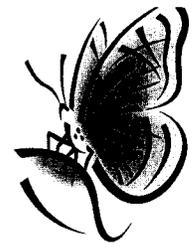


The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter
January, 2009 Newsletter



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

*Chapter Leader
Notes
From
Jenny & Rick*



What was troubling me a year ago at this time? If you are like me, I'm sure there had to be something going on in those dark recesses of your mind that kept you from being in the moment...something taking up space and stealing valuable opportunities to enjoy the gift of being alive.

We are spending this holiday season in Florida and are staying about 200 yards from the Gulf of Mexico, with white sandy beaches, the sounds of surf and gulls, and temperatures in the seventies and eighties being very much appreciated after the hard winter we have already had in Illinois.

This week we are experiencing the blessings and challenges of being with my daughter, ex-son-in-law, and two young grandsons. They have their own situations and are doing the best they can. Everything here is exactly as it is supposed to be. Things take their course as they will always do, no matter how much I may wish that they might be more ideal in my perception.

Which brings me back to my initial thoughts: I truly don't remember what was troubling me last year at this time! Here we are, at the same resort, same room, even. Around us are the same owners and staff, and many of the same guests. I know that last year I sat on the same beach, with probably the same thoughts and voices in my head, thinking of tomorrow and yesterday and next month and my busy season and money and obligations and...letting my own self steal precious time from my life.

Those of us who have gone through the tragedy of the deaths of our children should realize more than anyone how fast one's life can change and how pointless dwelling on the past and the future can be!

So, maybe this year I will try a little harder not to borrow from the future or linger in the past. Maybe I'll try a little harder to enjoy my life as it happens and give of myself to others who have

real problems. I know that's what Lila would want, because that is how she lived.



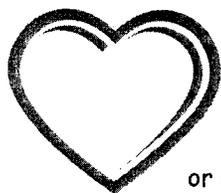
The Holidays are Behind Us

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 both, 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 among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the 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 throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our 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 searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed 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 for our child that are 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 deep way.

~Marie Andres TCF So. MD Chap., MD



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.

Loving Gifts for the December Newsletter

Thanks to Andrew Goszczycki for sponsoring the January newsletter in memory of his son, Michael Goszczycki, who was born January 10, 1959.

Loving Gifts for 2009

For the needs of the Chapter

Pat Howard

In memory of her daughter Christine Span

"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 to all who contribute.

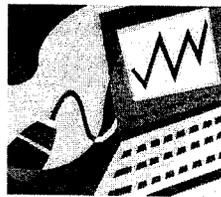
Save the Date!

The Compassionate Friends

2009 National Conference

August 7-9, 2009 ~ Portland Oregon

Watch the website for details!



New TCF Video: *After a Child Dies*

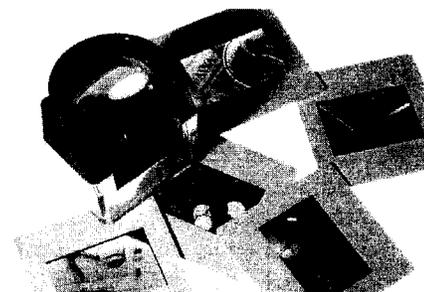
The Compassionate Friends unveiled this month a web version of a new video *After a Child Dies*. We believe *After a Child Dies* will offer insight and understanding and hope to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents, and to those who care about them. *After a Child Dies* is now available to view online.

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





OUR CHILDREN 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.

ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAYS

Anna Smith Miller

January 3, 1977 - July 6, 2005
Daughter of Carol Smith

Michael Goszczycki

January 10, 2000 - September 23, 2005
Son of Andrew Goszczycki

Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick

January 13, 2000 - August 25, 2002
Son of Jan Frederick & Michael Hamilton
Grandson of Sharon Frederick

Heather LaMarche

February 9, 1988 - August 24, 2007
Daughter of Peggy LaMarche

Brian Abrahamson

February 13, 1972 - September 17, 1994
Son of Ed & Laurette Abrahamson

Jarrett Howard Ecxford

February 15, 1992 - February 26, 2008
Son of Eugene & Ella Ecxford

Megan Candice Grace

February 24, 1984 - November 18, 1999
Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
Granddaughter of Diana Runyon

Anne Thomson

February 25, 1985 - April 25, 2002
Daughter of Nancy of Tom Thomson

Rachel Elizabeth Szech

May 9, 1975 - January 2, 1992
Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech

Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth

April 2, 1977 - January 16, 1999
Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise

