

The Primrose



Vol. 34, Issue 4

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Winter 2014



Resolutions for A Bereaved Parent:

- ♥ I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and I will not let others put a timetable on my grief.
- ♥ I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.
- ♥ I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now".
- ♥ I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.
- ♥ I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.
- ♥ I will not blame myself for my child's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.
- ♥ I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.
- ♥ I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and I won't feel compelled to explain this communication to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.
- ♥ I will try to eat, sleep and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.
- ♥ I will know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.
- ♥ I know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.
- ♥ I will let myself heal and not feel guilty about feeling better.
- ♥ I will remind myself that the grief process is circuitous—that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.
- ♥ I will try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit. I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.



by Nancy Mower, TCF Hawaii

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

Assistant Chapter Leader - Kim Tholen

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 - Cindy Hutchinson

If there is a task you'd like to help us with
please let us know.
Contact Pam Kroft

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.)

December 1st, 2014 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Celebrations are Challenging”

December 14th, 2014 (Sunday)

6:00 PM “Candle Light Service”

December 20th, 2014 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

January 5th, 2015 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Reflecting on the New Year”

January 17th, 2015 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

February 2nd, 2015 (Monday)

7:00 PM “The Masks we Wear”

February 21st, 2015 (Saturday)

10:00AM OPEN Sharing

March 2nd, 2015 (Monday)

7:00 PM “Memory Night”

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 DEAD OF WINTER

I went to the cemetery with my coffee and steaming soup
to have lunch and discuss the first snow
with my daughter,
but I couldn't find
her stone.

I fell to my hands and knees, like that August day
when I sent the graveyard man away
so I could bury the box
of ashes with my own
hands.

I groped in the early wet snow, numbing my gloveless
hands, feeling for the flat stone hidden
within a layer of leaves
that were still intact,
even crisp.

I found the stone and swept it with my arm, but snow packed
into her name, claimed the lotus blossoms, filled
the pond, and hid the tree swallow's
flight in a formless,
white sky.

It never occurred to me that the first snow, settling
over the forgotten toys, garden tools
and unraked leaves,
would also cover Laura's
grave.

It seems I must also relinquish her stone
and try to believe
in a future sun with the power to melt the veil.
But for now, her stone is gone,
buried in a season too long,
and too cold.

~Sue Crouse
In memory of Laura

**And if I go while you're still
here....**

And if I go
while you're still here...
Know that I still live on
vibrating to a different measure
behind a thin veil
you cannot see through.

You will not see me
so you must have faith.
I await the time when
we can soar together again,
both aware of each other.

Until then,
live your life to the fullest.
And when you need me,
Just whisper my name
in your heart,
I will be there.

Colleen Hitchcock



"I had to accept the reality that I
would never be the same person,
that some part of my heart, per-
haps the best part, had been cut
out and buried with my sons.
What was left? Now there was a
question worth contemplating."
—Gordon Livingston, MD

Chanukah

At this season of life, we remember the light you brought into our lives:

The light of your laughter
The light of your wit and intelligence
The light of your love

May the time not be distant when the memory of these lights
will illumine our hearts and minds
and eradicate the darkness therein.

Stephanie Hesse, TCF Rockland County, NY



A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hello TCF Friends,

December often can be a no-no word in the language of the bereaved as it represents the end of a year which we have survived without our beloved child and it means the holidays have arrived. I remember sitting my first New Year's Eve in a rocking chair; rocking, remembering, crying, rocking, remembering and crying. Still at a place where I continued to ask the question "Why?" wishing Sean would return if only for a moment. In our early years the celebrations of family and friends can be overwhelming, we can't seem to get through a day without crying and missing our child. I continue to reiterate how important it is to take care of ourselves and to only do what you feel is possible on the day, any day. Those around us want everything to be as it was and truly so do we, but our loss has changed our world and life will never be as it was, it will be different. We must be our own advocate so take charge and share with family and friends your needs during this month of December and on into January and everyday thereafter. As those days and months turn into years we will settle into our new life surrounded by all our family and friends who will have appreciated our candidness and honesty on what we could and could not do during our early years after our child's death.

Next I need to remind you of a task that has been in the newsletter the past few issues, one of our daughters, Brianna Bailey has offered to put together a collage of photos of our children for the candlelight service held on Sunday, December 14th. Brianna Bailey will put the photos of our children on a DVD and we will display it during our fellowship following our service. This project will take some time so I encourage you to either email Brianna at Briannabailey6@aol.com or hard copy her a photo in the mail at 34 Sturtevant Street, Johnson City, New York, 13790, don't forget to make a copy of the precious photo. We will try to have the hard copies at the event if you wish to have the photo back. Also include your child's name as Brianna will add it to your child's photo. I ask that if you have not sent the photo please do so soon as I don't want anyone to not have their child's photo on the DVD. Brianna does this in memory of her dad, Ryan Bailey. Let's make this project a success for Brianna. I am proud of her for wanting to do something so special for us.

