



## 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.*

**July-August 2013**

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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:

**July 16th August 20th**

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:

**July 30th August 27th**

### 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. ©2013**

### *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

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### 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

### 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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Chapter Web Page**  
**[www.tcfmetrowest.com](http://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.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Tocchi in loving memory of their son **William (Billy) Tocchi**. Each day my prayer to you. "A beautiful life that came to an end. He died as he lived, everyone's friend. In our hearts, a memory will always be kept of one we loved and will never forget."  
 Mr. & Mrs. Allen Kennedy in loving memory of their daughter **Kaitlyn E. Kennedy** on her birthday July 24th. "We love and miss you always."

Mr. & Mrs. John Vautier in loving memory of their son **Corey S. Vautier** on his anniversary May 6th. Gone four years, but never forgotten.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael McWhorter in loving memory of their daughter **Alyssa A. Haden**.

Ms. Janet R. Raneri in loving memory of her son **Major Robert M. Raneri** on his anniversary June 26th.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Boudreau in loving memory of their son **Nicholas L. Boudreau** on his birthday June 19th.

Mr. & Mrs. David Holland in loving memory of their son **Kevin Holland** on his birthday August 22nd.

Mrs. Virginia Lombard in loving memory of her son **Robert Lombard Jr.** on his birthday July 22nd.

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Tepper in loving memory of their daughter **Leah Catherine Tepper**.

## Chapter Notes

There will be a special meeting of Compassionate Friends on August 8, 2013 at St Mary's Church Holliston. The subject will be "Psychic Abilities."

Ruth Larkin is a psychic medium who offers free readings to families who have suffered the loss of a child.

Ruth is certified in integrated energy therapy and is a Reiki master and teacher. She explains that every cell in the body is energy, since energy cannot be destroyed, it keeps going as spirit when we die. It's all about energy and vibrations.

If you have an interest in being a part of this meeting please call me at (508) 473-4239 or e-mail me at [headly@comcast.net](mailto:headly@comcast.net) I'll give you the time. I'll need a count to acquire enough space. Refreshments will be available and there will be an opportunity to ask questions.



# 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, July and August. 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*

#### *July*

- WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
- DANA NICOLE THERRIEN
- SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
- JAMES P. NUGENT
- 2<sup>ND</sup> LT. USMC IAN THOMAS McVEY
- CHAD M. G. DIGREGORIO
- STACY M. LYONS
- JESSE APPELL
- TIMOTHY G. RECKERT
- DIXON BERGMAN

#### *August*

- WILLIAM H. BARDOL JR.
- RITA HUDSON-CARNEY
- ALICIA M. WARD
- CYNTHIA A. RENAUD
- OLIVER STRASENBURGH
- MATTHEW DENICE
- KRISTA SCHONBERG
- NICOLE FRADE
- BRYLEIGH ELIZABETH VALLEY
- JOAN M. PETERS

### *Birthdays*

#### *July*

- STACY M. LYONS
- KERI L. O'NEIL-DERBTSHIRE
- ROY RANDALL
- JUSTIN BAILEY
- DANA NICOLE THERRIEN
- SHAWN P. MARKS
- CHRISTOPHER SHEA
- ROBERT L. LOMBARD JR.
- KAITLYN KENNEDY

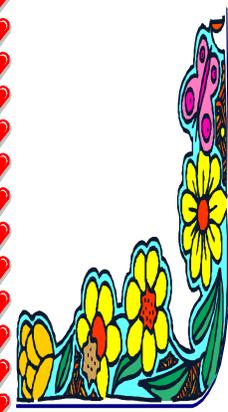
#### *August*

- CHRISTIAN ALBEE
- WILLIAM TOCCHI
- SUSAN A. QUINLIVAN
- MATHEAU VIRCA
- JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
- JOSHUA GILBERT
- BRYLEIGH ELIZABETH VALLEY
- LILIANNA PROVOST
- KEVIN HOLLAND
- CLIFFORD CROWE
- GREG BRUNO
- DAVID A. JONES
- ELIZABETH CASEY



**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](mailto: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.

## ***Real Men Do Cry***

On January 19, 1996 my life was forever changed when my brother, Carl died. I will never forget the moment a family friend called me out of my chemistry class to give me the awful news of Carl's death. Time stood still as I listened in disbelief as I was told how he was found at the bottom of a radio tower. Those few endless minutes triggered a series of painful recollections and realizations which surface from time to time in quiet moments as well as surfacing suddenly at inopportune times. Such painful recollections do not occur as frequently today as they did in the days and weeks following his death. Others who have walked through the early days of grief and those currently walking amidst the swirling haze of early grief know the continual bombardment of pain and memories as the permanence of loss is painfully realized.

