



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 2019

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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 16 & August 20

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 the Town Hall on the right 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.

July 30 & August 27

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. ©2019

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 508/366-2085
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774
 Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998

The chapter address is:

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

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

Regional Coordinator
 Dennis Gravelle
 638 Pleasant St.
 Leominster, MA 01453-6222
 Phone (978) 537-2736
dgtcf@aol.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, support our outreach program, 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. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran** on her birthday May 21st.
 Mrs. Deborah Hart in loving memory of her son **Casey W. Calkins**. "Always Loved, Never Forgotten."
 Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce-Tagoe** on his anniversary July 6th.

CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously donated his picture button kit to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. In loving memory of his daughter Kaitlyn. 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 me at headly@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. I now have the 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**.

**Our prime objective is that those hands should meet, should touch, and hold firm.
 Because only together can we make it.**

Rev. Simon Stephens,



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

THERESA LAUREL SWINDELL
WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
MOLLY ELIZABETH LACE ANDERSON
ETHAN WAYNE MILLER
JOHN "JACK" PAUL BEAUDOIN
RYAN J. McCUSKER
ERIC C. EATON
DIXON BERGMAN

August

WILLIAM H. BARDOL Jr.
STEVEN "CHRIS" MARSHALL
CHARLES J. FERRERA
JULIE A. SLOCUM
ADAM MICHAEL BELYEA
COREY A. MORELLI
MATTHEW DENICE
KIMBERLY ANNE TANNER

Birthdays

July

ROY RANDALL
EMILY GRACE SMITH
MIRA TUTEJA
ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr.
KAITLYN KENNEDY
DEANNA KELSEY RICHARDS

August

ERICA BLEAKNEY
THERESA LAUREL SWINDELL
JACOB TYLER JOHNSON
CHRISTOPHER J. LOUGHRAN
JAMIE BLAU
RICHARD PELLEGRINO
KEVIN HOLLAND
DAVID ALEXANDER SCHNEGG
CLIFFORD CROWE
GREG BRUNO
ADAM SCOTT COLE





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.

MY FOREVER BROTHER

When I was 20 years old, I was awakened in the middle of the night to the terrible news that my only brother, Scott, and my cousin, Matthew, had been killed together in a car accident.

It seemed inconceivable that my 17-year-old-brother was dead. My brother, whom I had grown up with, shared a history with and expected to grow old with, was suddenly gone forever from my life. Scott had unruly blond curls and bright green eyes. He was very athletic, devoured Twix candy bars, chewed cinnamon gum, was a NY Jets fan, and loved playing jokes. I envisioned us attending each other's college graduations and weddings, raising our kids together, and growing old together.

Scott's death turned my world upside down and put into question everything I ever believed. Early on the pain was so great, I honestly thought I would die of a broken heart. People said things to me that were not helpful: "Well, at least he didn't suffer," "At least it was quick," and "At least you have sisters."

As I struggled through my own grief, I also worried a lot about my parents and felt the need to "be strong" for them. I often hid my grief from them, and grieved alone, so as not to cause them further pain. I felt guilty for having my own grief because my parents had lost a child.

As I went through my grief journey, I looked to others further along in the grief process for guidance and strength. The journey was bumpy; I had no roadmap. Grief came in choppy, unpredictable waves, not neat, organized stages. Well-meaning people told me that I would eventually get over it, and find closure. These concepts were not comforting and did not make sense.

I didn't want to "get over" Scott. To "get over" him felt somehow like I was erasing him from my life. I am the person I am today because Scott was in my life. To deny him would be to deny an important part of myself. The reality is that we don't forget, move on, and have closure; but rather we honor, remember, and incorporate our deceased brother and sister into our lives in a new way.

With time and support, I went on to transform my life and create a "new normal." I have found meaning, purpose, and joy helping others who have suffered a loss, and I have met many wonderful and caring people through The Compassionate Friends. Today, I keep my brother's memory alive through the stories I share with others. Although it has been 30 years, my brother continues to live forever in my heart. He is my guiding light, and although I am poorer for having lost him, I am so much richer forever having known him. He will always play an important role in my life, and he remains forever my brother.

DR. HEIDI HORSLEY

Dr. Heidi Horsley is a grief expert and the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Open to Hope, an international organization committed to providing hope

**The only cure for grief is to grieve.
Emotions in grief are as different as snowflakes
or fingerprints.
Each person mourns in a different way.
There is no timetable for recovery.**

Rabbi Earl Grollman



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 5)

We are broken, but there is no fix for our heartache.

We carry it with us, always. Grief exhausts us to the bone. There is no reprieve. No minute, hour, or day off from being a bereaved parent. Once a bereaved parent, always a bereaved parent. There is no going back.

