



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

July 2005

Upcoming Meetings

July 27, 2005
August 24, 2005
September 28, 2005
October 26, 2005

Check us out on the web @

www.tcfsiouxcity.org

Meeting Place and Time...

The Sioux City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the fourth Wednesday Jan.-Oct., third Wednesday Nov. & Dec. at **Mercy Medical Center** in the Leiter room on 1st floor off the parking ramp on 5th street at **7:00 p.m.**

This Newsletter format is not the same that is mailed/emailed out. Some items have been removed to protect the privacy of our compassionate friends...

If you would like to receive the full version, please send an email request to:

newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. There is no religious affiliation. No individual membership fees or dues are charged, and all bereaved family members are welcome.

Sioux City Chapter

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Gone From My Sight

By Henry Van Dyke

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!"

Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying.



Thank you to **Mercy Medical Center**
for graciously printing our newsletters and providing us a meeting place.

Remembering our July Children...

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED

We all know how difficult those "Special Days" can be – birthdays and death anniversary days. Please remember parents on their special days and let them know that they are not alone, someone cares about their pain and their grief. *It means so much to be remembered.*

"When a person is born, we celebrate; when they marry, we jubilate; but when they die, we act as if nothing has happened."

Margaret Mead

Love Gifts

A Love Gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends for the purpose of running the Sioux City Chapter. It is usually given in memory of a child who died, however may also be from individuals who want to honor a friend or relative. It may be in thanksgiving that their children are alive and well, or simply a gift of support for the work of TCF. Others in the community make contributions because they want to help us with the newsletter, meeting costs, or maintaining a good lending library. The simple truth is that without your support, there would be little possibility for this group to exist. All gifts are welcome and truly appreciated. **Time is also a wonderful gift, and there are many jobs that must be done, and volunteers are always needed.**

Thank you for the love gifts received this month!

**Thank
You
for the
love gifts
in memory
and
celebration
of our
children...**

Sioux City Chapter Love Gift Form

Parent(s) Name _____
Child's Name _____
Address _____ City _____
State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
Birthdate(s) _____ Heaven date(s) _____
Tax-deductible donations that pay for the newsletter costs and other chapter expenses are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in the newsletter **unless you request that the gift not be published.** You may make your donation in memory of your loved one and include a message.
Love Gift \$ _____ (Any Donation Amount) Please make check to: The Compassionate Friends
In Memory of _____
On the occasion of _____
Message _____

To receive mailing address to send love gift, please contact:
newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Please complete and email to Newsletter editor at newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Name(s) _____ Email Address: _____

Address: _____ City, State & Zip _____

I would like to receive the newsletter by _____ Mail _____ Email _____

If you would like the birth and heaven dates included in the newsletter, please include your child's name and dates.

Comments: _____

Pressed Against The Pane

By *Rosalie Ritzema*, James Klaver's aunt

I stood inside and watched your pain,
My face pressed to the glass,
Wanting to come and offer help
Or pray at holy mass.

I stood and prayed and shouted "No!"
The words that you must cry
Each time you lay your head to rest,
Or open up your eyes.

I've reached out in the ways we know,
Our culture's protocol,
Yet flowers, cards, and sympathies
Can't touch your grief at all.

Can't touch the place that's only known
By those who've walked the path,
By those whose joy and laughter,
Was bathed in sorrow's bath.

And even those who seemingly
Have journeyed down that road,
Can't know the person that YOU miss,
Can't weigh the weight you hold.

Can't wear the jersey that you wear,
Would NEVER say "I know,"
The feelings you must have inside,
The hurt you don't let show.

But when you see me looking,
With my face pressed 'gainst the pane,
Listening to the thunder,
While you endure grief's reign.

Please understand that I'm aware
That I don't meet your needs.
I'm not there when you need me,
Or won't leave when you plead.

That I am sometimes ignorant
Of what you may need most.
Or willingly I hide somewhere
On earth's remotest coast.

But pressed against that window
Is my love, my heart, my soul,
Praying you'll find healing.
You'll start to feel whole.

Though I don't help you perfectly,
I hope that you will see,
My arms reach out eternally,
My heart's on bended knee.

*In memory of James Klaver on the
occasion of his birthday, April 26, 2005*

*"...when a good or a great person's life
comes to its final sunset, the skies of this
world are illuminated until long after he
is out of view. Such a person does not die
from this world, for when he departs he
leaves much of himself behind...and being
dead, he still speaks." —Henry W. Beecher*



We Used To

By *Tricia Klaver*, James Klaver's sister

Jamie

We used to be together.
At times I feel lost without you.
How long is it going to be?
The family misses you, too.



We used to be living.
Couldn't God have given it a second thought?
Although I have memories,
I wish it was time we could have bought.

