

**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](mailto: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 \_\_\_\_\_

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.



## November Again

I woke up November 1st thinking oh, it's November now, another holiday season begins, our fourth holidays without James, how's it going to be this year, we have to get "through" another holiday, not enjoy another holiday, not plan with a carefree happy heart, but with a heavy one, still.

Now that it's been 3 years since James died, I really get the distinct impression that the family is really tired of hearing me say/write something about what I wished I'd done, what I remembered him saying/doing when I write about something we did recently or something I experienced with our teenage foreign exchange student living with us that brings back the "if onlys" and the "what ifs". In a way, I don't want them to understand, because I don't want any one of them to be walking in my shoes and know this pain, but a smidgen of compassion and understanding is not asking for too much, at least in my book, but my book is an original and can't be found anywhere else, so I can't expect what I would like to expect. To say I'm just going to put that all behind me and not dwell on the in-laws and the way it used to be is one thing, but to really do it and live it is so hard. All of us have lost our most precious child, and then to top it off, the losses keep on coming – the loss of life as it used to/should be, the loss of relatives who can't put up with it, the loss of feeling connected to people who used to care, etc. etc.

I have been looking through my books on ideas and help for the holidays and came across this poem. It really made me think – especially about the little things I can be thankful for and not for all the things I'm missing and for the way of life that I wish I had back once again. When in pain and heartache, it seems natural to focus in on all that and think about the unfairness and cruelty that life has turned out to be for all of us as bereaved parents. I keep a journal but I haven't written in it in such a long time, but after reading this poem, it made me think that in addition to my journal, which are letters to my son James about what I'm thinking, going through, wishing, what the days are like, etc. etc. I should add just one sentence about something I'm thankful for – even if it is really small – like yesterday driving home and watching the colorful leaves fall like rain.

Meg Avery, Lawrenceville TCF James' mom  
James' mom (7/15/83 ~ 9/22/97)

~reprinted from TCF Atlanta Newsletter November  
December 2001

<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/NovDec2001.html>

## For That, I am Thankful

It doesn't seem to get any better,  
but it doesn't get any worse either.  
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken,  
but there are memories to be cherished,  
For that I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table,  
but the circle of family gathers close.  
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller,  
but there is still stuffing.  
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter,  
but the nights are softer.  
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there,  
but it lasts only moments.  
For that, I am thankful.

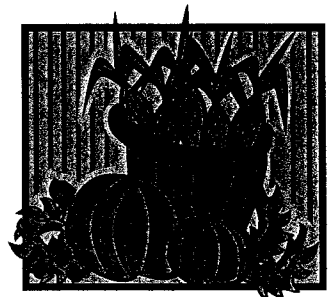
The calendar still turns,  
the holidays still appear and they still cost too  
much.  
And I am still here.  
For that, I am thankful.

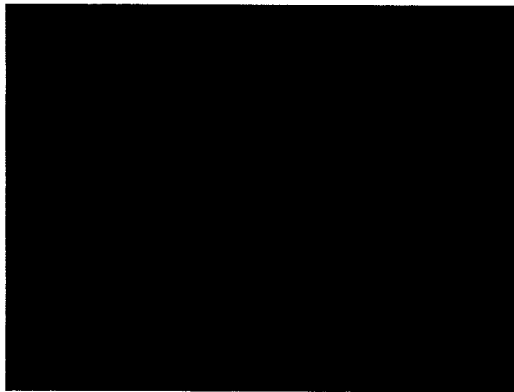
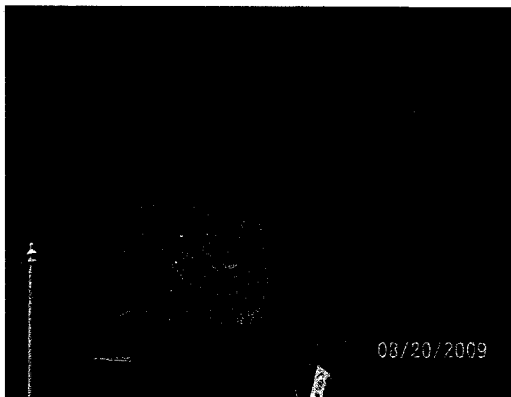
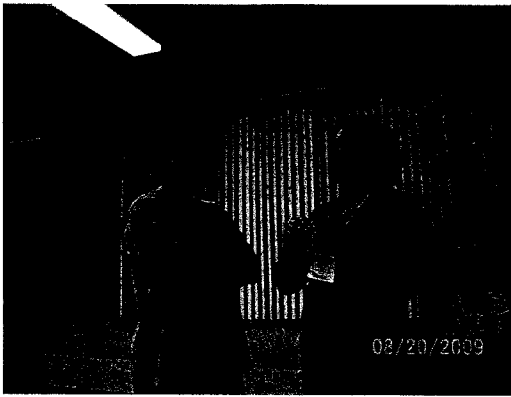
The room is still empty,  
the soul still aches,  
but the heart remembers.  
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come,  
the dishes pile up,  
but the dishwasher works.  
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing,  
the words still unspoken,  
but the silence is shared.  
For that, I am thankful.

