

The Primrose



Vol. 30, Issue 1

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Spring 2010

Dancing in the Rain

The following article was written by Julie Short, a member of the Southeastern Illinois chapter of TCF. She wrote it "in loving memory of Kyra."

The words "it is what it is" continually run through my mind. Our worlds don't often turn out as we imagined. My handsome prince didn't come and rescue me as a teen. He didn't whisk me off to a beautiful castle where he treated me like a queen. We didn't have four beautiful, healthy children or live happily ever after.

In fact, my life journey hasn't been at all like I had imagined, with the exception of one beautiful daughter, Kyra.

I was only six months into my grief when I attended The Compassionate Friends national conference in Boston. I remember grudgingly agreeing to attend a workshop titled "Another Day, Another Opportunity." I thought, *I don't want to go to that one*, because at the time, another day was just another opportunity to feel great pain and anguish. But something was pulling me to attend the session, so I went and was so grateful that I did, because it has helped me to find a new goal. One of the most memorable things the workshop presenter said was that until we are able to let go of our child's physical death, we cannot embrace their spiritual essence. It has been four years since Kyra's death, and I can now say that the farther I walk from her death, the closer I feel to her. The pain is still evident, but to feel her presence again is wonderful. I first felt it on the beach at Cape Elizabeth in Maine. I felt her spirit cry out, "I am free! Come and dance with me."

Kyra loved to dance. The country music song, "I Hope You Dance," was released before she died. I told Kyra that I dedicated it to her and gave her a plaque with the words inscribed on wood. The words in the song speak of not giving up when life becomes hard. I thought then that I had gotten it for her, when actually I think it was meant for me and other bereaved parents.

The word *dance* seems to be etched into my mind. Recently, a friend shared a quote she had come across: "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass ... It's about learning to dance in the rain."

Wow – what awesome words! The image of a storm is a good analogy in understanding our grief. Storms can come from nowhere, like a tornado, seemingly destroying everything in their path and leaving our lives in complete and utter shambles. The darkness and dreariness stay while lightning continues to flash, stabbing our hearts with pain. Thunder clamors constantly, reminding us that our children are gone. We can walk in fog for what seems like years as the sleet and frigid cold freeze us in our tracks. The wind howls, imitating our screams and wailing. The rain seems to be endless.

Others, who haven't lost their children, who are living in sunshine, cry out to us, "Come in out of the rain." They don't understand that often we're just not able to move. The storm has become our world, for however long we need or choose to live there. My own experience of grief tells me that our lives will always be stormier than they were before the hurricanes came and took what was most precious to us. But, we do have a choice. We can stay hunkered down under the false protection of denial. We can lock ourselves up in a protective shell and never come out. Or, we can learn to dance in the rain. However, each bereaved parent must decide what feels best to them.

I find myself thinking, "*It's hard to crawl, walk or breathe without her and she wants me to dance?! She must have forgotten all those times I tried and she said, "Mom you can't dance!"*" Then I realize that she's not referring to my ability when I hear, *Dance, mom, dance! Dance in the rain. Dance because you can't change what has already been done. You have the choice to sit it out or dance. Listen for the music, keep your eyes wide open, go forward, follow the music and dance. Follow me. I am not behind you. I am in front of you. I'm free and I am dancing.*

She taught me to hear the music and her song continues on. Without it, I couldn't dance. I believe if we allow our children to lead us to dance in the rain that they will eventually dance us out of the severe storms of pain and into the sunshine of peace.

And when the skies are gray because I went away Put on your dancing shoes, grab your umbrella, and dance



*The article is reprinted from the Summer 2008 issue of "We Need Not Walk Alone."
www.compassionatefriends.org Toll-free: 877-969-0010*

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

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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 - OPEN

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

**Next steering committee meeting
Thursday April 22nd
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 1st, 2010 (Monday)

7:00 “ Share our Memories”

March 20th, 2010 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

April 5, 2010 (Monday)

7:00 “ Spring Forward, Fall Back”

April 17th 2010 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

April 22nd, 2010 (Thursday)

6:00 Steering Committee Meeting

May 3rd, 2010 (Monday)

7:00 “ Extra Hugs to Moms and Grandmas?”

