. It's never an easy thing to accept the unfairness of life, and yet it touches us all. And sometimes it is only because life has touched us in this way, that we become more aware of the wonder of life and of the blessings it brings.

I realized that each time I allowed my self to love, it meant taking a risk. Each time I reached for my dreams meant taking a risk. I knew that the only way I could live life fully was to lose the emptiness and become unafraid to take risks again. I promised myself that I would let love back into my heart, for it is much too precious a gift to waste, and my days and nights too precious to be covered with sadness.

My third baby son was born the next year, and soon thereafter my baby daughter. Both again premature, but thanks to God, a wonderful dedicated pediatrician, and advanced medical technology, they survived. Their hospital stays were long and filled with many scary moments. The hours became days and the days became weeks, but both babies, in spite of the odds that faced them, continued to cling tightly to life. Months later when they came home, I slowly found I was mending my broken dreams and with joy, I was beginning a new fairy tale.

The love and compassion I have always felt for children has deepened through the years and will always hold a special place inside my heart. The thought of unfairness still comes and I still feel my tears when I hear of children being neglected or abused. But I no longer think of myself and my loss. Instead, I have become involved with organizations that are helping to do

something about these terrible problems. I have worked with dedicated pediatricians in the neonatal field, and have donated my paintings with messages of hope which hang in hospital waiting rooms. Giving of myself is the only way I can give back for the blessings life has given me.

There are ways each of us can help and become involved. We all have something to give, and it is through this giving that we uncover gifts of our own. Often it is enough just to hold someone's hand or simply be there. Each of us has a story, and each of us may feel alone with our heartache, but we are never alone when we let ourselves be unafraid to share our feelings. Sharing connects us and no matter how over-used that word may be, it is still a word that makes us realize how much people need one another in this world and how we can ease each other's pain.

I still look up into the night sky sometimes and think about those two little boys that were with me for such a short while. And sometimes I find myself wondering what they would be like today if they could have grown up with their brother and sister. Then I remember that although they are with the angels once more, in some wonderful way they are still with me. I believe that children are the most precious gifts we can ever know—yet they are only loaned to us for a while and never really belong to us.

The purest wonder in life is found in sharing love with a child. So while they are with you, nurture your children completely, love them uncritically and with all of your heart. And if you should ever lose them, know that they have never really left you for they remain inside your heart wherever you are. Believe that love like this never dies, and that it is not always the understanding of life that is really important, but the believing in the wonder of it.

Reprint policy: Proper attribution must be given to the author and We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.
Copyright 1996

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

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

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.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 tnesheim@sbcglobal.net *Rachel Salomonson* Age 19 – Auto accident

TREASURER Forest Anderson 847-838-0567 forest.anderson@att.net *Rusty Anderson* Age 15 – Osteosarcoma

SECRETARY Jenny & Rick Selle 847-249-4776 jennyselle@yahoo.com *Lila Ruffolo* Age 24 – Auto Accident

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 *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 Aaron Barrera, age 29 - insulin reaction subsequent auto accident

STEERING COMMITTEE Marilyn Grace 847-395-8597 grace.marilyn@gmail.com *Megan Grace* Age 15 – Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Mary Ann Grazier 847-336-0539 *Barry Grazier* Age 27 – Auto Accident

Maggie McGaughey 224-406-6644 maggieg00@hotmail.com *Jeremy Govekar* Age 22 – Hit by train

Charon Sloop 847-623-2264 charronsloop@AOL.com *David Sloop* Age 33 – Motor Cycles accident

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.