

June 2005



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

Upcoming Meetings

June 22, 2005

July 27, 2005

August 24, 2005

September 28, 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 of each month 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

Co-Leaders

Trudy Klaver

Peggy Pohlen

leader@tcfsiouxcity.org

Newsletter Editor

Melissa Munsen

newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org

Lending Librarians

Kathy Sieger

Denice Christoffel

library@tcfsiouxcity.org

For technical questions or suggestions concerning this website, please contact:

webmaster@tcfsiouxcity.org

Secretary - Mary Lander

Treasurer - Stan Yates

Regional Coordinator

Barbara Lorimor

June Meeting Agenda by Trudy Klaver, Co-Leader

We are privileged to have Alan Pedersen speak to us through song at our June 22 meeting. In August of 2001, Alan's only daughter, Ashley (18) was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Alan comes to TCF from his home in Colorado to share his story, his faith, and his journey with us having walked through the valley of the shadow of death. He began writing songs since Ashley's death, and has released a CD of these songs entitled "Ashley's Songbook." (He will be speaking at the National Convention this summer.)

Alan has dedicated his life to helping others who have suffered loss. He plays guitar and speaks to audiences around the country. His message is simple. "By continuing to live, love, and give in honor of those we have lost, we can find our own healing."

Please invite your family members, friends, co-workers, etc to this special TCF meeting. This meeting is open to ALL who suffer loss in any way. There is no charge. Alan is supported by the sale of his cd and donations given at his performances.

Check out Alan's web-site at www.everashleymusic.com



Thank you to **Mercy Medical Center**

for graciously printing our newsletters and providing us a meeting place.

“Firsts” by Clara Hinton

When something as profound as the loss of a loved one touches our heart, the deep grief seeps into every corner of our lives. Not one thought goes by without being tainted by the dark color of sorrow and pain. We feel so alone and so broken since the landscape of our lives changed that we cannot remember what it felt like to wake up and see the world before us as a picture of beauty and joy. We long to experience just a few minutes without the gnawing reminders of the changes that now have left us feeling so empty and lost.

For a while every event is prefaced by the word "first." The first time I went to church, the first time I went shopping, the first time I sat through a movie. After some time, we mark time by special events. The first birthday, the first holiday, the first vacation. There is so much pain and sorrow connected to every "first." We cry bitter tears wondering if we will ever experience joy again.

*It's comforting to know that there is hope found in the daily routine of living. The sunrise and sunset. The twinkling stars that light up the evening sky. The fresh smell following a spring shower. The rhythmic rolling of the ocean waves. **Hope is everywhere**, and eventually it will take root in our broken hearts and make room for joy once again.*

Anniversaries of the Heart

James Clark, TCF, Nashville, TN

**"The holiest of all holidays are those kept by ourselves silent and apart; the secret anniversaries of the heart."
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**



With these words, the poet describes the universal human experience for the deeply-moving events that occur in our lives; for me, and I suspect for you, the words apply most often to the times of loss or sorrow or grief. Those days should be, and indeed shall be, secret and honored anniversaries of the heart - not to be abandoned nor dismissed as though they were just another day, which they can never be. But there are other days as well which are holy holidays - days which only we celebrate because they too are secret from or unrevealed to most. They are the days of firsts, the days of achievement, the days of graduation, the days of recognition, the days of laughter and joy, the days of hugs, and maybe even the days of happy tears.

Thankfully, they can be just as special as the others. None replaces another as no day in our lives replaces any other, but each takes its proper place in the whole cloth which is ours. For some, the fabric is tightly woven like canvas with the threads of myriad events crammed close together; while for others who live to be quite old...the threads are looser like burlap. But for each, our days are woven together - the weak with the strong, the bright and the dull, the beautiful and the painful - to make the tapestry of our existence. Just as every thread is important to the strength and usefulness and beauty of the cloth, so is every day, every secret anniversary of our hearts, important to the calendar of our lives.

Husband

I see the grief behind your earnest eyes.
(You would give anything to have your child again.)
I feel the helplessness behind your silent anguish
(You would give anything to take this hurt away.)
I know you learned to keep your tears in hiding.
And you were taught few words to speak for solace-
Not yours, not mine.
I see the grief behind your earnest eyes.
And I will know to understand and trust you,
loving father.

By Sascha
From "Sorrow and the Light."



Local Writers

Many of the stories you read in the TCF newsletters were submitted by readers like you. We publish TCF newsletters monthly and would like to encourage **YOU** to submit any articles/poems you have written in memory of your child. Also, if any of your other children, family members, or friends have written anything that you would like to share, please submit your writings by the 1st of each month for inclusion in the next newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from our local writers.