We used to sit downstairs;
I would listen to you play.
Guitar in hand, you would ask,
"This song is new...does it sound OK?"

We used to sit in the country,
Laying on the hood of your car.
Music, cigars, and our serious talks;
You were a musician and wanted to be a star.

We used to discuss relationships.
You tried your hardest to protect me.
"I love you too much to see you be a pushover."
I took your advice, but you're not around to see.

We used to share the same stem cells.
I wish they could have saved you.
But they only did for a short time,
And then it killed me to see what you went through.

We used to be "twins,"
The same person in two different forms.
I'm missing my other half...
We have been torn.

We used to be happy,
Even though you were so sick.
You are my role model, best friend, and brother,
I would have died instead, if I were to pick.

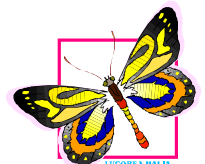
We used to be a family,
But you were taken away.
I miss you, brother,
But I promise, in time, I'll be on my way.

Unwritten rules from the "outside"

Don't talk about it.
Don't feel.
Don't trust. (Originates from
accepting the first two rules.)
Don't think for yourself.
Don't change.

We must break the rules.

We must talk.
We must feel.
We must think.
We must change and grow.



*Life is change; growth is optional;
choose wisely. —Karen K. Clark*

Introducing Rhonda Johnson, Compassionate Friend

My name is Rhonda Johnson. My story begins in 1983. My daughter, Rachel, died due to a bacterial infection when she was only 3 days old.

My husband, Lynn, and I have 4 great children. Derek is 24. He is a civil engineer. Our daughter, Jennifer, is 22 and is taking Elementary Ed. Our daughter, Lisa, was killed by a man who was eluding police, driving speeds of 125 mph, and believed to be drinking. She was 18 when she was taken from us. We have a son, Ryan, who is 19. He just graduated from High School and is looking forward to attending college to play football this fall. Then there is Michael! He is our 14 year old who loves life, just because!! Be it sports, girls, family, church, driving, whatever he has a smile on his face and he loves it. Three years ago I would have told you he got that from me, but from a mother who has lost two daughters, there are times when I have to work very hard to enjoy the things I used to. It's hard to find fun and laughter in the good things and it's hard to find the desire to want to laugh or have fun.

If it wasn't for our kids, some days a person wouldn't get up at all. Compassionate Friends is a place you can come and share all these emotions and feelings. We are one of the fortunate couples in the group. We have very supportive families, friends and co-workers. As has been stated before, "No one understands a grieving parent like another grieving parent!" We help each other one step at a time, one breath at a time, or whatever it takes until we can reach a "new normal" in our lives and find happiness once again. We welcome all grieving parents with open arms and open hearts, no matter where they are in their own journey of grief!



The Right Path

Lisa followed God's plan for her life every day,
Staying on the right path in every possible way.

She opened her heart to others any way she could,
Guiding them also on her road of being kind and good.

Reaching out a hand to everyone to guide on their journey too,
Eighteen years of helping all, and it didn't matter who.

Lisa was always radiant, and there to light another's path,
Even if it took her life, by this stranger's crime-filled wrath.

How could this empty man on random roads filled with strife,
Kill our angel on all the right paths, still smiling and full of life?

Justice is especially hard to find when there's not any remorse,
Intersecting life with death (our Lisa), on his evil course.

Joy in knowing heaven safely holds the ones we love,
And will join us all someday in the promises of God above.

The right road in life for yet another of God's fold,
Our loving Lisa lighting the heavens with her smile of gold!

By Beth Rust, Aunt of Lisa Renae Oetken

"How have I been able to live so long outside Nature without identifying myself with it? Everything lives, moves, everything corresponds... Captive now upon earth, I commune with the chorus of the stars who share in my joys and sorrows."

—Gerald De Nerval



Lisa Renae Oetken

5/8/84 – 9/27/02



Rachel Dawn Oetken

4/15/83 – 4/18/83

**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

In Remembrance of Justin & Heath

6/1/2003

You went away
Without saying bye.
God was the only one that knew,
But I'll never forget you.

You taught me so many things...
Words cannot explain.
From my world you did depart:
I'll always hold you in my heart.

You may not be near,
But in my heart you are here.
There you'll always be
Especially when I'm in need.

For many years
I will cry tears.
For I'll always remember you
I hope you will remember me, too.

I know you are in Heaven
From all you showed me - it's a given.
Your footsteps, I wish to trace,
To someday be with you in that beautiful place.

For now you'll watch me from above
With Angel wings and dreams of love.
When I am in Heaven with you
Maybe I can be an angel too.

