



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

January 2022 Newsletter



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



Chapter Leader Notes from Susan

Remembering ~ My first meeting; I remember walking through the doors, I was greeted by Toni and a handful members, who are now dear friends. As this first meeting came to an end, I had found an odd comfort and for the first time in many days I truly knew, I was not alone anymore. This is the most difficult thing I have ever done, this grief journey of mine. I am only able to function one breath at a time to this day and I am hyper vigilant of my thoughts and emotions. The death of my son, Westley is the most painful emotion I have ever had to experience. I hope, as I have now taken on the responsibilities of Chapter Leader, I can bring comfort and hope to all and to all a safe place to be, to rest, to share our stories, to listen, to share tears and to be alright for a short period of time with others who truly understand.

I hope to continue to lead our Chapter with warmth, grace, love, and dedication. I will continue leading our Chapter in all its parts; monthly meetings, the newsletter, Outreach, Adopt-a-Highway, HEART Remembers, Woodland Walk Memorial and the Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony and the many more parts that will need my attention. In the future newsletters and meetings, I hope to reach out and share any celebrations or needs our Chapter might have.

May the new year be gentle and kind to you and your families. May the new year bring hope, happiness, and peace to you. I look forward to sharing and listening with you at our next meeting, on zoom or in – person. Please be gentle with yourself, rest and pause to take a breath.

Your Friend, Susan

In honor and memory of her son, Westley.

Tortoise Lesson



My neighbor, Alexandra Roosevelt, and her family kept a huge African Spur Thigh tortoise in their back yard for the last twenty years. It disappeared this past August while they were on vacation. The story made the local news and the entire community helped search. They looked everywhere but were unable to find Tortley.

In late October he was found in a corner of a locked supply closet alive and well. When asked how he could survive for so long without food or water, Alexandra said, "Tortley's survival instincts kicked in and his body put life on hold."

(Continued on page 2)



GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the passionate 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 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

Lake Villa Meeting Northern Illinois Chapter TCF

The third Thursday of the month meeting will remain as an in-person only meeting. The location is at the:

Millburn Congregational Church
19073 West Grass Lake Road
Lake Villa, IL 60046.

Park in the parking lot behind the church, enter through the double glass doors.

Holy Family Church

The first Thursday of the month meeting will remain a Zoom meeting only. This will change to in-person the date is to be announced.

(OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED DECEMBER; JANUARY, & FEBRUARY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Ashley Seay
February 18
Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay
Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley

Mitchell Carlson
February 19
Son of Tina VanderMeer
Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong

Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles
February 19
Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles

Zachary Taylor
February 24
Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor

(Tortoise Lesson continued from page 1)

I think that describes how we managed to survive those first weeks, months and years after our son, Brad, died. We put life on hold. We didn't engage in living, rather, we simply existed while our bodies and minds went into auto pilot while we tried to make sense of the enormous injury that we had suffered. Our survival instincts kicked in and we did only the least amount possible to keep from drowning in a sea of grief.

Eventually life found us hibernating in our locked closet. Often there was a knock at the door, but we were not ready to come out. We somehow knew when it was time to re-emerge, slowly at first, into a world waiting to welcome us back. This re-emergence can take months or years. There is no timetable and only you will know when you are ready. If your life is still on hold, take heart; the world is waiting just outside your door. You'll know when it's time to answer the knock.

Richard A. Berman, Editor (Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XIX No. 1, Winter 2014, www.bereavedparentsusa.org)



**YOUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN
DECEMBER, 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

Mitchell Carlson	January 1	Son of Tina Carlson Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
Andrew Naydihor	Januray 1	Son of Kelly Kozel
Anna Smith Miller	January 3	Daughter of Carol Smith
Michael Curtis	January 4	Son of Sonya Curtis
Eric Wiatr	January 5	Son of Debbie Eposito
Nathan Enright	January 7	Son of Martin Boyle
Casperin Hernandez	January 10	Son of Colleen Ramos
Michael Frederick Hamilton	January 13	Son of Jan Frederick Grandson of Sharon Frederick
Gabriel Murphy, Jr.	January 16	Son of Arvine Murphy
Matthew Tisch	January 17	Son of William & Barbara Tisch
Brain Scott Engle	January 19	Son of Louise Engle
Justin Cody Ortega	January 20	Son of Susie Meggs
Keegan Cray	January 21	Son of Kristin & Ken Willis
Sandra Elena Varela	January 31	Daughter of Sandra Prez
Kevin Pomianek	February 4	Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek
Jeff Wagner	February 4	Son of Mary Wagner
Aaron Barrera	February 6	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
Micah Musich	February 10	Son of Heather Musich
Scott Levin	February 11	Son of Lynda Levin
Kal-El O Sexton	February 13	Son of Derry Sexton
Roderick Young	February 13	Son of Scarlet Austin Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
Megan Candice Grace	February 24	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
Anne Thomson	February 25	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson
Felicity Patrick	February 26	Daughter of Nicole Patrick

