



# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

December, 2003

[www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org)

Have you ever noticed that when you drop a ball of string, your best response is no response? At least, not right away. If you grab for the string, it tends to unravel even more than it would if you just let it fall to the floor. Of course, we tend to react without thinking and automatically grab for it. Only after a few experiences (more than that for some of us clumsy people), we start to notice this phenomenon. We learn to let the ball of string fall, not grab for it, and then retrieve it when it lands.

I would suggest that there are many ways grief is like that ball of string. But in particular, I think it has to do with the reactions of family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers to the figurative (often even physical) fall that we take following the death of our child or sibling. In their kindness and confusion, they want to help us get back to where we were before. They grab at us with attempts to fix the problem. Their intentions are good, but sometimes their advice is unnecessarily insensitive; like when they say we need to "move on with our lives", "count our

blessings", and other platitudes. Sometimes they want us to be like we were before and can't understand why we pull away from them.

It takes a very special friend to be able to watch us fall and not try to stop it. This friend has to keep watching, to see where we go, to step in when we are ready, to help us begin to wind up the tangled threads of our lives. This friend has to realize that no matter how carefully we are "put back together", we will not be exactly the same as we were before the fall. Maybe we can be whole again, but we can't be the same. It's a hard lesson for our friends (and ourselves) to learn. I hope that you have found a friend who is willing to wait, watch, and gently help you back to your feet. If so, make sure you let them know how much you appreciate them. If you are looking for someone like that, you'll find them at The Compassionate Friends.

I wish you all a season of peace.

Lisa Beall

#### GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
- to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
- to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
- to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
- to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.

*The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated by  
Sheila and James Mohan  
in memory of the life of  
Scott Joseph Mohan*



The Compassionate Friends  
Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter  
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Hospitality: Rebecca and Tom Fitzmorris  
Programs: OPEN

It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand...your compassionate friends.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editors 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed. **February submissions are due by December 20th.**



Our **lending library** is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above.

Thank you.

**The Compassionate Friends** is a non-profit self-help organization. We operate on donations from the community we support and concerned professionals in order to produce our newsletter, Service of Remembrance, library, and other needed services. Donations are tax deductible.

**Refreshments at our monthly meetings:** A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting or you may call Rebecca Fitzmorris (410-987-9175) to sign up. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter.



**Inclement weather on a meeting night -**  
meeting canceled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect at 5:00 p.m.

## MEETING INFORMATION

December 4, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Park in the back of the church

**PROGRAM: INTRODUCING OUR CHILDREN (and gift presentation)**

## NEXT MONTH:

January 8, 2004 (NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE)

**PROGRAM: THE MOURNING PROCESS**

## TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

**Marie Dyke, single parent, daughter, 17, only child, car accident**

**410-969-7597 Janet Tyler, daughter, 5 and brother, 33, car accident**

**410-360-1341 Tia Stinnett, miscarriages and infant death**

**410-721-6457 Sandy Platts, infant death**

## OTHER RESOURCES:

\* **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, (410-321-7053).

\* **Stephanie Roper Committee, for victims of violent crime,** Anne Arundel County chapter representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).

\* **The Compassionate Friends, Reston Satellite Group (support group for parents who are now childless),** second Saturday of the month, 1:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. For info., contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608, InLvMemory@aol.com); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049).

\* **Seasons, a suicide support group,** 3rd Tuesday, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lutherville (Dorothy Schanberger, 410-803-2098).

\* **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park (410-987-2129).

## CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

#### **December 4: "Introducing Our Children"**

The focus of this evening will be on our deceased children, and giving us a better sense of who these children were and are. There will not be a "Presenter"; the sharing groups are the focus. **Each person brings a picture or some memento of his/her child.** In the sharing groups each person holds the picture or memento facing the rest of the group and "introduces" his/her child, describing what the child was like, etc.

**We also invite you to bring an unwrapped gift** in memory of your child to be distributed to a needy child. (This is an optional activity.) If you would like to share some thoughts about what the gift might have meant to your child, it will give us yet another opportunity to know him or her better. These gifts will be distributed to children at the Board of Child Care, an organization that provides residential care, foster care placement, and counseling to children. Gifts may also go to children who suffered the loss of a parent and are in need of assistance. Wherever and to whomever your gift goes, you can be sure that it is needed and appreciated. When you awaken on Christmas morning or during your Hanukkah celebration, we hope that you will find a small measure of comfort knowing that the memory of your child lives on in the life of a needy child.