My early days of grief brought me home for a week away from my new existence as a college freshman which seemed suddenly so distant. While home for the week I sought to escape my thoughts by watching television, such brief respites from my intense pain were not only necessary, but few and far between. As I walked into the den, I caught my father sitting on the edge of the couch in the grip of his own painful moment of grief. I could see him facing the stark realization that his son would never again walk through the door, ask to go deep sea fishing, try to weasel a couple of bucks before rushing out the door. I sat quietly down beside him, not quite knowing if he would be receptive or embarrassed by my presence. I slipped an arm up over his shoulders which began to shake silently before my arm could even come to rest. The silent shakes of his shoulders gave way to heart wrenching, gut churning, whole body sobs.

I reached up across his chest to grasp his opposite shoulder and lowered my cheek onto the shoulder nearest me; feeling his tears fall across my forearm. I couldn't tell you how long we sat there sharing our tears, our pain.

It was the first time I had ever seen my father truly break down, the first time I witnessed something more than a single stoic tear trickle down his cheek. As I look back on the experience I recognize it as a turning point in our relationship. His intense pain did not create for me a greater burden in my grief. I was not frightened. My world did not cave in because my father allowed me to see him grieve. In all honesty, my world was enriched because my father not only allowed me to see him grieve, he allowed me to grieve with him, beside him in a moment which laid the foundation of our current relationship. His actions let me know it is alright for me to allow myself to feel pain, but to share it with my family. I do not hesitate to call my parents, or show up at their doorstep when I am desperately missing Carl, or grieving the loss of our unrealized future. I desperately want Carl to know my daughter; to be an uncle to her just as much as I desperately desire to be an aunt to the children he will never have. Grief is not only missing what was, but missing what would have been.

I am grateful to my father for showing me I am not alone in my grief. Only time can lessen the pain of grief, but my pain is more bearable when I share my grief. I have grown up with the knowledge of people who believe real men don't cry. Maybe they haven't lost a son. Maybe they haven't had a chance to be an example to the daughters who share their grief. As General Schwarzkopf said in an interview with Barbara Walters when asked if he was afraid to cry, "I'm afraid of any person who won't cry."

***Carrie Kears***

***In Memory of my brother, Carl***



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### *Precious Moments Can Last Forever*

Peace, love and understanding radiate from the warm and compassionate face of Samuel Butcher, the creator of Precious Moments. Immediately recognized by their large teardrop eyes and angelic appearance, the children he draws spread continuing messages of hope in a world too often filled with despair.

But, there was a time when the creative juices didn't flow, the pen didn't move, and the paint brush hardened in its resting place.

The emotional devastation Sam felt following the death of his 27 year-old son Philip is still vividly remembered despite the passage of almost a decade.

"I was totally in shock and completely out of it," he recalls. "I couldn't cry, I could hardly think. I didn't know what to do."

On business in the Philippines when he learned of his son's death from an auto accident, Sam somehow found the presence to telephone his daughter-in-law, Connie, who made a difficult request.

"She said Dad, I know this has got to be hard for you. We've heard you preach and speak in churches for years. I don't believe Philip would feel comfortable with anyone but you giving the message at his funeral."

Although dealing inwardly with his own grief, Sam was able to find the strength to deliver the funeral message, drawing from the book of Isaiah. "I remember saying '*And He shall give you beauty for ashes. Many of us ask how beauty can arise from the ashes of this tragedy. We may not know—but it will, because God said it.*'"

Sam wore the outward mask so many bereaved parents feel they must when in public. "I went through some difficult, difficult times," he admits. "I'm very personal with people and I believe a lot of them respect me for that. They come to me to share their feelings.