In a few short weeks, Sunday, December 14th at 6:00 p.m. we shall gather at the church to celebrate the lives of our children through song, poems and readings. The highlight of the evening for myself is when the lights are being lowered and the candles being lit and each and every name being read with reverence and love. I shall never tire of hearing Sean's name and after many years without him I have found peace and continue to embrace the hope that I wish for you during this holiday season. The night will continue with friends and family gathering in the fellowship hall for a potluck dinner. We ask that you bring a dish to pass if you are having a good day...Bring a photo or memento also as there will be a special table to share with our TCF family. If by chance the weather decides to be ornery our website will have any cancellation. As we near the date a reminder postcard will arrive in your mailbox. A few years ago we started an angel tree at our candle lighting, giving us the opportunity to write a message to our child. The angels from year to year have been made into garland which we hang around the fellowship hall, come, write a message, hang it on the tree and next year your child's angel becomes a piece of the garland. If possible we ask for a small donation as we continue our mission to making sure that no parent, grandparent or sibling must walk alone during their early years of bereavement.

A few days ago we had our biggest feast of the year, Thanksgiving, what better time but now to send thanks to some very important people. I wish to thank our steering committee for their continued support and faith in our never ending TCF mission, as each one has devoted time and money to our cause to assist families during their time of sadness and pain following their child's death. I wish to thank all the new families that have joined us this year as I know it's never easy to walk through our TCF doors and sit and share the lives of your children. I wish to thank the congregation of Nimmonsburg Methodist Church for giving us a home where we are safe to come and share. Also they have opened up the entire church to us during our candle lighting and other functions during the year. I wish to thank Steve McKeown for making our new badge board and badges taking over for our beloved Mike Rushanski who left us for heaven this year to join his beloved daughter, Tanya. I wish to thank Jim and Connie Pratt for sending me so many beautiful and inspirational sayings and

Continued ...

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER continued

words of hope to share with our TCF family. I wish to thank you our members for perusing this newsletter that Val Ambrose [thanks Val] has so unselfishly put together for our us. As you read the pages I pray you will find a glimmer of hope and peace to make your grief a little less. I also wish to thank our entire TCF family for thinking of me during the month of October....

A special reminder for our members, one of our families the Pratt's will be traveling to the Rose Parade this year where their son Jonathan's photo will adorn the Donate Life float during the parade. Many of our families have donated organs of their beloved children so others have the chance to continue living a healthy and productive life. I encourage all to watch, what an honor for Jim and Connie.....

In the next few months we may be challenged with Mother Nature and if there is a state of emergency our meeting will be cancelled.

As I close I wish to offer my understanding and friendship to all struggling to hold on to some sense of normalcy during this very unnatural time of our lives. Our children will always live within us and we shall continue to find ways to make their short lives have greater meaning to us and others. As I reach for your hand take hold....

Hope to all,
Pam Kroft
(Sean's Mom)

As the Holidays Approach

When the holidays are fast approaching, we who are bereaved always have mixed emotions about having a nice holiday when our child or loved one is no longer with us. We wonder if we will ever be as happy and if we can ever again celebrate the holidays or any meaningful family occasion, especially the first birthday, first Thanksgiving, or first Christmas since our loss. We try to look ahead to how we are going to feel when the time arrives, but it is usually not as hard as we had anticipated. Still, the occasion may not be as enjoyable as we'd like it to be or as we remember it from the past.

I would like to offer a few ideas for what we can do to make our holidays a little better. Consider buying gifts for less fortunate children, adopting a child/family at Christmas time, or inviting a lonely person to share your holiday meal. Make your child's favorite foods and discuss your loved one as you share the meal. Some people like to volunteer to serve holiday dinners for the homeless. Some bereaved parents want to visit familiar places their child loved to go, while others want to travel where their child had never been.

Several of our Compassionate Friends members put a small Christmas tree at the cemetery and decorate the graves with Christmas flowers and/or a grave blanket. Making a grave blanket is very fulfilling; we did that for 10 years after our daughter Teresa died. Attending a candle light program is a wonderful way to honor your child or loved one.

These suggestions are things we feel we can still do for our child, but they are not reserved for bereaved parents only. All of them can be done for any member of a family or a friend who has died. After someone dies we must keep going and doing things that lift us up. We can't always try to please people who feel we should act in a certain manner.

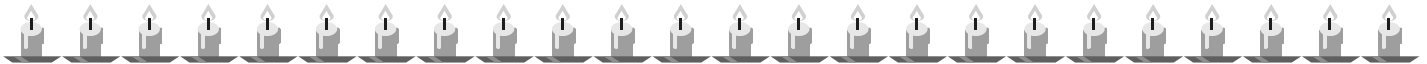
Jackie Wesley
TCF, East Central Indiana and Miami-Whitewater Chapters

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.

Removed for online version

Removed for online version



Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery ~ TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Christmas Without My Child

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.

