



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

September 2005

Upcoming Meetings

September 28, 2005

October 26, 2005

November 16, 2005

December 21, 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

SEPTEMBER MEETING!!!** Our September 28 meeting will be held in the **Buena Vista room** which is located on the 3rd floor. Take the elevator to the 3rd floor, walk towards the cafeteria, and turn left. **This is ONLY for the month of September.

Sioux City Chapter

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“Cherish the Children” – A walk to remember and honor children who have died!”

Christy-Smith Funeral Homes is sponsoring their fifth annual **“Remembrance Walk”** for parents, siblings, relatives and friends who have experienced the death of a child of any age. Please join us on Sunday, September 11th, 2005 at the Christy Smith Family Resource Center, 1819 Morningside Ave., Sioux City, Iowa at **1:00 P.M.** rain or shine. **Pre-registration is required.** Balloons and name tags will begin to be handed out at 12:30 P.M. Please come early to avoid the rush!!! The walk will begin at the resource center and will end at Latham Park with a short service in honor of the children.

Refreshments will be served back at the community room of Christy-Smith Resource Center.

To pre-register or if you have questions, please contact Brenda Zahnley, Director of Bereavement Services, at (712) 276-7319.

*Thank you to **Mercy Medical Center***

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

Remembering our September Children...

Birth and Heaven dates are not listed to protect the privacy of our Compassionate Friends...

September Agenda

by Trudy Klaver

Marilyn Clifford, bereaved mother of son, Brian, is coming to share with us her grief journey since Brian's death. He died at the age of 17 from complications of a seizure in 1998. Marilyn assisted as a facilitator in Brenda Zahnley Stepping Stones group in 2003. She will share her story and speak to us on the topic "Memories." There will be time to share personal memories of our children as well. Please bring a Memory Book, a Memory Quilt, or anything that you have which allows you to share your child with the group.

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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, and volunteers are always needed.**



*for the
love gifts in
remembrance
of your
children...*

*Love never
dies...*

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

July Meeting Minutes

by Trudy Klaver

On July 27, 2005 we had another "good" meeting. We "welcomed" several newly bereaved parents, which is always so bittersweet. We are sorry that everyone who comes qualifies for our group, but are so pleased that each and everyone have found us. We hope that each person that came found some measure of comfort, some peace, a safe place to celebrate their child's life, and a place to share their utter grief. All of us do understand, because we walk a similar road. There were about 25 in attendance.

We discussed the uniqueness of our grief, using Alan Wolfelt's 12 "Why's" of our grief journey. These are the unique reasons that our grief is what it is. The discussion went so well that we decided to finish discussing the remainder of the questions at our August meeting.

Some of us shared our drawings which describe what our grief looks like. They were so descriptive and portrayed so perfectly. Thank you for sharing.

We then ended our meeting with the song "Homesick," by Mercy Me.

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

Bereavement Magazine - www.bereavementmag.com

Centering Corporation & Grief Digest journaling site -
<http://www.i-remember.org>

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>

Alan Pedersen - www.everashleymusic.com

The Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Center
www.elisabethkublerross.com/index.html

Daily Message from Healing After Loss

by Martha Whitmore Hickman

Those who grieve find comfort in weeping and in arousing their sorrow until the body is too tired to bear the inner emotions. —Maimonides

Perhaps the value of very overt expressions of grief - wailing, lamenting, screaming - is that one gets quite worn out and a kind of temporary anesthesia sets in.

There is much to be said for this over the "stiff upper lip" practice of some settings, where so much demonstrativeness may be considered bizarre and self-indulgent.

Strange as it may seem at first if we are not used to it (we will be startled at the sound of our own voice), it can be very helpful to raise our voice against the faceless enemy, even though we know no one is going to answer and give us back our loved one.

So maybe it's worth trying. If you'd rather wail in private, fine. Just find a space isolated enough that you can't be heard, and "let fly" all that pent-up grief and anger.

Feel guilty about ranting against God? Not to worry - God can take it.

“MY TRIBUTE” will be **your** chance to tell us about your child who has died. It can be a short story, an amusing anecdote, or a list of treasured memories.

I will dedicate a page each newsletter and will include as many stories as room allows. They will be printed in the order they are received. The success of this feature will depend entirely upon **YOU**. I need your stories and your memories to make it a success. If you would like a photo to go with the article, please include.

Send email to newsletter@tcfsiouxcity.org please note subject as “TCF TRIBUTE” I need to receive by **October 1st** to be considered for the October newsletter. I look forward to reading and sharing about all of our children. Thank You!