"Because I have such a strong sense of responsibility, I just felt I couldn't fall apart in front of them. I had to be strong for them. I felt that way toward my family. They were all expressing their feelings of grief while believing I was okay. I really wasn't, but I portrayed to them that I was.

"But with the people I knew very well, I was a very different person, a person out of control, a person who went through deep depression and expressed it. And then it was a person who said, enough is enough...I've got to carry on. I've got to accomplish what I believe the Lord has called me to do and I have to snap out of this, because I have a responsibility to God and also to myself and to the people who come to Precious Moments."

The peaceful Precious Moments Chapel, nestled in the green meadows of the beautiful Ozarks of Missouri, is a haven for visitors seeking a quiet place of beauty and inspiration.

Only a little over 10 years since the Chapel opened, several million people have viewed the more than 50 Precious Moments murals handpainted by Sam Butcher depicting the Bible's Old Testament stories and New Testament parables. The Chapel has become a life's work for the artist, who never expects it to be completely finished.

But a transition in the nature of the Chapel took place as the Precious Moments creator wrestled with his own suddenly personal demon, parental grief. The need surfaced within Sam Butcher to remember in paint a son whose unexpected death had left such a painful emptiness within his father's heart.

"It was then I decided to do 'Philip's Room' and it was in that room where I was able to sort out and work through all of those things. It became a sweet experience because I could paint the picture of the little medic, which Philip was, and I could paint his little moose (which he always blamed when anything bad happened) and all of those things of his childhood. This was a tremendous healing experience for me."

Philip's father remembers him first as a child, and then a young man, who was "quite different" from his six brothers and sisters.

"He was very, very introspective. He had a very deep understanding, he was very sensitive. He was also one of the funniest, cutest kids I ever knew. All of my children loved Philip, because he was *that kind of boy*. He had a very loving, an openly loving, heart.

"The last time I saw him he said 'okay, we're going to have a meeting.' So he called together all his brothers and me and said '*I've got these, but you can't open them until I say go.*' He gave us each a small box. When we opened them, inside each was the same beautiful ring. And Philip said '*I had these rings made for you, they're all identical so that if any of us are far away you'll always remember each other.*' He was a boy with a heart too big for his size." That special ring never leaves his father's finger.

Philip's favorite song, *What a Wonderful World*, is remembered by his father as particularly fitting.

"That's the picture of Philip to a 'T'. It was just a wonderful world to him. Everything was great. He was the teddy bear of the family. Isn't it amazing how the Lord will even use a song? If someone were to say, describe Philip completely, I suppose I'd just say *listen to that song.*"

When he was younger, Philip had worked at Precious Moments, eventually leaving to become an army medic. Returning to head PMC, the division entrusted to create the popular Precious Moments dolls, he worked hand in hand with several of his brothers and sisters. Because the six surviving siblings were all close to Philip, they were deeply affected by his death. And they dealt with the loss in different ways, recalls their father.



## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Sam did not forget the grief of his children either as he included them in 'Philip's Room.' That painting portrays an empty bed surrounded by Philip's wife Connie and their children to the left, while on the right are Philip's brothers and sisters, mother and father. Above the bed is Sam's perception of Philip being welcomed into Heaven by his newfound friends as those left behind shed earthly tears from the separation. On the floor lays the record *What a Wonderful World*.

"I don't know who it was who told me that every-time they saw that picture of me they thought I looked lost, so lost. But that's how I *was* feeling."

Just as he changed as a person, Sam recognizes today that a similar transition took place in his work and in the Chapel during the years following his son's death.

"I have become more conscious of death," he explains. "When I painted *Hallelujah Square* (the largest mural in the Chapel) I wanted to recall the old and the new testament, it was an artistic endeavor and artistic decision. But as time went on after Philip's death and I heard about people who had lost a child, then they began to participate in this picture of what I thought Heaven would be like."

Several children who have died, including Philip, are now included and memorialized in *Hallelujah Square* and the other murals that make up the trilogy at the front of the chapel. Sam's grief also influenced the creation of the 'Tim Ryan Room' (named for a good friend who died in 1994 from cancer), an area where visitors are encouraged to write messages of love, in special remembrance books, to those with whom they have been separated by death.

