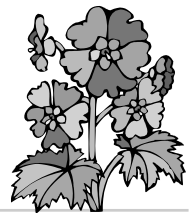


The Primrose



Vol. 29, Issue 3

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Fall 2009



Sinkholes

*Jean Limongello, TCF Pasco County
In memory of my son Anthony "Duke"*

"No one shares how to fill the hole inside you," a friend said recently. And I nodded, without words, because I have never heard, or read, of a remedy specific for that huge bottomless hole in your soul, or your heart, that occurs when your child dies. It appears as suddenly as a sinkhole might in a road or a property when you first hear the news and it swallows much of what you thought of as yourself. You think of that hole in the same context of the words you hear so often, "You will never be the same", at the very time you have little hope of any pain relief. And the damn hole enlarges as its edges collapse into the vortex of your swirling emotional waters.

Early on, I tried to drain those emotional waters by looking at pictures of my child and listening to sad songs – feeling the pain, walking my grief, and then trying to stuff some good memories into the hole to mix with the pain, in an attempt to lessen it. And, in exhaustion, I tried to fold in the marshmallow fluff of a constant wall of sound and pictures from the TV – that hypnotic state of throwing yourself into limbo and not caring to move, or eat, or comb your hair. I could not concentrate enough to use my favorite escape – reading—for the first six months. The only thing that helped at all was when I found The Compassionate Friends. Being with others who had lost children, who felt the same pain, endured the same empty sinkhole inside them awakened a sense of community in me. We were in this thing together. We understood the emptiness and each other when most people we knew did not. The hole was still there, but I gained the courage to be patient with myself, and gradually knew I could learn to live with the pain of my loss.

By the end of the first year, I discovered that when I didn't take care of myself reasonably well, the emptiness and pain increased and I was in danger of losing myself. I made a decision to try to keep my strength up by forcing myself to eat, and drink enough fluids, even when I didn't want to, and refusing to give in to the strong urge to avoid people, pleasures and places. Wanting to sink into myself I started writing about what I felt, and about my son. I guess I chose to live. Six months later, I made a commitment to our TCF chapter, and reached out to help others.

Looking back, I realize now these things were, and are, remedies for me that have helped the hole grow smaller. In accepting the support of others, choosing to support myself, expressing myself by writing, and reaching out to others I chose to live – and I subconsciously chose to hope. I think these choices, mixed with the passage of time have combined to allow for a resurgence of hope that coats the walls of the hole as it shrinks to just the right size.

What do I mean by the right size? On May 5th, my son will be dead four years. Increasingly during the past six months, I feel his presence. Yesterday when Mark Lunsford was interviewed on TV I heard him say that his daughter, Jessie, was always with him. I feel that way. I think of the words from the song, "Precious Child", "...In my soul there is a hole that can never be filled. In my heart, there is hope and you are with me still. In my heart, you live on, always there, never gone... And tho' it may be true that we're apart. You will live forever in my heart..."

Perhaps the hole, in my heart, or in my soul, is just the right size now to hold what seems much more than a memory – the invisible essence of my son – of his love and mine. He is with me still. Love never dies. If I think of it that way I'm no longer speaking of a sinkhole, am I? Although the "hole" is universal to all of us, the "remedies" can be as similar or different as we are. From my own experience, I think the operative word is hope, allowing for the possibility, making room for it, believing it will come. And praying it -will stay.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

National Office Information

Phone Number (toll free) (877) 969-0010

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Mailing address: P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Web address: www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Coordinator
Al Visconti (518) 756-9569

PARENTS RESOURCE CORNER

Please feel free to call the following people if you wish to speak to someone whose child's death was caused in a manner similar to your child's.