#### **January 8: "The Mourning Process"**

**\*\*NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE\*\***

**\*\*FOR THIS MEETING\*\***

How do we survive the tears, confusion, depression and other emotions following the death of our child? Answer: through healthy mourning. Telling your own story can be an important aspects of mourning. The act of telling your story is part of the healing process you use to put your life back together. The speaker will discuss the characteristics of mourning, the common myths of mourning, factors of healthy

**Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through Lisa Beall  
(bealls@erols.com).**

**Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$40 each month.**

***Thank you!***

### **ARE YOU USING AMAZON.COM FOR YOUR SHOPPING THIS YEAR?**

If you use Amazon.com, perhaps you could use the Chapter's website to make the connection and purchase. We have a link to Amazon.com on the home page of our website. Amazon.com will give our chapter a commission of 5% of any purchases which are made through that link. Using the link does not increase the cost to the purchaser. Alert your friends, relatives, and colleagues to the link and suggest they use it as well.

Access the site at [www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org), click on the butterflies on the welcome page to enter our site, and then scroll down the first page to the bottom. On the bottom left corner is the Amazon.com graphic. Clicking on the graphic takes you to Amazon.com's site. When it does so, it links information relevant to our chapter to the visit to the site. If a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. Purchases made without going through that link do not get credited. Since our chapter is a not-for-profit organization and has no dues or fees, we are dependent on donations and fund raisers. We are hopeful these commissions will help fund some of our community outreach activities.

Many of you who receive our **newsletter** were referred by a friend, physician, or clergy. You may have never attended a meeting. In this case, it is likely that your child's name does not appear in our **monthly list of "Children Remembered"**. This is because we require your permission to do so. If you would like your child's name added , please send a note to our post office box. List your child's name, your name(s), and the dates of your child's birth and death. Please allow 6 weeks to be sure it arrives in time for the appropriate month.

To my beloved daughter, Jolene Dawn, November again. How can it be? Fall is nice. The air is so cool and crisp and we know that the holidays are coming. I know that you are with me in spirit, but oh how I want to see you and hold you. Sometimes I think I will scream if I can't see you walk in the door. I truly believe that as the years go by and I grow older, I only miss you that much more. I have learned so much in TCF. I know now that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. So whatever I am feeling is okay. I am thankful to all my wonderful friends in the TCF for teaching me that. They are more than friends - they are family. We are all sorry to have to be in this group, but it is a blessing that we have each other. So, my sweetie, I will close for now. Always remember that I love you with all my heart forever and ever.



Your Mom,  
Charlene Kvech

*When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means you can summon me back to your mind, even though countless years and miles stand between us. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost...*

from Whistling in the Dark, by Frederick Buechner

## THE CHRISTMAS STAR

It's here again, son, though I sought to forestall the season from arriving by waiting until the day before to buy the tree. Even then I refused to put it in its place before the window until all were abed; to be alone with the tree and thoughts of you hoisting it over the thresholds of yore with cherry cheeks and white breath.

Remarkable, really, that I had no trouble placing the tree in the holder you'd made, nor stringing lights, hanging ornaments both store-bought and child-constructed, until I came to the star. Oh, I tried more than once, but each time I could see you creating a ceremony of hanging it just right, and I could not.

So I sat down with cookies and cider to wait for the pandemonium of Christmas breaking o'er the land. Later I noticed something flowing atop the tree - outside, a star shone low in such a way its light appeared upon our tree where I placed our star to silhouette its glow. Thank you, son, for hanging the Christmas stars.



Marcia Alig, Mercer  
TCF, Princeton

## NO MORE PICTURES

I just finished placing the latest snapshot of a family member's child under the glass top of our end table. I've done this for years so we have quite a collection of children's pictures at different stages of their lives. Some are school pictures, soccer team pictures, graduation pictures. As I look at them and compare this year's picture to last year's, I struggle with feelings of joy at seeing their smiling faces and feelings of resentment and deep

sadness. Jill's last professionally taken picture was done in kindergarten - there will never be another picture. She will never grow older, no soccer pictures, no graduation pictures, no more birthdays.