(Continued on page 9)





## Coming Unwrapped

We wrap ourselves for the holidays much like the presents we give. The brightly colored paper hides what's within. When people look at us they only see the outside.

We promise ourselves we will not come unwrapped. We'll make it through the family celebrations, the church services, and the big occasion. The paper and the ribbon will remain intact.

But it is the small thing that manages to untie the bow. The little insignificant moment, the Christmas parade, the search for the tree, the discovered ornament, the special carol, the memory and the paper gets wrenched off. The true Christmas presence shows itself. The inevitable tide of feelings bursts out of the artificially decorated façade. The emotions pour out. The intense anger wells up. The tears are shed and the holidays come. These are as sure as the tides of the sea and the march of time.

Only a compassionate friend, a bereaved parent, knows of what I speak. Yet the answer isn't in fighting or in denying these feelings. We have paid the price. We have the right to grieve. The resolution of our grief is the grieving. Our hope for all who read this letter is that you will make it through the holidays. We cannot make the pain go away, but know there are others who suffer with you.

We have made it, and together will continue on.

~Hank Hewett - TCF, Scranton, PA Borrowed from TCF Atlanta newsletter - 2000

## HOPE

By Sally Migliaccio

Last month the first holiday catalog was deposited in my mailbox, "So early," I thought, with tired resignation and more than a little resentment. The catalog unmistakably heralded the approach of the season of good cheer, and somehow I would have to get through it. It meant weeks of feeling like a despondent bystander as the world cloaked itself with bright trappings of love, joy, and goodwill toward men.



I was a bereaved parent, and I would spend yet another holiday caught up in the anguish of remembering.

With the catalog indifferently grasped in my hand I sat down in the kitchen, my heart heavy. My thoughts drifted back to last year's holiday, and I again saw my husband's melancholy face as he plaintively asked if we could put up just a small tree. I agreed only because it seemed important to him. It would be the first time since the death of our daughter that holiday decorations would grace our home. I had felt no joy, no solace when I looked at that tiny, glowing tree, but it was a huge relief not to feel the overwhelming pain I expected.

It had been the fourth holiday season without Tracey.

I sat in the kitchen, slowly turning the catalog's pages. I was so lost in thought I scarcely saw what was in front of me. Last year the mailman had delivered greeting cards and best-wishes-for-the-season cards, as always. I had opened some with appreciation; others, the ones I knew would ignore our heartache, I tore open almost savagely. I had mailed my own greeting cards to many of these same people, and as had become my custom each card was sent in memory of our daughter. It was the only way to manage the pain of a task I once loved.

I found myself absently leafing through the last of the pages. Though absorbed in my reminiscences I had carefully avoided looking at the many pages of toy offerings. I knew I would pay a painful emotional price if I lingered there. Children's clothing had to be desperately rushed by as well (though my well-trained eye caught the words

'girl's size fourteen" and stopped despite all I could do...oh, Tracey). House wares were fairly safe though uninteresting, and these last pages depicted a wide variety of novelty items. A pair of butterfly earrings captured my attention, turning my thoughts immediately to one of my Compassionate Friends "a truly loving friend" who adored butterflies.

"I could order these as a gift for her," I thought, and the idea startled me. With the notable exception of the painful purchase of a toy last year for my beloved daughter, I had not sought out a gift for anyone since her death. As the thought took root and began to flourish I felt my heart, so long frozen with grief, begin to warm.