May 15th, 2010 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

June 7th, 2010 (Monday)

7:00 “ Extra Hugs to Dads and Grandpas”

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,

Finally spring is upon us, while the daffodils and crocuses are trying to poke their heads from beneath the cold and hardened earth, why don't we try to shake the winter doldrums from our beings. Let's look toward the warming of the earth by that big beautiful sun in the sky and possibly we too, may grab a bit of that sunshine and warm our very hearts, the same heart that was so very broken the day our child died. We deserve that, you and I, we deserve our hearts to feel again.

What a beautiful evening we had in December as we gathered for our annual candle light service. Mother Nature threatened us early in the day but we prevailed and as the candles shone brightly that night we held all the memories of our children within the safety of our hearts. A special thank you to all who were a part of the team that worked in front and behind the scenes to make it a memorable night. George and Sara were the voices that lifted us in song. Added to our program this year was a beautiful white light tree, thanks to Luann, Jean and Angela, a tree to hang angels in memory of our children. It was not only a beautiful tribute but also donations were being accepted for anyone who wished to give, in memory of their child. We are no different than any organization that is self-sufficient trying to stay afloat during these hard economic times. We raised almost two hundred dollars, which will help us continue our mission of helping families after the death of a child.

Since our last newsletter three members of our local TCF have passed away. Angela Coyle's husband Ray, Carol Konkle's husband George, who for many years was an active member of our group and original web master, and Jay Kane, wife to John, who has written several poems and articles for the Primrose. Our condolences to Angela, Carol, John and their families.

At our last steering committee meeting it was told we shall have a few changes in our committee. Michelle Simonds, who has been our events coordinator, will be moving to Syracuse with her husband Jammie and son Michael, in the spring. Michelle, Jammie and Mike worked diligently to ensure the candle lighting went off without a hitch. [we shall miss you guys] Shirley Mehal is stepping down as the newsletter mailer; she has been doing this forever. When your newsletter appears in the mailbox four times a year it's Shirley, with her husband John's help, that labels, tapes and gets them to the post office on time. Let us thank Michele and Shirley for their faith in our mission. Both positions are open but for now I will be assuming Shirley's duties. If anyone is interested in either just let me know.

TCF has two conferences this year, one is a regional to be held April 15-16 in Meadville Pa and the second is the National to be held July 2-4 in Arlington Va. We will have information on both at the meetings. If you are interested and do not attend meetings just go to the national website, all the information is there. I have had heart warming experiences and met some wonderful people at conferences

Our next meeting on the 1st of March will be our annual memory night; extra time is given so we may share with the group that special memory so dear to us. Bring that story tucked inside your mind, or that favorite toy or the photo that never leaves your wallet. No matter at what age our child died the memories are ours to keep forever and ever. We sometimes become afraid of forgetting, so as you remember, write them down or tuck them inside your heart. As we travel through March, April and May let us not forget we don't ever have to walk alone on our grief road, there is always someone close or a phone call away, take the hand that reaches out to you with the understanding, hope and friendship to go on, hold on tight and they will help you find your new normal.

May all your memories, no matter how few warm your hearts and bring peace to your lives as you continue along this road, called Grief.....

Hugs to all,
Pam
(Sean's Mom)



Chapter Member Submissions

Cindy Hutchinson submitted this essay written by her son, Paul

It was submitted and won the Richard J. Stack Memorial Scholarship

Written in memory of Paul's sister Amy

She was numb, couldn't feel anything, guilty thinking she was the cause, depressed as if all the pain had left the world, filled with nothingness.

It was a sunny morning, just a regular Friday. I awoke to my mother's anxious voice; she was terrified, trembling with fear. I crawled out of bed, confused and dazed only wearing my usual tee shirt and underwear. I don't think she ever realized what agony she put my mother through when she disappeared; it hadn't been the first time. My dad Mark scurried down our creaky staircase. Every step he took seemed like an hour, getting longer and longer each time. He's never worried, and at that moment in time he took the role of Atlas, holding the earth's weight upon his shoulders. Once again, he rushed down three more creaky stairs, opening the back door, the family car was on. The worst part is, it was dead silent... dead silent. Out of nowhere, you could hear the pattering of our family car. Barefoot they ran over our pebbly drive way. I hear the crunch, crunch, crunch of the pebbles rubbing together.

