

May 2005



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

Upcoming Meetings

May 25, 2005
June 22, 2005
July 27, 2005
August 24, 2005

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(877) 969-0010 toll free
www.compassionatefriends.org

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.

Meeting Place and Time...

The Sioux City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 4th Wednesday, Jan-Oct, 3rd Wednesday, Nov & Dec at **Mercy Medical Center** in the Leiter room (by gift shop) on 1st floor off of the parking ramp on 5th street at **7:00 p.m.**

Many thanks to...

Mercy Medical Center

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

Thank You!

Sioux City Chapter

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A HUGE thank you to Leanne Klaver for designing **our new web-site**. Leanne is the daughter of Ken and Trudy Klaver and lives in Vancouver, B.C. She is a graphic designer for Youth With A Mission and has previous experience with web-designing. She created this site in memory of her younger brother, James. **Our local chapter's web-site is www.tcfsiouxcity.org**. It is the only TCF website in the state of Iowa!

Web Sites of Interest

Sioux City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends www.tcfsiouxcity.org
TCF E-Newsletter - TCF National Web Site www.compassionatefriends.org
Adult Sibling Grief – offers a chat room, message board and resources for adult siblings www.adultsiblinggrief.com
MISS Mothers in Sympathy and Support – www.missfoundation.org
Family support – www.woundedhearts.net
Create a website in memory of - www.memory-of.com
Bereavement Magazine - www.bereavementmag.com
Amanda the Panda Children & Family Grief Center - www.AmandaThePanda.org
Child miscarriage and child death support – www.silentgrief.com
Centering Corporation - <http://www.centering.org>
Website just for teens - <http://www.fireinmyheart.com>
The Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Center – www.elisabethkublerross.com/index.html

Remembering our May Children...

May LOVE be what you remember the most... Darcie Sims

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

— Longfellow

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. There are many jobs that must be done. Volunteers are always needed.**



*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

ARE YOU A GRIEF VICTIM OR GRIEF SURVIVOR?

Being a victim is a state of mind dictated by others.
A survivor dictates their own state of mind.

A victim fears the moments of grief.
A survivor welcomes those moments!

A victim knows about feeling down and tries to stay up.
A survivor knows feeling down is okay.

A victim tries hard to hide the tears.
A survivor never leaves home without kleenex.

A victim struggles to maintain a state of normalcy.
A survivor knows normal no longer exists.

A victim gets caught in isolation.
A survivor reaches out when they need to.

A victim is afraid they, in time, will forget.
A survivor knows they never will!

A victim sometimes feels guilty laughing.
A survivor laughs through their tears.

A victim tries at times to block out the memories.
A survivor embraces memories of all kinds.

A victim wants someone to cure their grief.
A survivor just wants someone to share their journey.

A victim struggles to get over their grief.
A survivor fights to get through it.

A victim tries to get on with their life.
A survivor lives their life knowing nothing will ever be the same.

A victim says, "Oh I'm okay..." then secretly cries.
A survivor openly cries... and says, "I'm okay."

___Author Unknown

Time

"Time heals" is not correct. "Time erases the pain" would be more accurate. Though we are recovering, we will never recover completely. Forward steps are cause for rejoicing. Grievers know they are healing when the following things take place:



1. They begin to care whether they live or die.
2. Their nagging, ulcerlike pain begins to subside.
3. They rediscover the taste of food.
4. They respond to the beauty of the sun, moon, and stars and the rest of God's great creation.
5. Two hours pass without conscious thoughts of the deceased.
6. They can visit the grave and focus on what is (heaven) instead of what could have been (earth).
7. They view life on living color rather than black and white.
8. Laughter is genuine rather than a forced response to humor.
9. They read short articles and remember what they read.
10. They look to the future with increased vitality.
11. They are able to acknowledge the faults of the deceased.
12. The urge to comfort others is stronger than the need to lick their own wounds.
13. Preoccupation with the deceased no longer mars the joys of a family dinner.
14. They can make minor decisions.
15. They can truly rejoice in the accomplishments of their deceased child's contemporaries.
16. Writing a book on the death of their child becomes a possibility.

__ Taken from "*Song of Triumph.*" by Eleanor Grotenhuis.
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*"When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain & touch our wounds with a gentle & tender hand. **The friend who can be silent with us in an hour of grief & bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing & face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares.**"*

__ Henri J.M. Nouwen

For Both of Us

As long as I can, I will look at this world
for both of us.
As long as I can,
I will laugh with the birds.
I will sing with the flowers.
I will pray with the stars,
For both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember
how many things on this earth were your joy.
And I will live as well as you would want me to live,
As long as I can.