This change in the direction of the Chapel and his paintings, has led Sam to observe that Philip has accomplished much at Precious Moments, even following his death.

"I believe 'Philip's Room' made an incredible difference in the Chapel. People who had lost a child, they could relate with the creator of Precious Moments, and they could say 'this man understands me'. That's why a lot of people will come and talk to me about the death of their child. They know I understand because I've been there. I no longer am in the grandstands. I'm now in the arena. If Philip had lived, he would have been here helping me. But people have written to me and told me how 'Philip's Room' has literally changed their lives and their family's lives...their friends' lives."

Despite a workload that has him moving in a dozen different directions at the same time, Sam always finds time for bereaved parents, or anyone else. who come to meet him. "I have a lot of things to do and I have schedules, but I never feel bothered by people. I believe this is a very important ministry, that personal touch and that personal time."

And many bereaved parents *have* come to meet Sam Butcher, hoping he could help them to make some sense of what has happened in their lives.

Compassionate Friend Wanda Spittler happened to be visiting the Chapel and was surprised to see Sam Butcher on the scaffolding painting. Wanda learned that Cody, a little boy who had accidentally hung himself with his play lasso, was being painted right in front of her. As the tears started to roll, Wanda told a tour guide about the deaths of her 9 year-old son Dusty and 7 year-old daughter Afton. The tour guide called Precious Moments Chapel Director Larrene Hagaman who relayed to Sam Butcher the details of Wanda's loss.

"Then he asked me to come to the front of the Chapel and tell him about Dusty and Afton. He told me he would paint them, and I knew it would be a wonderful memorial to them. But I was scared it would never come about. I prayed lots and lots and lots. Larrene kept telling me not to worry, 'when he says he'll do something, he does.' And he did."

Today all can see Dusty wearing his favorite baseball team outfit, in which he was buried, tossing a baseball with his sister in the mural *Graduation Day*. She is wearing a necklace with a fish, as she enjoyed jewelry and fishing. "It was almost like Dusty and Afton were actually up there," Wanda recalls. "The only thing I can remember is I burst out crying...it was an answered prayer, *Graduation Day*, one of three key murals at the front of the Chapel, depicts little angels in Heaven, waiting in line to receive their halos.

Although Sam's energy level nosedived after Philip's death, he says it is now greater than it has ever been. "Once I started painting Philip's mural, I became driven. I always feel driven when ideas come to me. First I'm inspired, but then I *have* to get it done, it's not completely clear, but that's how it seems to work.

"A lot of times I've felt insecure in my work, but I feel much more secure now because I see things happening. I don't have to convince people all this is important because now they can see it, so that inspires me."

One day, will the creator of Precious Moments have any questions for the creator of the Heavens and the Earth? "I felt my work with Philip was unfinished because he was the one who often annoyed me by his comments, sometimes he'd cuss or be a bit too loud. And he was the one we had to spank the most. But he was so loving. I kept thinking, *Lord why did you take him when we hadn't developed a real close relationship?* I think if I had had more time with him he could have understood how much I loved him. After Philip died I felt so guilty I wasn't there. I didn't spend enough time with him. I was impatient. All of those things hit me like a flood."

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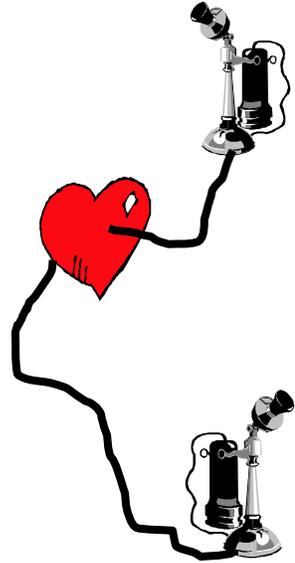
# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## 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.