Her body was laying there in the driver's seat... motionless. The sorrow screams of my mother deafening. My father yelled for me. He just kept yelling at me "911", "911", and once again, "911!" That was the number I was told to dial if something bad had happened. The ambulance came; the screaming sirens burnt holes in my ear drums. The paramedics forced my tearful mother out of the way, only causing a deeper tear in her heart. They cautiously tugged her lifeless body from our car. Evidently she connected the exhaust to the front window... gassing herself to death. Although they tried and tried to keep her heart pounding, it never lasted. On Friday, May 29th, 1998, it was the shocking truth that she had taken her own life. I was only six years old at the time, and to this day there is no one day that passes in which I don't think about her. She was fifteen years old, a sophomore at Vestal High School and my sister. Amy, you shall forever live on in my heart.

The truth is, somehow, my family picked up the scattered pieces. In time, we became closer, realizing that in this tragedy we find a new life, one that will not be forgotten.

Through experiences like this, we learn that there is only one thing in life that matters.

Happiness is something we as human beings strive to have. For some, I suppose success can be seen as making millions of dollars, or being able to get married or have a family. All I want is happiness, that's definitely one of my main goals I will attempt to achieve through my college experiences and life to come.

I'm planning to attend Pratt MWP in Utica New York, I can only hope that my future college experiences will enhance the things that I have learned over the past four years at Vestal High School and give me a never ending desire to improve myself not only as a leader but as a human. being

Written and Submitted by Joyce Ritzler, in memory of her son, Rodney

As you hold me close in memory
Even though we are apart
My spirit will live on
There within you heart
"I am with you always"

When you lean on trusted friends
And caring hugs enfold
Within their loving arms
I'll be there to hold you
"I am with you always"

And beyond the far horizon
When we'll finally be together
Where love will be eternal
And life will last forever
"I am with you always"

Chapter Member Submissions

This letter written and submitted by Linda & Bill Mutz In memory of their daughter, Grace Ann Mutz-Wozniak

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Thanks for being there. It is a prayer of humility, courage & honor.

The Grace of God is getting us through the sudden death of our once very active 34 year old daughter. Everything I see that's alive & Beautiful reminds me of her. There was only one set of fingerprints the were hers, no one will take her place. Memories are personal, intimate, sacred, special - a gift. But her vessel, of Love and Kindness were Devine and I do experience them everywhere. The Eternal Love Light Shines Brightly forever. I pray thru me and all of you. This is how I celebrate her life daily. Her Creator's Design will always be in me & you.

This Poem was inspired by her Eulogy

Somewhere in Between

Somewhere in between the handmaiden and the "all generations shall call me blessed,"

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between the carpenter's son and the Messiah,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between the sinner and the saint,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between the seed and the fruit,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between the human and divine,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between the clay pot of ordinary water and the best wine,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between if this chalice cup can pass and Thy will be done,

There is the gift of God, His Grace.

Somewhere in between ...

Someone prayed for you from war to peace, from slavery to freedom,

From old to new someone prayed for me and you.

That is the gift of Grace that He gave you.

And he will ask, "What did you do with the gift I gave you?"



Thank you for sending in your articles and poems.
We Love to include our chapters members submissions.
Please email them to Val Ambrose at jtl7899@yahoo.com
or mail to 730 River Rd, Binghamton, NY 13901

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 Are So Alike

We're so alike, you and I.
I lost a daughter.
You lost a son.
She was eight months old.
He was thirty-seven.
She never spoke.
He called you every Sunday.
She died nine years ago.
He's been buried two months now.
I always look at babies.
You see all the young fathers.
I miss my daughter.
You miss your son.
You see, we're so alike, you and I.

By Cathy Deider, Algona, IA



Believe

Crocuses poke their heads through the
crusted snow to let us know the long,
bleak winter is ending and spring
will come again.

So, too, the long bleak winter of your
aching, breaking heart will end and spring
will come again one day.

Be patient – but believe it.
Your spring will come again

By Betty Stevens, TCF, Baltimore, MD

The following was written by Linda White on the 10 year anniversary of the death of her daughter, Lucia

“It has been 10 years since Lucia’s death and I am amazed at how my life has changed. I also have changed and learned these truths about myself.”

I am a stronger person than I every realized... In the past I would say that I didn’t want to live without my precious daughter. I loved her more than life itself; she was my heart and soul. But now, here I am, 10 years later, alive and kicking.

Time has no relevance to me... 10 days become one day, years pass and it seems like yesterday. I feel as if I am caught in a time warp, floating effortlessly between days, months, and years. Time is now distinguished as before Lucia died and after Lucia died.

