



# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

January, 2017 Newsletter



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

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## Chapter Leader Notes



### Ready or Not - A New Year Is Here

The new year is here - whether we welcomed it or not. A time that is customarily celebrated is, generally, just a painful reminder to the bereaved that their loved one's presence has moved further into the past.

I do not enjoy marking the new year for that very reason. But I do try to consciously behave or think in a positive way to help me and those around me. I try to stem the morose places that my mind goes by remembering the moments of closeness and warmth and love that I still feel for my daughter, sister, and brother.

While recently walking through Hobby Lobby, I noticed a decorative, wooden sign that read "Don't look back, you're not going that way." The message caused me to pause and think about the meaning. Who would buy that sign and its' message? Maybe it would be a good gift for a college grad or someone who started their own business or embarked on a new career. I couldn't help but wonder how that sentiment of *not looking back* might apply to me - and all of the other grieving parents and siblings.

Looking back in the form of memories is very important to the bereaved. It keeps our loved ones alive in our minds and hearts. At some point, those memories bring smiles and not pain. Our relation

ship with our loved one exists in spite of their absence but changes over time. It takes work as most long-time griever's will tell you. It means learning what you can about grief and being conscious, even when painful, of how the grief is affecting you at your core as well as your physical and mental health.

It is equally as important to look forward. It takes some time before a bereaved parent or sibling reaches that point in their grieving - months? years? There is no set time or best time, it is just when you realize that you are ready to walk into a new year with a different mindset where you can actually be interested in new activities around you and you are actually happy for other people as they experience joy and excitement for their futures. Eventually, we will feel joy and excitement for ourselves but only after we have cried the tears and vented the anger, shared the pain of our loss and survived the fatigue of grief. Then we start seeing the future as positive and hopeful.

I will close with the words of another person, Pat Schwiebert, R.N., who wrote: "We have tasted the bitterness of loss, but have not allowed it to destroy us. And together we will rise out of the ashes of grief and say YES to life. None of us can do it alone. We need each other to lean on and celebrate newness."

"Our hope for those in the throes of fresh grief is that someday your days will again bring you more joy... more music... more laughter... more gratitude ... more friends ... more surprises ... more memories".

Wishing you a gentle, healing and positive new year.

*Toni*

## Meetings

### Northern Illinois Chapter TCF January 18 - 7:30 p.m.

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

### Waukegan meeting February 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

## Winter Gloves

--Bonnie Harris, TCF, Richmond, VA



When the season changes to fall each year, you know that winter is just around the corner. This is the time that you put away all the sunnier clothes and bring out the sweaters, coats, boots, and other heavy gear for the weather to come. This all boils down to possibly cleaning out a closet, a job that no one likes.

Few people would understand how long it takes a person to accomplish this task (or any other for that matter) after losing a child. Your mind puts everything on hold.

The power to concentrate and remember is retarded for a long period of time. For me it has been over two years and what little memory I used to have is just now slowly coming back. Cleaning out a closet has been put off and only the most important items taken out when needed.

I have been lucky, just to remember to hang up things through most of my grief period and some of the packed up boxes stored away, have things in them that I put away before Kim died. It is firmly time to challenge myself to complete a larger project other than just dusting, vacuuming or mopping, the kitchen floor.

Once the job is started, I feel I can handle it and see something all of the way through from start to finish. As I open each box (luckily there are only, three small ones), I must go through each item and decided whether to save, donate, or throw away. For the most part, the decisions are easy ones, but then came the box with Kim' gloves, ear muffs, and scarves.

At first I thought I would just quit and leave everything sitting in the middle of the floor just outside of the coat closet. But the more I looked over these items, the more pleasant the task became. It is not that I care that much for housework, it was the fact that I had found a treasure. To me, finding anything that belonged to Kim is a treasure, worth more than anything else I own. The discovery of these "treasures" made my chore at hand more important and easier to complete. I placed the things that had special meaning in the cedar chest in Kim's room and the others I planned on using myself to keep her memory as close to me as I can.

We tried every kind of glove made to keep her hands warm and dry when she would go outside in the winter. Once, we even tried the plastic gloves. When she was younger and played in the snow with friends, the only thing that would get her to come back home sooner that I figured, was the wet and cold hands. We could have five pairs of gloves lined up across the hearth of the fireplace, at any given time. Kim would stand there trying to get her hands to warm up and her gloves to dry fast so she could go back out again. As she got older, she preferred the pretty leather fur lined gloves for longer lasting warmth.

