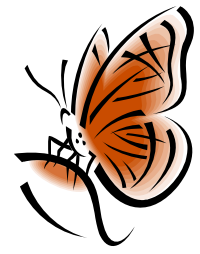


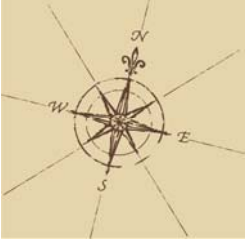


# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter  
September, 2018 Newsletter



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



## Bread Crumbs-- Finding Our Way Back

By Rich Edler

Bread crumbs are all we have.

They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice - a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest - to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us

and they lead us out of the forest-but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently - and I believe better - than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around - from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help

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## Meetings

### Northern Illinois Chapter TCF September 20

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

### Waukegan meeting October 4

– 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



### The ABCs of Grief

As we grieve, and grow and time marches on, we learn so much that we wish we hadn't had to learn. We've received an education that was so very unwelcome, unwanted, but we were thrust into

very

this school of grief and have learnt so many lessons. These are the ABCs of grief that I've learned and this September marks the 11th year since James left us.

#### Attitude Adjustment

Again and again, in many different situations and under various circumstances, I've had to adjust my attitude. Whether it's been a holiday, or a regular day, or a special event like a wedding, shower, or birthday celebration, my attitude decides how that day will turn out. At first I was continually sad and despondent and therefore, the entire world around me felt sorrowful and dark. Of course, this is the way it should be - dealing & coping with the death of a child is the absolute worst tragedy and what other attitude could anyone have for the longest time but to be grief-stricken with sadness? But we know we can't live like that for the rest of our lives and neither would our child want us to be forever engulfed in sorrow. As we emerge out of the darkness and live in the light of our child's memories, we always remember the lessons our child's life and death taught us. No longer do the material things have the same value and importance "before our child died", a broken

car or appliance is no longer earth shattering, getting the laundry done on time is not a big deal, neither is a clean house or cooking a meal every night. Our friends complain and gripe about the weather, or a broken fingernail, or the terrible traffic, getting stuck in a long line at the grocery store or any other such minor inconvenience. We, the bereaved, fluff it off; that's nothing compared with losing a child. I just don't get upset anymore when the checkbook doesn't balance (there's always hope next month) or when a glass breaks, or if I forgot to turn on the dishwasher or if the laundry stacks up. My attitude has adjusted in many situations, not just work or holidays or special events; attitude adjustment is something that goes on daily, but James, life and death taught me if I can just by our time together. She did learn a lot and I got shrug it off, try to smile, make a few jokes, be positive and humorous to others, it somehow rubs off on me too. Bereaved parents have no choice but to adjust their attitudes and if somehow it can be for the better, that's another healing milestone. We will always and forever miss our child & be sad they can't experience every day, holidays and celebrations with us but our child would want to see us have a healthy mix of enjoying life as much as possible mixed in with the times we are sad and ache to see them again.

#### Bent Not Broken

For the longest time we are totally broken; we are completely heartbroken and physically we feel broken into pieces as the pain of grief is a real stab to our insides and we wonder how can we ever learn to cope with so much pain? For the longest time I cried every day and it amazed me that one person could have so many tears. I felt broken as a person, broken and a failure as a mom, and broken as a wife. There was no way I felt I could put any of these pieces back together again and be a fairly together, functional, competent, and content person, in my roles as a wife, daughter, friend, employee and any kind of member of society. Walking into a store and trying to buy items needed was a huge chore. Gone was any sense of organization and focus at work and

(Continued on page 6)



## OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

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.

