



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

SEPTEMBER—
OCTOBER 2018

TCF MONTHLY

MEETINGS

ALBANY

7:30 pm
3rd Tuesday every month
Westminster Presbyterian
Church
85 Chestnut St., Albany
Jan Messina 439-0346
Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

SARATOGA

1st Tuesday of every month- 7:30 pm
Wesley Health Center Care
Activities Room, Lawrence St.
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

SCHENECTADY

1st Wednesday every month
St. Kateri Library, 1803 Union St.
John Powers 399-2492
JoAnn Bomeisl 372-8215

MID-HUDSON VALLEY

2nd Wednesday every month
Chris Yurchuk
845-691-2111

GREENE COUNTY

2nd Wednesday every month
United Methodist Church
Woodland Ave., Catskill
Judy 622-4023



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Having a bad day? Need someone to talk to? Want information about the next meeting? Help is just a phone call away

Jan Messina 439-0346
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275
Helen Connors 226-0557

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

DD'S MEMORY BEARS & MORE

Until a coworker's mother invited her to come over to their home with the invitation "I have a gift for you", Dawn Dawe had never seen bears created in memory of a loved one. The young man's mother had been touched by Dawn's thoughtfulness in putting together red, yellow and white ribbons (signifying love, friendship and peace) to give to her coworker's family and friends at his viewing and funeral. When the young man's mother led Dawn into his bedroom, she was astonished to see 200 bears placed on the bed. Each one had a small red, yellow and white ribbon on its chest. His mother explained that they had all been created from her son's clothing, to give to family and friends, and she would like to give one to Dawn.

From this mother's tragedy and her subsequent gift, Dawn realized how healing these special bears could be. Dawn's aunt located the woman who had made the bears to have one created for herself. She found that the woman wasn't making the bears anymore, but offered to send the pattern. Dawn's aunt shared the pattern with her, and she made her first Memory Bear when another friend died in 2004.

(continued on page 3)

UPCOMING EVENT

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany will host its first Emmaus Ministry (faith based) day-long retreat for bereaved parents on

November 17th in Schenectady. To be put on an email list to receive further info on this event, you can send a quick note to tcf1381@gmail.com.



LOVE GIFTS

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.

Pain is watching the little boy your child played with last year board the school bus on his very first day of school.

*- Barbara Augustine
TCF Lancaster, PA*

In loving memory of our beautiful daughter, **KAREN MICHELLE**, on the occasion of her 47th birthday in September.

Love and Miss you, Mom & Dad (Kathy and Larry DeMarco)

In loving memory of **THOMAS J. PERSICO** on his birthday, September 15, 2018. We miss you and love you forever. You are always in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Love, Your Family

Learning to Live Again

By Rhonda Henshaw

BP/USA Central Arkansas Chapter

June 21, 2007 was five years since my son's death. Sometimes I can't believe it has been even a year so how could five years have already passed? Yet it feels like a lifetime since I held my baby boy, David. He was not a baby anymore. He was 18 and becoming a fine young man. I was very proud of him and I love and miss him very much but life is getting better than I ever thought it would be after his death.

I moved this month so, over the last two months, I have been packing which included Dave's room. First I was going to sell the house so I just re-decorated and made it look like a guest room but all of his things remained in the closet. I had cleaned out the dresser within the first couple of years, but never made it past that point; re-decorating was hard and sad. I decided I had to finish packing up his room. Actually, my Mom did all of his clothes in the closet but I found some unexpected things—like the last thing he wore in a box from the detectives and the case file with pictures that were traumatic to me. I also donated some clothes and toys to the Union Rescue Mission which left me with many mixed feelings.