I wonder if our family and friends think about this as they enclose the latest snapshot of their child into my holiday card. Do they hesitate, not wanting to cause us pain or is this just

an automatic gesture? I wonder if they realize how bittersweet it is for me to see how their children have grown, knowing that Jill will never be older than six. I wonder what they think when they open our holiday card and instead of Jill's latest grade school picture, there is a little angel stamp with Jill's name on it that says, "Always in our Heart."

I really just wonder...

Bonnie Ebert

# SIBLING PAGE

## ANGER

Sometimes grieving kids get real mad! Do you? Anger is a normal part of grief. It is OK to be mad and angry. Here's what some kids say:

- \* It makes me really angry when I think about that drunk driver who killed my sister.
- \* How could God let her die? I hate God.
- \* At school now when I get bad grades, I just get furious.
- \* The thing that makes me mad enough to fight is when kids at school say something bad about my brother.
- \* I get mad at anything now. People think I have a bad attitude and that makes me even madder. They just don't understand.
- \* I want to punch in the face of the person who killed him!

If you can say what makes you mad - that is an excellent way to get your anger out. Find a good listener and tell him how you feel.

If you keep your anger tight inside yourself, it will end up hurting more and more. You might start to feel sick or have headaches. You might not be able to be really happy or have much fun. Your anger might burst out suddenly and cause you to hurt someone else or yourself, and probably get you into lots of trouble. You might start to lose your friends.

If it's too hard to talk about your anger right now, you

could try some other things:

- \* Get physical! Exercise..kick a ball..swing a bat..play sports..dance..run..jump..
- \* Make noise! Yell..scream..play a drum..crank up your music..bang pots and pans
- \* Calm yourself...listen to music..take a walk..get close to nature..draw..pray..do something you enjoy..
- \* Take your anger out on things. Tear up old phone books or magazines..scrunch newspapers..punch your pillow..hammer some nails..pound clay..squeeze playdough..break sticks..pop bubbles in packing sheets..kick a ball..crush cans..pull weeds...
- \* Write it down. Write your angry thoughts in a letter to the person..scribble on big pieces of paper..type your anger into a secret computer journal...
- \* Make a difference. Turn your energy into something good..organize your class to protest drunk driving..learn about the disease that killed your loved one..help some other kids who are grieving...

Anger can make you be the kind of person you don't want to be if you don't get it out in a safe way. Let it go!

Barb Coe, Editor  
Inside Fernside, 1997

## IF ONLY I HAD KNOWN

If only I had known,  
 It was our last walk in the rain,  
 I'd keep you out for hours,  
 I'd give you a life-line to my heart.  
 Underneath the thunder,  
 We'd talk for hours.  
 If only I had known,  
 I'd never hear your voice again,  
 I'd memorize each thing you said,  
 And on those lonely days at home,  
 I could think of you once more,  
 Keep your words alive inside my head.

I'd never hear your voice again.

You were the treasure in my heart,  
 You were the one who always stood beside me.  
 So unaware I foolishly believed  
 That you would always be there.  
 But then one day I turned my head, and  
 You were gone.



If only I had known,

Cortini  
 TCF Sibling chapter, Valley Forge



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Love shared can bring comfort to a broken heart.  
Please remember the following families this month.



David Sheridan Astle  
son of Senator and Mrs. John Astle  
October 21, 1974 - December 6, 1997

Mark Edward Smeltzer  
son of Peggy Smeltzer  
December 11, 1969 - March 15, 1997

Christopher Lewis Borngesser  
son of Diane M. Borngesser  
December 21, 1961 - May 28, 2001

Russell J. Tarr  
son of Lorraine Tarr  
December 22, 1963 - May 12, 1994

Phillip Wayne Gray, Jr.  
son of Joan G. Gray  
July 8, 1970 - December 22, 1986

Marie Rose Trehey  
daughter of Chere and Grey Trehey  
December 21, 2000 - December 21, 2000

Mallory Heffernan  
daughter of Dianne and Edmund Heffernan  
December 19, 1985 - April 18, 2003

Richard C. Watts  
son of Fran and Tom Cease  
December 28, 1966 - October 28, 1998

Logan Robert Kugler  
son of Sherry Kugler  
December 10, 2000 - December 10, 2000

Miriam Luby Wolfe  
daughter of Rosemary and Larry Mild  
September 26, 1968 - December 21, 1988

Michael Robert Leger  
son of Elizabeth and Daryl Leger  
July 11, 1986 - December 29, 2000

