

The Primrose



Vol. 29, Issue 2

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Summer 2009

Catching Butterflies

by Dottie Williams
TCF, Pittsburgh PA

It often hurt to come upon
reminders of my son
Tho' often since I lost him
I would search around for one
Which always brought on sadness
and the tears that I would shed
Were caused by names or faces,
all things that I would dread.
But then one day I came upon
a man who'd lost his son
I found that things I ran from,
he wouldn't even shun.
But rather he would treasure
and I said I wondered why
He told me that he called them
"Catching Butterflies."
This view of his intrigued me;
I wanted to hear more
And learned that he took all of them
and carefully would store
All of the reminders that
I chose to push away
He would tuck deep down inside
his heart each and every day.
Now a name or likeness
when catching me off guard
Does not upset me as it did
and I don't find it hard
For now instead I see
these times as opportunities
To see my son awakened
in these new fresh memories.

PROMISES OF RAINBOWS



I promise not to offer
Rainbows after storms
Or silver linings beyond the clouds,
But if you have tears of sorrow,
I will share them.
If you have words of anger,
I will hear them.
If you have moments of confusion,
I will help you through them.
Perhaps
Your tears of sorrow today
Will water the seeds
Of tomorrow's garden
Of spiritual growth, of worthy priorities,
Of loving relationships and genuine
Understanding and compassion.
My sad friend, your weeping is not fruitless.

By Nancy Williams
TCF, Marlboro, NJ

"It is has been said, time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone."

~ Rose Kennedy



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

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 July 16th
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.)

June 1, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ Calling all Dad’s and Grandpas”

June 13, 2009 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

July 6th, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ To Cry or Not To Cry”

July 16, 2009 (Thursday)

6:00 Steering Committee Meeting

July 20, 2009 (Monday)

6:00 “Balloons to Heaven”

August 3, 2009 (Monday)

7:00 “ My Anger Lingers”

September 14, 2009 (Monday)

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

**Please note that there are no Saturday Meetings
in the Summer Months of July and August**

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,

Fact: We will always grieve to some extent the loss of our child. Their smile, their smell and their being brought sunshine to our lives. As time passes these very memories will lead us back to the living, to a place that will allow us to once again embrace life.

Often at our TCF meetings I speak of hope for a future filled with joy and happiness without our children. That statement can be very unrealistic for the newly bereaved who are struggling with the day to day without their child. But as we travel along our journeys we are all aware of the changes in our grief. Several times at a meeting I know parents are looking at me as if I don't know what I am talking about as they are positive there will never be that joy or happiness. I am not saying it will come soon or that you will ever forget your beloved children [that never will happen] but you too shall once again be able to crack a small smile or feel a pang of joy. The longing you have for your child will not always deplete the energy you have to go on. That is the hope I speak of. For the many new families we welcomed in the past few months, thank you for letting us help you along your journey.

In March we had our annual memory night and it just amazes me all the wonderful tributes that parents have done in memory of their children. At our April meeting we had one of our moms share her story, thank you Renee for sharing Todd with us. I am encouraging others to share as well, often along our journey our story gets lost to others, and it also gives us a personal gauge on how the hope has reentered our lives, in turn giving that same hope to the newly bereaved. Just let me know so time can be allowed for you to share.

Next month, July, we will have our annual "Balloons to Heaven", a family night held at the Jeanne and John Wilfey park in Port Dickinson. All family and friends are welcome, a dish to pass [if you are up to it] and if you can a few lawn chairs. This year we will have a special guest, Alan Pedersen performing songs written in memory of his daughter, Ashley. Alan joined us last fall at our brick dedication at the angel of hope, located in the park that the picnic is held. He travels across the country in memory of his daughter sharing his music. There will be a postcard sent to all reminding of the date. This is one night where that very word, hope, can be visibly seen. Join us.....Also in August the National TCF conference will be held on the 7th -9th in Portland, Oregon. If anyone is interested I have info or you can go the national website, listed on the inside cover page. I have been to several and always find the comfort and compassion I am looking for.



As you post your calendar let me remind you there are no Saturday meetings in July or August, I know our grief does not go on hiatus during those months, so I encourage you to call if you would like to meet and chat. Also just a quick note that our June Saturday meeting is a week earlier because of a conflict, please take note of that. Also as you look to your calendars we are always looking for new ideas for topics at meetings. If you have something important that you feel needs to be covered ask and we can put it on the calendar as a new topic. We are all members of the group with the highest dues; this organization belongs to all of us.

In closing let me share something that I heard recently. When we are having a bad day and the tears are flowing from our eyes and someone asks you what is wrong, just answer, "I am having a memory hug". I thought that was so us, so appropriate, especially as we travel further along on our journeys. It's all baby steps, this thing called grief, take the hand of a friend and you shall never walk alone.....

Until next time,
Pam Kroft
{Sean's Mom}



WHAT GOES ON AT A COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETING??!?!?!?