LET GO, MOM

By Trudy Klaver



One beautiful summer day in July, I was driving along unfamiliar countryside when I was drawn to a cemetery that stretched, what seemed endlessly, across the Iowa hills. Ever since my son, James, died, I seem repulsed to even go to the cemetery where he is buried, but this particular graveyard seemed to attract my attention. Perhaps it was the inscribed benches, or the pond with ducks, or the little bridge... I don't know, but without really thinking, I turned into these winding hills marked by hundreds and hundreds of headstones.

Hoping for some time of solitude, to be lost in my thoughts, I heard a machine unearthing more land. As I looked up, I saw a few men, and a digger, preparing yet another burial place for someone who was recently deceased. Immediately, my thoughts rewound to two years ago when a hole had been dug for the body of my deceased son. I was sad upon remembering those last days when we put our eldest son's body to his final resting place.

As the workers were finishing, my eyes drifted up another hill and over to the right, and there a myriad of color, woven around small headstones. I began to walk, reading epitaphs along the way. It seemed strange to me that this particular area stood out. Why here? Then I knew. James had drawn me here. He wanted to talk to me, in this sacred place, where hundreds of children had been buried. One section seemed to be "Baby Land." Another seemed to be children, but older. Then another section of children who had been buried at the time I was born...in the 50's.

I started reading the markers, wanting to know who was buried, and how old they were at the time of death. I wanted to know their names, and how many there were. I counted until I realized there were more than I wanted to count. As I sat on the top of the hill looking down over "Baby Land," I realized the reason for the striking colors. It was due to the many, many stuffed teddy bears, angels, little tractors, dolls, mobiles, balloons, wreathes, windsocks and so many more tokens of remembrance. It touched me. I thought of all the children who were now enjoying eternity, but my heart was heavy thinking of all the daddies and mommies that came here on a regular basis to remember and cry. That made me sad.

What happened next was a mystical conversation with James, my son, who died of leukemia at the age of 23, two years ago. Many may not understand that type of experience, but that is all right. All I know is that it happened to me, and I am thankful. It seemed James was "talking" to me. I kept hearing him say, "Mom, let go, let go." I kept replying, "I can't James. How can you ask me to let go? How is a mother supposed to let go of someone she would have given her life for, had she had the chance? I don't know how to let go. And I don't even know if I want to let go." I sat there, tears rolling down my cheeks, listening to James, and fighting internally, wondering how he could even ask this of me.

Tomorrow Never Comes

If I knew it would be the last time
that I'd see you fall asleep,
I would tuck you in more tightly
and pray the Lord, your soul to keep.

If I knew it would be the last time
that I see you walk out the door,
I would give you a hug and kiss
and call you back for one more.

If I knew it would be the last time
I'd hear your voice lifted up in praise,
I would video tape each action and word,
so I could play them back day after day.

If I knew it would be the last time,
I could spare an extra minute
to stop and say "I love you,"
instead of assuming you would KNOW I do.

If I knew it would be the last time
I would be there to share your day,
well I'm sure you'll have so many more,
so I can let just this one slip away.

For surely there's always tomorrow
to make up for an oversight,
and we always get a second chance
to make everything just right.

There will always be another day
to say "I love you,"
And certainly there's another chance
to say our "Anything I can do?"

But just in case I might be wrong,
and today is all I get,
I'd like to say how much I love you
and I hope we never forget.

Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
young or old alike,
and today may be the last chance
you get to hold your loved one tight.

So if you're waiting for tomorrow,
why not do it today?
For if tomorrow never comes,
you'll surely regret the day,

That you didn't take that extra time
for a smile, a hug, or a kiss
and you were too busy to grant someone,
what turned out to be their one last wish.

So hold your loved ones close today,
and whisper in their ear,
Tell them how much you love them
and that you'll always hold them dear

Take time to say "I'm sorry,"
"Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay."
And if tomorrow never comes,
you'll have no regrets about today.

__Norma Cornett Marek

After I struggled for what seemed hours, he “said” something that will always remain with me. It was as if he took my hands, looked in my eyes, and lovingly said, “Mom, I am NOT asking you to let go of ME. I am NOT asking you to forget ME. I am NOT asking you to pretend that I never existed. I am NOT asking you to erase the memories. I AM ASKING YOU TO LET GO OF THE PAIN.”

My response is one that continues to confuse me, but I am seeking God’s direction as to how to let go of the pain without letting go of James. Pain seems to be my connection to James. How do I separate the two? There seems to be ONLY pain when I think of James. However, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that is not really true. Many times it IS painful. I often think of his illness, his suffering, his will to live suffocated, his zest for life gone. His tomorrows with us are no more. Those thoughts cause me tremendous pain.