I decided to use one pair of Kim's gloves as the "every day" pair, for walking the dog, trips outside, etc. The nicer pair with the special lining are saved for going to work and any other more special occasions. I chose another pair to keep in my car as a "just in case" spare. As with all of the other articles of Kim's clothes, when I wear them she is closer to me and I am comforted with that feeling.

I don't know what will happen when these "special" treasures" wear out and can no longer be worn. I



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

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**

<b>Mitchell Carlson's</b>	<b>January 1</b>	Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<b>Anna Smith Miller</b>	<b>January 3</b>	Daughter of Carol Smith
<b>Michael Curtis</b>	<b>January 4</b>	Son of Sonya Curtis
<b>Eric Wiatr</b>	<b>January 5</b>	Debbie Exposito
<b>Michael Lee Brandon Frederick</b>	<b>January 13</b>	Son of Jan Frederick
<b>Hamilton</b>		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>Justin Cody Ortega</b>	<b>January 20</b>	Son of Susie Meggs
<b>Keegan Cray</b>	<b>January 21</b>	Son of Kristin & Ken Willis
<b>Sandra Elena Varela</b>	<b>January 31</b>	Daughter of Sandra Prez
<b>Kevin Pomianek</b>	<b>February 4</b>	Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek
<b>Aaron Barrera</b>	<b>February 6</b>	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
<b>Roderick Young</b>	<b>February 13</b>	Son of Scarlet Austin
		Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
<b>Heather Donnelly</b>	<b>February 26</b>	Daughter of Daniel Donnelly
<b>Megan Candice Grace</b>	<b>February 24</b>	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
<b>Anne Thomson</b>	<b>February 25</b>	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

<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>Eric Wiatr</b>	<b>January 21</b>	Debbie Exposito
<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
<b>Rob Petit</b>	<b>February 2</b>	Son of Nancy Ervin
<b>Susan Nesheim Allbee</b>	<b>February 5</b>	Sister of Toni Nesheim
<b>Darien Wilson</b>	<b>February 11</b>	Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera
<b>Douglas Ramsay</b>	<b>February 12</b>	Son of Carlene Ramsay
<b>Ravael Villanveva</b>	<b>February 12</b>	Son of Victoria Villanveva
<b>Michael Stice</b>	<b>February 13</b>	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
<b>Kelly Klawonn</b>	<b>February 14</b>	Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn
<b>Ashley Seay</b>	<b>February 18</b>	Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay
		Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley
<b>Mitchell Carlson</b>	<b>February 19</b>	Son of Tina VanderMeer
		Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<b>Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles</b>	<b>February 19</b>	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<b>Zachary Taylor</b>	<b>February 24</b>	Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor

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.

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## A Mother's Journey From Loss to Peace



Sandy Goodman didn't believe she could survive her son's death. Then a psychic brought him back to her.

It was July 1996, the night before Sandy Goodman's 18-year-old twin sons, Jason and Joshua, were to ship out for naval training. It was also the night her world collapsed. Making the most of his final hours of civilian life, outgoing, adventurous Jason climbed the tallest building in their hometown of Riverton, Wyo., grabbed hold of a high-voltage line and was electrocuted. He fell three stories and died hours later in the hospital. Sandy still has his watch, stopped at 2:35 a.m.

"When Jason died, it was like the bottom fell out," says Sandy, who runs a group home in Riverton with her husband, Dave, 54. "You can't even describe what it means to lose a child. It's incomprehensible. Unacceptable."

Drowning in her pain, Sandy found it impossible to sever the ties she felt still bound her to her son. For months, she carried on one-sided conversations with Jason, pleading for a signal. She'd never been a particularly spiritual person, but a few months after Jason's death, she contacted a medium through an online bereavement group.

"Until my son died, I didn't really have a belief system," says Sandy, now 53, who also has an older son, Jeremy, 32. "I didn't know if psychics were real. But I decided to give it a try." Dave was skeptical, but Sandy was desperate. Christmas was almost unbearable.

"Reality had arrived, and I couldn't escape it," Sandy has written. "I would never again see Jason walk through our front door, tracking snow across my, freshly waxed for the holidays, floor. I would never again buy two of everything for Jason and his twin brother."

### A Spiritual Lift

Sitting by Jason's grave nearly a year after his death, Sandy begged him to reach out to her, or to anyone who could get a message to her. "Call your mom," she said. "Call and let her know you're OK. I need to know you're not gone."

Shortly after that day, on June 23, 1997, Sandy got a phone call at work from an up-and-coming psychic she'd met in a spirituality chat room. The medium told Sandy he'd been lounging by the pool on vacation when a young man appeared to him, with the symbol "JSN" and the name Sandy. The psychic grabbed a

menu and scribbled down a message: "You need to call my mom."

