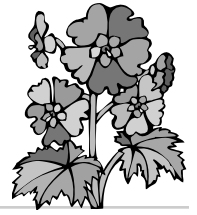


The Primrose



Vol. 34, Issue 1

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Spring 2014



LIVING IN A FANTASY

Fay Harden

I took my granddaughter shopping today. It was a special outing for just the two of us. We went to the toy department of a large department store. We were in luck, for once there was no one there! No other shoppers and the sales lady had stepped out.

I lifted my fifteen month old darling out of her stroller and set it aside. Then I began to slowly walk her through the aisles and show her the toys. After a while I let go of her hand and said, "You may look, my Sweet, go find a special toy for Grandma to buy for you."

She stood for a minute and then began to pick up the toys that attracted her. I just followed her around and watched. She picked up things here and there, a doll was hugged, a toy truck was pushed across the floor. Around the displays she went in silent wonder, lifting and looking and dropping – mainly on the floor. She shook a box, blowing on a whistle made her laugh, and she tried to work a top until a colorful pull-toy was noticed, she dashed over to it and gave it a few turns around the store then spied the shelves above.

She stood and thought a few seconds and then shoved some things over and climbed up on the lower shelf. I watched with pride at her ingenuity and daring as she snared the treasures from the higher shelf and tried them out. A tall wire basket of brightly colored balls caught her eye and she went over, stood on tiptoe but could not reach the balls inside. Without a backward look to me for help she simply caught hold of the top and turned the basket over, spilling its rainbow of colors across the floor. She picked up a red one and tossed it. What fun we were having, both in wonderlands of our own.

Too soon the sales lady returned only to stop just inside the door and laugh at the shambles we'd made of her formerly neat displays. What a sight we must have been trundling around knee deep in toys. As the nice lady and I picked up and sorted out the mess, Grandma's little angel dragged a teddy bear around by one ear.

We purchased Ted the Bear and the toys whose boxes were too badly mangled, for toddlers sometimes sit down quickly, and with our bags secured to the back of M'Lady's carriage, filled with satisfactions, we strolled away from my fantasy. A fantasy much like those of other people like me.

People whose children die too soon. People whose grandchildren won't be born. People who know what they are missing. People who are lonely.

My granddaughter is only a fantasy. She is the dark-haired, button-eyed daughter my son won't have. She's one of the memories I'll have to miss.

And if this makes you cry, it does me too.



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 Cunningham

Outreach - Luann Ford , Elaine Sahre

Carol Selby & Hank Nanni

Library - Sherry Bailey

Hospitality – Jean Scolaro

Treasurer – Val Ambrose

Newsletter Editor – Val Ambrose

Website Master - Marv Conover

Secretary - Angela Carro

Programs/Events - **OPEN**

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

**Please consider joining our steering
committee**

Monday March 20th

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 3rd, 2014 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Memory Night”

March 15th, 2014 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

March 20th, 2014 (Thursday)

5:30 Steering Committee Meeting

April 7th, 2014 (Monday)

7:00 PM “What is Normal ”

April 19th, 2014 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

May 5th, 2014 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Mothers Day Coming”

May 17th, 2014 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

Jun 2nd, 2014 (Monday)

7:00 PM “We Love our 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.**

KALEIDOSCOPE

He shattered his life into a thousand pieces, casting a kaleidoscope of light and shadows.
To you he may have seemed broken, but to me he was beautiful.
I remember...

The brightest blue, the laughing eyes of a child at play.
Charcoal gray, the suit of a young boy, handsome and full of dreams.
Ivory white, smooth keys beneath the talented hands of a youth, searching for a song.
Muddled orange, the bouncing ball passed fleetingly from hand to hand in a teenager's game.
Olive drab, the uniform of a young man seeking meaning, seeking himself.
Yellow, the speeding car that symbolized the beginning, the end, freedom and capture.
Dull red, day in and day out, the shirt of a man paying a price of wasted days.
Shadow black, a place deep within.
A man too young to die was lost where no loved one could reach to shine the light.
Empty, the world without him in it.
For a while it seemed that life had lost all color.
Now, though, when it seems my world is filled with shadow black,
I will think of a clear and bright blue,
and I will try to remember a child's laughter.