Author: Sascha Wagner

*Good friends are
like stars....You
don't always
see them,
but you know they
are always there...*

*"Sadness flies on the wings of the morning and
out of the heart of darkness comes the light."*

__Jean Giraudoux



A Suggestion on How to Handle Mother's Day
Written by Clara Hinton, April 27, 2003



Special days of any kind can be especially difficult for anyone who has lost a child. The first year following the loss of a child is often filled with days of dread and fear when anniversary dates and holidays approach. Mother's Day is a holiday that is one of the most dreaded holidays of all. A mother grieving the loss of her precious child often spends weeks in fearful waiting of the day, wondering how she will ever make it through.

There is no real way of avoiding Mother's Day. The stores are filled with gifts made and designed especially for mothers and children. Advertisements for gifts on the radio and in the newspaper bombard us every day for weeks prior to Mother's Day. Card and flower shops experience their busiest season of the year on Mother's Day. Reminders of this special holiday are everywhere!

The pain of facing Mother's Day without a child can be the most lonely pain a mother will ever know. There is an empty ache that becomes increasingly more evident as the day approaches, and there seems to be no way to find relief. It is wise to share these feelings with other family members and friends rather than to avoid the topic. By sharing how you feel, you can alert others to be more sensitive to your needs during this painful day of sad reminders. Sit down with your family and discuss what you would like to do for Mother's Day. Remember that this is not a time to worry about hurting other's feelings, but rather a time to make your wishes known.

Remind yourself often that there is no right or wrong way to handle Mother's Day. Some mothers have found it helpful to go away on a mini weekend trip, totally avoiding any church service, special meals, or family gatherings that will be too painful to attend.

Other mothers choose to do something special in memory of their child such as take a walk to a quiet place, read a special poem, and then release a balloon in memory of their child. The actual releasing of the balloon is known to give mothers a sense of letting go that is quite healing.

Many choose to use Mother's Day as a special day to plant a flower or a tree in memory of their child who has died. Seeing something growing is often a visible reminder of the ongoing love a mother has for her child.

Whatever you choose to do, remember not to set expectations too high for the day. Plan to do something that is healing for you, but realize that you will still experience a wide gamut of emotions, and many tears will fall.

Because grief is exhausting mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, be sure to eat nutritious food for the day, hydrate yourself with lots of fluids, and allow yourself time to rest and be replenished. Grief work is the hardest work you will ever do!

By planning ahead for Mother's Day, you have already crossed a big hurdle in your walk through child loss. Telling others that this is going to be a difficult day for you is a way of building up a support system that will help you get through the day. Remind yourself often that you will make it through Mother's Day, and when you do, you will be one step farther along in this difficult journey we call grief.

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.*

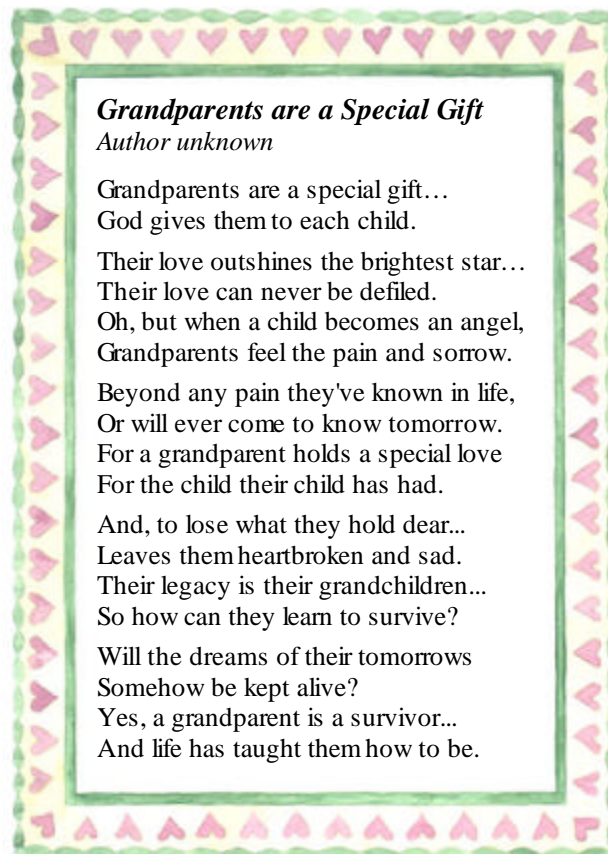
*They are there among the flowers...
Their sweet scent a memory of love.
They soar with the eagles,
As they fly so high above.*

*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
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It's Okay by Rob Anderson

It's okay to cry,
to not cry,
to feel guilty,
to not feel guilty,
to be angry,
to stop being angry,
to seek answers,
to stop seeking answers,
to feel responsible,
to feel sorry for yourself,
to be mad at your child,
to feel misunderstood,
to reach out for help,
to let out your pain,
to care what others think,
to not care what others' think,
to let go of your child's death,
to embrace your child's life,
to lose your expectations,
to grieve any way you want,
to give yourself a break,
to believe in signs,
to stop hating,
to forgive,
to smile without guilt,
to find joy,
to heal,
to begin to live again,
to laugh,
to love yourself.
It's okay, it's all okay.