Cautiously I pondered these emerging feelings. Was I ready for this? I was astonished to feel the ice encasing my heart begin to melt; emboldened by the warm feelings of caring spreading through me I looked more closely at the remaining pages of the catalog.

There! Another small item I was sure a second dear TCF friend would like. I found myself actually enjoying filling out the order form for both items.

Enjoying???? Did I really use that "Word"?

Had the pain and uncompromising grief, always intensified at holiday time, abated somewhat? Was I truly feeling lighter, more able to cope? Did this mean, could it mean, that I might one day step back into the world when it donned its festive mantle?

I knew as I sat there I would always deeply love and ferociously miss my child—and I knew that grief would forever be a part of my life. Understanding that, might it still be possible to allow a small amount of holiday spirit to trickle into my life this year?

I think just for today I'll hold onto that possibility, because today it seems I can imagine a less painful tomorrow. Today my heart contains a bit of warmth.

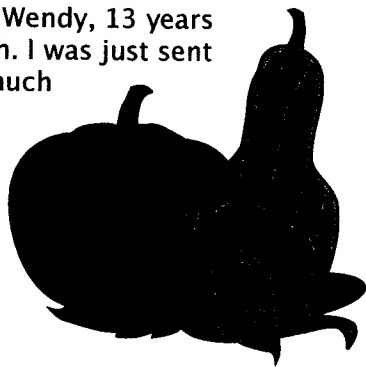
It feels good!

Borrowed from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

Copyright 1998



We lost our only daughter, Wendy, 13 years ago the 12th of next month. I was just sent a prose, that sums up so much for so many who walk this road. You may have read it before, but if not, send it on to some of your friends and realize that it sums up the loss of our children.



## The Gap

The gap between those who have lost children and those who have not is profoundly difficult to bridge. No one whose children are well and intact can be expected to understand what parents who have lost children have absorbed, what they bear. Our children now come to us through every blade of grass, every crack in the sidewalk, every bowl of breakfast cereal, every kid on a scooter. We seek contact with their atoms – their hairbrushes, toothbrushes, their clothing. We reach out for what was integrally woven into the fabric of our lives, now torn and shredded. A black hole has been blown through our souls and, indeed, it often does not allow the light to escape. It is a difficult place. For us to enter there is to be cut deeply and torn anew, each time we go there, by the jagged edges of our loss. Yet we return, again and again, for that is where our children now reside. This will be so for years to come and it will change us, profoundly. At some point, in the distant future, the edges of that hole will have tempered and softened, but the empty space will remain—a life sentence.

Our friends will change through this. There is no avoiding it. We grieve for our children in part, through talking about them, and our feelings for having lost them. Some go there with us; others cannot and, through their denial, add a further measure, however unwitting, to an already heavy burden. Assuming that we may be feeling "better" 6 months later is simply "to not get it". The excruciating and isolating reality that bereaved parents feel is hermetically sealed from the nature of any other human experience. Thus it is a trap—those whose compassion and insight we most need are those for whom we abhor the experience that would allow them that sensitivity and capacity. And yet, somehow, there are those, each in their own fashion, who have found a way to reach us and stay, to our immeasurable comfort. They have understood, again each in their own way, that our children remain our children through our memory of them. Their memory is sustained

through speaking about them and our feelings about their death. Deny this and you deny their life. Deny their life and you have no place in ours.

We recognize that we have moved to an emotional place where it is often very difficult to reach us. Our attempts to be normal are painful, and the day to day carries a silent, screaming anguish that accompanies us, sometimes from moment to moment. Were we to give it its own voice, we fear we would become truly unreachable and so we remain "strong" for a host of reasons even as the strength saps our energy and drains our will. Were we to act out our true feelings, we would be impossible to be with. We resent having to act normal, yet we dare not do otherwise. People who understand this dynamic are our gold standard. Working our way through this over the years will change us as does every experience-- and extreme experience changes one extremely. We know we will have actually managed to survive when, as we have read, it is no longer so painful to be normal. We do not know who we will be at that point nor who will still be with us.

We have read that the gap is so difficult that, often, bereaved parents must attempt to reach out to friends and relatives or risk losing them. This is our attempt. For those untarnished by such events, who wish to know in some way what they, thankfully, do not know, read this. It may provide a window that is helpful for both sides of the gap.