Stephanie Rice, Robert's sister TCF NE CT Chapter

Now I Know What Forever Really Means

Linda McGrath - TCF Atlanta Sharing

Today will be 5 years since Paul's accident. He would have been 25 years old. I feel I have come a long way in these five years. The early days it took all the strength I had to get up out of bed in the morning and go to work, when all I wanted to do was pull the covers over my head, go back to sleep and never wake up again. I cried on my way to work and again on my way home. I still don't wear mascara because I never know when some thought or song or whatever may start the tears anew. I think it took me at least a year before I even cared what I wore to work or how my hair looked and even now it doesn't really matter. Those things are not important anymore. I could hardly function at work. I kept forgetting to do things or would start something and forget to finish it. I was constantly writing myself notes and sometimes even that didn't help! Thank goodness my boss was very understanding. She would gently remind me if I had done this or that yet. Numerous times at home I had put the milk in the cupboard and the cereal or sugar in the refrigerator. It took a long time to begin to function semi-normally again.

There is a line in a Cindy Bullen's song that says something like "now I know what forever really means". It was about 2-1/2 years after Paul's death when I heard that song and I think that was when I realized it was forever. Up until then I found myself still "looking" for Paul. I would see him in a young man passing by or in someone dressed in a hat and shirt similar to his or a truck like his passing by and I would find myself straining to see if it was Paul. I still feel as though someone punched me in the stomach when I see a red Chevy truck. I rarely drive by the accident scene. It's not a road we normally have to go on. I avoid it if at all possible; it just starts the thinking process over and over and over. It takes me a couple of days to readjust. Remembering those early days has made me realize how very far I have come in these past 5 years. I have learned to live with this new normal. I don't like it, I will never like it, but I will do it "now until then" (which is another Cindy Bullens song).

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hello Everyone,

BRRRR!!! Let's hope that word will be banished from our vocabulary at least for the next several months. We have endured one of the coldest, darkest winters on record, but with the hope of a spring thaw our spirits should be lifted and our bodies warmed. March brings us rebirth and renewal as the earth begins to soften and new growth is evident with budding trees and daffodils sprouting. Let us grab hold of that rebirth and renew the life that has gone dormant through the winter months. In the winter, especially this one we found ourselves rushing home from work, getting into that cozy old sweater and not wanting to go outside till morning. For others not working you probably found several excuses to stay inside each day. Our minds wander to places of sadness and loneliness after our child dies, but during those dark, winter months those feelings seem to multiply. It's not so easy to grab hold of that rebirth when we are reeling in grief; the winter enforces our sadness with the darkness of the day. So my friends welcome March and what it has to offer, breath in spring, feel hope...

Our candle lighting in December was a beautiful evening spent with friends and family as we lit candles in memory of our children gone too soon. I always marvel at the love that I feel in the sanctuary that night. What a beautiful service it was; a night of music (Thanks George and Donal), readings, poems and most of all each child's name read aloud, in the flickering light of the candles. We crave for others to say our child's name, to remember them out loud. It makes them real, still here with us. As the fellowship hall filled we renewed friendships, talked of our children and indulged in great food. The angel garland, made from past angel trees, was hung around the room, embracing us. Several parents added new angels this year to the tree, writing messages to their child and in turn supporting our chapter. The faces of our children overflowed the photo table, giving pride to all that placed them there. A special thank you to our "cast" and the untiring kitchen crew, you are the best. Our next event will be this summer when we lift off balloons in our children's memory, Monday, July 14th.

My surviving son, Aaron will be married this spring and with that brings all kinds of mixed emotion. I have been scrolling the internet for the perfect mother/son dance song. As I play each song I think of Aaron and me dancing and then my mind travels to Sean and that dance that never happened. I have struggled trying to find a song not so emotional but then one deserving of Aaron and his day. I have resigned myself to the fact the tears will flow for my happiness as my Aaron marries and my sadness of Sean's absence in his little brothers' big day. Just one more event to show that our lives are changed forever after the death of our child, reminding us of our vulnerability and that life sometimes is just not fair. Dwight D. Eisenhower said it best, "There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child. Things never get back to where they were." That's where the hopefulness of the spring rebirth and renewal enters and we grab hold of it, letting it take us through the rest of the dark winter days as the bright light of spring peaks around the corner of our lives. May you continue to never walk alone as you strive to find peace and hope to carry you through your darkest days. Take the hand of someone near and walk with them along this road called grief, let them lessen your burden, your pain. It may be just a kind word, a look, a hug, sometimes that's all we need.

Take care my friends.....