Scott Joseph Mohan  
son of Sheila and Jim Mohan  
December 9, 1976 - March 15, 1993

Michael Henry O'Malley  
son of Margie and Tom O'Malley  
August 25, 1971 - December 7, 1991

Cedric John Peoples  
son of Lucille and John Peoples  
September 5, 1968 - December 14, 1987

Gary Lee Ryon Jr.  
son of Betty Ryon  
August 24, 1989 - December 1, 2002

Donald L. Severe Jr.  
son of Issy and Chuck Mattis  
August 23, 1956 - December 13, 1984

Donald "Donny" Lee Seyfferth Jr.  
Son of Jody Seyfferth  
December 16, 1977 - May 8, 2000





**For those who think that Christmas and  
Chanukah are just nice days to give and get present,  
bereaved parents have another message...**

Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness.

With the hope of birth comes the threat of death.

We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us, too.

Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life.

There is darkness. But there is hope.

There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

Dennis Klass, professional advisor  
St. Louis, MO



**HOW MANY STOCKINGS SHALL I HANG?**

What a torment! Funny how you worry about what your friends will think. For days I worried. And finally, I hung three upon the fireplace wall, and laid one gently on the mantel.

**But that was last year!** And this year I shall hang all four above the fireplace. For this year the confusion of mind has found new answers - with conviction! For it does not really matter whether my oldest daughter lives in Tucson, or my youngest son is dead - these are my children - our family - and as long as we hang the Christmas stockings, we shall hang them all... with love.

Shirley Melin, BP, Hinsdale, IL



Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the memorial service, library books, and other literature. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

**Contributions through United Way, Central Md.:**

Deborah and Paul Michael, in memory of Paul Brian Michael

Peggy and Gordon Haines, in memory of Matthew Haines

Paul and Claudia Balasic, in memory of Bethany Balasic

Donna and Doug Rohrbaugh, in memory of James Ryan Rohrbaugh

JeanMarie O'Sullivan, in memory of Cortney Belt  
Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

**Contributions:**

Marlen and Gene Maier, in memory of Eric Eugene Maier

Bob and Sue Katz, in memory of Matthew James Katz

William Marinelli, in memoy of John F. Marinelli

Marie Dyke, in memory of Michelle Marie Dyke

Sharon Poe, in memory of John Christopher Poe

Sharie Valerio, in memory of Darin Lacey Valerio

Debra and Richard Kerr, in memory of Kevin Murray Kerr

Dee Spirt, in memory of Gary David Spirt

Carol Boslet

Brenda Gawthrop, in memory of Andrew Thomas Gawthrop

Beth Neafsey, in memory of Jennifer M. Neafsey

Jack and Audrey Bagby, in memory of Deneen Leigh Lins and Nicholas Allen Bowling

Kathy Tullier, in memory of Marshall Maurice Tullier

Bonnie Boone-Adamecz, in memory of Traci Lynn Boone

Ella Mae McGinness, in memory of Jeffrey R. McGinness and Julie K. McGinness

Robert and Sandra Burash, in memory of Paul J. Burash

Anne and DeWitt Wilcox, in memory of Misty Dawn Smith and Sean Amaro Wilcox

Frances Palmer, in memory of Scott Thomas Palmer

Robin Stallings, in memory of Roderick William Stallings

Joan Para, in memory of Brian James Para

Rudy and Arlene Novak, in memory of David Joseph Novak

Ray and Catherine Fennessey, in memory of Barbara Jean Fennessey

LeRoy and Jeanne Jones, in memory of Brian Keith Jones and Jeremy Scott Jones

Kenneth A. Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

Dorothy E. Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Lorraine Tarr, in memory of Russell (Rusty) J. Tarr

Ann and Noel Castiglia, in memory of Tria Marie

Castiglia

Edwin and Susan Landis, in memory of Steven J. Landis  
Dr. and Mrs. Karl Reichardt, in memory of Kevin Eric Reichardt

Fran and Tom Cease, in memory of Richard C. Watts

Larry and Rosemary Mild, in memory of Miriam Luby Wolfe

Elizabeth and Barry Aikin, in memory of Jon Russell Aikin

Catherine Wallace, in memory of John Kirkpatrick Wallace

Gordon and Virginia Schmier, in memory of David C. Schmier

William and Linda Anthony, in memory of William P. Anthony

Sonja Bell, in memory of Lacy (Danny) McDaniel

Thomas and Mary Cranston, in memory of Ashlea Marie Cranston, Joseph William Cranston, John Cranston, and James Cranston