Not Allowed to Grieve

By Lisa Sculley, June 1997

Dads are very special people. They have the ability to fix just about anything. They pull splinters out of fingers, and assemble all the Christmas toys. They bounce us on their knees as babies, and walk us down the aisle as brides. They give us sound advice on how to buy a car, or what type of nail is used to hang pictures. They always seem to know what to do. They never ever falter; they are strong and kind.

For a long time, my Dad was Superman in my eyes. When I got married, I searched for those same qualities in my husband. In some areas, my husband never seemed to measure up. He is not talented at building, and please don't ask him to unstop the kitchen sink. But in the important areas, he is a lot like my Dad. He is strong, but gentle. He is a good father, and he works hard.

When I am down, he can help me through almost anything. I honestly thought that nothing could cause him to falter. Then our son died. Right after Joey died, Bill cried freely, and shared his grief with me. But as time went by, he stopped crying. He never talked about his pain. He hid it from everyone around him. I couldn't understand why he didn't hurt just as bad and cry just as much as I did. It made me angry. My Dad reacted in much the same way. He never cried in front of us. Instead, he would go out to the back yard and sit while he cried. He didn't like to talk about Joey, because he was afraid it would make me hurt more. I think it made him hurt too. He was a Rock, just like my husband was. He thought no one saw his pain. This is the fifth Father's Day since my son died, and the second since my father died. I now understand a little better. I know they hurt just as much as I did.

Bill lost his son too. Joey was not just my baby, he was Bill's little boy. My husband will never get to take him fishing, and he will never get to play ball with him. He has lost as much as I have. Dads do much more than pull splinters and fix toys. They give their children unconditional love. Why shouldn't we expect a father to hurt when their child dies? It is all right for a woman to cry and grieve. It is socially unacceptable for a man to grieve. And so, our fathers go on through life, not allowed to grieve.

As bereaved parents, we understand this. We know that men hurt too. We know that Father's Day can be a sad time for many Dads. If you feel sad this Father's Day, that is okay. But try to remember the good times you had too. Even if it only lasted a short while. You are STILL a father.

Look upon each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Do not suppress it. Never attempt to hide grief from yourself. Little by little, just as the deaf, the blind, the handicapped develop with time an extra sense to balance disability, so the bereaved, the widowed, will find new strength, new vision, born of the very pain and loneliness which seem, at first, impossible to master.

—Daphne Du Maurier

When the waves of pain rise highest, we think we will be swept under, that we cannot make it. But we can. Our work then is to accept the pain, and to wait. We can do other things while waiting - talk with people, go to the store, read, work in the garden. Even as we do these things we are aware of the pain, scraping against our heart. But if we accept these bad days as part of the course of healing then better days, better moods, will come. The pain will moderate, and we can be confident - proud, even - in our newly acquired strength.

I will not try to hide or walk around it. I will walk through the center of my sorrow and I will emerge - proud and strong.

Daily message from Healing After Loss by Martha Whitmore Hickman

Forever and Always

By: Michael Oetken

brother of Lisa Renae Oetken 5/8/84 – 9/27/02

Every time I think of you it always eats away,
60 minutes an hour, 24 hours a day.

From the time I get up to the time I go to bed.
I regret the things that were left unsaid.

A simple I love you would have done just fine,
sadly to say there was not enough time.

You were taken too early or so we thought,
but God needed a guardian angel to watch over us
and it was you that He brought.

Not a word, nor a sentence can tell how I feel,
I still can't believe that this is all real.

The way that I feel I cannot explain,
the horrible emptiness, aching, and pain.

The way you were always there for me
no matter when, where or why,
now when I think of you it makes me want to cry.

I love you so much and will forever and always,
for the rest of my life, and the rest of my days.



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!



*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: _____

April Meeting Minutes

We welcomed the many new faces as well as those who have attended before. "We are very sorry you qualify for our group, but we are pleased you found us. Within our circle you will find 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. There were almost 40 people in attendance.

We were so privileged to have Brenda Zahnley, Director of Bereavement Services at Christy-Smith Funeral Homes as our guest speaker. She spoke on the "Seven Lessons of Grief." We would again like to thank Brenda for her compassionate presentation as she shared with us.

After reading "Cherish the Meaning of Love" by Elizabeth Levang, we divided up into small groups to discuss the differences in men's and women's grief. We closed the meeting by listening to the song, "We Can Be Kind" by Paul Alexander.

Sometimes

"Sometimes, I still don't believe it,"
My husband said to me.
We have gone to bed, said our goodnights
And were resting comfortably.
My reply was short and to the point.
I simply said, "I know,"
Though it's been eight years since you have died.
Chip, we miss you so.
The memories of our life with you
Are treasures that we share.
For nineteen years we loved you well
While you were in our care.
So once again we said goodnight.
But before this we did pray.
This was a very poignant night.
This night was Father's Day.