Accidental – Pam Kroft	Ph: 239-4222
Illness - Shirley Mehal	785-5710
Adult child - Claudia Simonis	648-6715
Suicide - Cindy Hutchinson	757-9465

The Compassionate Friends of Broome County

1250 Front Street, # 147 Binghamton, NY 13901

Web Address:

<http://tcfbc.homestead.com/Home.html>

**For information pertaining to the
The Compassionate Friends of Broome County, call:
Pam Kroft (607) 239-4222**

Monthly Meetings

First Monday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Third or fourth Saturday 10 AM – 12 PM

Nimmonsburg United Methodist Church

918 Upper Front Street Binghamton, NY 13901
(across from BCC)

Steering Committee

Chapter Leader & Delegate - Pam Kroft

Outreach - Luann Ford

Library - Sherry Bailey

Hospitality – Jean Scolaro

Treasurer – Val Ambrose

Newsletter Editor – Val Ambrose

Website Master - Marv Conover

Community Awareness Coordinator - Claudia Simonis

Secretary - Angela Carro

Programs/Events - Michelle Simonds

***** Please consider joining our steering
committee as additional help is always
welcome.**

**Next steering committee meeting
Thursday Oct. 15th
Call Pam Kroft for information**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Meetings:

First Monday 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Unless otherwise indicated

**Third or fourth Saturday 10:00 A.M.
(Check calendar!)**

NIMMONSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

918 Front Street, Binghamton

(Across from BCC, next to the Credit Union.

Parking in the rear, enter through rear door.)

September 14th, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “The First Year, The Second Year....”

September 26th, 2009 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

October 5th, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ Why is it so Hard to Focus?”

October 15th, 2009 (Thursday)

6:00 Steering Committee Meeting

October 17th, 2009 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

November 2nd, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ Bracing for the Holidays”

November 21st, 2009 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

December 7th, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ What is Best for Me”

The Primrose is published quarterly
Deadline for newsletter materials:
February 1st: May 1st: August 1st: November 1st

Send Information to: Val Ambrose 730 River Rd.
Binghamton, NY 13901
Or email JTL7899@yahoo.com

**NOTICE: If you receive this newsletter, forwarded
through the funeral home, please call Val Ambrose at
(607 648-8598) with your correct address so new issues
can be mailed directly to you.**

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hi Everyone,

It doesn't seem possible that fall is just around the corner, in June I was asking myself where May had gone and in July it became where June went. For me it was an emotional summer, one filled with highs and lows. There were bridal showers, weddings, graduation parties, a family reunion and two very sad funerals. It seemed to be a whirlwind of events but this year my emotions shone through more than usual. I missed Sean not being a part of all the festivities, I missed him not being in the family photos at events and everyday I miss my life as it was before his death. I guess that's the bottom line, I miss my life when I had two living children, when there were no shrines, or memorial bricks, or buttons with his picture, two Mother's day cards and no TCF. [though because of TCF I did find hope to go on].

One of the highs of this summer was our annual Balloons to Heaven event that was held in June. We had a great turn out, parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, children, and a volunteer fire squad with fire truck to celebrate our children's lives. We were blessed to have Alan Pedersen, a bereaved dad and song writer join us for the evening, filling our hearts with his melodies. We had great weather and clear skies as the balloons lifted off to meet our children. It amazes me as we stand and strain our necks to watch our balloon as far as we can, before they are melded into one big color. We never want to lose sight of the balloon and the heartfelt note attached. Thanks to all who took part in the event, from the early workers to the clean-up crew. All your hard work is always appreciated and needed for this event to continue. Thanks, Michelle... Our very low of this summer was the passing of one of our active members, Ken Sahre, father of Kenny and husband of Elaine. Ken will be missed at our meetings, he was one of our group guys and the maker of the CD's that were given at the candle lighting last December and also that are placed in the packets for new parents attending meetings. I know we have many parents who read our newsletter and are not active meeting attendees, for anyone who has experienced a similar loss this year our condolences to you as well as Elaine.