Lauri Rogers, in memory of Keith Rogers

Walt and Marlene Evans, in memory of Bill Evans

Robert and Linda Rasmussen, in memory of Steven Craig Rasmussen

Tom and Joyce Schall, in memory of Thomas Jeffrey Schall

Jill Dumont, in memory of Jack Turner Dumont

Susan E.P. Alexander, in memory of Jamie Alexander and recognition of his birthday 33 years ago and the anniversary of his death 5 years ago.

Kathleen and Donald McGlew, in memory of Jennifer Hamilton and Robert McGlew

Kathleen Hartline, in memory of Michael G. Hartline

Susan J. Galyon-Pyle, in memory of Craig Robert Galyon

Lavigene B. Gross, in memory of Brianna Nicole Gross

Steven and Beverly Ambrozewicz, in memory of Jordan Edward Ambrozewicz

David and Shirley McGrady, in memory of James Allen McGrady

Lowell and Ruth Minor, in memory of Susan Blair Minor

Dee Kinsey, in memory of Judy Helm

Jim and Karen Temple, in memory of Matthew Jason Temple

Bryant and Missy Lawrence, in memory of Susan Lawrence Barr

Kathleen Savage, in memory of Robert M. White

## THE TWELVE DAYS OF HOLIDAY WISHES

### 1. THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE

An openness in sharing your grief and talking about your child

Thoughts of a cup half full, not half empty.



### 2. THE ABILITY TO CONQUER FEAR

To overcome anxiety surrounding the holidays and those special days

### 3. A SAFE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR GRIEF

Someone to listen. Someone you trust.

### 4. PERMISSION TO FORGIVE YOURSELF

For backslicing into deep grief or for at times feeling guilty about feeling good after the death of your child.

### 5. THE ABILITY TO BE ABLE TO DO OR CHOOSE SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR YOUR CHILD

Perhaps a candle, a tree, a special tribute to their memory.

### 6. PLEASANT MEMORIES

The days you were together as a family.

Those magic moments in life.

### 7. OPTIMISM



### 8. HOPE

To find a dream, something to add new meaning to your life.

### 9. THE ABILITY TO GIVE OF YOURSELF

To be able to do something positive with your life, like helping others.

### 10. THE ABILITY TO ACCEPT YOUR LOSS

Not the deep well of sorrow, regret and despair.

### 11. THE ABILITY TO PARTITION YOUR GRIEF

To accept life itself - the joy, the pain, the love, the anger, the hugs, the laughter, and enjoying the moment.

### 12. THE ABILITY TO SAY OUR CHILD' NAME WITHOUT PAIN AND TO ACCEPT MY SHOULDER TO HELP SHARE THE BURDEN



When you come to the edge of all the light you know  
and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown,

Faith is knowing one of two things will happen:

There will be something solid to stand on,  
or you will be taught to fly.

Author unknown

## DAYS TO SURVIVE

As the holiday season approaches, I realize that it will be a first for many of you. To me, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas of 1984 were just days to survive. I was still numb from Charles' death, but the hurt was setting in - BIG TIME!

I remember very little of it now, but one thing I do remember is hanging up four stockings instead of five. The fifth nail on the mantel looked so forlorn. The stockings were not centered at all. There was a big gap on the end.

I hated the way it looked, and I hated

not putting Charles' stocking out. To me it meant a betrayal almost denying his existence.

But on the other hand, I thought about the reactions of friends and neighbors as they came to visit. Would they think that I had really lost my mind if Charles' stocking were hanging?

I was miserable the entire season, and Christmas day was just horrible - until my sister, Ann gave me an envelope as the other children were opening their gifts. I looked at it, and it said, "CHARLES". In it was a check to the PICU at Children's Hospital at

Richland Memorial where Charles had been a patient for the week preceding his death.

Ann had remembered Charles! As I cried, she told me that the money she would have used for Charles' gift would still be used for something very special.

Every Christmas since then I have hung Charles' stocking. Santa's been real good about leaving something for a favorite charity in it.

Grace Dibble Boyle  
TCF, Sumter, SC

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## **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. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children 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 and creeds. 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 we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; 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 our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and 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.**