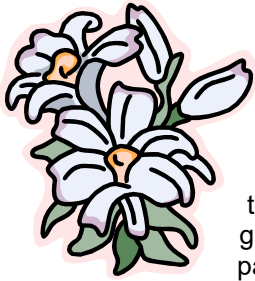
### **BIRTHDAYS**

<b>Shannon McCarty</b>	<b>Sept 5</b>	Daughter of Kevin McCarty & Pat Hayes
<b>Mary Margaret (Maggie) Miles</b>	<b>Sept 5</b>	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<b>Anthony Alexander Sosa</b>	<b>Sept 16</b>	Son of Yvette Sosa
<b>Shane Betar</b>	<b>Sept 21</b>	Son of Leia Betar
<b>José De Jesús Hernández</b>	<b>Sept 24</b>	Son of Jesús and Virginia Hernández
<b>Eduardo Chavez-Nuño</b>	<b>Sept 27</b>	Son of Maria Del Carmen Nuño
<b>Donette Klawonn</b>	<b>Sept 30</b>	Daughter of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
<b>Tony Trejo</b>	<b>Sept 30</b>	Son of Martina Williamson Brother of Victor Trejo
<b>Levi Nichols</b>	<b>October 4</b>	Son of Bambi Nichols
<b>Mark Sailors</b>	<b>October 9</b>	Son of Michelle Sailors
<b>Marleea Gerfen</b>	<b>October 12</b>	Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell
<b>Alexandria (Alex) Scarbro</b>	<b>October 15</b>	Daughter of David Scarbro
<b>Brian Keough</b>	<b>October 20</b>	Son of Kathleen Keough
<b>Kelly Klawonn</b>	<b>October 23</b>	Son of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
<b>Alyssa Burnstine</b>	<b>October 23</b>	Granddaughter of Judi & Stan Veouka
<b>Aaron R Moore</b>	<b>October 24</b>	Son of Rob & Sherry Moore
<b>Colin Henderson</b>	<b>October 27</b>	Son of Lisa Henderson
<b>John "Jake" Mosansky</b>	<b>October 31</b>	Son of Darlene & John Mosansky Sister of Veronica Steif

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

<b>Brian Scott Ludlow</b>	<b>Sept 1</b>	Son of Ronald & Karen Zaylik
<b>Levi Nichols</b>	<b>Sept 5</b>	Son of Bambi Nichols
<b>Anthony Alexander Sosa</b>	<b>Sept 12</b>	Son of Yvette Sosa
<b>Marleea Gerfen</b>	<b>Sept 13</b>	Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell
<b>Brian Scott Engle</b>	<b>Sept 13</b>	Son of Louise Engle
<b>Heidi Anne Herrmann</b>	<b>Sept 14</b>	Daughter of Bonnie Brackus
<b>Tim Curtis</b>	<b>Sept 17</b>	Son of Sonya Curtis
<b>Aaron R Moore</b>	<b>Sept 19</b>	Son of Rob & Sherry Moore
<b>Joshua William Bowman</b>	<b>Sept 26</b>	Son of Robin Bray Nephew of Kimberlee Christensen
<b>Sharon Beth Gray</b>	<b>October 4</b>	Daughter of Pam Gray
<b>Mark Sailors</b>	<b>October 10</b>	Son of Michelle Sailors
<b>Kerrin Fleming</b>	<b>October 21</b>	Daughter of Barbara Fleming

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



# Grief

By Annamaria Hemingway

How can we define what it means to enter the dark underworld of grief? We can use words such as pain, anguish, misery, shock, loss, and fear, but language itself cannot articulate the complex set of emotions that are experienced during a time of great loss. How is it possible to describe a metaphorical tidal wave that throws you onto the shore of a deserted island with no compass or adequate provisions, and leaves you stumbling, lost, and confused as you try to find your bearings? How can one give voice to the way the ice-cold arms of grief wrap themselves around you and penetrate your deepest defenses, leaving you shivering and numb? Grief is a land of shadows that speaks its own universal language ^ the language of suffering and sorrow that embodies the enormity of loss."

For every individual, "little" deaths can be experienced in every day life. The loss of a relationship, a job, or a cherished dream can bring great heartache, but none can equal the devastation of the death of a loved one. Nothing can remind us more of our impermanence in earthly existence, and that we have no control over the forces of nature that govern our own unique destiny.

Less than a hundred years ago, it was impossible to escape the reality of death and loss as epidemics of childhood diseases, shorter life spans and limited medical knowledge resulted in death and dying as being a part of everyday life. Support for those in the grieving process was offered by family members and the community.

Grief was acknowledged as an integral part of life and those in the mourning process openly displayed symbols of their grieving, as demonstrated in the Victorian and Edwardian eras when a black arm band or wearing "mourning" clothing for a certain period of time were a part of the rituals of grief.

In contemporary Western cultures, the disintegration of the family unit and local communities, combined with advancements in health care and a longer life span have resulted in society adopting the concept of ignoring death, the dying and the bereaved. This approach leads to fear and alienation and leaves us traumatized and feeling alone when the inescapability of death that can claim those of any age or circumstance touches our lives. Grief has its own timetable and is unique to each individual. When we enter the dark abyss of grief, the world we thought we knew becomes an alien planet, and life has no meaning. Time freezes and becomes suspended in a series of flashbacks that replay

past cherished memories. They are entangled with an ache so deep that it threatens to submerge you. Often feelings of guilt accompany the loss, guilt for all the things unspoken, and all the things left undone.

Even the world of dreams offers no respite for the pain that invades our psyche, rarely sleeps, and leaves us tossing and turning through so many dark nights of the soul. Our only companion is often fear, an uninvited guest that accompanies the floods of tears that prick their way through hollow, smarting eyes.