ANNIVERSARIES

Mitchell Rodefer	December 8	Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer
Kal-El O. Sexton	December 21	Son of Derry Sexton
Casperin Hernandez	January 1	Son of Colleen Ramos
Noel Wendell Hernandez	January 1	Son of Colleen Ramos
Rachel Elizabeth Szech	January 2	Daughter Vicki Szech
Chris Houchin	January 5	Son of Scott Houchin & Heather McDonald
Lea Ann Knuth	January 16	Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise
Susan Nesheim Allbee	February 5	Sister of Toni Nesheim
Micah Gerald Musich	February 10	Son of Heather Musich
Darien Wilson	February 11	Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera
Douglas Ramsay	February 12	Son of Carlene Ramsay
Rafael Villanveva	February 12	Son of Victoria Villanveva
Delilah Vivian Butler	February 13	Daughter of Aileen & Chris Butler
Kelly Klawonn	February 14	Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn

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Looking Back... the Awesome Power of Hope

About the Author Nan Zastrow: Wings was created as a ministry of hope by Nan and Gary Zastrow after the death of their son, Chad Zastrow. On April 16, 1993, Chad died as a result of suicide. Nan is the author of five books, a quarterly online grief eLetter and dozens of articles published in various resources. Since 2003, Nan regularly publishes articles in "Grief Digest Magazine". Visit the website at: www.wingsgrief.org or the Wings Facebook page.

There is a quote that states "Don't look back. You aren't going that way." That's good advice for many circumstances in our lives. However, sometimes looking back is also a way to understand how far you've come; the accomplishments you've made especially under duress; and the power of "Hope" in becoming someone different than planned.

In 2018, Wings celebrated its 25th anniversary of the non-profit organization. It was a year of looking back and remembering, not with sadness, but rather with surprise and profound gratefulness for the support of family, friends, community, and even strangers as we traveled this journey after the death of our son, Chad, in April 1993. Looking back reminds us of the feeling that we didn't think we could do it (move forward). Looking back reminds of the challenges, the emotional hard work, and the victories won!

Please bear with me while I regress and summarize a fraction of what we've learned.

Remembering the beginning:

Spring forced its way into Wisconsin in an unusual way in April, 1993. It strangely marked the day with headline news. "Blizzard." It was Eastertime...a time when the sun typically began warming the earth and tulips emerged. Outside my window a cherry tree with long, thin branches swayed in the wind. The branches loaded with spring buds supported dozens of plastic Easter eggs in bright colors suspended from ribbons. The sudden freezing rain and blizzard coated the branches heavily with

ice causing them to strain and bend unbearably against the frozen weight. This bizarre scene mocked the event that had just unfolded...the death of our 21-year-old son, Chad, as the result of suicide. We tried to shake the icy chill that numbed our minds and bodies. How could this be happening to us? Ten weeks later, Chad's fiancé took her life too.

In an instance, our lives changed forever. Sometimes who we were meant to be is changed by a memory from our darkest moment. Memories triggered by traumatic events change the way we think, act, and respond to future events. They can create either negative or positive reactions going forward. In most cases, we make a choice. What we become tomorrow is molded by how we process the event, when the numbness subsides. Our son's death, our darkest moment, became a turning point that changed who we were and created a life much different than we ever imagined.

My husband, Gary, my daughter, and I were left to survive an unimaginable absence in our lives. When life seemed almost perfect, suddenly we were challenged beyond the limits of our human understanding.

Here are a few of the challenges:

Faith. Our faith wavered with unanswered questions and triggered a new search for meaning.

We lived with a stigma-related death in a time when death by suicide was silent.

We challenged the statistics. So many people quoted the statistics about divorce among parents who lost a child. We wanted to show, by example, that the death of a child can also forge an unbreakable bond of communication, love, and marital commitment.

Lack of knowledge about grief, unavailable resources (the Internet was newly born). Community resources were few. We struggled to learn what we needed to help us heal.

