



NEWSLETTER

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information to help others be supportive.

January-February 2012

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YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the library of St. Mary's Parish Center, Route 16, Washington St., Holliston. The parish center is located between the church and the rectory. Our next two meetings will be on: **January 17th February 21st**

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. **Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last Monday or earlier if you plan to attend.**

Directions....On Route 16 (Main St.) going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at Tedeschi's Market on the left, take a left at the lights onto Winter St. The parish center is the last building before the church. Going south on Route 16 (East Main St.) after Sacred Heart Church on the left, bear right on Main St., continue past Dunkin' Donuts on the right, proceed to the next set of lights and take a right onto Winter St. There is parking on both sides of the street. Look for Compassionate Friends signs to meeting room. Our next two meetings will be on:

January 31st February 28th

WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings for those who wish to understand. Our objective is to help members of the community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers, and professionals to be supportive.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace, but whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2012

Weather Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:

**Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

* Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239
 * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533-9299

Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/620-0613
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087

The chapter address is:

The Compassionate Friends
 Metrowest Chapter
 26 Simmons Dr.
 Milford, MA 01757-1265

Regional Coordinator

Rick Mirabile
 11 Ridgewood Crossing
 Hingham, MA 02043
 Phone (781) 740-1135
 Email: Rmirabile@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends has a national office that supports and coordinates chapter activities. The national office can be reached as follows:

The Compassionate Friends
 P.O. Box 3696
 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
 Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010
 Fax (630) 990-0246

Web Page: www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

There are no dues or fees to belong to *The Compassionate Friends*. Just as our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, your voluntary, tax-deductible donations enable us to send information to newly bereaved parents, purchase pamphlets and books, contribute to the national chapter and meet other chapter expenses.

THANK YOU to the friends who help keep our chapter going with their contributions.

Love Gifts

Mrs. Minerva Ciccarelli in loving memory of her daughter *Cynthia Zottoli* on her birthday February 8th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son *Marc R. Pearlman* on his birthday December 14th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son *Alan R. Stuchins* on his birthday March 2nd.
 Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Bergeron in loving memory of their daughter *Doloren R. Bergeron*.

CELEBRATE LIFE

In memory of my loved one, I will celebrate his/her Life

Do a "Celebration of Life" scrapbook album showing for your loved one! Or help another bereaved parent do up a "Memory" scrapbook of favorite photos, drawings, etc.

Adopt an animal at your local zoo or shelter in his/her name. Or donate your time to an animal shelter. Also know that often they need pet food, newspapers, litter, old blankets and towels.

Whenever I donate even a small amount to a worthy cause I do it in honor of my child. Every year on his/her birthday I donate the amount of money of his/her age to a charity. You have a whole year to put some money away for this, in a special jar.

A woman in Illinois wrote a lady in Australia and offered to send up a balloon in memory of James. And then a woman in California said she would send up balloons, also. So on his birthday, in Australia, Illinois and California, colorful balloons hit the sky as a celebration of the life of James.



Our Children Remembered

As a regular feature, the newsletter acknowledges anniversaries of the deaths of our children/siblings and their birthdays. This issue covers the months of January and February. If information about your loved one is missing, incorrect or our chapter files are in error, please send the correct data, including your name, address, and telephone number, the name of your loved one and the birthday and date and cause of death to the newsletter editor, Ed Motuzas, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265.

Anniversaries

January

- ROY RANDALL
- MICHAEL CHINAPPI
- BRIANNA KIRBY
- BRIAN JAMES MOORE
- CHARLES PHILLIPS
- CAREN L. FIRTH
- JOSEPH F. SALITURO
- CHARLES E. PATTON

February

- SCOTT W. RUTH
- BRIAN PATRICK MARKEE
- R..J. SUTHERLAND
- COLIN M. DORAN
- ELIZABETH CASEY
- SHAWN P. MARKS
- JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
- KEVIN WASHBURN
- KAITLYN KENNEDY
- MICHAEL D. DUPONT
- JILLIAN A. DULAK