This weekend will be my last weekend in the house but I haven't been sad like I expected. I hope the feelings of happiness that I have had lately will continue. I had

forgotten what it was like to have a truly happy moment. Sure, I have laughed over the last five years, but to catch yourself in just a good, happy mood like "today's a great day" for no reason—I hadn't really had one of those days until recently. I guess I had given up hope of ever having one of those days again. Granted, it didn't last all day, probably not even an hour, but it was a great feeling - a feeling that left me with hope and promise that this journey of grief will change and I can make progress and have a happy life. I know I still have many difficult days to live through but I also know now that I will survive them. I have learned to accept the fact that I will never be who I was again and I will have a new normal. This was something I was determined I could overcome but now I know I can't but just having hope again is great!

I want to thank all of my friends and family who have helped me travel through this journey. I appreciate their continued support. Bereaved Parents of the USA has been my strength and my star of hope!

Loving lifted from A Journey Together,

The National Newsletter of the

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Fall 2007

www.bereavedparentsusa.org



**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
October 20, 2018**

(MEMORY BEARS continued from page 1)

The experience Dawn gained from making bears for several people she encountered subsequently took on a more personal importance when her sister Darlene died in March 2006. Dawn asked the young nurse who had helped her sister and family so much if she could take the gown Darlene had worn while in the hospital. Dawn remembers that the nurse gave her a strange look but agreed, and she went on to make three bears out of her sister's gown—for herself, her mother and her dad. "I carried my sister's bear everywhere I went that first year after her death," Dawn recalled. "I made other bears from Darlene's clothing for her four daughters and others in my family. I made a bear from Darlene's pajama bottoms for her youngest daughter. That bear was later replaced with one made from Darlene's robe when a new puppy ate the back of the first bear." Dawn still has the torn bear, and as it now has even more meaning, she uses it to represent her business, DD's Memory Bears & More.

The December Candle Lighting has become a special opportunity for Dawn, her mother, father and sister to remember Darlene with the bears made in her memory. Held in Kellogg Park in Plymouth, Michigan, the service takes place in the middle of a walk of lighted trees. One of the trees is decorated by the local chapter of The Compassionate Friends with personalized ornaments, and for Dawn's family, holding their bears throughout the ceremony has become an intimately personal way to remember Darlene.

Dawn has been challenged to make bears from a variety of clothing, but that isn't all. She offered to make a bear for a coworker who had lost his father, but he kept delaying in bringing her any of his father's clothing. One day Dawn asked if he had anything at all with him then, and he remembered his father's ties in his car. She wasn't sure how she could make a bear from ties, but when it was finished, not only was her coworker delightfully surprised with the bear, but Dawn couldn't believe how well it had turned out. She's gone on to make subsequent bears from bedspreads, corduroy pants, dresses, jackets and military uniforms.

"When we lose a loved one, we look for comfort in any way we can find it," Dawn explains. "A Memory Bear, made out of an article of clothing from a loved one, can help with the grieving process. These bears bring comfort and emotional support to adults and kids who have lost someone special in their lives. Memory Bears can also be made from something you care about and want to cherish forever, like a baby's first blanket, Dad's ties, or Grandma's jacket. I love making Memory Bears for people. It brings happiness to me knowing that I can help them with the loss of a loved one."

Aside from Memory Bears, Dawn looks for any opportunity to help people, and plans ahead to make bears to donate to the Salvation Army, Toys-for-Tots, Adopt-A-Family, First Step and other organizations during the holidays. She finds the most satisfaction from her Memory Bears, though, and is focused on "getting the word out" to those people she feels needs them.

Dawn can be contacted at ddsmemorybears@yahoo.com or visit her website: ddsmemorybears.com



Story lovingly lifted from We Need Not Walk Alone, The National Newsletter of the Compassionate Friends
Autumn 2008

What would he tell me... about his first day of school?

Okay, I didn't think it was going to bother me this much. I've been saying for weeks that I couldn't wait till school started to get Scott and Ashley out of my hair. (They couldn't wait to get me out of theirs either.)

So here it is, the eve of the first day of school, and I'm thinking "What would tomorrow be like if Nicholas was here?" His turn finally comes to stand outside with backpack and new shoes, waiting for the big yellow bus. Or would he have wanted Mom to take him his first day of kindergarten? What would he come home and tell me about his first day of school?