But since that day in the cemetery, I have been contemplating what he asked of me and how I am beginning to understand what he meant. He wants me to let go of the pain, but with that, HOLD ON to him and my memories of him. He wants me to remember his life, his values, his hope, and his unstoppable spirit. He wants me to remember our experiences together, our life together; remembering all the fun, the laughter, the music and the good times. He wants me to remember the hopes and dreams and the ability to reach out and touch someone else’s life. He wants me to make a difference, like he did in his short life. He wants me to turn my tears into smiles, (although tears are OK, too.) He wants me to take each moment, each day, and live it to the fullest. He wants me to continue on, doing what I do best...being a loving wife, a great mom, and a true friend to others, whether they are already a friend, or a perfect stranger. He wants me to continue to carry the beautiful memories, the love, and him in my heart. He wants me to be happy.

I needed James’ visit that day. I have thought about it often. I haven’t really learned how to meet his request in full yet, however, I do think I understand. I want to let go of the pain. But I am still in the process. And I think that is all right, too. I think learning to work through loss, and learning how to live with it, and come to the other side of grief, is an ongoing experience. I think I need to be patient with myself, and allow the process to take place naturally. I would love to rush it, and stop hurting so badly, but I don’t think that happens overnight, neither does it happen in just two years (for me.)

Although I hurt, and I still experience a broken heart, I appreciate the way Barbara Johnson puts it when she writes it has been a “hellish recovery” with hopes of becoming a “heavenly healing.” I hope to be able to “let go of the pain,” and preserve all that James means to me. My Father promises that He will show me the way. I will continue to trust in Him, and let Him be my Guide. I thank God for His voice, and allowing me to hear James’ whisper in the wind that day. I thank God that I was able to feel James’ hugs through the warmth of the sun. “I love you, buddy.

Loving you through eternity,”

Mom

On a Child’s Death

All heaven was in mourning,
the day that young man died;
When He closed His eyes, they said,
ten thousand angels cried.

The angels shed their many tears,
because He was God’s Son;
but there is a special sadness,
when God takes the very young.

At times like that, I question God,
why let a child die?
I cannot understand it,
and I need to ask Him why.

I, too, have heard the angels cry,
I’ve heard them cry first hand;
for I, too, gave up a child,
and I’ve tried hard to understand.

Yes, I received God’s comfort,
though I’m grateful, I want more;
I want reasons; I want meaning,
I am a parent who’s heart-sore.

God can give, and God can take,
I am well aware of this;
but, why my baby ... why my child?
Why did God put him on His list?

Did I love my child too much?
Was he too good for this old earth?
Had his purpose here been filled?
Was that why he was taken first?

I awake each day with questions,
I fall asleep at night, the same;
so many times I ask God why,
I’m both saddened and ashamed.

But then, in reflective moments,
when my prayers are most intense,
one word keeps going through my mind,
patience ... patience ... patience.

Maybe now is not the time,
to explain this great heartache;
even if I knew God’s reasons,
what difference would it make?

Can’t I just be grateful,
for any time we had?
Accept God’s action without question?
Why is that so very bad?

What’s my hurry ... why my pressure?
Is my faith not strong enough?
God will explain it when He’s ready,
surely I can trust that much.

God understands my broken heart,
He, too, gave up a Son;
He knows the pain of one lost child,
He weeps with me, and we are one.

Just as I talk to God each day,
I talk to my precious child;
I blow him kisses, and I say,
"See you, honey, in a while."

__Virginia Ellis - Copyright © 2000

HEAVEN'S PERFECT ORDER

It's your birthday again
and, like always, I find the tears
still so near the surface,
the sorrow still so overwhelming
at the thought that you are gone.

But, as I gaze at my favorite picture of you -
where you flash that huge, open-mouth smile -
I hear a message running through my mind.
It sounds like I imagine your voice would sound,
even though you spoke in life only with your eyes.

"It's time to change the way you think of me,"
the voice intones, "the way you view my journey.
Instead of crying when you look at my picture
and feeling sadness at all the difficulties I endured,
be overjoyed at how far I came and all I did in life."

"Think of all the people who were inspired by my enthusiasm
and challenged by my willingness and desire to participate.
It's time to be glad that I laughed so much more than I cried,
that I gleefully clasped hands with life and ran, in my mind,
through so many meadows; that I climbed so many mountains."

"Now is the moment in time to exchange sadness for joy,
to lay down regret, dry your tears and pick up thankfulness.
The wonder was never that I left too soon - all things leave.
The wonder is that I came, I loved, I dived into life, I exulted.
Both my coming and my going were in heaven's perfect order."

In Memory of Lance Porter Hopkins,

*son of Harold and Beverly Hopkins,
brother of Lisa, Lana, Lon and Larry Hopkins,
Midwest City, OK USA*

*I have continued to write my pseudo-poetry chronicling my journey
through the grief following our son, Lance's, passing in November
1999. His 30th birthday was July 20, 2005 and, as I have done
every year, I wrote a poem in his honor. We do miss our boy so,
but are finding some peace out here on the plains of Oklahoma.
I'm writing every day, working on a book about Lance and our
family's experience and changes after he came into our lives.
I'm calling the book, Warrior On Wheels.*

__Harold Hopkins, hbhop@cox.net

"Transformation" from Safe Passage

by Molly Fumia

"Mourning is the constant reawakening that things are now different." __Stephanie Ericsson

Grief is like a leaky faucet. Just when you think it's fixed, it comes back again, more bothersome than ever.