__Samantha Pearson



Email Friends

Melissa Munsen newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

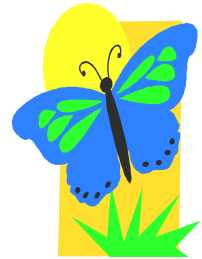
Twins- 32 day old daughter, premature
5 ½ year old son, multiple medical conditions

Trudy Klaver leader@tcfsiouxcity.org

23 year old son died from leukemia

*Silence is the
prison; sharing
is the key.*

Anonymous



Our Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We give thanks for Justin and Heath's lives, the memories, smiles, hugs and joy they always shared. We lay before You the emptiness that has come into our lives. We ask that You continue to lift us up as we grow with this separation, and prepare us Father, for our reunion with Your Son Jesus.

Only through the love of Your Son, Jesus Christ, shining through prayers, actions, and deeds of others have we seen the blessings You have bestowed upon our families in honor of our sons.

Bless them Lord. Please let them know how truly loved they are and how grateful we are for each and everyone. Bless us Lord, as we continue to seek Your Word and Guidance. Bless Justin, Heath, and all our loved ones in Your Kingdom as they rest.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Bruce & Rhonda Kneifl

Mandy & Trinn

Martin & VerLynn

Becky, Pat, Whitney & Alex

Roy & Florence Breuklander

Shirley, Ron & Jessie Rose

Twyla, Doug, Jeni, Zeb & Ang

Steve, Gina, Tana & Dani

July Agenda by Trudy Klaver

On July 27, we will be discussing Understanding Your Grief, "Embrace The Uniqueness of Your Grief," chapter 3. After our break, we will come together and share our drawings with each other. During the month of July, spend a few moments and reflect on your grief. What image(s) come to you when you think of your loss? Feel free to use words, pictures, lines, colored pencils, etc. to draw what your grief looks like to you.

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

__Helen Keller

"Death is really another birth. Imagine telling a baby in the womb, attached to the umbilical cord, 'Hey, guess what? You are about to enter into a bright new world with sound and light and air and brilliant colors. You will be able to see and smell and taste for the first time. There are mountains and sunflowers and sandy beaches and a lot of beautiful things out here. You're gonna have to let go of that umbilical cord. In fact, we're gonna snip it. Don't worry. You'll be fine after a few moments of crying.' I think our death is something like that. It is actually a birth into a brighter, more aromatic, more delicious, more beautiful world than the one we now know. But we can only guess at it. We are really in no better position of understanding it than the infant could understand our world from the womb."

__ James Bryan Smith

Quintin's 23rd Birthday

Happy Birthday, Sweet Quintin.
This, the day you were born,
will be bittersweet
for us here who mourn.

Hugs from sister Erika,
and older, smaller, brother Robin, too.
Siblings here wishing
Happy Birthday to you!

Fear not, our Dear Quintin.
We will never forget you.
Your spirit lives on vividly
through Mom and Jack.

We know that you are safe
in our Father's arms above.
So upward to Heaven,
we send you our love.

So blow out those 23 candles
on your fluffy cake of white.
We send you hugs and kisses,
'til we greet you in His Light.

Edited by Quintin's Mom,
Laurie Pitts

In Memory of



Quintin Glenn-Thomas Streeter

May 28, 1982 - April 27, 2004

Angels Among Us

Our Angels are among us,
We see them everyday.
In all the forms that God created...
They are with us along life's way.
We see them in the sunrise,
That brightens and warms our soul.
We feel them in the summer breeze
That chases away our cold.
They are there among the flowers,
Their sweet scent a memory of love.
They soar with the eagles,
As they fly so high above.
The night will find them in the stars,
Lighting our path below.
And even in our dreams,
Their presence we'll still know.
As the snow melts with the sun,
And spring flowers peek through their beds,
They come on the wings of butterflies,
And flutter about our heads.
They are telling us they are with us,
And will be forever more...
Until it's time for us to meet again,
As we pass through Heaven's door.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux Copyright 2001



In Memory of Brad on his Birthday

Brad Lorensen 7/28/75 – 7/1/98

Since we were kids young and free,
he was my younger brother.
We'd laugh, play, and try to trick
Our father and mother.

We both grew older and wiser too,
and went our separate ways.
But never once have I forgotten
those memories of the earlier days.

Though space between us grew at times,
there'll never be another
as close to my heart and soul,
as he, my younger brother.

It's been seven years now
since Brad left our sight...
but still the ache can linger on
throughout a long, dark night.

*Love always and forever,
Dawn, Brad's sister*

*"Unrecognized losses and unexpressed grief are
at the bottom of much of our unwellness."*

Fr. Jack McGinnis

May Meeting Minutes by Trudy Klaver

We welcomed about 30 individuals on May 25. "We are very sorry you qualified for our group, but we are pleased you found us. Within our circle we hope you found some measure of comfort, some peace, a safe place to celebrate your child's life and a place to share your utter grief. We do understand because we walk a "similar road." Following brief introductions, we divided ourselves into small groups and discussed the 10 misconceptions that are found amongst our "grief avoidant" society, according to Alan Wolfelt, author, educator, and grief counselor.