## Support Resources

### TCF Online Chat Groups:

[WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online\\_Support.aspx](http://WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online_Support.aspx)

- For questions, please contact Diana Jorden, 925-432-3854, who moderates the general grief and suicide loss rooms on Friday nights and Sunday. TCF online offers several specialized chat rooms, all moderated by moms who have been in chat for at least 2 years or more. We offer a sibling-only chat, loss under 1 year, loss over 2 years, loss of only child, suicide survivor, infant/pregnancy loss, and every night (and Monday mornings) there is a general loss room open to parents, step and grand, and siblings.
- You can sign up for the online TCF National newsletter at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)
- You can reach our TCF National Facebook page through the link on the same home page of our national website. You will be asked to join Facebook if you are not already a member, and we hope you'll find our Facebook page as interesting as do the more than 11,000 fans who have already found us!

### Other Grief Support Websites

- [agast.org](http://agast.org) - for grandparents
- [alivealone.org](http://alivealone.org)
- [aliveinmemory.org](http://aliveinmemory.org)
- [angelmoms.com](http://angelmoms.com)
- [babysteps.com](http://babysteps.com)
- [bereavedparents.org](http://bereavedparents.org)
- [beyondindigo.com](http://beyondindigo.com)
- [childloss.com](http://childloss.com)
- [goodgriefresources.com](http://goodgriefresources.com)
- [griefwatch.com](http://griefwatch.com)
- [GriefNet.org](http://GriefNet.org)
- [healingafterloss.org](http://healingafterloss.org)
- [opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)
- [pomc.com](http://pomc.com) - families of murder victims
- [save.org](http://save.org)
- [survivorsofsuicide.com](http://survivorsofsuicide.com)
- [Taps.org](http://Taps.org) - military death
- [webhealing.com](http://webhealing.com)



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 6)

Time has helped Sam work through those guilt feelings, realizing he cannot change what has already passed.

But his work at the Chapel, the changes that are visible, make one observation apparent. He *has* used the tragedy to bring *beauty from the ashes*.

**Wayne Loder**

## Summer Memories

Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country: vacations, holidays, family reunions, relaxed days at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mown grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him. The summer solstice on June 21 was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year. As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST), I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year. Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light...the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

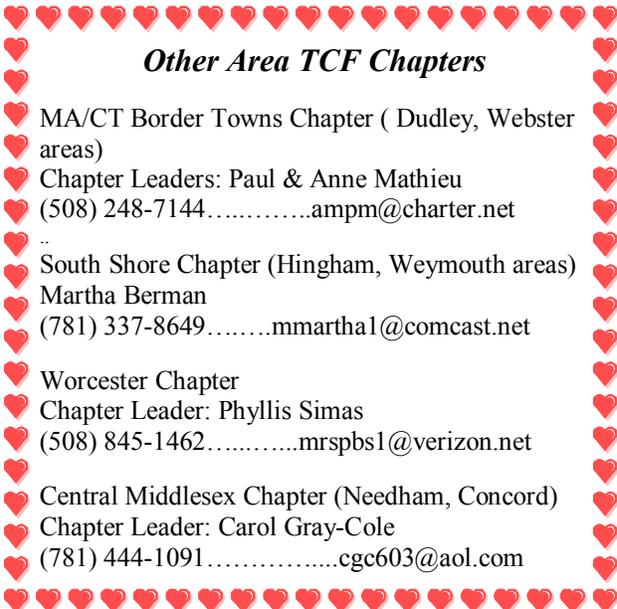
That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience. We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship. Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night.

We light candles, take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions. Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.

**Annette Mennen Baldwin**

**In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX**



## Other Area TCF Chapters

- MA/CT Border Towns Chapter ( Dudley, Webster areas)
- Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
- (508) 248-7144.....ampm@charter.net
- ..
- South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
- Martha Berman
- (781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
- Worcester Chapter
- Chapter Leader: Phyllis Simas
- (508) 845-1462.....mrspsb1@verizon.net
- Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
- Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
- (781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com

## Progress Check

It's usually around this time of year, when summer is nearly over and fall is around the corner, that I like to take a close look at the progress of my recovery. Maybe it's the seemingly endless "back-to-school" sales that suddenly end or the return of the yellow school busses with children carrying lunch boxes that causes me to feel a need to take a look. This is one of those times of year that some of us find difficult to deal with, and checking where we stand during rough times is always a good idea, especially if it helps us find areas in which we can improve. As a possible bonus we may even find areas of real progress that may boost our awareness of the positive steps we have made. It usually is difficult to notice the steps we make, particularly early in recovery, unless we make a concerted effort to notice them.