We as parents of children who have gone too soon and members of TCF will always have highs and lows as we continue without our precious children. I met a mom just this past weekend who wore a beautiful cross around her neck, a cross with a stairway falling from the bottom of the cross, engraved with the saying that we have on a stone at group, "If tears could build a stairway and memories a lane I'd walk right up to heaven and bring you home again." She and I struck up a conversation, she revealing her son Scott had died in a similar accident as my Sean and at the same age. In that very conversation there were highs and lows, the low being the death of our sons and the high because we were able to share their lives with each other. Sharing Sean's life is always a high for me. As we continue on our grief journeys there will be several highs and lows, ups and downs, and detours along the way. I must remind everyone that in time there will be more highs than lows but our children will never be forgotten no matter how far we are from their death. As I wrote earlier I do miss my life before Sean's death but I also have learned through many years of grief work to embrace what life has to offer now, today, this moment.

Before we know it our annual candle lighting will be here. If there are parents that would like to take part in our program just give me a call. We are always searching for new faces to continue the beautiful tribute to our children. There is also set up and clean-up tasks available.....

As we continue on our grief journeys hold onto the love that you shared with your child and continue to reach out to other bereaved parents for the support and understanding you have to give to each other. As we travel together let us find the hope to make it through another day.....

Hugs to all,
Pam
(Sean's Mom)



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

In each issue, we reach out with our arms and hearts to the parents who will be facing difficult days during the next three months. Please remember them on the anniversary of the death of their child. The children's names listed are those of parents who have made a love gift and are subscribing to the Primrose.

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OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED *continued*



We Compassionate Friends are:

Caring, crying, crippled friends,
Outraged with life, having outlived our children
Meeting once a month to meditate; miserable
Parents all, whether natural, step or grand. Pained, pale, paralyzed, pathetic... from
All walks of life. Agonized and aggrieved.
Sharing memories. Shocked. Seeking support.
Sad, yet sympathetic.
Individuals; isolated.
Old and young, oppressed, opening our hearts.
Nice people, you and I.
Alienated from society, no one really understands.
Tragedy has struck, tears flow, time our enemy.
Empiness inside.

Frail, fallen people; floundering through the day,
Ripped off, raged. Recalling and remembering.
Inconsolable at times.
Enduring pain and loneliness. Emotional.
Not wanting to let go.
Devastated. Longing to die to ease the pain.
Seeking answers.

My Compassionate Friends, I'm sorry we had to meet this way.
Sharon K. Robertson, Mt Vernon, OHIO (TCF, VIC Newsletter 1988)



The Group No One Really Wants To Belong To

This September 22, 2009 will be 8 years since our son, Jesse Kane, went back home to the heavenly skies, after a very hard and courageous battle with Hodgkin's Disease with complications.

I used this title because Jesse's best friend, Adam, has a very special uncle who is John Walsh from America's Most Wanted. For years, after knowing what happened to his son, I had always wondered how his family could ever deal with the loss of a child. Then, listening to his program, when Mr. Walsh spoke of other families that had lost a child he would say, "Believe me, it's The Group No One Really Wants To Belong To".

It definitely is unnatural for a child to die before a parent--at least it use to be, but more and more it happens. And more and more it is heart-breaking. Then one year after graduation, it was our turn to become a member of this Group. We were devastated -- our only child together. The service was so full, people were standing in the street, listening to a microphone that was pumped outdoors for them to hear. We were told it was the biggest service ever to be held in the small town of Afton, outside of Binghamton, NY.

When my husband and I finally didn't know what to do, or how to help ourselves, it was suggested we go to The Compassionate Friends Group in Binghamton on Front St. We did faithfully for awhile. Then, I started reading every single book I could get my hands on about the loss of a child. It still wasn't enough. I just know in my heart, Jesse wouldn't want us to grieve to the point where it literally was killing us. So, we decided to make a big move to North Carolina. At least John's one son and grandchildren lived there. It helped some. But still not a day goes by that we don't think of him. There are still tremendous hard days, as you all know. The day he was born, Mother's Day, Father's Day, his special holiday Christmas, a favorite song of his. We do know he still lives on in our hearts and always will.

