



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2020

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm
ZOOM MEETING

Please contact Kathleen Kelleher at
Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com or
518-439-1114 for instructions on how
to join the Zoom meetings.

OTHER LOCAL CHAPTERS

Due to the Coronavirus, many chapters have ceased in-person meeting, but may be holding virtual meetings. Please call your local chapter to inquire about meetings.

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

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Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white.

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night.

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
from this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above.

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow.

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On earth we will light candles
As we remember.

-Jacqueline Brown
Peace Valley TCF, New Britain, PA

TCF Albany Candle Lighting

December 15th

The Albany Chapter of TCF will be hosting a virtual candle lighting ceremony during the regular Zoom meeting on Tuesday December 15th at 7:30pm. In order to join, you need a valid email address on file with the chapter co-leaders. You will be sent a Zoom link about a week before the event. You also need a candle (real or electric) and if you wish, a picture of your child. Our plan is to do the same readings and music we always have, and then go around to each participant who can say their child's name, hold up a picture if they wish, and light a candle. If you are receiving the Albany Chapter Zoom links now, you are all set. If you are not, please provide your email by calling or emailing Kathleen at 518-439-1114 or kathleen.kelleher17@gmail.com. We hope to see you at the ceremony and feel free to invite others.



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.

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.



LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

This section is reserved for Love Gifts given in honor of your child. You can post a special message to your child right here and even include a picture. Your Love Gift donations help to fund the activities of our Albany Chapter. Please consider giving a donation today. (See the left side page for instructions). Thank you.



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held on Sunday, December 13th from 7-8 pm, and unites families and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

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

Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving I am truly thankful for many things. My family remains my greatest blessing. Friends who continue to walk beside me and let me talk and show them the same pictures over and over are added to my family. True, the empty spot at our table screams, but it screams "Remember me, I gave you laughter and fun," and I am so truly thankful for his life. It was too short by my standards, but he got so much done. As one of his friends wrote after his death, "Jon added the spice." He did that and it stays constant & precious. I try to share it for him.

-Jo Hepburn, *Blue Grass*
Chapter
TCF Lexington, KY



Thanks By Darci D. Sims

It doesn't seem to get any better...
but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken...
but there are memories to be cherished.
For that, I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table...
but the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller...
but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter...
but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there...
but it lasts only moments.
For that I am thankful.

The calendar still turns,
The holidays still appear
And they still cost too much...
but I am still here.

For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty.
The soul still aches...
But the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come,
The dishes still pile up...
but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing,
The words still unspoken...
but the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

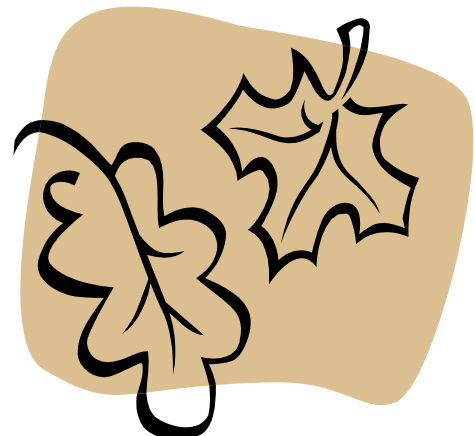
The snow still falls,
The sled waits,
and the spirit wants to...
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains...
but the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.

The moment is gone...
but the love is forever.
For that, I am blessed.
For that, I am grateful...

Love was once
(and still is)
A part of my being...
For that, I am living.
I am LIVING...
And for that, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most
wondrous reason of all.



What Will Happen to Us?

My sister died last summer.

Mom cries.

Dad sits in his chair -- staring into space, channel surfing, or sleeping.

Nobody talks about her.

It hurts too much.

What is happening to us?

Grandma invited us to Thanksgiving dinner. Mom doesn't want to go.

She cries.

Dad just sits in his chair.

"Maybe we should go, it would help us feel better", I said.

Nobody answers.

What has happened to us?

Mom doesn't want to have Christmas.

"But Christmas was her favorite time of year," I say.

"She would want us to have Christmas."

Mom is standing at the sink pretending to wash dishes, but I can tell she is crying.

Dad just sits silently in his chair.

A tear trickles down his cheek.

What will happen to us?

I go to my room.

Quietly I close the door.