Grief reflects not just something or someone that has been lost from the outer world, but can also mirror a similar death in the inner world of the individual, as hope and faith become victims to the ravages of some invisible force that silences the voice of God or a higher power, which surely has abandoned and deserted us.

The author, C.S. Lewis, described his own similar feelings in a diary that he wrote following the death of his beloved wife. These writings were later published in the book "A Grief Observed," in which Lewis recounts his painful journey and his struggle to reconcile the death of his wife to his strong religious convictions. He commented: No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid at other times it feels like being mildly drunk or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. What does everything matter now?

C.S. Lewis eventually emerged through the stages of grief and loss to find that his religious beliefs had strengthened and that he had become a radically changed person through his profound experience.

Grief has a timeless quality and although the pain will lessen, the memory of a great loss becomes forever etched within our deepest being. Rather than trying to escape or ignoring the inevitability of grief touching our lives, we can become strengthened through understanding that grief, like love, ultimately has the power to transform

**(continued on page 5)**

**(GRIEF continued from page 4)**

and can offer us the chance to learn what it means to be most authentically human.

The Buddhist scriptures illustrate this teaching in the story of a woman who came from a poor family, and was looked upon with contempt by her husband's relatives. When she gave birth to a son, their disdain changed to respect. However, a few years later, the son died, and the woman became distraught with grief.

She searched everywhere for a cure that would bring her dead son back to life, but could find none. In her despair, she visited the Buddha, to see if he could help her. The Buddha told her to go back to her community and collect a mustard seed from a household where there had been no death. The woman searched for days, believing that if she could fulfill the Buddha's request, her son would be returned to her. But she eventually returned to the Buddha empty-handed, and realized there was no cure for death; it was an irrevocable part of life that everyone had to experience. As he lay on his deathbed, the Buddha reminded his followers of the impermanence of life, and how all things would eventually decay and perish. He encouraged people to accept death as a motivating force that provides a foundation for living life consciously and well.

Grief is the most painful experience we can suffer in this lifetime. It is a deeply emotional struggle to become reconciled to the reality of loss. No conciliatory words or advice can make it any less agonizing. The hand of grief will change your life forever but for those in the grieving process, perhaps some comfort may be gained from the notion that grief can enable an inner strength to emerge in each of us, and can ultimately make us more fully conscious human beings.

Author of Practicing Conscious Living and Dying:  
Stories of the Eternal Continuum of Consciousness

~reprinted from MissFoundation July/August newsletter  
<http://missfoundation.org/newsletter/vol11/JulAug2007.pdf>

www.missfoundation.org

## SEPTEMBER SONG

I wonder how many people think about what it is like for a parent not to have pack a Snoopy lunch pail for their child ever again. September marks the re-entry of kids into the world of academia, but for some parents it's the reminder that the excitement of the children that electrifies the air won't be the same in their homes this year.



to

So many hopes and dreams and memories are wrapped up in what occupies a major part of a child's life-school time. Summer cushions us from having to be painfully aware that our children won't be walking to school with the other kids or won't be trying out for the lead part in the school play or won't need new school clothes or won't fall in love with the girl he sits behind in math class.

Parents who never had the pleasure of "letting them go" to school for the first time know what they missed. They remember their own "first time" and would have liked to relive it with their own child. They would have liked to have made it really special and to have asked all of the questions their own parents asked them when they arrived home from school. Hopes and dreams for this child's future will never be realized.

I wonder if my neighbor remembers that if my baby had lived, this is the year that he would have started kindergarten. I wanted him to have a Snoopy lunch box just like the other kids.

TCF, Portland

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**(The ABCs of Grief continued from page 2)**

and home. I knew I couldn't survive like this for the rest of my life; but feeling broken apart was just how it was for many months. Somehow, although I really didn't care much about myself, I decided to start caring about others and doing for others and hoped that it would help myself also. Now I can realize that bereaved parents are broken but the pieces gently and gradually blend back together in new ways that allow us to bend, allow us to be better, and not bitter, and our life, although it will never be the same, can somehow be molded so that we can heal and be flexible as we struggle and manage our life as parents, relatives, spouses, friends and members of society. Yes, in many ways I still feel emotionally broken, but through the past 11 years I've been bending, trying to be flexible, trying to be patient & understanding because what and whom I've got left in this life is to be treasured. James taught me to bend, because to continue to be rigid with grief, to allow minor inconveniences destroy my contentedness, will only continue allowing the pieces to be shattered and broken. A life worth living, and yes, we have to learn that our lives are worth living even without our child, is a life that we deserve to have and we need to bend toward the path of forgiveness and fulfillment and not be forever broken in pieces.