In loving memory of my son, Chip
by Nancy McKenney

Child's Photo

We now have a permanent bulletin board set up in our meeting room. Please feel free to bring a wallet size photo of your child.



"Mighty" Max Munsen



Compassionate Friend

By Peggy Pohlen

What a journey these two years have been!
My old friends have gone astray. They don't know what to say.
I have grieved the loss of friends and the lack of lending support.
They just aren't comfortable to keep in touch, when I need them so much.

I grieve the death of my friendships.
I grieve the death of my son.
I grieve the death of my love for life,
and the trust I had in God's Son.

I've lost a lot since Michael's death, yet I've gained so much as well.
New friends who understand me through the darkness and the hell.
Through the black abyss you have led me, for you have been there too,
Gently, lovingly guiding me to help see me through.

You are never afraid to listen, or see a tear or two,
You never judge my progress, or lack of it - it's true.
You never judge my anger and you never judge my pain,
You never judge me any way; you always remain the same.

I thrive on your unconditional love and all the wonderful hugs,
as we talk and laugh of other things while still in our grief.
Knowing that you care, makes all the difference in the world,
for someone going through despair.

The depths of my grief are not as dark, knowing you are near.
I am able to bear my soul as you lend a listening ear.
Your strength radiates through your smile and your love.
It gives me enormous comfort as you radiate your love.

You give me strength to carry on until we meet again.
That is why I call you "My Compassionate Friend."

Lament for a Son

By Nicholas Wolterstorff

"Lament for a Son" is a journal of a dad whose son died. It was the most heartfelt, genuine book about grieving, suffering, and death that I have read. Mr. Wolterstorff doesn't use trivial platitudes to convey how he is feeling, because this is truly just his journal. I felt like I was not alone in my anger, frustration, and sorrow after the death of my daughter, but there was someone else who was feeling the way I did. I connected with this families' pain. I also was given hope... that it was not the end of the world. I was also given the realization that humans can truly relate to the sufferings of Christ, that it is not something that is out of reach, but something that can be attained.

Excerpts from geocites.com

My Dad is a Survivor

My dad is a survivor too
which is no surprise to me.

He's always been like a lighthouse
that helps you cross a stormy sea.

But, I walk with my dad each day
to lift him when he's down.

I wipe the tears he hides from others;
he cries when no one's around.

I watch him sit up late at night
with my picture in his hand.

He cries as he tries to grieve alone,
and wishes he could understand.

My dad is like a tower of strength.
He's the greatest of them all!

But, there are times when he needs to cry...
please be there when he falls.

Hold his hand or pat his shoulder...
and tell him its okay.

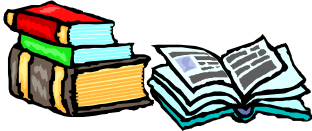
Be his strength when he's sad;
help him mourn in his own way.

Now, as I watch over my precious dad
from the Heavens up above...

I'm so proud that he's a survivor...
and, I can still feel his love.

__Kaye Des'Ormeaux

Dedicated to all dads who have lost a child & were forced to survive



Book Commentary reviewed by Trudy Klaver

When There Are No Words by Charlie Walton

"Written from the perspective of a parent learning to cope with the loss of his sons, this book contains practical suggestions for dealing with the tangible and intangible components of grief. Both the bereaved themselves and those who struggle to help them will find this book useful.

Walton describes eloquently the physical, spiritual, psychological, and social effects of grief with descriptions of what is and is not often helpful in coping or helping. Although Walton writes from a Christian perspective, his suggestions are of a universal nature and would be helpful to anyone of any faith".

The following excerpts are found in Walton's book on pages 89-92.

"Contrary to popular wisdom, time does not heal all wounds. Some people die from wounds. Others just learn to live with scars ...there are some hurts that never stop hurting...no matter how faded the scars may be. Time doesn't heal all wounds. It just puts more space between the times you remember the events that gave you those wounds."

