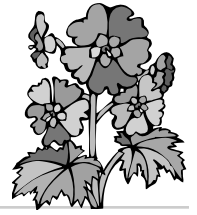


The Primrose



Vol. 33, Issue 1

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Spring 2013



In the December issue of the Primrose I inadvertently omitted a love gift and also put the wrong name of a child. I cannot apologize enough. I know it is important to remember our children. The group appreciates your gift and I would like to acknowledge your gifts here.

Barbara & Peter Metritikas in memory of their son **Stavros**

James & June Moore in memory of their son **Jason**

Please except my deepest apology—I'm very sorry.

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a *non-profit mutual assistance, self-help* organization offering *friendship, understanding, and hope* to bereaved parents and families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings provide an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, but to support bereaved parents, grandparents and adult siblings in the positive resolution of the grief feelings and issues that revolve around the death of their loved one and support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work. Try to attend three times before deciding if TCF is right for you.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK** – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF 'veterans' to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE come to a meeting. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group, but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the other members is okay, too. Our meetings are open to parents, grandparents, adult siblings, or adult family members.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

This group belongs to you and cannot survive without assistance. You can help with refreshments, setting up before a meeting, help with the newsletter, becoming a facilitator, volunteering to help with Chapter activities or serve on the steering committee.

Part of getting better, sometimes is being there to assist others, too, through this journey.

If you'd like to help, please contact us.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

National Office Information

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

Fax Number (630) 990 -0246

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

Assistant Chapter Leader - Donna Cuningham

Outreach - Luann Ford & Elaine Sahre

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 - OPEN

***** We Need Help *****

**Please consider joining our steering
committee**

Next steering committee meeting

March 21st, 5:30PM

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.)

March 4th, 2013 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Memory Night ”

March 16th, 2013 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Discussion

March 21st, 2013 (Thursday)

5:30 PM Steering Committee Meeting

Call for location

April 1st, 2013 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Survivors We Are ”

April 20th, 2013 (Saturday)

10:00 AM OPEN Discussion

May 6th, 2013 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Calling All Moms and Grandmas ”

May 18th, 2013 (Saturday)

10:00 AM OPEN Discussion

June 3rd, 2013 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Grandpas and Dads You Have the Floor ”

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.**

THE STORY OF THE GRIEVING MOTHER

There is an old story from China of a woman whose son had died. She went to the Buddhist temple and begged the monk to bring her son back, for her pain was just too unbearable and she could not go on with it. Rather than scoff or scold her for her request, the monk told her to go out and find one family who had not experienced a loss, and then he could stop her hurting.

So she set out to look for that family. The first place she decided to stop was at a very large castle on a hill. "Here," she thought, "these people are so rich and wealthy, surely no loss or pain has ever come to them." So she climbed to the castle and told her story to the servant who brought his mistress and master to talk to her. They told her such a sad story, and were in so much pain, that the woman thought, "I can help them! I've already been through this part of the pain." So she stayed for awhile and helped this family. Soon, though, she resumed her search.

The next house, and then the next, and all those that followed, told her of such sad stories that at each one she stayed awhile to help them with their grief. Then one day she looked at herself, and she found that through helping so many others, her grief was not now so overwhelming and so painful. She still missed her son terribly, and still cried for him in the night, but she no longer was consumed in her own grief.

She found that by helping others, she had helped her own healing from this most painful loss.

This is the idea of The Compassionate Friends and other support groups – to give support to those who are newly bereaved and lost in the fog, then as they grow, to reach out to help others who are hurting.

Together, we can make it through this journey down life's most painful and darkest road.

Together, helping one another, we will survive.

Orange Coast Chapter of TCF

Renewal

In the first warm days of springtime
When the winter chill is through,
Each waking thought & closing prayer
Begins and ends with you.

Like the daffodil and crocus
That survive the bitter snow,
My soul is gently lifted up
And is warmed by sunlight's glow.

It's a time of fresh renewal,
A beginning - not an end.
And oh how much I miss you,
My daughter and my friend.

So I'll take the warmth of springtime
And hold it close to me,
To help me through the winter storms
Till your face once more I'll see.