In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue—a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent's tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it. The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heart-breaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings.

We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable. We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions. Perhaps not.

Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible. We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations.

By “dropping out” we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer.

The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures. A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to “go with the flow” of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else.

One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality. We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.



Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Smile

By definition, grief is deep sorrow
especially caused by someone's death
To me, grief is a lifelong suffering
that can slowly deplete but never goes away,
a pain that is so strong, yet so beautiful,
as our love for them shines
through the broken parts
It's every emotion you can think of,
felt for the rest of your days on this earth
It hurts and it hurts
But remember, it could be worse
You ask how this is when you feel such remorse
Well, you could look back and
not feel grateful about one memory
They say when you grieve so much for someone,
it means you had true happiness in your life
So grief is bittersweet
And nothing I say will make it all okay
I know it's easier to wallow in the pain
than keep it small and contained,
But we talk with others who share our pain
and are in that club we never wanted to join
I know sometimes it's easier to destroy ourselves
than it is to heal ourselves
But when you start to feel the guilt
And when your world starts to tilt
As hard as it may be, think of a good memory
It may make you cry, it may make you ask why,
it may make that heaviness on your chest feel
heavier
But remember to breathe and remember to smile
Your loved one watches you from above,
Feeling your pain and your unconditional love
But we owe it to them to not always be so sad
We owe it to them to look back
on positive memories we had
But every so often, subside the tears,
and once in a while,
look up, and give them a smile

~ By Chelsey McHale

Your heart will mend but it will....
Be a different heart
Wearing a deep and lasting scar
Be a more compassionate heart
Know life in a different way
Understand the eternity of Love.
Nancy Green—TCF Livonia, MI

Holding Hands

No one held my hand as I held yours. My tears
formed silently in solitude, flowing openly only when
you were asleep. We sat alone and counted down
your life.

Neither your love nor mine could save you. I could
offer only my arms full of love as I held your frail
body, my sweet child.

Others sent candies and pretty flowers but you could
no longer swallow the yummy treats. Our love tried
so hard to hold you to this earth.

As we clasped hands, we sadly walked together. We
ventured down that long tunnel of light.

I went as long as it took for you to adjust. And when
you felt safe in the glorious light, you then released
my rigid grip and let me go back.

Leaving me with only your heart in my empty hand.



Mary Jane Cronin
Bereavement Magazine June 1999

THE WOUNDED HEART

Children have preceded their parents in death for
eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the
last, to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for
now...right now, it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly
wounded and OUR HEARTS are in need of mend-
ing.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and
lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sad-
ness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of
tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quiet-
ness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the
turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the
depth of its agony, will be an abscess to swell and
undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, sup-
pressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only
the bearer will know when his/her heart has healed.



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:

Removed for online version

JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

November, December and it's almost time to take the "January pill." After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas is not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions." You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You may find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can — you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth B. Estes –TCF Augusta, GA- In Memory of Tricia



It takes only you and one candle to
join hearts with the world.....
"that their light may always shine"



Love Gift Form

*Please consider making a Love Gift to support the Compassionate Friends today.
Your gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings,
meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved.*

The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

Mail donations to: **Valerie Ambrose 730 River Rd. Binghamton, NY 13901**

Make checks payable to: ***The Compassionate Friends Broome***

Contributor _____

Address _____ Please check
If new

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Please designate which of the following your gift should be used for (you may choose more than one)

Newsletter \$ _____ Postage \$ _____ Library \$ _____ Supplies \$ _____ Generic \$ _____

ALL donations are mentioned in the Love gift section of the newsletter.

Your expiration date is shown in the 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.

Relationships Do Change

Does it seem to you as if relationships with your family and friends have changed since the death of your child or sibling? You are not alone. In her book *When the Bough Breaks*, Judith Bernstein selects these expressive quotations from other writers' works to introduce the chapters on "Family Relationships" and "Social Relationships," respectively:

Death of a child member becomes an important identifying piece of information about the family. It is woven into its history and into the everyday operation of members' lives. The child who has died continues to be a family member after death. Parents are forever parents of a dead child as well as of the surviving children. The dead child lives in memory. The family grieves for him and remembers him with little comfort and support from the society around them.

— Joan H. Arnold & Penelope B. Gemma *A Child Dies: A Portrait of Family Grief*

When people outside the immediate family are encountered who do not allow expressions of emotions and thoughts about de-ceased children, it creates a resentment that is difficult to control. Subsequently, the time comes when parents begin to separate themselves from insensitive and uncaring people in their environments who insist on keeping channels of communication closed.

Many times a wedge is driven between those suffering the loss and very dear and close friends. We can refer to this as a "wedge of ignorance"— ignorance about the great importance of open communication.

— Ronald J. Knapp *Beyond Endurance*



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



*Your expiration date is shown in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label.
Please let me know by this date if you wish to continue receiving the Primrose.*