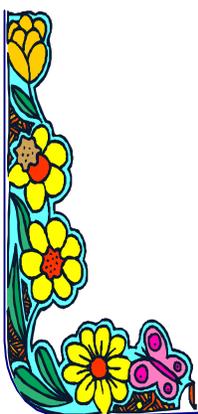
Birthdays

January

- KELSEY MULKERRINS
- JOAN M. PETERS
- JOHANY NADEAU
- CHRIS GRIFFITHS
- LAURA SWYMER – SHANAHAN
- BRYAN PLUNKETT
- RUTH A. ROMANS-BELITSOS
- PATRICK J. COOLE
- KRISTIN E. GRACI
- JASON BOGHOSIAN
- LARSAN GOBEH KORVILI

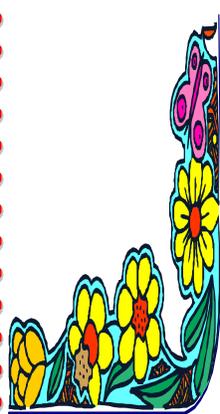
February

- LEA M. SIEBERT
- MATTHEW DENICE
- CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
- TODD M. CARSON
- DAVID PELLETIER
- NEAL PATRICK SPRING
- BEATRICE ELIZABETH HUDSON
- JILLIAN A. DULAK
- MICHAEL J. PAULHUS



CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously volunteered to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. The buttons are 2 1/4 inch diameter. If you have a photo of your child, you can e-mail it as an attachment to aksound@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. Al has a tool that will cut out the 2 1/4 inch diameter picture to fit it in the button. The circle is an approx. diameter of the button. A special thanks to **Al Kennedy.**





THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

"Siblings Walking Together." We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

Say Their Name

Time goes on. I don't know that I believe the "time heals" idea, but I do know now that time just keeps going and drags you along with it. Into the future you never imagined. Into a life without your sibling or child by your side. It's painful and unbelievable, we all know that.

It's been 3 years since my brother Jason died needlessly, and I think about him every single day. I say his name. Sometimes out loud, very often in my head. Sometimes it gets stuck in my throat, and when I say it to a few dear friends it's often accompanied by a choke and tears. When my kids say "Uncle Jason" I smile because they remember him, or at least they remember the idea of him because we talk about him. I realized one day when a friend told me she was "... thinking about Jason..." that it feels like a gift when others say his name to me. Even if it makes me cry, I love that they say his name and think of him and are willing to talk to me about him.

Which made me think. I should let people know I think about their kids and siblings. People I met at TCF meetings and 'met' their loved one through the stories we shared there. I think of them and say their names. Often when I'm alone, out in nature, I think of them and their families:

I say their names... Ginger, Ryan, Scott, Carei, Weston, Toni, Stephanie Catherine, Cody Orion, Julie, Mark, Tyler, Isabella, Gretchen, Rick, Will, Brad, Sarah, Josh, Tracey, Brandon, Brian...so many, too many. Sometimes out loud. Sometimes in my head. They are not forgotten. I say their names.

***By Kara Myers,
Jeffco TCF
Sister of Jason Lhotka***

Changes in the Family

by Karen Gibson

My sixteen year-old brother, Craig, died in 1985. He had no lingering illness; it was sudden. Though his death was not expected, there is a part of me that was not surprised. Because he was my youngest brother, I was old enough to remember when he was born. I helped take care of him; he was even my first baby-sitting job. But I had moved away from home before he began to grow into young adulthood. In my mind, he always was, and always will be, a child.

I don't know what it's like to lose a child. As a social worker, I have seen grief, but I have never been a parent who has lost a child. I imagine it must be the most horrible loss one could experience. It threatens traditional beliefs that the old die before the young, parents before children. I watched my parents go through the normal stages of grieving; denial, anger, guilt, depression and acceptance.

They're still working on the acceptance stage. I understand it can take parents years to complete this cycle. I've observed some interesting, parental reactions such as their trying to make sense of their son's death by turning to books and religion. I realize now that because he died, Craig will always be their "favorite" child. Often parents deny having a favorite, but it happens and it is normal. One child may be a favorite because he is the oldest, another because she is the most like one of her parents. At different times, different children will be favorites. But the death of a child can make that child the favorite. I would like to deny that this bothered me when I first realized it, but I can't. Finally, I understood that if Craig had become their favorite child, it did not change their feelings for me. They still love me as much as they ever did.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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I always thought of my father as the man in control who knew what to expect and how to take care of everything. I've seen a vulnerability in him the past three years. He probably would hate to be told that, but I think it makes him more human, loving and affectionate. My mother has been the amazing one. Even while grieving herself, she took care of my father, another brother and me. She took care of a terminally ill mother-in-law all by herself, too. The strength in this woman I've known all my life never ceases to amaze me. And I see the woman I want to be in twenty years.

I have not seen much written on what a sibling experiences when a brother or sister dies. Some siblings may not have seen each other for years at a time. I felt guilty for not spending much time with Craig after I moved away from home; for never having much time even when I was at home because seeing my friends was a priority. These are things I can't change, and as time passes, I begin to remember more of the good times.

Birth order plays a part in our personalities and how we react to situations. I am the oldest and only female of three children, Craig was the youngest. Though I love my other brother, Craig was always special, maybe because he was the baby and I looked at him maternally.

The decision to have my own baby was difficult because I know how people tend to "replace" loved ones. I stubbornly resisted the idea that my child would be another Craig, for me or anyone else. Perhaps I was afraid that I would lose my child, also. I now know there is only one Craig.

In our family there's not much talking about Craig these days, though his picture can be found all over my parents' home along with other family pictures. I believe my mother has some things she still needs to say, but she must be allowed to do that in her own time.

The anniversaries are the hardest. Craig would have had three birthdays since he died. The first year we all talked, but now no one mentions it much. We each remember it in our way. My way is by making a donation to an organization which helps children. Thus far I have given money to Special Olympics, Save the Children and UNICEF. Of course, the anniversary of his death is even harder.

None of us wants to recognize the date, but we do. It's a hard time for me, but it's getting easier. The first year, I called my mother, but I've avoided doing so since, afraid of making things worse.

This past year, a cousin was hospitalized the day before that anniversary date, so my mother and I ended up talking on that day anyway. The cousin happened to be a year younger than Craig would have been. In the middle of our conversation, my mother began crying and soon hung up the telephone. I felt helpless.

The next day, I bought a sympathy card (blank on the inside) and wrote how I felt. I wrote about missing Craig, about wanting to be able to do something, and about how much I love my mother. Not only did sharing this make me feel better, it brought me closer to my mother.

***Bereavement Magazine Inc.
8133 Telegraph Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80920-7169
(719) 282-1948 Fax (719) 282-18500***

Shared Thoughts Resolving to Care For Ourselves

We all approach the New Year very differently. Many cannot wait for the year our child or sibling died to pass, while others feel it separates them further from that person. But, the one thing most newly bereaved agree on, is that they are glad the holidays are over. For some the anticipation was far greater than the holiday itself. When pain and stress control our lives it is very difficult to be optimistic.

We must try to face the New Year with the thought that we will not always be in this much pain. As difficult as it is for us to believe, the pain does soften. One day you will find a tolerable life again. It will not be the same as it was, but in many ways our lives can be richer, for we don't fret over the trivial things we used to. We have learned the real values in life. January is the time of year we struggle to put all our trying events behind us, and begin the year with new expectations. Unfortunately, that does not apply to our grief. We cannot "get on with our life" until we have spent sufficient time resolving our grief. All too often, we choose to repress the most painful emotions. They are too difficult to share with others, and we feel too fragile to deal with them. Once unresolved issues become delayed grief, it can be very damaging, and much harder to resolve.

Perhaps, one of our New Year resolutions should be allowing ourselves freedom to grieve. We need to take time to read, attend meetings, phone a friend, cry, walk, eat healthier, and in general remove our name from the bottom of the list of people to care for, we need to place ourselves at the top of the list, making ourselves number one. We cannot always be a reservoir of strength; this may be the time to let others care for us.

We can't expect this to be a good year if our grief is fresh. But, we should expect good things as well as bad. We have survived the impossible ordeal of the death and funeral. We have learned to take one day at a time, and not to set our expectations too high. If a good day comes, cherish it.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST

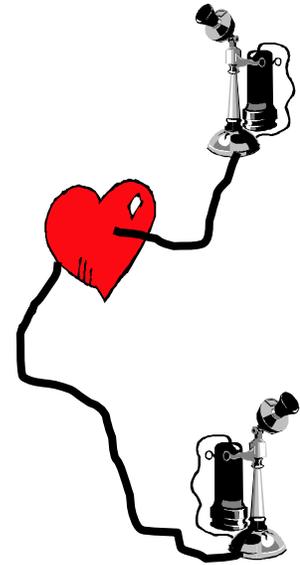


Phone Friends

Sometimes it helps to just be able to talk to someone; maybe at a time when pain or stress seems too much to bear. We maintain a list of Telephone Friends; people who are willing to listen, to commiserate, to give whatever support they can. In a time of need, feel free to call one of our Telephone Friends.

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942.
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,...**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087
- Gloria Rabinowitz.....**Gianna Rose Therese**, Still Born,.....(774)287-6497
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
- Linda Schafer.....**Kimberly Ann**, age 16, Now Childless,.....(508)393-4448

It is always useful to have more Telephone Friends; individuals who are willing to provide support and comfort via the telephone. The chapter provides guidance for those who want to help. When you listen and talk to the bereaved, you make a difference. A longer list of Telephone Friends increases the likelihood that someone will be available when needed. Call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 if you would like to be a Telephone Friend.



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It blended with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT....it had become lost in the pain of my loss.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of the scrapbooks. I found my own laughter and that of my friend, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts. Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet...as if when I opened the door, the giver of this Valentine would still be waiting!

Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting - waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have.

The snow had drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace is faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and through the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones die, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and the memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE - and what a sweet treat that will be!

Darcie Sims

**Lovingly lifted from Sunflower Chapter,
Wichita, KS**

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.

**From A Grief Observed
by C. S. Lewis**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



A very special thank you goes out to those people that facilitate our meetings every month. It is through their unselfishness in stepping up, that makes our chapter a safe place for the newly bereaved to get through the grieving process.

Thank you for your involvement and continued support.

Mitchell Greenblatt (Ian's Dad)
Linda Teres (Russell's Mom)
Rick Dugan (Larry's Dad)
Janice Parmenter (Tyler's Mom)
Judy Daubney (Clifford Crowe's Mom)

Death Takes a Back Seat

There was a time, not so long ago, when the only focus I had was on the death of my child. The loss of his life and his absence from the physical plane swept over me like a tsunami. I lived his death every waking moment. The sorrow was devastating, and the waves of pain kept coming and coming, crashing over me, with no end in sight.

Each of us has experienced our grief in a unique way, and each of us has done what is necessary to cope. But at some point in my grief, I began perceiving my son's death as only one moment in his life. I believe that was when I began to find hope.

The shock had worn off; the tsunami of pain had subsided. I began remembering the events and everyday activities with joy instead of sorrow. I remembered his birth, his first steps, his first word, and his development as a toddler and then as a young child. I remembered his first day of school. I remembered the anxiety I felt as he blithely slipped out of the car and walked up that big sidewalk by himself for the first time. "I love you, Mom," he said as he grabbed his lunchbox, crayons and tablet. He looked so cute and confident that day. He knew he was going to learn to read.

I remembered his trips to the barber with my dad, the fun they had together, the first ride in Grandpa's new convertible, the obvious love they shared. I remembered the day my dad cried when Todd asked him, "Grandpa, have you ever loved someone so much that you just want to be a part of them? That's how much I love you." He was six years old, Dad was the hardened WWII Marine, and Dad's eyes filled with tears as the impact of this tremendous breakthrough my son had given him touched him. Dad was always a gentler, more open man after that innocent statement of emotion by his grandson.

I remembered the many Christmas celebrations, the anticipation that filled Todd's heart each year. The holidays were very special to him.

I remembered our move to Houston when Todd was just 12 years old; he got a paper route, a heavy duty Schwinn bike and he was earning money for his first car. Every Sunday I would drive him on his paper route at about 4:00 am because the papers were too heavy for the bike. Todd would make my coffee and wake me up, and off we would go. Those were special times when it was just Todd and I talking easily about his life, his dreams and the future. I thought about Todd's high school years, his graduation, the promise of the future and the tears in my dad's eyes as he watched the ceremony marking yet another milestone in his special grandson's life. I remembered the birth of Todd's son, the nights we sat talking while he fed his baby, and the discussions about the best way to raise a child. I remember the day he married, the birth of each of his daughters, the deep love and devotion he had for them.

Then I recalled the day when Todd received his MBA from Texas A&M. My dad stood proudly in the aisle watching the ceremony and listening to the Aggie fight song, tears in his eyes as he looked at his grandson, grown-up and ready for life.



I remembered my son's first house, a fixer upper. My husband and I gave him money for the down payment and he put plenty of sweat equity into it. After his daughters were born, he chose to move to a larger home, selling his first home with no small amount of sadness. For this was where his adult life started. This home had marked his first real step in responsibility and the world of the adult.

All the good times come flooding back now, the memories as vivid as the moments were in time. Yes, there is still sadness, but my heart tells me that I must celebrate the 35 years Todd had on this earth. He lived a good life, laughed, loved and worked hard. He was a lot like his grandpa in that respect.

Now when I tell a story about Todd, there is a returning joy in my heart. And now, each day when I come home from work, I remember how good it was to see him after a stressful day and to reach out and hug my child....whether he was 3 years old or 35 years old. We have a bond, a bond I have felt every day since his birth. The bond between mother and child does not end at death.

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



NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



We continue to update our mailing list. We want everyone who reads our newsletter to receive it; however, mailing costs make this update necessary. We want to send it where it is being read. Your donations allow us to print and mail this newsletter and to reach out to hundreds of parents and siblings.

Please fill out this form now if you wish to be added to or removed from our mailing list. This form should be filled out annually. If we don't hear from you in a year's time you will be notified through the newsletter that your name will be removed from our mailing list unless we hear from you.

If you are able to make a donation at this time, it will be gratefully received. Please mail to address below.

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

I (do___) (do not___) wish to continue receiving the TCF newsletter.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Parent / Sibling / Grandparent___) (professional___)

(Donation included___) Make checks payable to "The Compassionate Friends" or TCF

If there are any errors in spelling or other information in this newsletter, please call it to my attention so that I may correct it. Please use this page to send back information, reverse side is addressed for your convenience.

Mail to: TCF Metrowest, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

PLEASE ADVISE US OF ADDRESS CHANGES TO INSURE YOUR RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER, THEY ARE NOT FORWARDED BY THE POST OFFICE.

Fold & Tape _____

The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
26 Simmons Dr.
Milford MA 01757-1265

Fold & Tape _____



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

Every time I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." Those wishes, unfortunately, can never come true. Another wish I hear is "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

 I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important.

 If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.

 I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.

 I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.

 I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.

 Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.

 I wish you knew all of the "crazy" grief reactions that I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.

 I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent".

 I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.

 Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you would tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.

 It is normal and good that most of us re-examine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.

 I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches, and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.

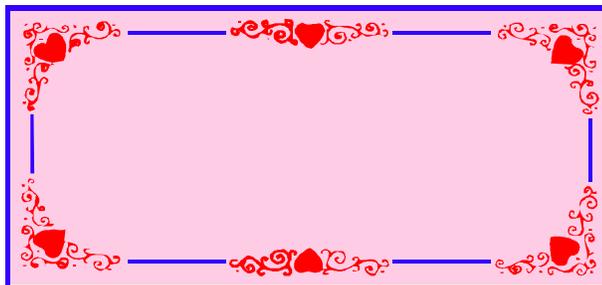
 I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me - maybe you'll still like me.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us, or we can sit and wait, I believe our children would want us to help the world understand.

Elaine Grier
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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person - or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

*We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK...** what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”*