-Ptiscille Kenney, TCF, North Shore/Boston, MA

Holding Onto Love

*Trees and flowers seem suddenly reborn,
As another spring arrives fresh and new,
Surrounded by such beauty,
My thoughts turn to you.
As another college graduation looms,
Great excitement fills the air,
Glancing at the smiling students,
I still search for strawberry blonde hair,
No matter what I do in life
You are always there,
I feel your presence constantly,
As each new experience we share.
Though physically, you have left us,
Your love remains here to stay,
A bond so strong and nourishing,
It gets us through another day.*

By Chuck Collins
Burke/Springfield/Fairfax TCF



A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hi Everyone,

How many times this bitter cold winter have we found ourselves night after night snuggling in that cozy blanket {thanks, Val}, our feet laden with woolen socks, sweats and flannel shirts our winter garb, sipping a hot cup of tea or hot chocolate, trying to warm our souls, so many thoughts of our child gone too soon. Hopefully by now our brutally cold winter of 2013 has eased some, teasing us with the air of spring. Winter seems to be the time of year where we tend to be more homebound leaving us to sit and think of what we so desperately miss and what we have lost. So easily we can become lost in our grief, losing momentarily our identity {who am I now?} and definitely losing our way, stumbling all the while. If this describes you, you are not alone. This grief process can be debilitating and often brings us to our knees, not just physically but emotionally as well. A few of the words that best describe what we are feeling can be summed up; spent, fatigued, depleted and exhausted... My doctor would say that's a vitamin D deficiency, but I call it GRIEF.

Our candle lighting in December warmed the hearts of many family members as we had a night for our children; filled with song, readings, poems and friendships new and old renewed. It so touches my heart to see so many come out regardless of the weather to light that special candle in memory of a very missed child. Our group is fortunate to have such a safe place to call "home"; the church has been not only welcoming but so accommodating to our needs. I would dare to say we have a good relationship. There are always so many thank yous after an event so if I failed to say it that evening please except it now... Without your participation our candle lighting would not be as comforting and such a beautiful tribute to our children. Thanks to all.....

If you receive our newsletter and had thought about attending a meeting but weren't sure; maybe a bit leery, not knowing what goes on, I suggest this month's meeting; entitled Memory Night. We share a special memory of our child and the night is filled with hope and love as each parent shares, keeping our child alive in our hearts and minds. Of course if you want to just sit and listen that's fine as well. No pressure, just parents together trying to figure "it" all out. By having Memory Night we are reminded what our children brought to our lives and how they will never be forgotten.

The 21st of this month we will have our next steering committee meeting which will be held at Dunkin Donuts by the Oakdale Mall, at 5:30 p.m. We are always looking for new members and new ideas to keep our group moving forward. If you might be interested join us on the 21st, it's a great way to give back.

The National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held this July in Boston, Massachusetts on the 5-7th. The conference is a great way to connect with other parents, grandparents and siblings. There are workshops, wonderful speakers, dinners and just plain sharing. On the final day a remembrance walk is held, all chapters carrying the names of their children. I believe the National Office is sending information to everyone. If you have not attended this is a great opportunity as it's on the East Coast this year. I have attended several through the years and am thinking about going this year as well. It brings comfort reconnecting with moms and dads I have met along my journey.

Kim Tholen, Taylor's mom has reunited with our group and has offered to help me along with Donna Cunningham giving hope and understanding to our members. Hopefully you will be seeing them at meetings and events. We also have welcomed many new parents to our meetings, I know it's not easy to walk through the open door but you have so let us help you find peace, as the day to day can be overwhelming. In time sharing our stories can bring comfort.

In just a few short weeks we shall rid ourselves of the heavy clothing, replacing it with springtime wear, throwing off the cozy blanket and sipping on icy cold drinks as we take to the outdoors feeling the warmth of the sun [even though we don't see it often] beat upon us and giving us the rebirth that spring has to offer. We all deserve to feel life and to live life again. I came across this saying and wanted to share with you. So appropriate for whom we are:

Continued on next page ...

There are moments in life

*When you miss someone
So much that you just want
To pick them up from your
Mind and hug them.*

Just like now.....

In closing may the next few months fill your minds with the memories of your children and fill your hearts with the love we shared with them and may we all find a renewed hope that life will again be worth it all. Time is of great importance as we continue on day after day trying to find our way. Along that way there are many who will take your hand and walk with you, I just say, let them.....

Hugs,
Pam Kroft
(Sean's Mom)



TCF 2013 National Conference

Save the date: July 5-7, 2013 in Boston, MA

Message from Kenny

By Mary Mandeville

It was August of 2007, and I was in Oklahoma City with hundreds of other bereaved parents. It was the Compassionate Friends Annual Conference. I went with my good friend, Nancy Frank. We were new at this... we had both lost our sons the previous summer.