After a short break, we shared with the whole group something that captures the unique relationship that we had/have with our child(ren) who died. There were several personal poems read, as well as visual "linking" objects that expressed our relationship with our children.

We closed our meeting listening to "Daddy, Smile" by song writer, soloist, writer, and bereaved father, Alan Pedersen. He was our special guest on June 22.

What is a COMPASSIONATE FRIEND?

by Rob Anderson, Sugar Grove, Illinois

The dictionary definition of compassion is, "a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to help alleviate the suffering." Friend is defined as "a supporter or sympathizer." My "heart" definition of a compassionate friend is someone who "gets it" and never, ever forgets it.



When our kids die, we're all takers. We take from anybody who is willing to give to us. Whether it's the stranger sitting next to us on the airplane, our next door neighbor, or a close family member, we need someone who will compassionately let our hearts bleed over the death of our children. Often the only person who will let us do that is another bereaved parent. We both know what it means to have a broken heart and through that common ground we can help each other begin to heal.

In the beginning our pain is so intense, so all consuming and confusing only someone who has walked that path can understand that type of pain. Only they can understand that being compassionate means not challenging or directing us, but just listening while sharing our story and our healing. In other words, they follow the golden rule of doing unto others as they would have others do unto them. To that I would add, "and do it forever."

The power of a compassionate friend's empathy in the face of the tornado of agony that is the newly bereaved parent's life can be critical to their healing. If we, as healing bereaved parents, are willing to step into the role of caregiver for the broken soul of another bereaved parent, it's important not to lose touch with our pain. Not to lose touch with that kick in the stomach we felt when we first learned of our own child's death.

As our hearts heal, it can be easy to fall into the role of a teacher where we start to advise or pass judgment on how another bereaved parent grieves. We start to "should" them, as in you "should" grieve this way, because it worked for me. The newly bereaved can be scary even to veteran bereaved parents who have lost touch with their pain. If we want to help others heal, we must continue to relate to that instant after our kids died. That feeling is where we find our sameness. The blinding intensity of the pain of a broken heart is where a common bond is forged. In the unconditional love and patience we give to others who are suffering, we give away our greatest healing gift.

For those of us who have begun to heal, we need to remember those in our support system who did not leave us, even in our darkest days when we teetered between sanity and insanity. We need to think about those who did not judge or try to direct us, but just listened with a compassionate heart and waited for the person they once knew to return—even if it was just as a shell of that former person.

Just as we were all once imbalanced and on the edge, so are many of the newly bereaved we can now support. Even if we think they should be in a better place with their grief because we were feeling better at that same period, our best work is done through our silence, our sharing and our compassion.

I think of a support group for a bereaved parent as a hospital for the soul. Just like any good hospital, we don't turn anyone away. Even if they scare us, even if they make us uncomfortable, we can't compete with their process and push them away. We take in all the bereaved, we take in all the broken hearts for as long as they need to be with us. Even though we're uncertified and unlicensed therapists, we can play that role for each other. It can be difficult to sit with a shattered soul and wait patiently for it to find its way again. Just like a tiny child whom we waited patiently to see walk, if we want to be a compassionate friend, we need to also wait patiently until a newly bereaved parent learns to walk in their new life.

For those of us who can do it, it's an honor and a blessing to be able to give away the healing we've found. Others gave theirs away to us; others waited for us to return, and we can be compassionate friends by giving away what we know and what we feel. We're all sick people in the beginning, our hearts and souls poisoned by the death of our kids. When we found our support, it saved our lives, sometimes literally. That's why if we want to reach out to the newly bereaved, an open, understanding, compassionate and patient heart will let them grieve in the way that's best for them.

I've always believed in the concept that we give when we get. If we make our giving about what's best for someone else, and not about what's best for us, then we get so much more in return. If we give with no expectation of getting something in return, our souls smile. And when we do get a thank you, or a hug, that's extra special. Sometimes it's not easy to wait for a bereaved parent whom we think should be doing better. If we lose patience with their progress, then we've lost the ability to be their compassionate friend. Compassion comes from the intangible and sometimes hard-to-live concepts of empathy, kinship and understanding. I guess it comes down to the ability to walk in the shoes of someone else's experience. If we step out of those shoes, then it's hard to help them.

Just as we would never give up on someone we care about who has a life-threatening disease, we must also never give up on those who are suffering a soul-threatening disease. We needed compassionate friends at the start of our journey, and we can be compassionate friends to those who are new on their path. Love has undeniable power when given with a dear and pure heart, where nothing is expected in return and in a compassionate, caring way. In other words, like a compassionate friend.