Right before we moved, we made a trip to New Jersey and stopped in Atlantic City. By the grace of God to us, we saw a big commotion and went to see what was going on. And there was John Walsh, taping an episode in one of the casinos on how people are stolen from there. Bodyguards were surrounding him. We went up to one and in a short version, asked if we could please meet Mr. Walsh as our son had passed away that was his nephew's best friend. They took us to the head of the line and we were able to meet him personally. Things work in mysterious ways, as I had a picture of Jesse and Adam at graduation in my purse -- I sincerely don't know why I had it. We gave it to Mr. Walsh, he hugged us and said "I knew. My nephew told me, I am very sorry but now you both belong to the "Group No One Really Ever Wants To Belong To, May God Bless You Both." He said he would keep that picture and then he had to be whisked away. We will never forget that day, as the three of us had tears in our eyes.

This letter is much different than what we usually write. No poems. Just a true story. We learned that no one can do what someone tells them to do -- we all have to do what makes us as comfortable in our own skins as we can possibly be. We go on the belief that God had special things for Jesse in mind and needed him more than he needed us. That Jesse learned what he was suppose to of learned while here on Earth with us. I truly believe this, because the last month of his life was spent in Wilson Hospital -- they gave us a room so we didn't have to leave at all and that's where we lived the last month of Jesse's life. Everyday, I prayed to God to take me instead, but of course it didn't work.

We did want our son's memory to live on in the community. He was a great basketball player for Afton High School and for AAU of Oneonta -- both places retired his number on his jersey #23 -- no one can wear that number again at either place. Like the pros do. His jersey hangs in full in front of the main entrance to the new gym. We also started "The Jesse Kane Memorial Award" given to a graduating senior that stood for what Jesse believed in: honesty, integrity, and some kind of involvement in sports. Hopefully, we can keep that going for as long as we can on our own now.

We also learned that it hurt worse when people or friends would try not to mention him like he didn't exist at all. We finally made it clear to those people or even new people we meet, that we would much rather talk about our son than to act like he never existed.

We still order "The Primrose" and read each issue word for word from other families and share their loss. This time we would like to thank all of the Binghamton Chapter of Compassionate Friends and all those who write poems and their stories in " The Primrose" for sharing and helping us 8 years later.

We would like to end this by saying, " Jesse, we always will miss you terribly, but you also will continue to live in our hearts until the day comes when we meet again in Heaven."

We are your Compassionate Friend Too and We Do "Belong To The Group No One Really Wants Too". We all must live One Day At A Time the best we know how.

God Bless you All!!!

Sincerely,

Jay & John Kane Maiden, NC

IT'S OKAY

It's Okay to Grieve:

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such Hurt! It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to Cry:

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal:

We do not need to "prove" we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty," for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh:

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Marianne Waite TCF, El Paso TX

Believe....

Believe nothing

just because a so-called wise person said it.

Believe nothing

just because a belief is generally held.

Believe nothing

just because it is said in ancient books.

Believe nothing

just because it is said to be of divine origin.

Believe nothing

just because someone else believes it.

Believe only

what you yourself test and judge to be true.

Buddha

Good-bye

By Laura W. / TCF Champaign, IL

It's August again,
Different than last.
A hot blanket covers the earth.
Blood red roses
droop over your casket.
With weak limbs I stand.
Misty eyes gaze at you,
My only brother,
Lying prepared for earth.
Today we were to go hiking,
Explore the vast countryside,
Just you and I.
Tomorrow we would try golf,
or maybe just talk.
You told me yesterday
of your pride in me
That I might strive for more.
"But it is you I follow," I say.
And we broke through the barrier,
declaring us true friends.
To say good-bye
is to remember this,
and smile.
And if I look,
I will find them —
Memories that smother
the good-bye,
And let me cling to your life.