I am so lonely.

My whole being aches with grief.

I wish we could go to Grandma's.

I wish we could have Christmas.

But nothing will ever be the same again without her.

I don't know what to do.

What will happen to us?

*Nancy Gleim
The Heart of Samantha
Lovingly lifted from Bereaved
Parents of the USA, Fall 2008*



The Gold Wrapping Paper

It's said that we have a choice to make. I've chosen: The story goes that some time ago a man punished his 5 year old daughter for wasting a roll of expensive gold wrapping paper so as to decorate a box to put under the Christmas tree.

Nevertheless the little girl brought the gift box to her father the next morning and said, "This is for you, Daddy." The father was embarrassed by his earlier over reaction, but his anger flared again when he found the box was empty. He spoke to her in a harsh matter. "Don't you know, young lady, when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside the package?" The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was full." The father was crushed. He fell on his knees and put his arms around his little girl and he begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

An accident took the life of the child only a short time later and it is told that the father kept that gold box by his bed for all the years of his life. And whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems he would open the box and take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of his child who put it there. In a very real sense, each of us as human beings have been given a golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.

Friends and family are like angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.

*-Author Unknown
Lovingly lifted from the National Newsletter
of BP/USA, A Journey Together, Fall 2009
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

Are “Happy Holidays” a Myth?

By: Margaret Gerner
1996 BP/USA St. Louis



We all have expectations and ideas of what the holidays should be but, in truth, the idea of “Happy Holidays” is a myth.

Actually, if you stop and think about it, many of your own past holidays, even holidays with your deceased child, weren't happy.

There were many times you didn't get that special something you hoped you would get. There might have been times you didn't have enough money for necessities, let alone decorations and gifts.

There were times when someone was sick. Maybe that happened the last year of two of your child's life. Maybe you were the one who was sick. Sickness makes holiday preparations difficult for everyone.

And, inevitably, there were times when Uncle Joe got drunk and caused a fight.

Another problem with the holidays is that we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others.

We think we should have the right gift for everyone, the family should be together, dinner should be perfect, everyone should have a good time and love, peace and joy should prevail. Life is rarely like that, is it? Then to add to our unrealistic expectations, the media and advertisements compound it. In the movies, Santa arrives and all is well. Things are always perfect for the television family and everyone in the ads are smiling.

Another problem is that we look back to past holidays when we

were children, when our families were young and to the good times with our children that our gone.

So, you see, unrealistic expectations of what “should” be, the media hype that's all around us, and the sadness of what “used to be” but is no more, can make the holidays difficult under the best of circumstances.

You have no energy, everything you have to do is too much. You have no interest in anything. You feel like “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas.” You can't concentrate. You can't remember what you are supposed to do or where you have put things. What you would like to do is to go to sleep now and wake up in January.

Then there is the pressure from those around you to have a happy holiday and self pressure not to spoil the holidays for others around you.

And, finally, you feel depressed, confused and out of control. Let me assure you that **THESE FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS ARE NORMAL AND UNDERSTANDABLE.**

But you can help yourself.

Know that no matter what you do it is still going to hurt, but you can lessen some of the fear and confusion. The secret is to be prepared and plan ahead. Share your ideas, feelings and thoughts about the holidays with other family members (even extended families) and ask them to share theirs with you. Work out a holiday plan together, hopefully one that will please all of you.

Know that, as a grieving parent,

you have physical and emotional limitations. Evaluate your priorities and decide what you want to do and what you are capable of doing.

Share and delegate holiday tasks.

Remember that holidays often magnify feelings of the loss of a child. Experiencing the sadness that comes is important and natural. Blocking such feelings is unhealthy.

If you have had one holiday without your child, people in your life might expect you to be “over it,” but the experience of many bereaved parents is that, eventually, they enjoy the holidays again. Hold onto that hope.

Don't pretend that everything is just like it was, that nothing really happened. Don't pretend you don't hurt. Don't make changes in everything. Don't not observe the holidays at all.

Remember what those of us who have some holidays behind us have found: **THE ANTICIPATION OF THE DAY IS USUALLY MUCH WORSE THAN THE DAY ITSELF.**

*Lovingly lifted from the National
Newsletter of BP/USA,
A Journey Together, Fall 2003
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*





Leadership

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Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey
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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.



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