Adam Roach

January 26, 2006
Son of Michael & Nancy Roach

Renee' Rochelle Powell

July 7, 1971 - January 30, 1981
Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell

Rob Petit

May 15, 1979 - February 2, 2003
Son of Nancy Ervin

Douglas Ramsay

November 17, 1969 - February 12, 1987
Son of Carlene Ramsay

Michael Stice

July 4, 1986 - February 13, 2005
Son of Dora & Gary Stice

Kelly Klawonn

October 23, 1968 - February 14, 1969
Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn

Jarrett Howard Ecxford

February 15, 1992 - February 26, 2008
Son of Eugene & Ella Ecxford

Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles

September 5, 1960 - February 19, 1995
Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles

Zachary Taylor

November 30, 1998 - February 24, 2007
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.

vszech@comcast.net - 847-573-1055

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, earmuffs, 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 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.



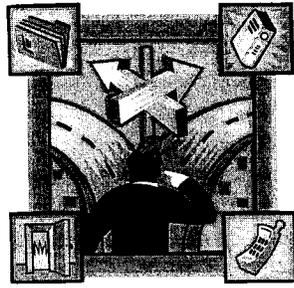
Winters of Our Lives

By Mary Wildman ~ TCF, Madison County, IL

Someone has said that it is in the winter, when the trees have dropped their leaves, "revealing the diversity and uniqueness of each ridge and valley" ~ when the hills bare their innermost selves ~ that we get to know them ~ what is really out there. And so it is with people. Most of the time we wear our masks. But it is during the difficult times, during the winters of our lives, that there is the strong need to shed our masks and be able to reveal the hurting and turmoil that is really there. "It is in these moments that friendships are formed and we experience one another as few others ever will." So it is among The Compassionate Friends! WE CARE!

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



Winter of our Souls— Sandy Goodman

It is winter today. There is no sun, not even a flash of light to focus on. The air has become murky as if it has solidified, losing its clarity. Ice covers everything, smothering any life that might have been.

Staring out my window, I compare the bite of winter to my grief: the coldness, the shadows, and my reluctance to breathe in any more discomfort. Grief, like winter, appears uninvited and unwelcome. We abhor the pain and wonder why we must endure the distress, while all along we feel the imminent arrival.

Winter compels the earth to rest. Everything stops struggling, stops performing, and sleeps. Abruptly, nature's need to "do" is gone and "being" is all that is necessary. All that was living before appears lifeless. The leaves disappear from the trees, flowers no longer grace our gardens, and the grass is entombed by snow. But what is going on beneath that which we see? Are the flowers really gone, or are they only changing . . . becoming new, becoming different?

I ponder how much further I dare go with this. Can I contend that grief, like winter, is a gift? Can I talk about the metamorphosis of grief, and contemplate gratitude for its presence? I do not know, but that is where my thoughts are leading me.

Grief necessitates a sabbatical from living. We stop struggling, stop performing, and freeze. Our compulsion to "do" dissolves, and "being" is all that is possible. Our life as we knew it disappears, dreams are shattered, and our hearts are ripped from us in the blink of an eye. We are gone, lost in our grief. But what is transpiring in our heart? Is everything gone, or is it only changing . . . becoming new, becoming different?

Grief is harsher than winter. The tasks of daily living are amplified, and what was once soft and blurred becomes sharp and ragged. While winter invariably ends and I remember that spring will arrive, grief makes no such promise. I must wait

without assurance. There are moments when winter is beautiful: a blanket of fresh snow on Christmas morning or the surprise of a warm breeze in February. There are nights when winter is hard and ugly, when temperatures plummet and the howl of the wind threatens our sanity. Grief is the same. A special memory comes into my heart and grief becomes bittersweet . . . beautiful. Then, a letter addressed to my son arrives in the mail, and I am back to the harsh reality that he is gone.

My grief transformed me. It tore out everything within me and said "There! "It is GONE! What are you going to do? You have NOTHING LEFT TO HANG ON TO! You must begin again. You must change.

And change is what I did. As winter alters the earth, my grief changed me. It gave me a period of time to step back from living and just be, a space in my existence to feel only that which I needed to feel. It was a time for reflection, reprioritizing, and searching. Without it, I would remain as empty as a garden that never rests.

"But it was painful, horrifying, and devastating," you say. "How can you be thankful for such a thing?"