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(Looking Back... the Awesome Power of Hope continued from page 4)

Learning how loss of a sibling would affect our daughter with an intellectual disability and provide for her future needs.

Returning to the workplace, managing productivity, dealing with inquisitive questions from coworkers, and finding motivation to excel when it didn't seem important anymore.

Accepting that this death was something we could not control. We struggled with shudda, wudda, cudda feelings of guilt until we realized that some things in life are not to be understood, but rather accepted.

Restructuring family traditions long-term. Recognizing that this loss changed the way we practiced our traditions, and filled the gap created by death.

Loss of dreams. Seeing family and friends living out their dreams through the lives of their children and grandchildren. Then, realizing we would never have the opportunity to experience the same.

Finding purpose. Purpose equals "future." Without a vision of the future, there is no such thing as purpose.

How we healed our pain:

Here are my short answers to some of the items above that paved our path to healing.

First, we let God in. After a brief period of anger and frustration with a loving God, we realized there is nothing stronger than faith to get you through.

Stopping the silence about suicide became a passion. So often suicide is misunderstood and over-judged. We speak publicly about this and other related taboo deaths.

Remembering who our son was, not how he died is our focus. Guilt implies "intent". We adopted a

"no fault" judgment regarding Chad's death. We instinctively knew, without a doubt, that Chad did not intend to hurt us. Putting guilt aside was a simple choice.

Continued education and learning about grief. This became a lifelong pursuit to help us deal with our own loss as well as help others.

Providing educational opportunities to help people deal with uncertainty and live with a society that sometimes minimizes the impact of grief on someone's life.

Building a "different" life with different "dreams" and grasping joy wherever we could find it. Living in the present moment and not taking it for granted.

Creating "purpose" through our grief ministry allowed us to see a brighter future.

Our way to defeat the pain was to never forget. We'll never forget our darkest moment, but there are lessons to be learned from all life experiences. We still selfishly surrender to moments of sadness and tears. It is our legacy. However, choosing to be better rather than bitter was the right choice. The memory of our grief lives as our daily companion, but it is the healing that reigns. The dark moments become grayer and the sun shines brighter fading the pain of loss so we can live meaningful lives. We will forever be amazed at the surprises that unfold because we are exactly where we are meant to be.

God directs our paths. Our pursuit for peace evolved through action. Choosing to heal grief can challenge your life temporarily, but it will likely change your life forever. One nanosecond in time changed our lives forever. Looking forward is the key to surviving loss but looking back is a requirement for discovering and acknowledging the awesome power of HOPE!

(Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XXV No. 1, Winter 2020, www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

7 GRIEF STRATEGIES FOR THE NEW YEAR -- OR FOR ANYTIME

The old saying is true: "If there is an elephant in the room, introduce him." No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. And when it comes to facing the pain of our grief with both eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we've had a loss recently, the new year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest about the pain of our grief and resolve in the months to come to be proactive and do the necessary grief work to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

#1. Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter. Imagine you had a friend who you cared deeply for and imagine that friend had just experienced the death of someone they love very much. You would want to help them, you'd want to comfort then and encourage them. Well, now substitute yourself for that friend. You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged too, so write yourself a letter saying to yourself the same sorts of things you would say to a good friend. Then, read the letter aloud to yourself once or twice, put it away for a few days or a week, then read it again. Do this for a few months, then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Avoid thinking that you are so 'strong' or 'solid' that you don't need help and tender compassion. That is a misunderstanding of strength and personal fortitude. Feeling intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness, to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

#2. Buy a big calendar and use it. One of the main problems bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. Grieving people also sometimes get pressured by other well-meaning people into doing activities they really don't want to do. An 'appointment calendar' can solve both of those problems. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. So, as the new year begins, grab your pen, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments. Appointments with whom? Well, most importantly, with yourself. Without isolating yourself or taking yourself out of social circulation, you can pen in

some 'self-time' and thereby reserve a lot of valuable quiet time. Now this quiet time does not have to be momentous. Just by reserving time for yourself, you will give yourself time to breathe and reflect as the new year, with all of its demands and changes, unfolds. Appointments like "movie with me," or "reading with me," "journaling with me" or "recreation with me" make it possible for you to always be able to tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, "Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment." This way you can say "No" in a socially graceful way, and if you want to accept someone's invitation, you can always break an appointment with yourself, no one will be upset about that.