Sharon (Wendy's Mom)

6-18-77 to 11-12-96 to infinity

\*Our shining star, yesterday, today and forever\*

[www.angelfire.com/oh/wls19/index.html](http://www.angelfire.com/oh/wls19/index.html)

[sharont@ncweb.com](mailto:sharont@ncweb.com)

## DAYS OF THANKS

In a year when much was given,  
much was taken, too.  
So we pause and give our thanks  
for what now is.

Think, too, of what once was,  
And we are grateful for the  
threads of lives gone by  
Threads that enrich the fabric of this, the life we  
know.

– Lois Wyse



~reprinted from TCF Atlanta Newsletter November  
December 2001

<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/NovDec2001.html>



## ***OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER***

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

***Selene Martinez***

**November 1**

Daughter of Manuel & Lidia Martinez

***Jim O'Connor***

**November 6**

Son of Kay O'Connor

***Carrie Seger***

**November 10**

Daughter of Sandy Seger

***Jeremy M Govekar***

**November 12**

Son of Maggie McGaughey

***Jeremy John Thomas Hoth***

**November 12**

Son of Vernon & Norine Hoth

***Douglas Ramsay***

**November 17**

Son of Carlene Ramsay

***Zachary Taylor***

**November 30**

Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor

***Mark Yates***

**December 20**

Son of Linda Hegg

***Barry J Grazier***

**December 22**

Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier

***Raphael E Vidal***

**December 24**

Son of Raphael & Mirtha Vidal

### ANNIVERSARIES

***Lila Ruffolo***

**November 1**

Daughter of Jenny & Rick Selle  
Granddaughter of Diana Runyon

***Geoffrey Ruff***

**November 2**

Son of Judith Ruff

***Andrew C Perkins***

**November 3**

Son of Richard & Thelma Perkin

***Rachel Salomonson***

**November 15**

Daughter of Toni Nesheim & Denny Salomonson

***Robert Joseph Landers***

**November 17**

Son of Deborah & Michael Landers

***Megan Candice Grace***

**November 18**

Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace

***Sven Christian Reinhard***

**November 22**

Son of Astrid Reinhard

***Mark Yates***

**November 24**

Son of Richard & Linda Hegg

***Elizabeth Mary Foresta***

**November 28**

Daughter of Al & Mary Foresta

***Mike Reardon***

**December 6**

Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon

***Matthew David Stolarick***

**December 6**

Son of Kathy Stolarick

***Gina Ross***

**December 8**

Daughter of June & Nick Ross

***Michael Furman***

**December 13**

Son of Mary-Jo & Gerald Dempsey

***Jeremy John Thomas Hoth***

**December 11**

Son of Vernon & Norine Hoth

***Andrew Muno***

**December 15**

Son of Darlene Muno

***David Quade***

**December 23**

Son of Pat & Dave Quade

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](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) - 847-573-1055



## 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 November Newsletter

Thanks to Judith Ruff for sponsoring the November newsletter in memory of her son, Goeffrey Ruff.

Thanks to Diane Runyon for sponsoring the November newsletter in memory of her granddaughter, Lila Ruffolo.

### Gifts During the Year

In this time of thanksgiving we give our thanks to those who lovingly give of their time for our Compassionate Friends Chapter:

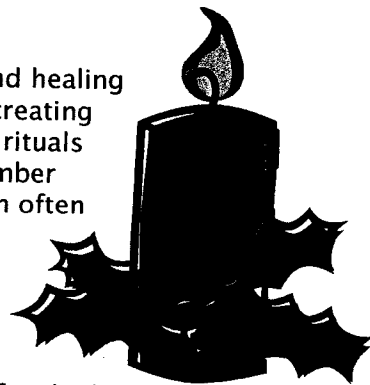
Jenny & Rick Selle  
 Chris & Forest Anderson  
 Charron Sloop  
 Thelma Perkins  
 Darlene Muno  
 Mary Foresta  
 Kari McHugh  
 Marilyn Grace  
 Maggie McGaughey  
 Mateo and Lucy Cantu

Our grateful appreciation to those who made financial donations to the chapter, to those who brought refreshments, to those who attended, planned and helped with the Candle-lighting ceremony, the Woodland Walk dedication and the balloon launch; to those who helped create a second meeting each month, to the staff of Holy Family and Milburn Churches, and to all those who faithfully attend our monthly meetings

"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.