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

*"A friend is
someone who
smiles when
you smile, laughs
when you laugh,
and holds your
hand when you
cry."*

The Sioux City Chapter of
The Compassionate Friends hope
that all Dads have a gentle day and
have memories of their children to
lighten their hearts on

FATHER'S DAY

*"Memorabilia of your loved
ones can be an important
aspect of keeping memory
and relationship alive."*

_Phil Rich

James' Prophetic Walk

By Trudy Klaver



Graduation Day...May, 2003. James was determined to walk across the BJ Auditorium stage to receive the long awaited diploma. He had been in the hospital 6 weeks prior to that day fighting leukemia for the second time in 4 years. Each doctor that had James as a patient became quickly aware that James had one short term goal... that being to "walk" the stage for his college graduation. No one could promise him anything, but they all said they would do everything humanly possible to see that James' dream become a reality. The doctors' main concern was, of course, to kill the leukemia cells. The chemo schedule revolved around his illness, not his graduation. However, God definitely knew the desire of James' heart and granted him this wish. James was able to attend his graduation and with absolute determination, planned on "walking" to receive his well deserved diploma. His presence at graduation was a miracle in and of itself. Needless to say, James was extremely weak, pale and thin. Only two days prior to graduation he had suffered the effects of chemo. So, with thankfulness and humbleness, we were all there to witness such an incredible milestone in his life.

However, what we did not realize that day was how significant it would be in our lives. Today as I reflect on our daughter's graduation only a few days ago, my mind re-wound two years ago when James actually did "walk."

Please permit me to set the stage. Ken, James, and I drove together to the campus for commencement. We had previously reserved a wheelchair for James. For anyone who knows James, you can imagine that he really didn't think he needed a wheelchair. But, being the protective mother that I am, I reserved one anyway. When we arrived on campus, the pastor and Laura, James' girl friend, met us with the wheelchair. He wanted Ken and me to find our seats amongst the other graduates' parents. (I had not left James' side since the first of April, so it was very difficult to have him out of my sight. However, we realized he needed and deserved some independence, "just for today.") Reluctantly, we found our seats.

As the procession began, we anxiously watched for our son, but to no avail. He and Laura had decided to remain in the foyer until right before his name would be called. So, Ken and I tried to relax. (Impossible!) Finally the Theology majors were called to receive their diplomas. To our relief, James was being escorted by Laura and a professor to the front of the BJ auditorium in the wheelchair.

We shouldn't have been surprised when James stood up when the president called, "James Albert Klaver." Mr. Determination pulled a true "James." He got up from his chair and began to climb the 3 stairs to the top of the stage. Our eyes were glued to every move he made with such anxiety and nervousness. I held my breath, as did Ken. Thankfully, James climbed the steps independently and successfully. We were so relieved.

However, as James proceeded to walk across the stage, his legs suddenly buckled underneath him. He fell. He picked up his 6'5" frame, and attempted to keep walking, however he fell again. As the audience simultaneously gasped with each fall, Ken and I froze, with our eyes fixed on James. Sitting at the edge of our seats, feeling panic and fear, we both began to cry for help. Ken called out, "Somebody help him, as I cried, "Careful honey, careful honey." Again, James recovered. (I believe every individual in the auditorium were inwardly cheering him on with silent prayers.) Regardless, he fell for the third time.

Finally, after staggering and falling 3 different times, James regained his composure, took a deep breath, stood straight and tall, and with pride and all the determination he could muster, faced the audience with his dimpled grin and said in a loud, sure voice, "I CAN WALK." James is a very persevering individual. He had gone through so much, and had come too far to give up now. Walking across stage took an enormous amount of energy, but he used the same unbelievable determination, phenomenal courage, and unstoppable spirit which was so evident while he fought for his life against leukemia.

The audience broke out into a victorious applause, and James walked. With diploma in hand, he humbly received help to go down the steps to find the comforts of the chair that awaited him. Needless to say, the family left the auditorium to be with him. We found him in the foyer and the first thing James said to us was, "I'm sorry I fell, dad and mom." That comment should not have taken us by surprise. We knew our son well. He cared so much how we felt, and did not want to cause us any further concern, especially on this day...his graduation day.

This segment of James' life comes to mind often since Graduation, 2003. Since James' death, there have been incalculable times that I have felt like there was no way I could continue to live in this world. There was no way I'd survive such horrendous grief that cut to the core of everything I had ever known or felt. No way would I ever be able to live, love, or laugh again. But then I remember...I remember James' prophetic "I CAN WALK." I remember his strength, his courage, his determination, his perseverance, his faith. It is then that I take a deep breath, stand straight and tall, and ask God to help me "walk." Even though I stumble over and over again, cry much, and, at times want to bury my head in the sand, I remind myself of James' spirit in which he said, "I CAN WALK." That's when I know, "I can do anything through Christ who gives me strength..." and "walk."

"Thanks, son, for teaching me another life-lesson. Little did I realize how that day and its' significance would be prophetic for my life, as well as the lives of your friends, family, and perhaps others unknown to us who attended graduation that day. I hope and pray that we will all remember just how strong we can be if we believe, with unstoppable determination and an unwavering faith, such as you displayed during your life, your illness and until your death. I will never give up, James... Never."

Loving you through eternity,

Mom