(continued on next page)



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

So the first step should be to look closely at your beliefs concerning what you will find. If you believe your recovery is going poorly, it probably is or it's likely not going as well as it could. We tend to see what we believe we will see and we tend to miss what we believe is not there. Dr. Wayne Dyer's book, *You'll See It When You Believe It*, covers this topic very well and I recommend it along with any of his other books as excellent recovery reading material. The quality of our recoveries, as well as our lives, is determined by what we believe.

If you develop an attitude of positive expectation about your recovery you will begin to see your progress more easily. What you need to do is adopt a belief that you can find something positive about your recovery no matter how small the positive may be if you look closely enough. The trick is to convince yourself that noticing the smallest of positives is worth the trouble. It is worth the trouble your life depends on it. Noticing the smallest of positives can enable you to make a necessary positive mental attitude shift that is required for good recovery. Having a positive mental attitude is not the same thing as positive thinking. It doesn't mean that you pretend that everything is okay when it isn't. Positive mental attitude means that no matter how bad things are we can at least learn something of value from even the most horrible things that happen to us.

I'll use an extreme example to make my point. Early in recovery the very best positive we may be able to come up with is, "well, at least I believe there is hope that someday I will feel better than I do now." Admittedly, when our child has died, even this small positive may be difficult to believe, but let's say you do believe it, or you're willing to believe that you will someday believe it. As weak as this positive may seem to you it still is strong enough to begin the process of causing a positive mental attitude shift.

The shift will be small and probably not noticeable to you, but it will nevertheless occur. With this shift you will be more likely to notice other positives, for example, you are reading this newsletter and are therefore obviously taking a positive step to see if this article has some value to you in your recovery. Even if it didn't, the fact that you are reading it alone is a positive recovery step if you choose to see it as such.

We often choose to see our small steps as insignificant. This judgment alone is enough to slow our recoveries to a crawl. Each step no matter how small is required to complete the journey. The sooner you accept even the smallest recovery step and celebrate each and every one as it occurs, the sooner you will benefit to the greatest extent each step offers.

So how do you do this? There are several ways. My favorite is to ask three questions. Early tomorrow morning, as soon after awaking as you remember, ask yourself the question, "What can I do today to improve the quality of my life?" It doesn't matter what you come up with, but be sure you keep it simple - make sure it's something you can easily do. Tomorrow evening ask yourself, "How did I do?" Write your answer in a notebook or journal. Then answer the question, "No matter how small, what positive recovery steps have I taken today?" Do this every day for at least ten days. Each day come up with different answers. At the end of ten days you will know if it is beneficial to your recovery to continue. If so, by all means do so. If not, you may find it helpful to do a progress check on your recovery by asking yourself these questions for a few days every month or so. Give it a try; you'll only know if it's a positive for you if you do.

**Pat Akery**  
**TCF, Medford, OR**

## *The Sign*

As a little boy Jody loved to pick Black-eyed Susans. He'd pick those wild flowers and bring them to me with such love and pride in presentation. The last bunch he picked for me was on my birthday before his death, August 4, 1976.

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son's death, in the center of Jody's grave, was a single perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.



I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. "Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I'm okay and at peace."

Whether it was a sign from Jody or from God, perhaps a bird dropped a Black-eyed Susan seed on the fresh grave, it brought me relief. I felt that my son wasn't so far away, and that his spirit would always be with me.



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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If nothing more, it helped me to begin to think of Jody there at the gravesite. He was dead, and I began to accept that. I started to realize that I would never again see his form as I had known it. But his spirit would be close and would guide me. I would not forget him and what we shared. He would always be special. What we gave to one another, what we had meant to each other, would not die or diminish with the passage of years, and it has not.

Each year since Jody's death, a single Black-eyed Susan has grown on his grave. It is a comfort and a joy. It is a remarkable phenomenon that now makes me smile rather than cry. Jody was a kid who never forgot my birthday, and never outgrew giving his mom flowers. I choose to believe he still hasn't. There are many mysteries in life and death that can't be explained, and I think shouldn't be, just accepted.