Even during happy or joyful moments, the pain and sadness is always there. A permanent undercurrent, a pulse of pain.

We learn how to carry it all: the joy, the pain, the love, the sadness. Eventually we become an expert at carrying it all.

The moment our child died is now, yesterday, tomorrow, *forever*. It is the past, the present, and the future. It was not just one finite horrific moment in time that happened last whenever. It is not just the moment, the hour, the second, the millisecond our life became permanently divided into *before* and *after*.

You might say, "But she died *last year!*" Or 10 years ago, or five. No. No, she didn't.

Our child dies all over again every morning we wake up.

And again every moment they are (yet again) missing. And again every moment in between. And again every breath we take.

Our child dies again every moment they are not here with us— for the rest of our lives.

The truth of this fact is almost impossible to express. How many deaths can one parent endure?

For the rest of our lives we will struggle to accept and understand this very fact: our child is dead. And in the incessant replay of our minds our child will keep dying all over again for the rest of our lives.

This is child loss. It is never over. It is always happening. Again and again and again.

We live and relive it. It is now, yesterday, tomorrow, forever.

Just like our love for our child is now, yesterday, tomorrow, forever. It spans both directions. There is no end.

Please remember this next time you hear someone tell a bereaved parent they are dwelling, stuck, depressed, not moving on; that they should just hurry up and get over it, or any other common judgment or misconception. Our pain, our love, and our child cannot be watered down to such phrases, such shallow summations. It does not even begin to capture or express the reality of our day-to-day lives, nor the eternal ache and love in our hearts.

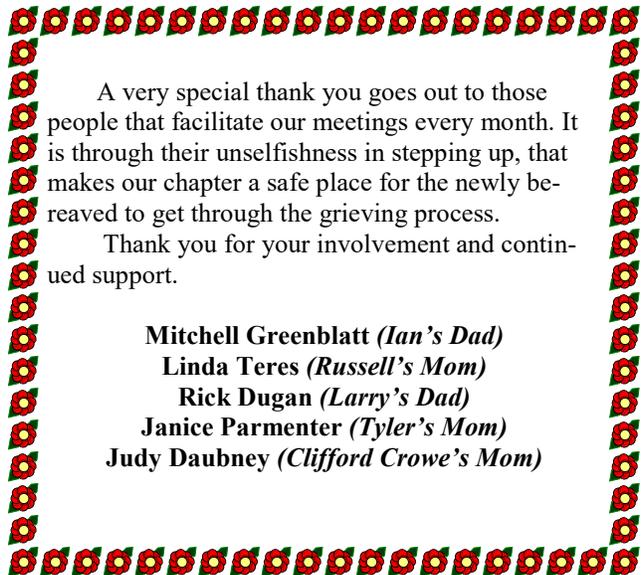
To understand child loss, you have to think about every second, minute, hour, day, month and year a bereaved parent has to live *without* their precious child, *a lifetime*, not just the finite moment in time their child died. Every missed milestone, every heart beat, every breath without them, hurts.

It hurts now, now and *now*. It will *still* be painful 10 and 20 years from now. It will remain an ever-present ache in our heart, soul, mind and body always, until our very last breath.

Child loss is *never over*. It is a loss that spans a bereaved parent's entire life.

This is why we will never, ever, get over it. Because "it" is our precious, irreplaceable child. There is no getting over it. There is only love (and pain) to be bravely and courageously carried, for a lifetime.

Angela Miller is a writer, speaker and grief advocate who provides support and solace to those who are grieving the loss of a child.



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*)

It's only...

Losses are often diminished. They are sometimes diminished by saying things that bring little comfort. Sometimes the loss is diminished due to the relationship with the deceased. I have seen grief dismissed due to the age of the deceased whether a child unborn or an elderly grandparent.

I first became aware of death when my grandfather died. I was a young child but our bond went deep. He made me feel like there was no one else in the world. I learned good and bad from this death experience.

I learned that when someone you love very deeply passes, you will never forget them. I learned you will help others to either remember them or get to know them. I learned you should NEVER force a child to see someone dead if they don't want to.



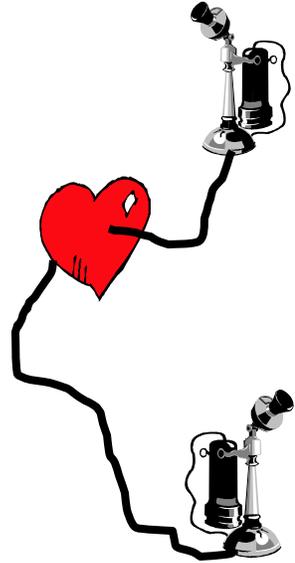
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt,.....**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
Sandra Richiazzi-Natoli,....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
Sarah Commerford,.....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