Those words, "Call my mom," sent shivers through Sandy. "That was the proof I was waiting for, to know Jason was still connected to us," she says. The medium received more signals from Jason, Sandy recalled, talking about his favorite childhood story, *The Poky Little Puppy*, and the fact that Jason had been scheduled to leave by plane with Joshua the day he died. "I could feel his personality coming through," says Sandy. "I was elated."

Since then, she's had many readings with numerous psychics, including four encounters with celebrity medium John Edward. Messages from Jason are not especially spiritual, she says. They relate to mundane aspects of family life that Sandy instantly recognizes, such as camping trips or pieces of Jason's artwork displayed in the house.

The contact with Jason's spirit validated her feelings, says Sandy, and let her begin grieving the loss of his physical body. "I knew I'd always have a connection to his essence," she says. Cynthia Craton, a Michigan-based medium who has acted as a conduit for many of Jason's messages, says it's common to feel a sense of peace after a valid afterlife reading. "The message is that loved ones are always with us," she says. "And it's OK to go on living."

Over the past decade, Sandy has paid for only two psychic readings. Most, she says, have been entirely spontaneous and authentic. And the value has been incalculable; surrendering her skepticism and embracing the links to Jason's spirit is what kept her afloat in the dark times following his death.

### Moving On

Now Sandy wants to share her experience with other bereaved parents. Since publishing a book, *Love Never Dies: A Mother's Journey From Loss to Love*, in 2002, she has become an



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(A Mother's Journey From Loss to Peace continued from page 4)

advocate for the transformational power of grief. She recently founded Love Never Dies 4U, a grief-support group that embraces the notion of life after death and supports the work of mediums in the healing process. "Some people don't feel comfortable talking about their beliefs if they fall outside mainstream religions," she says. "With mediums, it can be hard to get past fears or skepticism."

Sandy wants to change that. She has created an online support forum ([loveneverdies4u.org](http://loveneverdies4u.org)) and e-newsletter, and is planning a workshop on after-death communication. Everyone, she believes, must endure loss to feel the depth of eternal love. "It's been a gift to realize how strong a parent's love is, that it survives even death."

### The Gift of Grief

Amazingly, Sandy says she and her family have found peace through their loss and cherish one another even more. Dave was at first reluctant to embrace the psychics, message - it meant admitting Jason wasn't coming back. "Sometimes it was just easier to believe he was away somewhere, like camp," Sandy says.

But eventually he too became convinced Jason's spirit was still with them. Their sons Jeremy and Joshua, Jason's twin, now 29 (who quit the Navy after the tragedy and now works in the oil and gas field), have both found their own paths to healing.

"We've learned many lessons," says Sandy. "You can survive. You have to go through it all, feel it all and at some point make a conscious decision to move on, to decide to go on living."

"It's hard to say this because I still feel guilty. But I have found joy," says Sandy. "I've found love. It takes a while. It takes years. But I actually feel fortunate that I have realized how much parents love their children."

.....is now online!! Here's the link:

<http://www.quickandsimple.com/article.php?id=528&menu=0>

Sandy Goodman  
[sandy@loveneverdies.net](mailto:sandy@loveneverdies.net)  
 Love Never Dies  
<http://www.loveneverdies.net>

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I

thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year: New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself – both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation.

Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!



Resolutions  
 By Pat Akery  
 The Compassionate Friends,  
 Medford, Ore.

( WINTER GLOVES cptinued from page 2)  
will decide what to do, when the times comes, hoping that at that place in my life I will be ready to let go of these things and still remain somewhat sane. But for now, I will warm my hands against the cold winds and snow with Kim's gloves, holding onto my memories to warm my heart.

## I've Learned

By Nancy Ludt  
Huntington Beach, California

*Editor's Note: When Nancy Ludt asked the families of the Huntington Beach, Calif., Bereaved Parent Support Group what they had learned since the death of their child, she reported that their comments were "moving and eye-opening," and she offered to share these pearls of wisdom with us. No two comments she received were alike, and "the names of the contributors were left out because this is a group effort, and we can all benefit from this list." While these "lessons" are from bereaved parents, they can easily apply also to almost any other kind of bereavement, as well.*

I've learned:

- To take one day at a time.
- Not to say, "if only," "I should have," etc.
- To appreciate what I've got and not moan about what I "don't got."
- To appreciate life and not take it for granted.
- If today is bleak, tomorrow can be better.
- To appreciate the moments when I can laugh.
- That without my support group, I would be lost.
- How very much I need my "new" friends.
- How much I treasure and love my daughter's friends.
- Not to take my health for granted.
- What is trivial.
- That if my energy level is low, I don't push myself.
- The importance of exercise.
- That grief is not time-bound.
- That no one grieves like me; everybody grieves differently.
- That the pain never goes away, but it does get "softer."
- That no one can comfort me the way Jesus can.