**Susan White-Bowden**  
*In memory of Jody*  
**"From a Healing Heart"**

## **"Another Senseless Tragedy"**

The words rang in my ears as I listened to the newscaster report on the shootings in Littleton, Colorado last week. All tragedy is senseless, I thought. Whether on a grand scale, or in the smallest and quietest of losses.

My mind wanders back, against my desires, to other tragedies. To shootings at Jonesboro; to horrific events like the Oklahoma City Bombing; to local, but no less tragic events in my hometown. To my own family's quieter loss six and a half years ago. I remember my unwillingness to watch and see those events reported in the daily news, and the simultaneous need to stare at the television, drawn to it, pouring salt into my own wounds. No matter how many years pass, and how different the circumstances surrounding these losses, the stories never cease to touch me, and haunt me with the same feelings I remember so well just after my own son's death. And the tears course down my face. How senseless!



I think about the parents... and remember the unreality of those first days. I remember moving automatically to do what had to be done. I remember people, and hugs, and I remember the silence that followed in the weeks after. I wonder how they will make it, how they will survive. I wonder how I survived. How any of us survive.

And yet... survive we do. We struggle with the unfairness, the anger, the depression, the windmill of senseless emotions that engulf us. So senseless. And in surviving, we make sense out of a senseless situation.

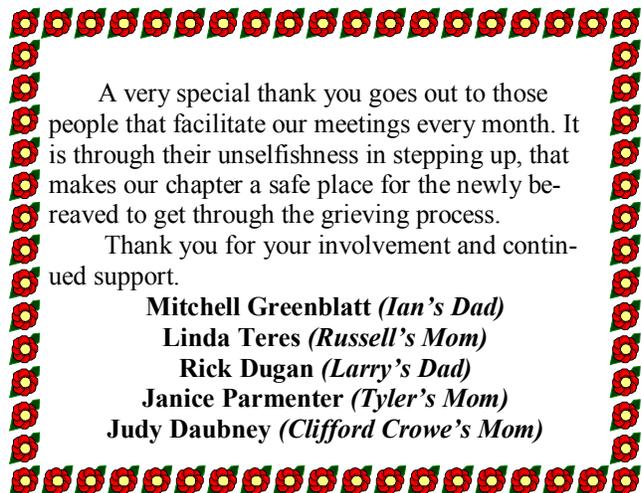
We bring purpose and meaning to our lives, by determining to survive and by living on. We honor our children's memories, we give their life and their death a purpose. We reach out to others; we make a difference.

There is no sense in the loss of a child, no matter how old or young, no matter the circumstances of that death. But in the ashes of their loss, we can build a new life. Sadder, emptier perhaps, but that new life is a tribute to the ones we miss so much. We will never make sense of our loss, but we can live with that senselessness, and bring purpose to their memory. And in our own survival, our child lives on in us.

*In memory of those lost in Littleton, Colorado; in honor and tribute to their families, and all families who survive the senseless loss of a child.*

**Lisa Sculley, 4/26/99**  
**TCF, Jacksonville, FL**

**Mom to Billy 11, Michael 9, and Joey 7/16/92**  
**to 10/7/92**



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)**



## **Save a tree**

To all members that receive this newsletter via snail mail. If you would like to get your newsletter a week earlier thru e-mail please send your e-mail address to: **headly @comcast.net**. This would save a tree and reduce postal cost.



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## *Strange Bedfellows: Humor and Grief*

At the opening ceremony of TCF's National Conference held in Atlanta on July 4, 2003, Maria Housden, author of the marvelous book, *Hannah's Gift*, was the featured speaker. She began by telling how that morning she had conversed with a man she met on the elevator. When he asked her why she was staying in Atlanta she told him that she was there as a speaker for The Compassionate Friends, an organization offering support and hope for parents, siblings and grandparents who had suffered the death of a child. As oftentimes happens when hearing what TCF is, the man suddenly was at a loss for words. As he got off the hotel elevator he broke the silence by turning to Ms. Housden and said, "Well, knock 'em' dead!"