A question that is asked frequently of newly bereaved parents who have never attended a meeting is, "What do you do?" or rather, "What will you expect me to do?" In answer to the last question - we expect and require nothing more than your name.

Our meetings are very informal. We open the meeting with introductions, by mentioning our name and our child's name, but, if you feel you cannot do this, it is okay also. We have all, at one time or another, choked up on the mention of our child's name or the circumstances of his/her death. Some people attend meetings several times and do not enter any discussions or voice their feelings. They absorb some ideas and discard others that do not meet their immediate needs. But inevitably, someone around the table will say something that is tuned to the exact way you feel - then the realization comes that one is among friends, people who really understand and care about them and their sensitive feelings.

Some parents are more vocal right from the start and they find willing listeners who neither criticize-nor pass judgment on them. We most likely have had the same feelings of anger, despair, longing, panic and a multitude of others.

Now, a word about crying ---. Please don't stay away because you are afraid you will cry: We have all cried many times. Perhaps we've attended several months and didn't shed a tear. Then, something is said or a memory comes back that brings the tears to our eyes. Compassionate Friends can accept the gamut of feelings from tears to laughter.

Laughter? Of course: We are, after all, human and our emotions are many and varied. There are humorous things that come up in everyday living, and thankfully, we are able to see that humor and enjoy it. If we can accept each other's feelings, it must include all ranges of emotions.

In the course of discussions, you may hear the answer to a question or problem that has been plaguing you. Several parents may tell how they have handled the question of what to do with their child's possessions - clothes, toys, books, etc. or how they have gotten through holidays, birthdays and other difficult days. Maybe you will pick up something that will be helpful in dealing with your surviving children's problems; how to deal with a seemingly uncaring relative or friend; the hurtful remarks; or how to answer the question, "How many children do you have?" Sometimes what has helped one may not have worked for another, but the importance is the open and honest discussion and chance to decide for yourself.

In the newsletter published by the National Office they always have a paragraph titled, "What's it all about." And here's what it's all about...

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of their child, and to foster the physical and emotional health of bereaved parents and siblings.

Please don't let the word meeting intimidate you - perhaps we should call it a gathering. Whether our gathering consists of a program featuring a film, a speaker, listening to a tape or general discussion, please don't hesitate to join us: The coffee pot is always on the table.

Pat Gollon

The Cocoon

I've wrapped myself in...
with the pain and despair.
No way out...don't really care.
Sequestered and weary....
alone, by choice?
I scream in my head...
no one hears my voice.
Yes, their ignorance
is very much their bliss.
Yet...what do I want from them?
See, they can't ever miss
her like I do.
They can't know this anguish,
it's true...
Not in this life, would I ever want them to.
To feel the depth, the ever-present hole...
the irreplaceable puzzle piece...
that seeps into my soul...
That place, that part...
where she used to be,
is there forever...
It's what's left...
of what used to be me.

Brigid
Christine's Mom
1/30/75 - 2/26/02

Grief is the darkness of a broken life.
Grief crushes like a deadly avalanche.
Grief is a stormy sea that throws the heart
Into the depth of pain, the center of despair.
But we are given tender remedies:
Remembrance of a golden joy embraced,
Rich feelings left from moments in the sun.
If we but reach for these:
They wait beyond the dark to give us hope,
To let us live again, to let us celebrate
The children gone from earth,
Yet always here
Eternal light of memory and love.

~ Sasha

Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.
I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.
Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.
Places where you laughed and played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.

by Genesse Gentry ~ TCF, Marin Cnty CA
In memory of Lori Gentry
(2/2/70 to 6/28/91)

"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,
In loving memory of my son,
Lane McCord (1/26/65 - 9/13/98)

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

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THE BEDROOM DILEMMA

There are many dilemmas affecting the life of a bereaved parent, but one that seems to cause one of the greatest amounts of stress and hand wringing is what we do with our children's (or siblings or grandchild's) bedroom. My daughter Nina's room was her sanctuary--a very messy one at that. Much to my chagrin, the more clutter surrounding her the better! However, as a teenager, that is where she could be found most often; lying on her daybed chatting on the phone with her friends, homework and soda cans scattered around her, clothes and shoes thrown every which way. Laughter emanated from her bedroom, my daughter's intermingled with her friends' shrieks of delight. Many evenings I sat on her bed as she told me of her adventures as a freshman at Park High, her latest crush, and regaled me with her tales of a day in the life of a typical 15-year-old girl. Much of my memories are to be found in that room, and the realization I would never have those experiences again with Nina were almost unbearable. Therefore, what I would do with her bedroom now that she was no longer here was of utmost importance to me.

Over the 12 plus years since Nina left this plane, and I have been a part of TCF sharing groups, I have heard various ways others have dealt with this issue. Interestingly, what seems to come into play again and again is what friends and family thought should be done with the child's room. More often than not, their school of thought is that we should empty it completely, give away their possessions, and change it into an office or guest bedroom just as quickly as possible. They believe keeping things as is are only constant reminders of our children's absence. In reality, we are thinking of them 24/7 anyway. Truly, they mean well and are only trying to find ways to help us. However, in the early stages of our grief most of us are not capable of making such an important decision, which is one that should be made only by us.