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

- 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
- 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 - for grandparents
- alivealone.org
- aliveinmemory.org
- angelmoms.com
- babysteps.com
- bereavedparentsusa.org
- beyondindigo.com
- childloss.com
- goodgriefresources.com
- parmenter.org - children's bereavement
- griefhealingblog.com
- griefwatch.com
- GriefNet.org
- healingafterloss.org
- Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org.
- opentohope.com
- pomc.com - families of murder victims
- save.org
- survivorsofsuicide.com
- Taps.org - military death
- webhealing.com
- Griefshare.org



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 6)

I wasn't forced to go into the "room" by my parents. It was a cousin 10 years older than me. He didn't drag me but rather strongly persuaded me. He told me things like how much my grandfather loved us and how disappointed he would be if I didn't "see" him before he was buried. My cousin was not being ill-hearted. Reflecting back, perhaps these were the things he was told.

My cousin walked with me down the long, long aisle. Once at the end of the aisle, he snatched me from my feet, to lift me up so I could "see." I stared into the coffin. I didn't see my grandfather but rather death. As soon as he lowered me to the floor, I escaped from the room but not from "seeing".

Before Tony drowned, my closest friends and family would have told you, "Debbie won't go to viewings or funerals." I first tried to go to a funeral fifteen years after my experience at my grandfather's funeral.



A close friend's father had died. I assumed I was surely mature enough to be able to go to the funeral home to offer condolences. Maybe I could have if I hadn't been very pregnant at the time. I tried, I really tried.

I drove myself to the funeral home. I knew I was a bit jittery but thought it would pass. I very nervously walked into the funeral home. It had been years since I had been back home so I didn't necessarily expect to either know or recognize a lot of people.

I could see the "room" with the long, long aisle. It was as if I was that little girl again. Except this time, it was me that persuaded myself that it was the right thing to do and it would be alright to "see." Except this time, I didn't have anyone walking with me.

While I wanted to turn around, run, and escape the "room," I knew that I could no longer run in my current physical state. My inner self was still persuading me to keep going. I finally made it to the casket.

I stood at the side of the casket for several minutes. I kept my eyes closed and simply wept. I did not want to "see" again. I eventually summoned enough courage to open my eyes and look down at my friend's father lying in the casket.

I stared, trying to understand. This man had such thick, curly white hair. I just could not understand. My friend's father had been bald since the first day I met him. At last, it dawned on me. I had walked down the long, long aisle of the wrong "room!"

As quickly as I could, I turned around and waddled down the long, long aisle continuously looking down so not to make eye contact with anyone. Luckily, no one tried to slow me down or come after me.

Today, I no longer fear seeing. I am now able to go to viewings, attend funerals, and to offer support to those grieving. I gained this strength as a gift from Tony's death. Thank you Tony for the gift of strength to offer others in their time of need.

Unfortunately today, I must help my granddaughter down an aisle. Kay was only two when her Uncle Tony died. Her memories of Tony are through pictures and stories we share. Thankfully today, it is not her grandfather or even a person!

Today, she will decide on her own if she wants to "see." We have prepared an appropriate casket for a guinea pig. Grandpa has already dug the grave. Mommy has gone to pick Kay up from drama club.

Soon, we will share the sad news with her. She loved and cared for Fluffy very much. This night will be the beginning of her foundation to "see." I want her, and all my grandchildren, to "see" only when they are ready.

Fluffy's casket will remain draped with the kitchen towel unless Kay decides otherwise.

Goodbye little Fluffy. You were a wonderful companion for my granddaughter.

P.S. I have often wondered if the family and friends of the deceased elderly man that saw me standing, weeping at his coffin ever figured out that I had simply wandered into the wrong room

Debbie Rambis

A MOTHER'S MUSINGS

There are no ordinary days for us. Each day brings with it something that triggers memories of our children. I've found myself in tears at the site of a TV commercial, or when I see a toy that my child loved, or a song that he sang. I've felt my heart skip a beat at the site of a blonde, curly haired little boy, or a young woman the same age my daughter would be now, or whenever I see a young man in a wheel chair. I've 'seen' Danny in the t-shirt someone was wearing, in the way someone's hair curled up at the nape of their necks and in every disabled child. Our memories are etched deeply in our hearts but can rise to the surface at the slightest hint of something that once was associated with our children.

I've found myself driving down the road with tears streaming down my face because the Beatles song, "Michelle" came on the radio. I've been in the middle of cleaning house when my mind turns to memories of my children and then the world becomes a blur of tears. I've cleaned out a drawer or closet and sat looking at an object, caressing it, cherishing it because it has some connection with one of my children. The holidays are the worst. Everything reminds me of the fact that all of my children are not here.



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

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



(continued from page 8)

Hanging the stockings and knowing that there are three other stockings now packed away forever. So many memories tugging at my heart at every turn...it's almost too much to bear.