And what about the kids—his class? Will I forever look at these kids (and their parents) and wonder "What if?" They don't even know that they're missing a classmate.

Here it's been almost six years and I feel compelled to hang around the school and grab every kindergarten parent I see and say, "I would have had a child in this class." I surprise myself because I don't usually have those urges anymore.

But this is harder than I thought it would be. Another milestone of life—first day of school—that Nicholas (and I) missed.

The thing is, nobody will think of this. It's not a birthday or Mother's Day or Christmas. It goes by unnoticed except by a mother with kids too excited to sleep tonight—one starting fifth grade, one starting second, and one...

- Linda Moffatt
TCF St. Louis, MO

THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRESSURE COOKER

Labor Day can put siblings into their own back-to-school pressure cooker. Whether this is the first year or later, our kids may be dealing with questions and comments about their brother or sister from peers, teachers, or counselors. Or perhaps no one is talking, because no one knows what to say. Feelings of loneliness, being different, being left out, can surface—and sibling rivalry? Remember, if you will, how intense it could get between all your children. What kind of competition existed between them during the school year, or what comparisons were made: athletics, grades, friendships, extra activities?

That kind of emotion is often forgotten when a child dies. But as your children go back to the classroom, to the athletic field, they may see those reminders each day. When they bring home these feelings, positive and negative, they need a place to express them without being judged or compared to their sibling.

We want to remember the good. But we have to remember that no child was always good! To forget that is to make a martyr of our dead child—possibly at the expense of our living children.

Our surviving children need special support at this time of the year too. They need to be reassured that they are still loved—that they can be forgiven for any anger or resentment they may feel toward their brother or sister...that perfection is not a requirement for loving. They need to be reassured that they are separate, unique individuals, not imperfect replacements for the child who died. They need a safe place to talk, to let out their own concerns and anxieties and fears. They too are grieving and need a lot of support, especially during this back-to-school rush.

- Cindy Cooper
TCF St. Louis, MO

MOMENTS

Opening the closet looking for the vacuum,
you glimpse at a shirt hanging there.

Walking down the hall, you pass the closed
door.

His cat jumps in your lap and settles in,
finding a comfortable spot.

Shopping for groceries you spy the
Entenmann's donuts.

A car goes by that you recognize. Was the
front plate crooked?

Driving past the tree, you look. You always
have to look.

A familiar song plays on the radio.

Moments that poke their heads up day after
day trying to enter your mind and take
over.

Moments taking your breath away.

Moments that make you think it isn't true.

You push them back with all your energy.

Ignore them. Keep busy and they will go
away.

But without warning one little moment pokes
up, just a fleeting moment appearing out of
nowhere.

You have no more strength. It explodes in
your mind and takes over your body.

Crying, screaming, hitting, slamming! Asking
"why?"

Tears, nausea, dizziness, sweating.

Your body finally goes numb. All feeling is
gone. The burst is over.

You pick up the pieces and take one little
step. Then another. Face another day.

You see a bird at the feeder.

A butterfly lands on the flower you planted.

The sun peeks from behind a cloud.

A friend calls.

You feel ready to go on.

A hint of a smile appears.

You are gathering your strength.

You feel stronger than ever...

Waiting for those moments to poke at you
again.

- Janice Mazza

Lovingly lifted from TCF Mo-Khan Region
Newsletter September 2009

REFLECTIONS AFTER 20 YEARS

This is not a raw outpouring of latent tears, nor some systematic denial of unbearable pain. This is me—20 years after my stepbrother hanged himself in his mother's garage. I don't think about it every day anymore, or even every week, yet honestly believe that this "event" had more impact on my life than any before or since.

Cory, I don't know what you would have been to me if you had lived to have a family, a career, or even that island amusement park you dreamed up, but by choosing to end your life, you changed me more than anyone else on the planet.