## Holiday Rituals

Many families have found healing during the holidays by creating personal ceremonies or rituals that help them to remember their loved one. Children often find comfort through creating personal ceremonies that give them concrete ways to remember their loved one. Some suggestions for the holiday season include:



**Create a Memory Book** about your loved one. You can include photos, pictures drawn by children, special memorabilia and stories.

**Start a New Tradition** – for example, a storytelling time to reminisce about your loved one. Children may enjoy hearing stories about the childhood years of a parent or grandparent.

**Decorate an Ornament or Candle** in memory of your loved one.

**Invite family and friends** to send you letters and stories about your loved one.

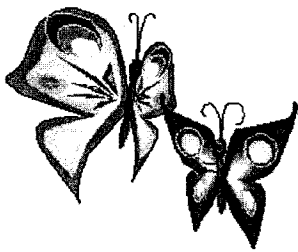
**Light candles** in honor of your loved one at the holiday table or at a special place in your home.

**Write Letters** to your loved one and place these in a special basket or perhaps in a holiday stocking. Children may want to write about events that were important to them during the past year. The letters may be burned to protect privacy.

**Prepare a Favorite Recipe or Meal** in memory of your loved one.

**Make or Buy a Gift** in memory of your loved one to donate to a charity that is important to your family.

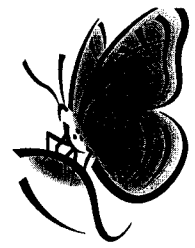
~reprinted from Holiday Hope



# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

November, 2009 Newsletter



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

## Chapter Leader

## Notes

## From

## Jenny & Rick



A Sunday morning in Arkansas...sitting outside the camper at an RV park along the banks of the White River in Cotter. I'm in one of those aqua scallop-shell 1950's chairs and it's about 50 degrees, still, with mostly cloudy skies. I am, once again, reflecting, and it's easy to do when I'm in this kind of setting, outside and peaceful, with beautiful nature all around me.

These moments happen with no intention or plan. They are like slivers of time which nourish my soul and give me the energy to deal with regular life. When things get chaotic, which they often do, I have a little stockpile of images and sensations like this that I can go to, to get some serenity.

Yesterday we were at the cemetery where Lila and Danny are at rest. It is 750 long miles from our Illinois home, in a little tiny town called Natural Steps, Arkansas. Maybe you can picture it. As we did what we do whenever we get to visit the gravesite, like reading, again, the inscriptions, noticing new arrivals nearby, and marveling at the flowers still blooming, the gentleman who maintains the cemetery drove by and stopped to talk.

I was reminded once again of how important the simpler side of life is. What matters more, really, than moments when fellow travelers connect and share? He told us that his own brother died too soon, from suicide, and is there in that same cemetery. He choked up, after twenty-plus years. We were all compassionate friends at that moment. That little visit could not have been planned or arranged, it just happened.

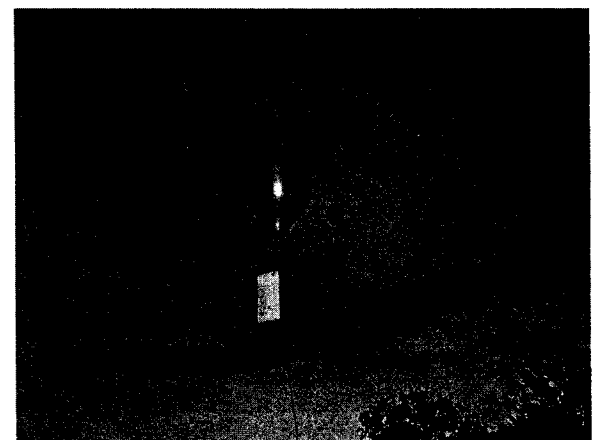
The weather, like here, has not been easy for farmers, and he was a little concerned about getting the soybeans out of the fields, but he was more upset that "the government is trying to blow a hole in the moon!" We love Arkansas and more and more can understand why Lila had found her home here!

I heal and grow a little bit when I notice and appreciate people, feelings, and moments.

The world/universe is so much more than my human mind can even comprehend, but I am trying to be open and grateful.



People gather for balloon launch.



Balloons soar into the sky.

See more pictures on page 6.