- To allow the grief, pain and loss to become a part of me.
- That there is a reason to keep on living (and loving).
- That joy does return...only in a different way.
- To turn "it" over to the Lord.
- That someday we will be together again.
- Not to let Satan steal my happiness.
- To ride "the wave" of denial, anger, depression and acceptance.
- To accept that I may never know why.
- It's okay to say, "No."
- Not to blame people when they don't understand.



## PICTURES FROM THE HEART

Since we have lost our children, part of what remains of them are pictures from the heart, which are those mental images we hold so dear. For some of us these pictures are memories of what had been, and for others these pictures are dreams of what might have been. And for some of us these pictures are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are really the same. It is the dimension where our children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories of the future, because we remember our children by the dreams we had for them; and memories are nothing more than dreams of the past, because to remember them is certainly to dream of them. I believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not hurt as much because they only had their child for a little while or to think that someone will not hurt as much because their child had the chance to grow up. In these dreams and memories, these pictures from the heart, all of our children are infants and all of our children have grown up. The sadness and pain comes from the broken heart, the memories and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

Kenneth Hensley  
TCF, Nashville, TN

## Love's Road By Paula D'Arcy



I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence;  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

~Robert Frost from The Road Not Taken

During the first months after the death of my husband and child I locked myself inside my apartment. When the phone rang I stared at the receiver until it was still. Friends knocked at my door, calling my name and I wouldn't answer. If my arms could not hold the ones for whom I longed, then I wanted them empty. My angry choice.

And my private choice, too. For I was building hard barriers inside of me. In subtle, secret ways I had begun to say "No" to all of life because part of life had hurt me.

Then one day, unexpectedly, my mail contained a letter from a young man in Kansas. He was suffering from a painful and incurable illness and he wanted my friendship. To my chagrin he would not accept any of my "Public" faces, nor would he honor my walls. He hammered into my life demanding that I be there. Without regard he pushed past the shadows and the memory-filled half person I was willing to become. His insistence was like a scream that I be alive.

In effect he was forcing me into the yellow wood and demanding that I face its reality; one inviting road of memories and shadows; and the other, rough road of love. No one grieves without standing at that same fork, waiting to decide. For it's never that we can't love again. It's that we won't. I knew. I had refused for a long, long while.

The experience of this encounter was the beginning of my fearful steps toward all the possibilities which might be waiting in my new, altered life. It was when I began to live for the new day. It was when I agreed to say goodbye to what had been. It was when I first started re-accepting life. Life in general, and my life in particular.

During those hard weeks when my choices were made I assumed that their significance reached only to my

future. Today I see that I was very mistaken. For how we choose to survive casts as much light (or darkness) on our treasured past as it does on our anticipated future. Here is the key: Nothing can give lasting life to the loves of yesterday except our willingness to carry the experience of that love onto the new roads sent for us to travel. In denying the new we bury the old. For when we cling to memory and live only with regret we do not really have that which we so tightly grasp. Nothing is ours until we let it go. That's the mystery of life and death both. Lord, give each one who reads these words the courage to take love's road.

## Thoughts on Winter

January, February, so cold, so crisp, so leafless. Beginning a NEW year, and NEW beginning. You never lived in this year and that is new. Sometimes new is painful. January is also the month of resolutions and the only resolution we must make is that we must learn to live without our child. What a profound sadness that is! To love them so deeply, so passionately, so completely, only to have us part.

My child, did I ever tell you enough how much I loved you? I've wondered. Do we tell those we love how very much their life has meant to us? Probably we do not. Somehow we arrogantly believe that time goes on forever. It does. It's just that people do not. We fail to recognize how entirely too brief some lives can be. You were not supposed to die. Death is reserved for others. How could you disappoint me? Didn't you know that I had such plans for you? I didn't want to face my own mortality. How cruel life was, using you to prove to me that we do indeed come to an end.

I don't want to accept your death, but what choice have I left? Oh, I'll mend, although mending sometimes means forgetting. I cannot put you aside, but already memories of you are fading. You know what I like best. When I'm given little tidbits of your life by those who knew you. What a bittersweet delight. Each piece of my jigsaw puzzle will eventually fit together. You will be the only missing piece.

-Dorothy Worrell  
TCF, Palo Alto, CA

**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).

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

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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.

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