At 15, there was no option for me but to let my broken heart drag me through every stage of "the grieving process." I was old enough to understand everything that was happening, and especially sensitive to the reactions of others. I have forgiven but never forgotten my Catholic neighbor's offer to pray you out of purgatory for me. I can still see and hear one of your close friends hitting the top of the coffin with his fists and shouting through clenched teeth and tears "Damn you, Cory!" over and over. I remember not feeling angry with the guy for saying it. It was honest. It was real.

Most important by dying at 22, before you got a chance to see if things could ever get better, Cory, you taught me to live. To live no matter what. To go when it hurts too much to stay. To search out happiness and not count the cost. While my life choices have not brought me success or fame, I can say, with some confidence that I have lived more than most.

By not understanding how many people suffer from one little suicide, you forced me to witness it firsthand. I couldn't pretend not to know. No one could write a suicide note long enough to cover the holes they will blow in so many people's lives. All this in exchange for relief, for one ticket out. As much as you thought nobody cared, and that the world would be better off without you, you left dozens of people shattered for years. End your life, and you've murdered somebody's mother/father/daughter/son/brother/sister/aunt/cousin/lover/friend.

I was just sitting on my back porch looking up and, seeing Orion, remembered the Christmas two months after you died, Cory. I assigned you a star and wished hard—I don't remember for what. Maybe to stop hurting, or to hear something from you, from God, who knows. But just then, a meteor streaked across Orion from hand to foot, cutting a path directly across the star I had picked. It was the brightest and longest star I had ever seen. I could hear it sizzle through the atmosphere. I don't even know what meaning I attached to the "sign" at the time—just remember being stunned out of my sobbing, and feeling like the world was expanding around me. So much yet to be found out.

Looking up tonight, I had the thought that I am glad it all happened when it did. I immediately censored

myself, because it sounds like I am somehow *glad* that you died. I'm not. I would love nothing more than to bring all my kids to Uncle Cory's Island Amusement Park for vacations. I wish that they could hear your laugh. It was the greatest.

But really, if it had happened when I was very young, like four or something, I might still be attempting to deal with it. When kids lose someone close, it is too big to process, so they just put it away. A lost parent or sibling becomes idealized. Memories blur with fantasies. Plus, the situation isn't always explained to them fully until they are much older...and often they are lied to outright. What a mess to have to wade through 20 years later.

On the other hand, if I had been in my 30s or 40s when I experienced my first significant loss, it might have been even harder. Kind of like not getting chickenpox until you are 35. Instead of two weeks of itchy spots, you get two months of shingles. I would be sitting here trying to grieve, and take care of five children. I would have to put on a face for everyone. Adults who experience loss are allowed to be sad for a few weeks or months, and then somehow expected to just go on with their normal lives. Go to work, church, the grocery store, pay the bills, be polite, and all the things that become practically impossible to do when you are suffering so intensely.

Being 15, with no real-life responsibilities, I was completely free to lose my fool mind. For years. To just be sad. To be wickedly mad. To be totally, disgustingly selfish. To act out in crazy, irresponsible ways. Nobody expected anything less. It scared Mom and Dad because it looked a lot to them like I was trying everything I could to just die too...and I am sorry for putting them through that. However, I think it was more about trying everything I could to find a way to make peace with just being me and being alive. That much I have found.

Thanks, Cory, for sharing your dad with me. I needed one, for sure. He really is a great guy. I know it was a pretty rough time for you, living with Dad's new family, but you were a great big brother to me. I needed one, for sure. And, as far as my neighbor's prayers, we didn't need those after all. I know you're up there waiting for us. In a way, whether you knew it or not you laid down your life for me. In my God's eyes, that counts for everything. - Michelle

By Michelle Bertucco

Michelle and her husband live in east Tennessee with their five children. She shares her reflections 20 after the death of her brother Cory.

Lovingly lifted from [We Need Not Walk Alone](#), the National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Autumn 2008. Copyright © 2008



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

435-5321 (PLEASE NOTE NEW NUMBER) 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.



You need not walk alone

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