



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

MARCH-APRIL 2020

TCF MONTHLY MEETINGS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm

Westminster Presbyterian Church

85 Chestnut St., Albany

Jan Messina 518-439-0346

JanMessina@verizon.net

Kathleen Kelleher 518-439-1114

Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

1st Tuesday of every month (except July & August) at 7:30 pm

Wesley Health Care Center

131 Lawrence St., Saratoga Springs

Gabby Gravelle 518-596-4275

SCHENECTADY CHAPTER

1st Wednesday of every month at 7 pm

St. Kateri Community Room

Lower Level

1803 Union St., Schenectady

JoAnn Bomeisl 518-372-8215

tcf1389@gmail.com

John Powers 518-399-2492

jpower11@nycap.rr.com

Peggy Hohenstein 518-887-5204

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER

2nd Wednesday of every month at 7 pm

United Methodist Church

40 Woodland Ave., Catskill

georgeknoll64@yahoo.com

Carol 518-537-6098

MARCH WINDS

As the winds blow, often violently, it is as if there is an attempt to wake us from our winter lethargy. The birds begin to sing, calling to us. The dormant trees begin to move in the breeze. We see the first buds. Witness a crocus peeping through the encrusted ground. Regardless of our grief and regrets, life goes on, whether we participate or not. This can be a season of renewal. We can symbolically plant a flower, a tree, or a bush and nurture it as we loved our child. As the plant flourishes and adds beauty to our lives, we can experience a sense of creation just as our child added meaning to our lives. It's time to sort out the good memories when we do our spring cleaning. Discard the anger, regret, disappointment and sorrow. Shake it out and throw it away. Hold on to all that is good. Cherish it forever. It's time to make a constructive effort to restore ourselves. We hope the gales of the March winds will awaken you to a new beginning. May the "winter of our discontent" disappear. We wish for you to live in the future with your happy memories.

*By: Betty Davis
TCF Marion, Ohio*

A BEGINNING

One day you wake up and realize that you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow.

One day—one glorious day—you wake up and feel your skin tingle again, and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken...and it is a beginning.

*By: Susan Borrowman
TCF, Kingston, Ontario*





LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

This newsletter is made possible by donations through love gifts. Love gifts are a way that we can honor our children throughout the year, on their birthday, anniversary of their death or during the holidays. Please consider giving a love gift in memory of your children. Love gifts can be made in any dollar amount and mailed to Debbie Bouchey, 26 Berkshire Drive, East Greenbush, NY 12061.

In memory of our beautiful daughter, **KAREN M. DEMARCO**, who passed away 38 years ago, 3/24/82. We love you and miss you with all our hearts.

Love, Mom & Dad

In loving memory of **TIMOTHY KNORR MCFARLAND** on the 7th Anniversary of his death on March 20th. You are always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts.

Love, Your Family

Call for Submissions

Anyone wishing to submit an original poem or story for publication in our newsletter can do so by sending the writing to Debbie Bouchey at alyssabob@yahoo.com

Please remember that editing may occur and not all submissions are guaranteed to be printed.

THANKS

THANKS to the friend who did know the right words to say: "There is a group in town that might help you."

THANKS to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about "that group."

THANKS to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk -- and talked.

THANKS to the dad who said after the first meeting that he could never come back-- but did.

THANKS to the parent, who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said: "They really can help."

THANKS to the mom who, for the first time, was again able to bake cookies -- for her "Compassionate Friend."

THANKS to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people --who became a facilitator.

THANKS to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men --and didn't say he was sorry.

Because of you, we will be able to help someone we don't even know --next month.

*John DeBoer
TCF, Greater Omaha, NE*

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
April 20, 2020**

MARCH OF THE SEASONS

On March 20, winter is over and spring is here. Nature continues its never-ending cycle: Death and Rebirth, Growth and Harvest. For many, there is reassurance in this never failing, familiar march of the seasons.

But we know, we especially know, that the cycles of the seasons will never be the same for some of us. In nature there is balance. The death and dormancy of winter are always replaced by the rebirth & awakening of spring. What is lost one year is replaced the next. What is harvested is replanted. But for some of us, what we have lost can never be replaced. No gain can ever compensate us for the loss of a child.

I know, I know. Every other article, every other book, every other poem will cheerfully announce a new day, a visit from beyond, a rejoicing in heaven, “spiritual gifts,” etc., etc., and so forth. I know of no “spiritual gift” worth my son’s death.