Elizabeth Edwards was the Keynote Speaker. The woman was amazing. After speaking for almost an hour, she autographed her book with a personal message for each and every one of us. The fact she was suffering from terminal cancer didn't faze her a bit.

Nancy and I had toured the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and saw the museum of personal belongings of the people killed in that terrible bombing.

The next day was the closing walk. Our 2 mile walk was strictly sidewalk walking. It was very hard on the feet. Nancy and I never were at a loss for conversation. She asked me about Kenny and his wife Dawn. I talked about the fact they were living in Portsmouth, VA at the time he died. Dawn was still in Med school and Kenny was in a wheelchair recuperating from foot surgery. He loved to sit on the front porch of their house in the morning and watch the 8:20 am train go past. I had no sooner gotten those words out of my mouth when the train in Oklahoma City went zooming past us. I looked at my watch and it was 8:20 am! A coincidence... or my son sending me a reminder of him? You know what I believe. This was the first of many signs I have gotten from Kenny. They don't come as often... but I know he is thinking of me.

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*



Healing vs. Recovery

I have heard the term “recovery” and “healing” used interchangeably to refer to the goal of processing grief. I would like to propose the idea that recovery carries with it the assumption of an injury or illness and that when the necessary repair has taken place, the person will return basically to the same person he was previous to the injury or illness.

When a child dies there is, in deed, an injury of massive proportions. All systems—physical, mental, and spiritual—are affected. There is physical pain, emotional retching, spiritual upheaval, and struggling. All this may be occurring simultaneously. Though there may not be bleeding in the physical sense, there is emotional hemorrhaging. The body and psyche are in crisis. Bereaved parents are often unable to eat, they may experience sleep disturbances and disorientation. Believe it or not, all these reactions are normal. Grief is a normal part of life. This is not a mental illness or some chemical imbalance in the brain. What is not normal is to experience the death of a child.

The major difference between recovery and healing is that the goal is not to return to who we were before our child died. That goal is impossible to achieve. To continue to try to achieve a goal of recovery is to assume that life will be basically the same, with a few minor adjustments...such as we will set one less place at the table, buy less food, feel sad on holidays and cry a bit more. But our lives have been permanently and irrevocably changed and we are, in fact, becoming different people. The “becoming” is the healing.

During this process we examine every facet of our lives and or belief systems. This is a journey, not a “repair.” By living through this journey we become different people. True, we may basically look the same, but we are not the same as before our child died. We look at life in a new way. Our interests change and our priorities change. We will have a new and deeper level of understanding and compassion for those experiencing pain—all kinds of pain. We will have a different understanding of spirituality. We ourselves will feel new and different. We will carry some of the old person with us through the healing process, but we will emerge different.

We are healed...not recovered.

By Birdie Tracy, TCF Shoreline Chapter

MOTHER'S DAY AND MIRACLES

You might believe in miracles.

I have been a bereaved mother for 38 months this May..03

This is the fourth Mother's Day that will include a visit to my 20-year-old-son's grave. I miss him terribly. Mother's Day reminds my heart of so much.

I have been involved in The Compassionate Friends since soon after his death. I have met literally hundreds of other bereaved parents, and am frequently asked by the newly bereaved, "When will I start to feel better?" I always try to answer as honestly as I can. I know that, as unique individuals, we all must deal with grief in whatever way brings the most positive results.

I am different from the majority, because in those first months of overwhelming sorrow, I never asked someone further along, "When will I start to feel better?" I truly never felt it was possible to ever really feel any better. Maybe I didn't really want to. I felt that joy and happiness were gone from my life forever. The "candle" that was my son, David, had suddenly been blown out, taking with it my heart and my capacity for joy and happiness.

Everything I believed in was gone. Like - "bad things happen only to bad people." And my belief that I had control over my life...Gone! Just like David - like the candle in the wind. I did expect to function again some day, and cope, maybe even smile again (usually at a memory), but true joy - never.

I was partly right. I do not feel exactly as I did before his death, or look at the world in quite the same way. I have learned, as portrayed so beautifully in the book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, that bad things do happen to good people. We truly do not know what tomorrow brings. It could be a miracle...

At a recent TCF meeting, with many newly bereaved in attendance, I took a moment to just look around the room. What I experienced was a miracle. People surviving tragedies and finding hope and strength.