Of course, the man was mortified after he realized what he had just said; his inadvertent remark was simply a common phrase often used as a send off to someone about to tackle an audience. Unfortunately, not exactly a well-timed or good choice of words considering the situation, but certainly not intentional!

It was easy to tell which people attending the opening ceremony were still quite fresh in their grief and who were the seasoned grievers (those further down the grief road from their child's death) solely by their reaction to Ms. Housden's attention grabbing opening to her speech. As I looked around at the faces of those sitting near me, it was quite obvious who was who.

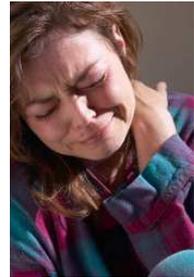
I thought back to my own early grief. I had always considered myself someone with a very good sense of humor, but the days and months following my daughter Nina's death I couldn't imagine finding humor in ANY situation EVER again. I remember witnessing the laughter of strangers and thinking, "Didn't they know my daughter was dead? Hadn't their world been shattered into a zillion fragments like mine had?"

My first experience with someone trying to mix a little humor with grief was renowned and much loved speaker, Darcie Sims, a grief psychologist. I saw her at a conference for bereaved parents held in Minneapolis barely a year after my daughter's death. I was shocked at how someone could make me laugh out loud and then bring me to tears in almost the same breath. At first I was uncomfortable with my own laughter. But I think it helped that Darcie was herself a bereaved parent and therefore she had "been there" too. Just as I had seen the more seasoned grievers in my TCF group enjoy laughter again, Darcie's humorous, yet poignant speech gave me hope that I would one time too hear the sound of my own laughter and be comfortable with it, something I thought was an impossibility.



There is, of course disgustingly unsuitable "humor" where grief is concerned. I am repeatedly appalled at what I see and hear from the so-called comedians on late-night TV, who seem to find hilarity in the most inappropriate topics: I have heard jokes made about drunk drivers, cancer, suicide, and AIDS with alarming regularity. Obviously, these same "comedians" have never felt the sting of death of someone they loved that was caused by any of the above causes. My oldest daughter is an actor and used to perform for what are called Murder Mystery Dinner Theaters. For example, one of the advertisements read: "Where Murder is Always on the Menu!" She admitted that until her sister Nina died that she didn't really think about how, though seemingly innocent, these shows could be hurtful to those whose loved ones had suffered such an atrocity and how personally painful this mockery of death had become to her after the loss of her little sister.

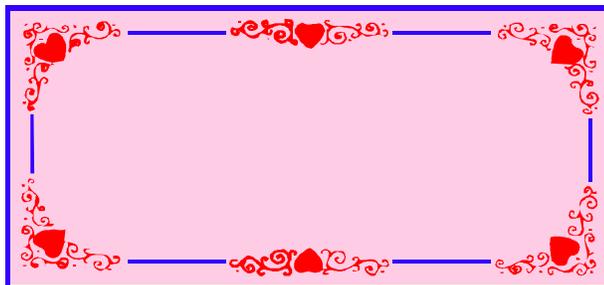
I know what I, in my early grief, thought about laughter, truthfully, I didn't care if I ever laughed again. I remember a dear friend telling me how she was so tired of hearing from other non-bereaved. "Your daughter wouldn't want you to be so sad. She would want to hear you laugh." To which my friend sternly answered, "No she wouldn't, she would want me to hurt." This was early grief talking. The misconception here is that we oftentimes feel that by laughing, we are somehow dishonoring our children, by appearing as if our renewed interest in enjoyment of life again meant we stopped caring about and loving them. However, we all know deep down that could never be true; we know it is possible to find some humor in unison with the intense forever love of our children, no matter how much we miss them. I know that the aforementioned friend, who is now a "seasoned" griever, would agree. And though you may not be ready to hear it now, eventually, somewhere down the road (remember: there are no timetables in grief, our grief experience is as individual as we are), you will remember a funny story from your child's life and it will feel good to remember it with laughter. And I truly believe your child will smile and laugh along with you.



*With gentle thoughts,*

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

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



### ***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.”*