Perhaps we should not expect an end to the dripping of the faucet or of our tears: there will always be more where they came from. Instead, we can accept the comfort of a rhythmic letting go, knowing each droplet of grief has the potential to cleanse, to soothe, indeed, to nourish new life.

No, this was not "meant to be" and it is certainly not "better this way." How can a death ever be prescribed? How can the loss of hope be better than its fulfillment.

This only is meant to be; the tenderness and fidelity with which we remember the dead and endeavor to fulfill the hopes of the living.

The paradox of healing is that it is both holding on and letting go. We hold onto memories, and we let them go; we hold onto feelings, and we let them go. We hold onto an old way of being, because the self we still are resides there, and we let go to a new way of being so that the self can live on.

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

***There is no 'answer' to the
riddle of grief. But if one
person, alone, cannot hold
up under the crushing
weight of loss, the heaviest
burden can be lifted, or at
least lightened, when it is
shared."***

__ Johann Christoph Arnold

***People talk about closure. There is
no such thing. Closure would be to
go back to that moment in time,
and find that the person you loved
is still there, still alive.***

__Author unknown

As you read this, summer is coming to a close. Families return from vacation. Schools open their doors. A nation pauses to reflect on 9/11.

I found an old Sports Illustrated dated September 24, 2001 and in it a story of one family's search for its 22-year-old son who worked on the 104th floor of the north tower of the WTC. In a conversation with a friend, the father says, "They can rip off your arms and legs, Tom, you just don't want them taking your children. I love you, Tom. Give Sue and your kids a big hug for me."

Reflecting on those three short sentences, I couldn't help but think they mirror the way parents work through the pain following a child's death. Consider this. As bereaved parents we often startle those around us by speaking the uncensored, naked truth about the pain of losing a child. Thus, a Dad says, "They can rip off your arms and legs." We simply can't resist the relentless need to tell others whatever we are thinking and feeling whenever the need arises and for as long as the need persists. Occasionally, we may pause to express our thanks and our love to family and friends for their support. And sometimes, somehow, we are able to reinvest in life, by sending a big hug home to someone's kids.

The grieving and mourning we must do is rarely this quick or easy. The process is repetitious, it lacks stability. And, it's impossible to confine grief to an orderly timeline. But, in the course of living with grief, we pin our hopes on returning time and again to that reinvestment phase hoping that one day, life will be meaningful again.

This year, as reinvestment, I'm making quilts and comforters to be distributed by county nurses to single moms. On the back of each quilt I'll write "Jason's Gift." I'll add the year, but nothing more. I'll smile at the thought of new mothers wrapping their babes in my quilts and wondering, "who's Jason?" These are small comforts I'll cling to. The movement of time, the roller coaster ride of grief, the end and beginning of each season, all gently signal that change is recurring and enduring. In I'm Missing You, songwriter Dan Fogelberg penned a line "I'm getting closer, but I don't know what to." Grief moves us along, but for a long time, we don't know or care where we are going.

If, in the months ahead, the torment lessens and you experience episodes of hope, pass the feeling on in some small way in memory of your child. Many beneficial organizations have grown after a child's death (MADD, Amber Alert Now: The Polly Klaas Foundation, The Dougy Center, etc.) While it's inconceivable that good ever comes from a child's death, we can derive comfort when good things emerge because our child LIVED. This year, in those brief moments when grief is interrupted, give a gift in memory of your child's life. The gifts you receive in return may bring comfort and joy.

Here are a few suggestions:

- * *Hang a bird feeder and vow to keep it stocked all winter.*
- * *Buy school supplies you would have bought for your own child and donate to a needy child.*
- * *Make trick or treat bags and take them to foster children, senior neighbors or nursing homes.*
- * *In place of "Merry Christmas" cards, send a short note announcing your donation to a favorite charity, asking friends and family to match the donation in your child's memory.*
- * *Speak kind words to yourself and others.*
- * *Connect with a Compassionate Friend to provide support through the coming months. **You are not alone...***

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***The name of your child
Is a magic word,
Did you know?
At any given moment --
Whether busy or still --
Stop,
And think or say that name:
Something will happen
And whatever that something is,
Let it happen ---
Even if it be tears.
The name of your child
Is a magic word
To heal your heart.***

Author Unknown



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.

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 has written anything that you would like to share, please let the editor know. Please consider this request and submit your writings by the 10th of each month for inclusion in the next newsletter. **We look forward to hearing from our local talent.**