Hugs,
Pam Kroft
(Sean's Mom)



MY ANGEL



Deep in the
woods a meadow lies
this is the
place where sorrow hides

In this clearing
there is a pool
filled with
tears I've cried for you

And from this
pool springs forth a stream
that leads me to
the land of dreams

This is the
place I long to be
The place where
you can be with me

Thou I know this
cannot be
I also know
you'll wait for me

And one day when
my time has come
I'll find you
smiling in the sun

And together
joyfully we'll run
through meadows
made of memories,
of love, of hope,
and happy things

Until then I
shall carry on
With you as my angel
to lean upon

by Tracy Smith TCF Binghamton
in memory of her niece Madison

WHEN GRIEF IS NEW...I NEED:

I need to talk about my loss.
I may often need to tell you what happened or
to ask you why it happened.
Each time I discuss my loss, I am helping myself
face the reality of the death of my loved one.
I need to know that you care about me.
I need to feel your touch, your hugs.
I need you just to be with me
and I need to know you believe in me and
in my ability to get through my grief in my own way,
and in my own time.
Please don't judge me now or
think that I'm behaving strangely.
Remember I am grieving, I may even be in shock.
I may feel afraid.
I may feel deep rage.
I may even feel guilty.
But above all, I hurt.
I'm experiencing a pain unlike any I've felt before.
Don't worry if you think I'm getting better and
then suddenly I seem to slip backward.
Grief makes me behave this way at times.
And please don't tell me you know how I feel.
Or that it's time to get on with my life,
I'm probably saying this to myself.
What I need now is time to grieve and recover.
Most of all, thank you for being my friend.
Thank you for your patience.
Thank you for caring.
Thank you for helping, for understanding.
Thank you for praying for me.
And remember, in the days or years ahead,
after your loss when you need me,
as I have needed you – I will understand and then
I will come and be with you.

Barbara Hills Les Strang,
from *After Loss, A Recovery Companion*
for Those Who are Grieving

You Are Not Alone

We know the heartache that you bear
We've felt the pain,
because we've been there.
We share a bond of infinite sorrow,
A hope for peace,
strength for tomorrow.
A time will come when you'll seek relief,
Solace and comfort
to ease your grief.
We welcome you – we will be there.
We understand; we've much to share.
TCF, Scranton, PA

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.

Intentionally Left Blank for Online version

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED *continued*

Special Days

Spring comes and with it the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead. For those who are still going through all of the "firsts" without their child, we want to share with you some of the ways parents have coped and managed. Mother's Day... Father's Day... graduation... vacations - these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories of young lives cut short. You can make these special days easier with some planning and with encouragement from those who have already been there.

Whichever day lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your child. Share thoughts and suggestions about the possibilities: planting a tree, starting a garden, donating a book, lighting a candle, putting flowers on the altar, or taking that long talked of vacation. Remember, tears and moments of sadness are expressions of love.

Also remember:

1. Take one day at a time.
2. Keep things simple.
3. Change your routine from past years.
4. Make plans to keep busy.
5. Give your surviving children some space - they not only feel your sadness, but they also have their own feelings to deal with.
6. Remember that the anticipation is often worse than the day itself.

--Fox Valley, IL TCF Newsletter

Helping Yourself by Helping Others

Anne Byrnes, MS, CT

"Is it ever over?" I asked myself. It's been 22 years since "forever" began. "Forever" being when six people came into my home to inform my husband and me that our 17-year-old son, Jimmy, was dead; killed in an alcohol-related car crash. Just like that! In the blink of an eye, our lives were changed forever. But you know about that, don't you; for you lost a child to death also. Know that my heart grieves for you too.

Being forced into a journey never anticipated, I realized I needed the support and encouragement of people who could understand the depth of my pain. I also needed to borrow their courage, for I didn't want to, nor did I think I could live the rest of my life without Jimmy.

After six months, my husband, my priest, and I formed a self-help support group for grieving parents. It grew and I evolved with it. In order to be taken seriously by professionals in the helping fields, I went to undergrad and grad school. My degrees are in human services and counseling.

My reputation as a wounded healer grew, and I was asked to run a weekly support group for The Bereavement Center of Westchester. Their dedication to grieving people offers a warm light for the darkness of the soul. Their programs benefit children and adults who have experienced grief. They have a school outreach program and offer individual bereavement counseling as well.

My painful journey also affected my spiritual dimension. I questioned all my beliefs about God and an afterlife. I felt abandoned by God; I was angry and felt like I was broken in pieces. Looking back, I can see how I wasn't abandoned. In fact, to help me, God sent many people who filtered in and out of my life at that time.

Three years after Jimmy died, I hit bottom both spiritually and emotionally. I think for the whole first year I was numb and the second year I began to "defrost" and get in touch with my anger. Luckily-or as I think of it now, God placed a gift in front of me in the form of a wonderful Capuchin priest and counselor. Father Ray allowed and encouraged me to express all my negative thoughts and feelings about God, life, and anyone who could not understand the depth of my pain and the profound grieving process I was experiencing.