With our loved ones gone, once we change something, there is no going back. To clear away her things and depersonalize her room felt to me as if I was somehow removing her from my life. What I learned from seasoned bereaved parents was that what are perceived as painful memories of their absence, while in early grief, will, in time, become cherished memories we will want to hold onto. When the numbing brain fog lifts we will more clearly begin to realize that, and only then make more rational decisions that are right for our situation.

I decided to leave Nina's room as it was, mostly from advice I received at a TCF meeting. I told myself that I would know when I was ready to tackle that decision. This is not always possible for everyone--maybe they had previously crowded conditions and needed that room for someone else or a variety of other reasons. What we need to remember again is that handling something like this is so personal; what feels right for one person may be entirely wrong for another. I think the key thing to remember is that if we are able to take our time that we try not to make a snap decision. We had no control over the fact that our child died; this might be something that we can make a choice about when we are ready and able to do so. In my case, I waited for seven years before redoing Nina's room. I tried to do it at one and a half years and then again at five years, and found that I just could not. When I finally did at seven years, I took my time and spent many weeks sifting through her life. I cried a ton of tears, but at that stage I spent the majority of time smiling and laughing. I found things she wrote, what I call 'buried treasures', that in the early stages would have set me back weeks because of its emotional impact, but years later brought me peace, and a deep personal understanding of Nina's thoughts that rekindled our close relationship.

I acknowledge that most people do not wait seven years to undertake the bedroom project; however, that is what worked for me. I made her room into a guest room that still included her daybed and many of her personal belongings. At that later stage, it became my private place where I would wrap myself in her handmade afghan, lie on her bed, look at the glow-in-the-dark stars on her ceiling (that are still there today), and I felt close to my daughter. The point here is that seven months or seven years, we must try not to let someone else force the issue, as well meaning as they may be, with something as important as what to do with our child's room. Everyone has different timetables.

Only we will know what and when it is right for us.

With gentle thoughts,
Cathy L. Sehuetter
TCF/St. Paul Chapter



The Death of the Young

People ask: "Why do children or young people die, when they have lived so little?" How do you know that they have lived so little? This crude measure of yours is time, but life is not measured in time. This is just the same as to say, "Why is this saying, this poem, this picture, this piece of music so short, why was it broken off and not drawn out to the size of the longest speech or piece of music, the largest picture?" As the measure of length is inapplicable to the meaning (or greatness) of productions of wisdom or poetry, so - even more evidently - it is inapplicable to life. How do you know what inner growth this soul accomplished in its short span, and what influence it had on others?

~from *Spiritual Life Cannot be Measured* by Tolstoy



THOUGHTS ABOUT PROGRESS

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to "recovery", when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really? Let's keep in mind most of us have had no previous experience "recovering" from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference – It's all new to us. Actually, the "roller coaster" of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left – just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute.

After a couple of months we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM – back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let's be realistic!! There is something wrong – terribly wrong: we have each lost a child.

Let's be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, "laughing on the outside – crying on the inside." We want to be acceptable to society. "You are doing so well," we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean "getting over it"; it means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let's not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person's general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy.

Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that, and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

~Mary Ehmann, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

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 Continued ...



Passage taken from "Incident at Badamya " by Dorothy Gilman
.... There are people who insist that we're made of bone and flesh and muscle but I say instead that we're made of memories. Cherish them but don't live in them, or they'll destroy the bridges to your future.
Submitted by **George Schumacher** in memory of his son **George**

Please accept my apologies for any mistakes I make, and let me know if there are any corrections I need to make. Also, please consider submitting your poems and stories, we love to print our local groups articles.

***** 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.

Troubled Child

I was so scared to tell them about you.
I felt so ashamed...
You were a "troubled child,"
Not "perfect" like all the rest.
Stories of children loved by everyone...
Sons and daughters with such promising futures.
Even though you were not like them,
You were my baby.
Even though you got into trouble and took drugs,
I was always by your side.
Even though you spent time in jail,
You could not have been loved more.
At times you were so frustrating
And seemed all bad,
Then you would do something wonderful,
And I knew you loved us.
I don't need to feel ashamed any more,
It didn't matter what you did or who you were.
You were my child,
And you did not deserve to die.
I love you,
Mom
Gretchen Wasson, TCF, Bethany, Oklahoma

She is Gone - By Anonymous

You can shed tears that she is gone
or you can smile because she has lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that
she'll come back or you can open your
eyes and see all she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you
can't see her or you can be full of the love
you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and
live yesterday or you can be happy for tomor-
row because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's
gone or you can cherish her memory and
let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be
empty and turn your back or you can do
what she'd want: smile, open your eyes,
love and go on.

Bereaved Parents Group

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