Sometimes our miracles come when we least expect them. Just when you feel you cannot go on, the unexplainable happens. It might be as simple as the message in a poem or song, a butterfly at just the right moment, a telephone call that lifts you up and lets you know you are not alone - a dream so real that you know your soul has been touched by a powerful and loving force.

You start to feel some hope, and with hope comes healing - and with healing comes, what for me was unexpected, joy and happiness. When you let these miracles happen, you can almost hear your deceased child whispering in your ear - straight to your heart,

"Any happiness you give and receive is a tribute to me, and a beautiful statement of our unconditional and everlasting love. Happy Mother's Day, Mom ~ Keep believing in miracles."

Sherry Hall, TCF, Lakeland/Polk FL from TCF National Magazine "Friends, Caring & Sharing



IT WILL BE ANOTHER BIRTHDAY WITHOUT YOU

The sun will shine
roses bloom, geese fly
throughout the sky
stocks will trade,
the weatherman predict
politicians debate
it'll seem like another day
just a day, same 24 hours
not a special holiday
But to this mother
who will stand at the grave
lifting balloons into the sky
serving angelfood cupcakes
with rainbow icing
coated with tears
fluctuating between emotions:
the grief over death
the celebration over birth

For this mother
it will be yet
another birthday without you.

Alice J. Wisler ~ Daniel's mom



where are you now

where are you now
but in my heart
your voice clear in my mind
I know we're never far apart
mind to mind
heart to heart
and, maybe, if I'm fortunate,
soul to soul
we connect
you, watching over me
me, so unaware
but, oh, to actually see you
how you've grown and changed
still, oh, to embrace you
feeling your strength and youth
breathing in your life
now held only within
mind's eye
heart of hearts
and lonely soul

Victor Montemurro
TCF Brookhaven in Medford, NY

Footprints in the Sand

There was a day of sunshine
When you followed after me.
Bare feet in cool sand.
Small prints skipping
Through swirls of foam
Upon the shore.

Even as we danced and laughed,
The waves crashed against the rocks.
Yet when I looked behind us,
Only smooth sand remained.
The sea had erased our marks.

People have ceased
To speak of you
And grow uncomfortable
When I do.
But I refuse to let them,
Like the sea,
Erase your memory.

Karen Nelson TCF- Sioux Falls, SD



"DON'T STEAL MY GRIEF"

Don't try to make me feel better,
By quipping your cute jokes.
Don't try to rob me of my pain,
When I need it as my cloak.
I know you probably think,
You're doing me a favor.
But what you don't understand,
Is that my sadness is my savior.
Don't try to steal my right,
To express my grief in my own way.
You see, I lost my child,
And grief is the price that I must pay.
I need to feel the hurt and pain,
As it beats inside my chest.
Don't try to steal my grief,
When it's the only feeling I have left.

By Faye McCord, Co-Chapter Leader,
TCF / Jackson, MS
In loving memory of my son,
Lane McCord (1/26/65 - 9/13/98)

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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Love Gifts cont.



We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. Please check your mailing labels for an expiration date. Let me know if you want to continue to receive the Primrose before it expires. Also, let me know any corrections to names or addresses.

No donation is required, but all donations are appreciated and help us with the costs of printing, mailing and supplies.

*** NOTICE ***

The Primrose Newsletter, published quarterly, is available for a year with a suggested subscription of \$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: *The Compassionate Friends Broome*



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.

VULNERABLE

I have found in the years that have passed that I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance. The word "Anniversary" no longer holds a promise of celebration.

Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. *It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be emotionally devastating.* You'll excuse me if the bounce is gone from my step; or the depth of my laughter has changed. Issues that were once monumental now seem insignificant. Please excuse me if I don't commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed. You'll excuse me if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days "to bear" rather than days to share and enjoy. You'll pardon me if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and I'll pardon you for not understanding that my life will never be the same, that although I'll survive, there will always be sorrow.

-Joan Fischer, Nassau County Chapter, NY

It's abnormal for a child to die before a parent. "Normal" people (those who have not lost a child) verbalized that BUT there is no way in this world they could possibly understand how horrific this type of grief is. It's odd feeling "abnormal" every single day... how I miss the old me, but I realize that person is gone because the old me had a beautiful daughter who I was very attached to. I miss everything about her. Taken too soon from this world. The world needed people like my Maggie in it. So many horrible persons are alive and kicking, but she's dead. When does it start to make sense?
Barbi Rodriguez

Bereaved Parents Group

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
BROOME COUNTY CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies