



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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.

Place your message here. For maximum impact, use two or three sentences.



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January-February 2016

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 19th February 16th

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford parish center at 17 Winter St. **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 26th February 23rd

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. ©2016

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.

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
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

Regional Coordinator
 Tom Morse
 66 Atwood Avenue
 Middleboro, MA 02346
 Phone (508) 572-3038
tjmorse521@gmail.com

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

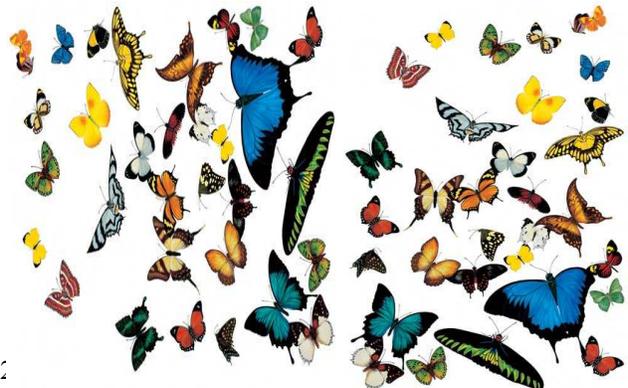
TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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

Ms. Katie Murphy in loving memory of her son **Shane L. Merrifield** on his birthday December 6th.
 Mrs. Marilyn Rossetti in loving memory of her daughter **Christina M. Rossetti** on her anniversary December 1st.
 Mrs. Beverly Marks in loving memory of her son **Shawn P. Marks** on his anniversary February 15th.
 "Still missed so much in my heart forever. Forever young. Love Mom."
 Mrs. Alice Horigan in loving memory of her daughter **Donna M. McHugh** on her birthday October 16th and her anniversary September 18th.
 Mrs. Minerva Ciccarelli in loving memory of her daughter **Cynthia Zottoli** on her birthday February 8th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Scott Sr. in loving memory of their son **Daniel J. Scott Jr.** on his anniversary February 9th.
 Mr. Donald DiLorenzo in loving memory of his son **Christopher D. DiLorenzo** on his anniversary January 10th and his birthday February 23rd.
 Mr. & Mrs. Burton and Family in loving memory of their son and brother **Alan S. Stuchins** on his anniversary November 5th.
 Mrs. Susan Sannicandro in loving memory of her son **Frank (Frankie) Topham**.





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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
CHRISTOPHER D. DiLORENZO
EVAN M. RODRIGUES
JONATHAN BRET LOVEJOY
KEVIN S. JOHNSON
CAREN KING FIRTH

February

MICHAEL F. McDANIEL Jr
DANIEL J. SCOTT Jr.
MATTHEW SHEA
SHAWN P. MARKS
JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
KAITLYN KENNEDY

Birthdays

January

SAMANTHA AMY MICHAUD
CHRIS GRIFFITHS
DANICA SCHNAIBLE
MICHAEL F. McDANIEL Jr.
THOMAS J. JOHNSON Jr.
PATRICK THOMAS SIBLEY

February

CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEA
LEA M. SIEBERT
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
RICHARD J. LaJOIE
MATTHEW SHEA
DENNIS NIELD
STACEY ANN MAHONEY
CHRISTOPHER D. DiLORENZO
MICHAEL JAY ANDERSON
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS
ANDREW DELPRETE

Other Area TCF Chapters

MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
Chapter Leader Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
Worcester Chapter
Chapter Co-Leaders: Lisa Holbrook
(774) 482-3073.....sixholes@charter.net
Mary Vautier....
(508) 393-7348.....mjvautier@msn.com
Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com

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)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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.

For My Brother

Memories are hard to find.
It seems so long ago since you have died
I do remember a dream I once had
You were standing in a ray of light
I went to hug you but you fell through my arms
Why did you leave so fast?
I wanted to say goodbye.
I still see your smile in the clouds
I still hear your whispers in the wind
When I think back to how much I loved you
It makes me wonder how I dealt with the pain
Being so young and fragile at the ripe age of seven
A piece of me was torn out from my flesh
My heart had been strangled and left to die
Why did you have to leave so fast?
I wanted to say goodbye.

Gina Sannicandro "Sister of Frankie"
Metrowest Chapter of TCF, Milford, MA

A Part of Me

YOU were not just my brother, but **YOU** were my friend. **YOU** were supposed to be here always, or till the world came to an end.
I know that we argued and seemed to disagree, but I could always count on you to be there for me.
YOU may be gone from this world I see, but you will always be a part of me.

Donna Montville
TCF, Siblings Group, Gardner, MA

I Remember You

I remember the way you laughed,
You meant so much to me
I remember the way you smiled,
You were the way a Christian should be
You were so smart,
Your presence could light up any room
We all miss you so much,
We wonder why you left so soon
Memories of you make me smile,
While others make me cry
I wish you could have stayed for one more day,
Now all I have is the question, "Why?"
The day that you were called
Was sad for everyone,
We tried and tried to save you
But nothing could be done
I know that you are in Heaven,
And I know that you are free
But when I'm sad I stop and wonder,
Do you remember me?
Now all that I have left,
Are memories of what you would do
Some are happy, some are sad,
But I remember you.

In memory of my brother
Dalton William Knauss
January 20, 1984 - March 13, 1999
By Sara Knauss
TCF, Phoenix, AZ



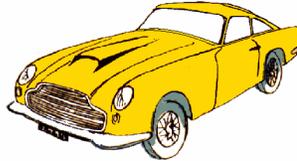
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Memories Surround Me

I have learned that there is a comfort in keeping my son here, beside me, sharing my life's journey as he once did. No, he is not here in a physical sense. He is here in my memories and in my daily life. I keep his presence alive on the earthly plane.

In my home are pictures that remind me of my child's life. A picture in an announcement.....a beautiful, sleeping baby boy who is just one day old. Next to that is one of my son standing beside his GTO. Now I can relive any year of my son's 35 years of life. Whether it is high



school graduation or graduation from Texas A&M, there is Todd...smiling, happy, radiating the joy of his accomplishments. He's in the pool as a teenager and then on another shelf, he's holding his daughters, one in each arm, as he stands in that same pool. Smiling, always smiling. Todd loved life. He looked forward to each new adventure. This is portrayed in all the pictures displayed and those that are yet to be brought out from their hiding places.

In my bedroom is a wood shop project that Todd made for me when he was in eighth grade. It is an alpaca, which rests on a wall stand. Todd made these treasures with his hands; his name is forever etched into both pieces. Each week I lovingly dust that alpaca and its shelf and remember how proud my son was of his first woodshop accomplishment.

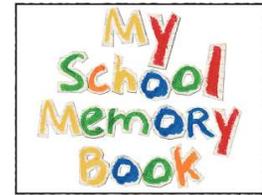
And then there are the projects from the "macramé summer." Todd made a lovely plant holder for me and then he boldly went to a large wall design that is something akin to a dream catcher. It has always been displayed in the atrium of my home. Each time I walk past it, I reach out and touch it and feel the love that went into this creation. Ironically, I now have another dream catcher attached to the one that Todd made. This is the dream catcher with his picture and my words of remembrance that were written for the National Compassionate Friends Conference in Oklahoma City. I touch them both now....remembering my beautiful child.

In my bedroom is a Queen Ann desk. This was purchased and refinished by my son during his "wood working summer" in high school. He painstakingly sanded and worked the wood to a smooth finish. Then he used fine sand paper and later steel wool to finish the staining and glossing process. It is a beautiful desk with a fold out writing area, tiny drawers and hidden compartments. I keep much in this desk. Every night as I am getting ready for bed, I touch Todd's desk.

In 1994 Todd and I went out for Mother's Day dinner and later we stopped and picked out a new washing machine. Todd recommended the Amana. I trusted his judgment. I bought the Amana. Each week when I do laundry, I wipe off the washing machine and remember that shopping trip, his words of "keep it simple, Mom, and you won't have to worry about repairs" and consider that he gave me some good advice and a wonderful memory that day.

Other items come to mind each day. In my home office is a plant pot made by the eight year old hands of my son. Small pieces of fabric were lovingly glued to the pot to create an interesting look. I have kept that pot all these years. He was so proud of it; that's a Mother's Day present I'll not forget. Each time I look at it, I think of Todd.

Next to my kitchen phone is a pencil holder that Todd made in second grade. It has been in use since then. It's simply part of who I am and will always be. Each week I clean out the inside and replace the pens and pencils. One of the pencils, never used, contains the words "It's



a Boy!" on it. That is the pencil that Todd gave me when his son was born. He was so proud of his baby boy. What a great father he was. Memories are everywhere in my home and my office, in my car and even in places that I go. Todd was here, we did this there....I remember when we all met at Ritter's Ice Cream every Saturday night to look at the other collector cars. When I drive by there, I can see Todd, GTO gleaming, hood up, talking with other aficionados, holding a child in one arm, gesturing with the other hand to demonstrate one thing or another.

At night, after I touch the desk that was so lovingly restored, I look at the wall next to my bed. Two reproductions of German paintings brighten this wall. These are pictures that Todd bought for me when he was in Germany on an exchange program with Texas A&M. I always look at them as I begin my reading, and then, before I turn out the light, I look at them and think about my son and tomorrow. I remember Todd's glorious European adventure, smile at the joy that is his life and turn out the light. These pictures are the last things I see before I sleep. Good night, Todd. I'm so glad you gave me so much of yourself to treasure, but I wish you were here. Your mom misses you.

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



“Butterfly in the Snow”

I knew that the further away we got from Minnesota I should have felt the weight of the world lift off of my shoulders. Normally someone who was going on an 18-day vacation, away from the stresses and strains of work and everyday life, on their way to the beautiful West Coast should feel that way. But the events of the past few years made it difficult to relax and I felt the muscles in my neck and back become tenser as we journeyed on. I could sense that my son Dan picked up on my anxieties, as I was sure he had his own. He was seated next to me and I tried to flash a smile of reassurance to him that really belied my fears and the growing knot that I felt in the pit of my stomach.

Our uneasiness was justified. This was the first time we were on vacation in a little over four years. That family vacation had ended in unspeakable tragedy. Having spent the day of my 45th birthday at Daytona Beach, my husband, daughter Kristina (her nickname was Nina), son Dan and myself were on our way to my celebratory birthday supper. Only three-quarters of a mile from our destination, a drunk driver fell asleep at the wheel, crossed the median, hit the side of the car where my precious and beloved 15 ½ year old daughter, Nina, was sitting and she was killed instantly. From that moment, life as we knew it was irrevocably changed. It was the initiation into unfamiliar territory and the beginning of the roller coaster ride of emotions we were to experience. We were about to be educated in the school of grief; a place we never wanted to enter. From that day forward I swore that I would never, ever attempt to go on another family vacation. The memory of that one was painfully and eternally burned into my mind. I was fearful that if it could happen once, it could happen again. In my experiences along the grief pathway and those I had become acquainted with while on that journey, I came to learn that no one was immune to tragedy repeating itself.

Shortly after Nina died, I became involved in “The Club” that no one wants to be a member of. I became a part of The Compassionate Friends, a self-help support group for bereaved parents. Membership is a parent’s worst nightmare to someone who has never lost a child, but to those of us who have it is a lifesaver. With their support and friendship, I could uncurl myself from the fetal position and begin to think, feel and cope with life again. There I met people that I know will be my life-long friends; people who had somehow even survived the loss of more than one child, and some that had lost their only child. Each of their stories were incredibly heartbreaking: children “gone too soon” from cancer, congenital defects, accidents, house fires, suicide, AIDS, homicide – a never-ending list of sorrow. But somehow they carried on and gave back what they had received tenfold to the newly bereaved.

They were such an inspiration and I knew that in time I would want to give back as well.

A few years after my precious daughter’s death, I became co-leader and newsletter editor to our TCF Chapter in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Compassionate Friend’s National Conference was being held in Portland, Oregon in June of 1999. I had always heard how lovely Oregon was and for the first time considered even attempting another family vacation. Though I was apprehensive, I wondered how I could allow my feelings to dictate that my son Dan would never experience with his family the beauty that this bountiful country of ours has to offer. I also justified it by rationalizing that it was more a “business trip”, to receive ideas to help my other Compassionate Friends, than a pleasure trip.

My parents generously offered to take Dan and me through some of the most gorgeous country in America. We traveled to Glacier, Yellowstone and the Grand Teton National Parks, with their “purple mountains majesty.” We saw the rugged and rocky, lighthouse studded spectacular Oregon coastline and the breathtakingly gargantuan redwood trees in Jedidiah Smith Redwood Forest in California. Though I was awestruck and taken in by all the beauty, inwardly I still harbored doubts. In my prayers at night I would speak to Nina and ask for her approval. “Is this all right with you, Nina, after what happened on our last family vacation? Please somehow let me know that I am doing the right thing.”

The day before we were to arrive in Portland, we made a stop at another National Park. I don’t think I was at all prepared for my surroundings at Crater Lake National Park. To say the crystalline sapphire-blue waters of the lake skirted by rolling mountains, volcanic peaks, and evergreen forests left me breathless would have been a gross understatement. As we were not properly dressed for the cold weather and snow, my parents, Dan and I shivered as we stood above the snow line overlooking this awe-inspiring sight. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a tiny unique butterfly appeared. With the snowy backdrop, it looked out of place. It fluttered near us and circled the four of us several times, but stayed close by. I watched its flight until it disappeared as quickly as it arrived.

I felt a smile cross my lips. A warm glow overtook my entire being and the tenseness in my body diminished. I had already drawn my own conclusion as to whom this unlikely visitor was, but did not share my thoughts with anyone else. The four of us stood quietly for a few minutes until my father broke the silence. “You know who that was, don’t you?” he quietly remarked. I stated that I knew who I thought it was. “Butterflies can’t fly up here in the cold air at this elevation,” he continued. “That little butterfly was Nina. She came to remind us that she is with us always and wherever we are... and that this is the kind of exquisite beauty and so much more that she experiences in heaven every day.”

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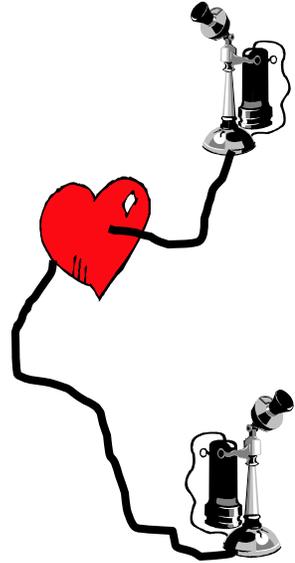
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan C. Plunkett**, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106



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.

(continued from last page)

The highlight of my trip, a sign from my precious daughter, who came with the answer to my question. And to remind us all that the best is yet to come.

Cathy L. Sehuetter
TCF. St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

The Compassionate Friends is for Sharing

Many people may think that meetings of The Compassionate Friends consist of bereaved people who sit and cry most of the evening, but that is certainly a misconception. It is normal to shed tears as we talk about our child's death, and we would expect a newly bereaved person to cry. We understand that completely. But we don't just sit and cry. Would you believe that most of the time we spend in our sharing group circle we may enjoy hearing others' stories about their children, or even sharing our own? Our meetings are usually about our memories, our questions and also telling what has helped us to cope with it all. We all have ideas that we share with others in the hope that they may reach a point of "good memories" instead of bad memories of the child's death.

Yesterdays
Memories
are tomorrows
Treasures

A support group should be very comforting and welcoming to those who attend and should always have non-judgmental members. We are less concerned at how the child died (even though we do care) and we are **more** concerned that we be there for the parents, siblings or grandparents who need us. They have a desire to talk and share about their loved one. We want to let them lean on us in their time of pain, just as we had others before us who let us lean on them. It does come full circle.

Jackie Wesley
TCF, East Central Indiana and Miami-Whitewater Chapters

Cleaning Out Her Room

The other day we cleaned out our daughter's room. Time had remained the same in this room for two and a half years.

All that we needed was for our 8 year old Stephanie to come home! Come home to a room filled with games, books, toys, all the memories that today remind us of how special her life was.

We caressed lovingly the sailor cap she wore at her last dance recital.

Her first "wooby" now scraps of cloth. but so soft and familiar, Stef refused to give it up until one day we hid it, told her it was lost, and replaced it with a new one. How soft it now felt in our hands.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Her “Skip It,” purchased only a few days before she died. How excited she was! “Thank you mommy, thank you, thank you! I love you! I love you!” How long her mom had searched to find one for her. How short the time she was able to use it.

Her Rainbow Brite sleeping bag, given to her one Christmas Eve. She slept for weeks on the floor in that sleeping bag. How much it meant to her.

Her baton. Her Burger King watch. Her “Sweet Pea.” Her stuffed animals . . . They all screamed “*I was Stef’s!*”

Clothes were folded . . .

Tears flowed . . .

A new baby is coming to live in Stef’s room. We know Stef would approve. If ever a guardian angel exists, we know it is Stef. She will watch over her little sister.

Her love remains to fill this room.

It will never be empty!

Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI
In Memory of my daughter, Stephanie Loder

7 Things I’ve Learned Since the Loss of My Child

Child loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her “good” days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are needed. If you’d like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts forever, here is what I’ve learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

1). Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased children as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours, the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn’t so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn’t stop me from saying my son’s name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go.

Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn’t make him matter any less. My son’s life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2). Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds, a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we’ve never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It’s a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

3). I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no “moving on,” or “getting over it.” There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no exilir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time where I won’t think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone, should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born, an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered forever.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

4). It’s a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I’ve ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I’ve ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship, that we could have met another way, any other way but this. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE (THIS PAGE WILL BE PRINTED EVERY OTHER EDITION)

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

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

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 8)

Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining the club. If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a life force to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

5). The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to "move on," or "stop dwelling," from well intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains.

The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

6). No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why every holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two, anything, than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one or more of your precious children. That is why holidays are always and forever hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand.

Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

7). Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it's both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again, when the joy comes, however and whenever it does, it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply: the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but because of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all "worth" it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say thank you, thank you, thank you. Because there is nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing— I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given.

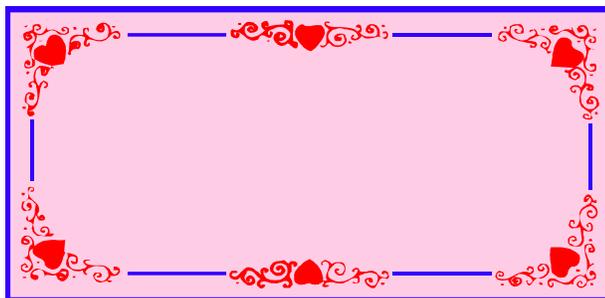
Even death can't take that away.

by Angela Miller

(Author Angela Miller is a writer, speaker and grief advocate who provides support and solace to those who are grieving the loss of a child. She is the author of *You Are the Mother of All Mothers: A Message of Hope for the Grieving Heart*, founder of the award-winning community *A Bed For My Heart*, writer for the *Open to Hope Foundation* and *Still Standing Magazine*. Angela writes candidly about child loss and grief without sugar coating the reality of life after loss. Her writing and her book have been featured in *Forbes*, *Psychology Today*, *MPR*, *Blog Talk Radio*, *Open to Hope Radio* and *Writerly*, among others. When she's not writing, traveling, or healing hearts, you can find Angela making every moment count with her two beautiful, blue-eyed boys.)

My apologies to Marilyn Rossetti for the omission of her daughter *Christina M. Rossetti* anniversary December 1st. in the November / December issue. I guess the date got lost in Cyberspace.

The Compassionate Friends
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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.”*