Grief, like winter, freezes our world. Both appear painful, horrifying, and devastating, but it is our preparation for, reaction to, and perception of that creates our discomfort. It is our need to judge which labels discomfort as bad. If we deny that death is possible for those we love, we will be stunned and terrified by its occurrence. If we react to the first blizzard of winter with panic and fear, we will be too afraid to honor its power. If we perceive a fatal ice storm as an act of God, we will shake our fist at Him and spend more time than we have asking why. And if we distinguish death as the end of a loved one's existence, we will be eternally saddened by their absence. The path to spring, to the end of winter, requires only our patience and perseverance. The path to healing requires that and more: it requires that we learn to think differently.

We are a society that fears death. We consider it an end to life, love, and all that came before. Those who die either cease to be, or they exist in a place that is unavailable to us. It is not surprising that fear is present. However, if we alter our beliefs, we can then change our preparation for, reaction to, and perception of death. If we come to know that death is a change
(Continued on page 9)

(Winter of our Souls continued from page 6)



in form and not an end, we will not eliminate the winters of our grieving, but we will lessen our suffering.

When my son died in 1996, I had no other option but to change my thinking. I could not live another day presuming he no longer existed. By saying to myself often I am changing my perception of death, I announced to the universe and my higher self that I intended to change what I believed. I placed my intent, reached for it, and settled for nothing less.

I began searching for and finding information to support my new perception. I read books about life after death, mediumship, after death communication, spirituality, and reincarnation. I perused websites, subscribed to email lists, and joined chats where these topics were addressed. I found like-minded friends who understood what I was feeling. I observed mediumship activities on television, at seminars, and on the Internet. I began to support my new belief system with knowledge.

I invited experiences by talking to Jason and asking him to come to me in a dream or to give me a sign of his presence. I meditated and made myself more aware of that which isn't seen or touched. I opened up a doorway of possibility and welcomed all that came from love to enter.

Finally, I accepted what happened and expressed gratitude. When the lights went off and then on again for no apparent reason, I was quick to say "thank you." If I was only thanking the power company, it didn't matter. No one knew. The more I accepted as real, the more I experienced. We hear often that "seeing is believing," but this is about "believing is seeing."

My journey has been both desolate and inspiring. There have been moments when I thought the cold and darkness would never end, and moments when tears of joy washed away the pain and light permeated my being. I invite you to walk the path of grief a little differently: to nurture winter's bleakness and look deep into its purpose. And just as we must think differently to see winter's grace, we must think differently to see the gift of grief. It is there, buried beneath a frozen crust that protects and restores while the winter of our soul . . . ensues.

~reprinted from Love Never Dies

<http://www.loveneverdies.net/newslet6.html>

Sandy Goodman

~reprinted from Love Never Dies

<http://www.loveneverdies.net/newslet6.html>

This Season Of Grief

It hits like the first blast of winter.
Icy fingers spreading within, numbing, the mind,
heart and soul.
Shrouding us in a protective haze.
Seeing, but not seeing
Knowing, but not knowing
Here in this season of grief.

The first hint of spring arrives, and the tiny seeds,
well planted, begin to stir.
They take root and begin their journey of growth,
spreading throughout.
So begins the seeing and knowing this season of
grief.

The heat of the summer brings with it the storms.
The raging, the floods, the calm before.
All that was growing is entangled with weeds
Slowly suffocating all that it needs
Here in this season of grief.

The coolness of autumn settles within
Silently taking all that had lived.
The garden lies empty, barren and cold.
No place to hide.
For now we must know
Now we must see
That we have become this season of grief

The spring bursts upon us
The untended garden no more
For we have come through the winter
We let grow all the seeds
We weathered the storms and let ourselves bleed
For we began a new garden without even knowing
The scars on our soul no longer openly showing

One day we look back and sigh with relief...
For we have survived this season of grief.

by: Kathie Simensen © 1997

From Parents of Suicides submitted by Karyl,
mother of Arlyn 9-02
From parents of suicide website 9-02

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

The newsletter is sent without charge to any person interested in receiving it. Each year, in order to be sure we are sending it only to those who truly want to be on our mailing list, we ask that everyone who wants the newsletter return this form. We also accept LOVE GIFTS to pay for some of the chapter's expenses. Your voluntary, tax-deductible donations make it possible for us to mail out the monthly newsletter, contact newly bereaved parents, purchase brochures and other grief materials, continue our participation in the TCF/National organization and meet other chapter expenses. Perhaps you would like to make a gift in memory of your child's birthday or remembrance day. It is a meaningful way to honor our children and we are grateful to members who are able to support us with their contributions. Please make the check payable to The Compassionate Friends. Return to Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048 or call 847-573-1055 or send an email to vszech@comcast.net.

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

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

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

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

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

LOVE GIFTS

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

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sponsor the newsletter for _____ (month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library _____