When my son died, a friend, a very good and dear friend who had a tragedy of his own, said to me, “This will make you a more compassionate person.”

“I would rather be the meanest man on Earth and have my son back,” I snapped. But I was not given that choice.

When I was a small child, my parents would say to me, perhaps in order to profess their love and make me feel secure, “Steve, we would gladly give our lives for you.” This did not make me happy. In fact, it made me feel extremely fearful, anxious and guilty. I could not say the same thing! What was wrong with me? What a selfish and bad little boy I must be! I could not, for the life of me, imagine myself dying for any reason, not even to save my parents’ lives! I never breathed a word of this to anyone it was my dirty little secret. I buried the thought deep, “I am an unworthy son.”

My son was depressed before he committed suicide. What a stupid statement. He had to be depressed. He was tall, talented, handsome & smart. He had everything to live for, but he must have thought otherwise. He must have thought we, his parents, would be better off without him. If he knew how much pain he has caused his parents and his sister, I know he would not have killed himself.

In the aftermath of David’s death, I realized

many things. I realized that without being fully aware, I was bargaining with God, “Take me. Take my life and restore David to life & health.” I did not verbalize it, but I was contemplating my own death and actually felt I could make a “deal”.

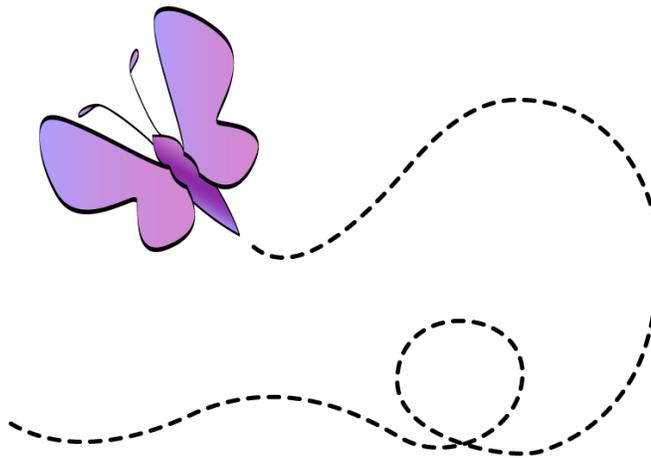
Then I had another realization. This was the other side of my parents statement. I, the parent, was willing to die for my child. It is normal for a parent to feel this way about a child. It is not normal for a child to feel this way about his parents. A revelation that lets me off the hook. After fifty years, a “spiritual gift.”

My daughter says she owes her (spiritual) life to her brother, David. He taught her “life is precious.” she propelled herself through school, overcoming great odds, “for him”. More spiritual gifts.

I would like to say it was all worth it, but I can’t. I have been in TCF for more than five years, and I have never met a parent who would not trade all of the “gifts” back for even one day of their child’s life. I have not met anyone who would not trade his or her own life for the return of their child’s life. Many of us have tried (consciously or unconsciously) that same bargain with God. But we don’t have that choice. We can’t make that bargain.

So what do we do now? We don’t throw away the gifts out of spite. I am thankful my daughter had found herself. I am thankful if I am able to help another person. Choosing to throw away the gifts will not bring our

children back. Choosing to help others in David’s name brings some dignity and meaning to his death. Throwing away the gifts would make his death meaningless. No parent wants his child to die in vain. Maybe I can give his death meaning, posthumously, by accepting the spiritual gifts.



*By Steve Leibowitz
TCF, Northern Virginia*

GRIEF AND ANGER

In our chapter meeting this month, we will be discussing anger in our grief. Many experience anger after their child or loved one dies. A description of anger is “A feeling of rage, an emotional agitation to what is viewed as unfair, unjust and sometimes even shameful.”

When we are angry, we need a target. Sometimes the target may be God. (He understands) some may even feel anger at their child or loved one, thinking, “How could he/she leave me like this? Why? Doesn’t he/she know I’m hurting and in pain?” Some people are angry at the doctors, some at the funeral directors, some even feel anger toward themselves, thinking they could have done something to prevent the death.

We may even be angry at our spouse. He/she may not grieve the same way and we may misunderstand their feelings that are just as deep as our own. Maybe our clergyman is not as compassionate as we believe they should be, or maybe they were not available to us at all. We are angry because we feel abandoned and that life is unfair. We also feel very alone and no longer in control of our emotions. We may also think nothing will ever be the same, and it won’t, but as time goes on, it does get somewhat easier as you work through your grief.