*To bring me out of my sadness, to bring me out of my grief,
I began to write poetry for some relief. —Peggy Pohlen*

Depression

I wake up in the morning, my heart is still heavy
It's been nearly two years since you went to heaven
There is work all around and all I can do is stare
And the ironic thing is I don't even care
It's hard to lift a finger my energy's all gone
I am not the same person now that you are gone
I'm totally exhausted from this grieving and pain
I'm so depressed - am I going insane?



Michael Pohlen

12/4/96 – 5/27/03

Anticipation

As the date of your death begins to draw near
My heart grows anxious because you are so dear
My heart fills with sadness my heart fills with fear
As the date of your death begins to draw near
How will I handle the date this year?
The anticipation rises the sadness mounts
As your second anniversary surmounts
I'll deal with the sadness and forgo it alone
Cause most people are busy and will leave me alone
If they remembered what could they say - its been two years anyway
Would I tell them my sorrow would I tell them my need?
Or would I keep it inside sight unseen.

Isolation

I feel so isolated and alone
No one to turn to when I groan
I have such deep feelings and no where to turn
My stomach hurts and begins to churn
I turn to food to fill my void
But the emptiness I feel I cannot avoid
I miss you so dearly that it makes me sick
The grief I feel is so very thick



*One of Michael's
favorite things was
dinosaurs...*

Yearning

The morning dawns on a new day
But what does it matter now that you're away
My heart is so empty and dead inside
I wished I could go and be by your side
But I know that I must keep going on
For the living are living and not beyond
I'll keep on living with the weight of my grief
But I'll still hope for the beyond and beneath

Michael

My picture of you grows tattered and torn
But my love for you will remain safe and warm
I may not remember your image as clearly
But your spirit remains with me so dearly
Your voice was silenced and is hard to recall
But your words of appreciation still touch us all
Your laughter, joy, and love of life
Are still a bright spot in my life
Your time was short your time was sweet
I wish that we could all still meet
You brought me much happiness and joy
My precious, precious little boy!



Peggy Pohlen

A Mother's Prayer

Help me please
Oh Lord, I pray
To endure the trials
Of each new day.

Let me look them
Squarely in the face
And then put them
In their rightful place.

Give me patience
And strength to cope
But most of all God
Give me hope.

When all seems futile
Please let me say
"Look how far I've come
To reach this day".

Reach out Your hand
And pull me through
Cause, Lord, I'll never make it
Without You!

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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***Find a little time for spring,
Even if your days are troubled.
Let a little sunshine in -
Let your memories be doubled.
Take a little time to see
All the things your child was seeing -
And your tears will help your heart
Find a better time for being.***

—Sascha

Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God. Belief puts God between our circumstances and us". E. B. Mayer

The Cross by the Side of the Road

My memories often bring comfort and joy,
Though some can bring heartache instead.
I smile to think how she acted so coy
And chuckle at things that she said.

Whenever I visit her bedroom I hear
The laughter that used to be there.
A glance at her brush usually brings out a tear,
Remembering the feel of her hair.

I seldom approach the town or the school
Without a new thought of my loss.
For she was my hope, my delight and my jewel,
But now all that's left is a cross.

The accident site is right on the way
To everywhere we have to go.
Her friends brought a wreath and symbol to say
What most of us already know.

This is the place where her soul was set free
And ours gained a burdensome load.
Remember sweet Carla whenever you see
The cross by the side of the road.

—Taken from *Treasures of Darkenss*
by Ken Hekman, used with permission



Eternity We Share

Andrew, he laughed and loved and felt our feelings.
He hugged and played and needed us.
He reached out to more and more of life
and now seemingly so far removed.
Can we live without his wit, his smile, his fun, his presence?
If he could enter our grieving now, what would he say?
“You have life.
You have things you know you must do.
Grieve but go on!
You have loved me until you have become a part of me;
That part I take with me to God.
I have loved you until I have become a part of you;
That is my gift to you for always..
I am alive in you.
You are alive with me in God.”
Eternity we share!