There were so many people who couldn't understand the length of time it takes a grieving parent to go through the process. From my personal and professional experience, I would say it takes anywhere from seven to nine years before a bereaved parent can say, "OK, I know how to handle the bad days now, and I can live with this pain." This is not to say that a grieving parent is in constant emotional pain for all those years.

A healthy response to grief will initially include intense pain, which will eventually diminish over the years. It will never go away completely, but it will diminish. I promise. Birthdays, holidays, and the yearly anniversary of the death will always be a reminder of the loss and will rekindle sadness and a sense of longing for what could have been; what should have been.

One of the things that helped me, was for me to help others. Somehow, my emptiness helped to fill up their emptiness and their emptiness filled up mine. That wonderful priest and I developed a spiritual retreat for bereaved parents. I've heard it said that grief shared is grief diminished, and the weekend spent at the retreat helped do that for many people over the years.

During the retreats, we would do "The Angel's Walk." It was a very healing visualization and meditation on what happened at the moment of death and how the angels carried the child into the arms of a loving God. The evaluations received afterward spoke to how consoling and healing that experience was.

Looking back, I can see I reached out in many different ways to help myself. If I read about a child who died, I wrote a note to the parents. I shared with them that there were many other bereaved parents who knew what they were going through and would keep them in their thoughts and prayers. I also made myself available to speak with anyone who needed encouragement and support. I even wrote a book called, *Healing Broken Hearts: A Book of Signs*. It is a collection of letters from bereaved parents who received signs from God and/or their deceased children, as well as chapters written by me and other professionals in the field. Writing was very cathartic for me.

If I could leave you with a thought, it would be this: *You will help yourself by helping others*. That was the lesson I learned from my painful journey. We are all here to help one another. Try it. ♥

The Robin's Song



It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back towards the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.

Before my daughter Lori died in the summer of 1991, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd mis-named its larger, boring, American cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was cheep!

Then one spring day in the year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! . . . Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so, while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our "boring" American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered the true harbinger of spring, singing "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily."

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily." I thought to myself, "Cheerily" . . . No, that isn't what I hear." We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said "Cheerio!" to one another when we meant, "Goodbye" or "See you later!" There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say "hello!"

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that first spring song, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

From *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child*
By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry, TCF Marin & San Francisco, CA



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:

Intentionally Left Blank for Online version

SEASONS OF THE HEART

Your special days are unchanging
Seasons of the heart I celebrate.
Your birth, forever spring,
Tender memories relate,
New and green, a dream
From which too soon I awake.
The summer of your life was bright
Laughter needed no reason,
Seemingly endless days of sharing.
Sixteen summers. Short in season.
Your death brought winter without warning,
What sense in all this can be found?
Summer dreams replaced with mourning.
Where is hope now?
But the heart knows what
The mind cannot accept
That when all is lost,
It is love that is left.
Love knows no barriers
Time or distance recognize.
Love does not diminish,
But is constant in our lives.
And like a summer breeze
Uplifts and inspires us
With healing memories.



~Peggy Walls, For son Eddie
(2/18/745 — 5/30/90)

Another Choice

"I don't know how you do it.
I could not have done the same."
These sometimes are the words
I hear as I say my daughter's name.
"I had no other choices,"
is often my reply.
I must learn to live without her,
or shrivel up and die.
It's way down on the inside,
where one can never see;
Way deep within
is the missing part of me.
It's when you do not see me,
that I cry my silent tear,
or feel the empty hurt inside,
because she is not here.
I would choose it to be different,
I would choose to feel no pain.
I would choose to only smile,
as I say my daughter's name.
So if you wonder how I do it,
I will quietly raise my voice.
"I wouldn't have done it this way
if I had had another choice."

**** 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 _____

(if new)

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 are mentioned in the Love gift section of the newsletter.



A Miracle in May

Paint me a picture of love,
A miracle in May,
With tender warm colors
Of peach-pink sunsets
Reaching into soft twilight haze.
Begin with the freshness
Of a dew-touched morning,
And color it with a rainbow
after a summer's rain.
Paint me a picture of love,
A miracle in May—
Of violet-green meadows
And daisies growing wild—
A picnic with you, a reason to smile.
Paint me a picture of love,
And you'll paint me a picture of you.

Debbie Dickinson TCF, Naperville, IL

I Am Spring

I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.
I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth – life is change.
I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.

By Carol Clum



The Compassionate Friends

Broome County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

1250 Front St., PMB 147
Binghamton, NY 13901-1043
(Address Service requested)

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PERMIT # 52
ENDICOTT NY