**Compensate and Compromise**

I live a life without my son. As with all bereaved parents, a huge part of our life is forever gone. Although James is with me spiritually and I carry his memories and love with me every day, he is not with me physically and most certainly, this is not the way it should be. Over the years I've learned to compensate and compromise for whom and what I don't have in my life. I'll never watch James graduate from high school or college, I'll never share in his successes & accomplishments with college and/or a career, I'll never dance at his wedding, I'll never have a daughter-in-law to pass family traditions on to, I'll never hold James, child, and my grandchild, in my arms. Many friends and family members do not understand that my grief is not simply for the loss of James; it is for the loss of all that he is not experiencing, it is for the loss that I'll never be a grandmother and a mother-in-law. It is for the loss that my husband doesn't have his son to go fishing with and continue in Scouts with, and carry the first year or the next year; it carries over to different levels & degrees depending on the situation or circumstances. I ache for myself and for my husband and for all the the future we should have had for and with James. In my own way, I've learned to compensate and compromise to get some enjoyments out of life. I know that total joy, or total happiness, will simply never be a part of my

life. I can find a level of peace, and moments of contentment and I am so blessed when I do have these and I have found ways to reinvest my life, both for myself and for others in memory of James, and with my husband. We won't experience high school with James; but we've been host parents for exchange students and we've been fortunate to share their high school experiences with them and our lives are enriched with our international teenagers - even though I've had to compensate and be an active mom by borrowing someone else's child. What a life changing experience it's been for our girls and us; they have become family to us. My husband loves Scouting and although James is no longer a participant, he didn't quit Scouting; he continues on to help other teens and they are benefiting from the compassion and patience my husband has developed. Some people envy me because I travel frequently. I find it difficult to spend too much time at home. I know that I need to be out doors, to travel and discover the beauty and serenity of nature and our beautiful environment. I am extremely blessed to have a group of wonderful friends that plan travel adventures and we all have such good times and create terrific memories. My husband and I enjoy camping and that's another way to spend time outdoors. Quite honestly, I feel closer to James when I'm hiking a mountain trail, hiking to see and photograph waterfalls, walking on the beach (especially at sunset), standing out on the deck of a cruise ship relaxing and basking in the views, and these are my therapy. If only I could be spending my time traveling to visit James at college, or taking him on vacations, going on vacations with my grandchildren, but that will never happen. Yes, during the past 11 years I've learned to compensate and compromise and if others think I'm so lucky to travel, to be able to pick up at a moment's notice and do whatever and whenever, let them try walking in my shoes for a week. The emotional sacrifices and the physical loss I have in my life leave me with no choice but to compensate and compromise and while doing so, find pockets of peace and moments of contentment.

**(Continued on page 7)**

**(The ABCs of Grief continued from page 6)**

Life is meant to be enjoyed to some degree; to whatever degree we can possibly reach. I know James, and I know our children, would want us to enjoy our lives whenever and however possible. So as we go through our ABCs, and as we learn the lessons our child taught us, as we are educated along our grief journey, I hope we all take it one day at a time and always realize, although we have to adjust our attitudes, become bent not broken and better not bitter, as we compensate and compromise in our own individual ways, we also need to remember, we need not walk alone.

By Meg Avery

Written August 2008

[tcfwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfwinnett@yahoo.com)

In Memory of my son James Avery, 7/15/83 ^ 9/22/97

Gwinnett TCF Chapter Newsletter is now online  
[www.tcfatlanta.org/2008FallNewsletter.doc](http://www.tcfatlanta.org/2008FallNewsletter.doc)

**(Bread Crumbs--Finding Our Way Back continued from page 2)**

someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But, Honey," the mother said. "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "There is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in State Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich and his wife Kitty are founding members of the South Bay/LA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Son Mark died in 1992 and Rich's first book "If I Knew Then What I Know Now" is dedicated to him. His following book, "Into the Valley and Out Again" is the story of a father's grief after the loss of his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follow. Rich served on TCF's National Board of Directors for several years including as president of the board. He died in February of 2002. Kitty is the current president of TCF's National Board of Directors.

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**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** [Julyson2@gmail.com](mailto:Julyson2@gmail.com)

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  
TCF National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 3696 - PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246

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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**REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY** Thelma Perkins 262-279-6178 *Andrew C Perkins* Age 17 – Auto Accident

**LIBRARIAN** Kathleen Rettinger 847-922-7456 *Alexander Rettinger* Age 18 – Of suicide

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