— Taken from *Andrew, You Died Too Soon*
by Corinee Chilstrom, (Andrew's adoptive mother)

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. 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 10th of each month for inclusion in the next newsletter. **We look forward to hearing from our local writers.**

Be at peace. Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life; rather look to them with full hope as they arise. God, whose very own you are, will deliver you from out of them. He has kept you hitherto and He will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will bury you in His arms. Do not fear for what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and everyday. He will either shield you from suffering, or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

— St. Francis de Sales

What can you do?

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

What do you do when someone dies?
Do you celebrate or do you cry?

Do you cry because you won't see them again?
Or do you celebrate knowing that they are in heaven?

What can you do, where can you go?
Somewhere, anywhere to just be alone!

It's ok to cry, it's ok to feel sad,
It's even ok to be a little mad.

Go to someone you trust or someone you love.
Cry with them, feel sad with them,
Yet feel good that the person is now
Watching over you from above.

How do I know this you're probably wondering why?
It happened to me; **I wish I could've said good-bye**

March Meeting Minutes by Trudy Klaver

We began our meeting with reading “The Mourers Creed” written by Alan Wolfelt. Introductions were made, acquainting ourselves with old “new” friends as well as a few newly bereaved individuals. Welcoming new members is always bittersweet because we know at what cost they have come. We opened our meeting with a song entitled “Help Somebody Cry.”

We then divided into small groups discussing chapter 1 of Alan Wolfelt's book, “Understanding Your Grief.” We discussed the first Touchstone...Open to the Presence of Your Loss.

After our short break, we introduced our child(ren) who have died by sharing their picture with the group and describing the qualities of our child(ren) that made them who they are. We closed by reading a poem entitled, “It's OK” by Ron Anderson.

Our group continues to grow which is also bittersweet. **However, it is our vision that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.**

A Priceless Gift on Mother's Day

By: Trudy Klaver



Dear James,

I vividly remember Mother's Day, 2003. After fighting for your life the previous 6 weeks battling leukemia, your doctors allowed you to come home to graduate from college. We never imagined that you would be home for 3 whole weeks before returning for the next phase of treatment, however, you and the family took advantage of the "break," and I was privileged to have you home for Mother's Day, totally unaware that it would be your last.

You never really took an interest in shopping. However, since the girls were not home on the Saturday before Mother's Day, you asked your younger brother if he would like to shop with you. The two of you were on a mission, and you found exactly what you were looking for—a beautiful locket that had "Mom" engraved on the top, and four tiny frames inside the locket for miniature pictures of each of you.

How often I think about that special day. The family had just celebrated eating dinner together, and you and your siblings had a gift for me. First of all, I was stunned that the "boys" had gone shopping. Secondly, I was touched that it was something as meaningful as a Mother's locket. (Someone took a picture of me holding the locket that day. I look SO happy, a feeling that I have felt very seldom since your death. I was beaming!) I was overflowing with love and gratitude, not only for the locket, but more so, that you were alive and well enough to enjoy the day with us at home.

Little did we know that would be our last Mother's Day with you. Little did I know that you had given your last earthly keepsake to me. I have worn my priceless locket daily since Mother's Day, 2003. Wearing it reminds me not only of my love for each of you, but also your love for me. As each day passes, and I am reminded of your earthly absence, I find myself holding the locket and remembering...remembering you. This locket holds such significance. You gave me more than the locket that day. I think that this final gift represents your love for me. It reminds me of the gift of your love, life, and our relationship. It speaks to my heart of your spirit, encouragement, strength, perseverance, laughter, hope, and unwavering faith. It adorns my neckline daily, causing me to give thanks that I have been blessed with such an irreplaceable love between mother and child. This gift testifies that our four beautiful children have become our very best friends.

I love you James. I love you children. I know my heart will ache on Mother's Day, missing you more than I can express, but God has blessed me so abundantly, that I will again rub the locket between my fingers, remember...and give thanks. I know in your heart you are saying, **"I love you, mum. Happy Mother's Day."**

Love through eternity,

Mom

May meeting agenda

Our May 25 meeting will focus on Touchstone #2 which is entitled "Dispel the Misconceptions About Grief." We will have an open discussion about the grief myths debunked in this chapter. If time allows, we will also share with our fellow group participants something that captures the unique relationship we had/have with our child who has died. Examples may be a poem, a special song, or an item belonging to our child.

Thank you to Kathy Sieger who worked many hours to get our lending library up and running. We have many books on grief and numerous authors represented. Please take the time to browse through our library and check out a book. We ask that you return the book the following month to make it available to someone else. You may also donate a book in memory of your child(ren) if you wish. Your name and the name of your child(ren) will be recognized on a label on the inside cover if you so wish. You may also donate a book in honor of your surviving children.

Thank you to Rhonda Johnson for contributing her time to make the button/magnets of our child(ren). Having these keepsakes in memory of our children means so much.

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: _____