For me, September is a difficult time. Not that there are any significant holidays but the one that is in September, Labor Day, holds some very painful memories. My sweet Jerry died on Labor Day and although Labor Day isn't always on September 6, for me it will always be the day that Jerry died.



For someone to say that they know how we feel because their child has gone off to college is typical of the remarks that we have all heard over the years. There is "it was God's will", "it was for the best", "at least they aren't in pain anymore", "they're in a better place" and my all time favorite, "Well, now you have two angels in heaven"! I don't want ANY angels in heaven...I want them HERE with me. To these people I say, "Thank God you are not in my shoes because if you were, you would not survive...not if you think what you are going through is even close to the pain I've felt!"

For most parents, September comes and school begins, then follows Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the beginning of a new year. For us, each month brings up old memories and new pain. We mark time by, "before he/she died" or "after he/she died." We remember their birthdays with tears and flowers, instead of gifts. But then we have one more date to mark...one we wish we had never lived to see...the anniversary of our child's death. All of those parents who are watching memories being made as their children grow up, date, graduate, and marry; have no idea of what it means to have that opportunity cut short. They assumed that when their child was born that they would experience all of these things. We have learned to NEVER assume. We know that nothing is certain, life is tenuous and fragile and can be snuffed out in an instant. For us, no month, no week, no day is ordinary. They are all reminders of what might have been.



Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Memory of Michelle, Jerry, and Danny
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reprint granted by the author

Little Handprints

About a year and a half after my son died, my son's former in-laws were caring for his three daughters for a few weeks—something that Todd had always insisted that I do. This in itself was painful. But, further pain was inflicted when it became very apparent that I would not be spending any time with the girls without the "watchful eyes" of Todd's in-laws. There was an agenda.

We spent a total of six hours with the girls; the first night we visited with them at the in-laws house. But the girls wanted to visit us at our house, and after much exchanging of knowing looks, the former in-laws finally agreed. So, on the second night, the girls came over with their other grandparents to visit and share memories of their Dad and talk.

The time passed quickly, and as late evening approached, I began to realize that this would probably be the last time I would see my granddaughters for many, many years. We laughed together, talking about whatever was on their minds. One of the girls slipped into the kitchen and whispered a secret to me that I wasn't supposed to know. But I knew. I had known that secret for many years. "It will be fine, just steer clear of the problem," I whispered.

As we packed up their little toys, I felt the still open wound in my heart begin to ache. I acted like this was just another of the many times that Todd's daughters were heading out after time spent with us. But it wasn't.

One by one, the girls pushed the storm door open, palms placed flat on the glass. I said nothing, as I knew this was a moment to remember. I touched their little heads and hugged them close to me as they dawdled through the doorway. We stood in the driveway as they got into the big SUV and waved their last goodbyes. I was overwhelmed and shuddered with the depth of yet another cruel loss.

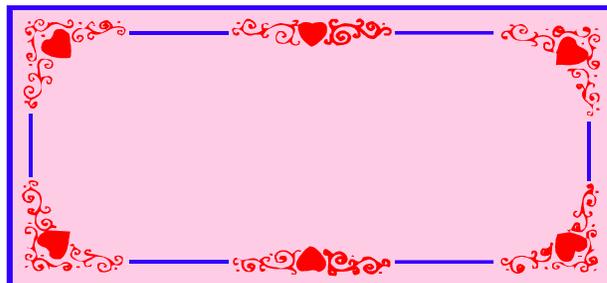
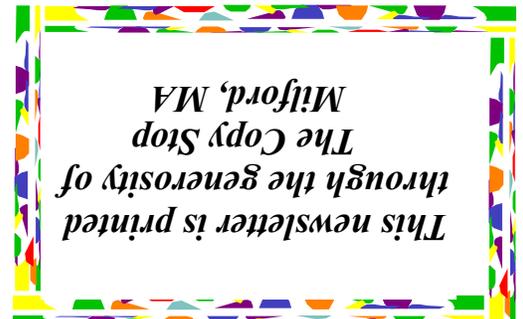
A few days went by and it was time to clean. As I opened the front door I saw the glass storm door with its little handprints and carefully cleaned around them. I did this week after week for almost a year. But as time passed, the prints became smudged and were difficult to recognize. Finally, with tears pouring down my cheeks, I cleaned off the little handprints. I felt as if I were erasing a part of my child, wiping away yet another part of his life. I knew that Todd would have been more gracious if the circumstances had been reversed. That has given me a measure of peace to cherish over the five years since I last saw his sweet daughters.

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

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. “Hope Rings in Philadelphia” is the theme of next year’s event, which promises more of this year’s great National Conference experience. We’ll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this.



Address Correction Requested



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