#3. Move your body, move your mind. As you slowly adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it's vital you get outside and move your body. Notice, I didn't say "exercise," since for some people that may sound daunting (What do I wear? What gym do I join? What are the elements of my workout?). No need to make it a big undertaking, you're not training for the Olympics. So, pick short, achievable goals, like a very short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park, etc. Keep these jaunts short, as this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief. This is a great habit to form in the new year.

#4. Realize that you do not need to "understand" your grief or fit your loss into your religious or philosophical worldview right now. When I coached Little League, I established the One Minute Rule. It was this: If I, or any player, gets hit by a batted or thrown baseball, whatever the person hit by the ball says for the first minute after being hit, is OK. Screaming and accusations were common after being hit by the baseball, but everyone knew that you got a free pass for a minute. And they knew that after a minute the hit person had to be ready to move on. Well, bereaved people get a lot longer than a minute, or a month, or a year, to integrate their experience into the rest of their outlook on life. So, don't feel any anxiety about fully grasping what has happened to you. Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to cognitively address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued. (Continued on page 7)

(7 GRIEF STRATEGIES FOR THE NEW YEAR -- OR FOR ANYTIME from page 6)

#5. Decide that in the new year, you will, in some new way, begin to focus a bit more on others, as a part of your loved one's legacy. This is a valuable change you can make in your life. We all need to get out of our skin for a while, we need to get out of ourselves and just focus on other people, and their problems. Sometimes this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. So, plan on doing that this new year, and as you do it, you will no doubt talk with new people, and when the opportunity presents itself tell them about your loved one who has died. You don't have to tell your loved one's life story or anything like that, just mention them in passing, or say "My wife [son, daughter, sister, brother] used to like to do this activity." You may feel a bit more comfortable talking about your loved one with people who didn't know him or her, and it is very valuable to begin to talk out loud—in the past tense---about your loved one. It may be shocking for you to hear yourself speak out loud in the past tense about someone so close to you, but it will help you integrate their death into your life. Where do you go to be around other people? Start with local civic groups, like the Boys and Girls Club, the Historical Society, the Kiwanis or Elks, the Library, Big Brothers and Sisters, a Habitat for Humanity project or a Rescue Mission.

#6. Listen to the Music. A recent study I saw asserted that sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood, report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing. Throughout human religious and cultural history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Sit down with a pen and paper and make a short list of some songs of different types that you have always liked. Then go to youtube.com and search for them and listen to them, or go to the library and listen to them, or order them online (if you are not accustomed to doing that on a computer, ask a friend to do it for you). Just get the music playing so you can listen to it. And as you do, let your mind take you where it will--daydream---and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed...

#7. Wishing you well. As the new year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the new year. Trouble imagining what that might be? It's probably the same as what you would wish for your loved one, had you been the one that died. So sit down at the computer, or put pen to paper, and make a list of five or seven or ten states of mind or attitudes or commodities that your loved one

would want for you to attain as you move forward without them physically with you. For example, my mother would want me to look toward the future, and not be paralyzed by mourning. Or, my father would want me to be optimistic about what will happen to me this year, or my sister would want me to buy those expensive boots we used to talk about. And then, armed with your list, choose one of those dispositions or possessions and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months and check off the outlook or object you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this new year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

So often, we think of grief or bereavement as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives. This is not to say that grief is a "problem" we can solve, or a "condition" we can hurry up and make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants and even helpful agents in our own emotional well-being. By deliberately and purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a new year and our new lives dawn.

About the Author: Brad Stetson (Ph. D., University of Southern California) has published on a wide range of religious and social topics, including *Tender Fingerprints: A True Story of Loss and Resolution* (Zondervan, 1999, 2000) and *Living Victims, Stolen Lives: Parents of Murdered Children Speak to America* (Baywood, 2003).

(Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XXV No. 1, Winter 2020, www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

“The strongest person in the world is a grieving mother that wakes up and keeps going every morning”

Tara Watkins Anderson

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 Road, Winthrop Harbor, IL. 60096

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include the 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 - 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI - 48393 PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246. The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org

Steering Committee 2021 – 2022

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH Sue Battis 847-445-7004 suebattis@yahoo.com son, Nick Battis Age 24 of suicide.

HOSPITALITY Kris Frisby 847-366-3170 Kefrisby88@comcast.net son, Camden Frisby Age 15 of suicide.

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Northern Lake County IL Chapter #1511 <http://www.iltcf.org/index.html>

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TCF SIBS: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tcfsibs/>