We all try at times to not let this anger show to others, but suppressing it can only lead to sickness and withdrawal. Masking anger will often hurt the ones around you and may even drive them away from you. You may even risk losing your closest support system.

Dealing with your anger and admitting it and also seeking help from others who have experienced this feeling is always the healthy thing to do. Personally talking has been the best help for me. Attending a Compassionate Friends meeting and talking to others who have “been there” has helped many.

*By Jack Wesley
TCF, East Central Indiana
and Miami-Whitewater Chapters*



IT'S OKAY

IT'S OKAY TO GRIEVE

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

IT'S OKAY TO CRY

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to “level off” and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

IT'S OKAY TO HEAL

We do not need to “prove” we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel “guilty” for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

IT'S OKAY TO LAUGH

Laughter is not a sign of “less” grief. Laughter is not a sign of “less” love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

*By Marianne Waite
TCF, El Paso, TX*

IF I COULD

If I could catch a passing cloud,
I'd jump on and hitch a ride,
I'd ask the winds that blow it,
To take me to your side.

I'd love to see you once again,
But I wouldn't want to leave.
And ride that cloud back down to earth,
Alone -- back here to grieve.

*By Jane
For my brother Michael
Bereaved Parents of the USA,
Western NY Chapter Spring 2005*

A SHADE OF DARKNESS

In comes the darkness to my soul,
Even as I sit in the early morning sun.
The distant sounds of the living
Seem far removed from the foginess of my mind.

In the stillness of the house,
which seems quieter than quiet,
Time seems to pass too slowly.

A feeling of being outside myself,
Looking back into an empty shell
Of the person I used to be.

I cry for my former self --
That person I once liked and enjoyed.
She is gone.
A loss within a loss, within a loss.

A heaviness in my heart.,
The weight of a million tears.
Drowning my emotions,
Mixing and swirling in a pool of despair.
Ugly, hateful despair.

A sadness so deep and heavy,
Leaving the body tired and used.
I feel I could sleep,
Sleep for a thousand years and never wake up.

A thousand years will not change a thing.

You would still not be here.
What to believe. I don't know.
I just don't know. My soul is lost.

I know not which way to turn,
Where to look,
Where to find comfort for my aching heart.

I feel helpless;
Helpless to help myself,
Annoyed with the daily things of life I must do.

I don't care, not anymore.
The world could fall upon its knees,
It would not matter.
I am too shrouded in the darkness of my world
That spins ever out of control,
Directing my emotions
With no warning as to what feelings
Will be brought upon me next.

There is guilt, another weight to bear.
Those who are with me, who I love and love me,

They need me, but I am not ready.
I hold them back at arm's length.
I am not ready.

Their demands draw on what strength I have left.
For that I am sorry.
But I cannot help bringing on the emotional distance.
There is a need to protect myself.
But from what I am not sure.

There is anger.
Anger that occasionally swells with me.
There is no direction into which to fling this anger.
It is a new and different type of anger,
Not one I am familiar with and it disturbs me.
It makes me afraid.

I try to be strong. For you, and only you.
I try to think what you would have me do.

I know you would want me to live my life.
To continue on. It is not an easy task, not at all.

Some days I can go out and meet the world with vigor and
say I do this for you.

Some days I must crawl into my shell
And hide from the world that has been so cruel to me.
I am trying.

The days are filled with thoughts of you.
And should I find myself not thinking of you,
I gasp for fear that I am forgetting you.

Someday the sadness will lift
And I will only think of you
With a smile and warmth in my heart.
My love for you will always be there.
That shall never pass.
And I hope somehow you know this too.

Your memory is only a heartbeat away.
I shall always love you.
I shall always long for you.
I shall always wish to have you back.
And I shall live — if only for you.

*For Daniel Rush
Missing you today and everyday my darling son
Loving lifted from Bereaved Parents of the USA,
Western New York Chapter, Spring 2005*



Leadership

Albany Co-Leader: Jan Messina 439-0346
Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114
Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275
Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey
518-435-5321 or alyssabob@yahoo.com
Mailers: Joanne Baia
Special Mailing: Marylou & Ed Clark
Regional Coordinator:
Al Visconti—(518) 756-9569

TCF's MISSION: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

TCF's VISION: That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.



National Headquarters, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522, 877-969-0100 (toll free)
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends
c/o Debbie Bouchey
26 Berkshire Drive
East Greenbush, NY 12061

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
Slingerlands, NY
Permit No. 23

Address Service Requested