My faith is stronger, more secure... None of my questions have been answered and I still do not understand why she died. However, the realization that I do not need answers to be able to accept her death now brings me peace.

People are still uncomfortable when I speak her name... Even friends and people in the community who know me and my situation look uncomfortable when I say “Lucia.” They do not want to be reminded of a painful event and secretly wish that I would never speak of her because death remains a difficult word to deal with.

I now belong to an exclusive group “parents who have buried a child”...I can easily spot other members by the look of sadness deep in their eyes...it cannot be disguised.

Grief never ends...This journey has no conclusion. I appreciate the 5 stages of grief espoused by psychologists, but hasten to add that even though you never get over losing a child, you do learn to live in a new way and carve out a different way of life for yourself

Joy is not real joy, sorrow not real sorrow...Because you put up a protective wall to avoid intense emotions, you do not let yourself really feel things anymore. This is a defense mechanism to keep you from falling into that pit that once swallowed you.

I have been held up and strengthened by my community ... People have been messengers of hope by their encouragement, understanding, and kindness. I am convinced that God uses people as vessels of love and He has revealed Himself to me in countless ways through the actions of others.

Grief is hard work...Each year around the anniversary, the birthday and the holidays, I move into the survival mode. I begin to prepare myself mentally and emotionally to relive the reality of her death. I am forgetful, lose things, break things, cry for no apparent reason, and experience anxiety – my heart races and my mouth is dry. Grief is not just an intense emotion, it remains a physical reaction.

Finally, gratitude is the key...I can honestly say that I am thankful that I was able to experience the love of a precious daughter. My life is richer because of her life AND death. My mission in life now is to honor her legacy by reaching out to others in need, working to make my community a better place, and searching for the good in every person and situation I encounter.





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“Those of us who have worked through our grief— and found there is a future—
are the ones who must meet others in the valley of darkness and bring them to the light.”

Rev. Simon Stephens
Founder TCF



A Butterfly ~ by Frances Conner Strasburg, VA

Some say a butterfly is a member of the insect world... I say that a butterfly's story has yet been untold... For I believe a little butterfly is a lovely gift from Heaven above... A beautiful symbol of our children's spirit coming to earth, reminding us of their never ending love.

Fingerprints

~By Lila Milligan, a bereaved parent

Grieving is like a fingerprint, an impression on the skin
No two people are alike or grieve the same within.
Some express their sorrow through flowers, tears, or song
It can be a unique approach; there is no right or wrong.
Grieving has no time frame, symptoms there are many
It could take days or months before someone feels any.
Some may like their privacy, while others need to share
Some may join a counseling group, some find peace in prayer.
Some may feel more sensitive for a lot of different reasons
Some will be affected by holidays and changing seasons
So if there is a special date, which causes extra sorrow
Pamper what is felt inside and put it off until tomorrow.
Grieving is a process that exhausts the mind and soul
It should be done in baby steps a very gentle goal
Grieving is a fingerprint, someone special's touched your heart
Your memories are your fingerprints to express while you're apart.



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 ...



“Good Memories are the perennials that bloom again after the hard winter of grief begins to yield to hope.”

Sascha Wagner TCF, Des Moines, IA

**** 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.

In The Silence

In the silence Mom you hear me,
In the silence I am here.
In the silence you can feel me
and in the silence it is clear.
That my spirit hasn't left you,
I am just a thought away.
You can see me in the shadows,
anytime you look my way.
Look for me in the sunshine,
and in the stars at night.
In the wind, trees and flowers,
everything that is in sight.
Talk to me, say my name
and know that I'm still here.
In my death I have a new life
and one day it will be clear.
So talk to me and look for me,
in everything you do.
For I haven't gone so far away,
I'm really right next to you.

By Joy Curnutt - St. Clair County, IL



My Angel

You are my angel in heaven,
Watching over me.
You shine a light on my path,
So that I can see.
You are my angel of happiness
that always makes me smile.
You are my angel of strength,
so that I can walk the miles.
You are my angel of hope
when things are going bad.
You are my angel of comfort
when my heart is feeling sad.
You are my angel in Heaven,
Who someday I will see.
You are my angel in Heaven,
keep watching over me.

Tonya Lee Brown – Sugar Creek, MO

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Bereaved Parents Group

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