Remembrance

Pricilla D K. / TCF Kennebunk ME

I see your smile
in the brightness of the summer sun.
A gentle breeze
is the touch of your hand on mine.
A wave breaks softly on the shore,
and I hear you whisper,
"Remember me."
A winged bird begins its flight
into the distant sky.
The sound of children's laughter fills the air.
The evening stars become your eyes,
and I reply
"You are ever near"

Love Gifts

Our chapter is a self-help group with no required dues. We rely solely on contributions. Your donations help us pay for the cost of this newsletter, the postage, all the books in our library, meeting and event supplies which are a great help to bereaved parents.

Your contributions are tax deductible and very sincerely appreciated. The following donations were received since the last Primrose deadline:

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Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations — that life isn't fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best isn't good enough, and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable Lessons and Precious Gifts. As a result of my sister's death — I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater Compassion for those who hurt.

I have learned to be a survivor — to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all — I have been given the gift of time — time to heal and time to replace Painful memories of death with Priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schumberger from This Healing Journey — An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

Please consider submitting your poems and stories, we love to print our local groups articles.



If you make donations to the **United Way** you can specify that the monies go to our local TCF chapter. All you have to do is complete a Donor Choice Card and indicate that you want your donations to go to **The Compassionate Friends of Broome County** 1250 Front Street, # 147 Binghamton, NY 13901.

This is great way to help defray the cost associated with publishing our monthly newsletter, special programs, books, events and other resources needed to help our chapter help other bereaved parents and grandparents.

If you do contribute this way, please let me know so I can acknowledge the gift in the Love gifts. The United Way does not send me the contributors names.

**** NOTICE ****

The Primrose Newsletter, published quarterly, is available for a year with a suggested subscription of \$8.00 - \$10.00. You may pay as little or as much as you like towards our newsletter printing and mailing fund. Your expiration date is shown in the lower right hand corner of your mailing label. Please let me know by this date if you wish to continue receiving the Primrose. This is my way of knowing if you want the newsletter.

Send your Tax deductible donations to: **Mrs. Valerie Ambrose 730 River Rd. Binghamton, NY 13901**
Make checks payable to: *Bereaved Parents.*

Name _____

Please check if new
Address

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Child's Name _____ DoD ____________

Newsletter \$ _____ Library \$ _____ Other (specify) \$ _____ Generic \$ _____

Please specify if there is a specific fund you want the money used for (newsletter, books, supplies, ect...)
ALL donations will be mentioned in the Love gift section of the newsletter.

The Waves of Grief

By Brenda Sydnor, Louisville, KY, 2006

Grief is like the ocean tides
With their constant ebb and flow.
Sometimes the tides are quiet
Sometimes the strong wind blows.
The pain is like the ocean waves
That roll way out in the sea.
Sometimes the motion is gentle
And lulls me into a sense of complacency.
But then from out of nowhere
Traucherous storm clouds fill the air.
The sharp, white foam waves lash over me
And overwhelmed me with despair.
Just as vicious storm waves battering the rock
Will eventually etch their mark,
So too, the ravishment of pain and grief,
Have taken a toll on my heart.

The Space Between Thoughts

You are no longer in my thoughts constantly.
You are now dwelling
in the space between thoughts,
a part of my every moment
whether joyful or sad
or in between, or both simultaneously.
I walk, talk, work, play and you surround me.
You are in the sparkle of my smile
the wisdom in my thinking
the rainbow circles in my life.
As I breathe and live, you breathe and live.
As I learn, you are teaching, not only me
but all those who are in my life today.
You are a blessing, dear child,
for all you were and all you are
and all you forever will be.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry - June 2001
For Lori 2/2/70 – 6/28/91

Bereaved Parents Group

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Binghamton, NY 13901-1043
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