



The Compassionate Friends

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

February, 2003

This is a time of change in our chapter. A new chapter leader takes the reins and others move into leadership positions serving the needs of bereaved parents and siblings in Anne Arundel County and beyond. Dave Alexander has been organizing the programs this past year and I'm sure we can all agree that he has done a magnificent job. We have had speakers covering such diverse topics as anger, choosing to go on after the death of a child, the invisible grievers, the difference between the grief of men and women, and what to do with your child's possessions. Dave brings enthusiasm, organization (though he would deny it), and a commitment to making this chapter the best it can be. Now comes the part the rest of us must play - serving in supporting roles. Dave is going to need assistance planning programs for the coming year. This means providing topic ideas and contacting potential speakers. One person does not have to assume the responsibility on their own, however. It can be divided up among several members. The only way for this chapter to continue to thrive and be a real resource for bereaved

families is for those of us who are farther along in our grief to give back some of what was given to us in our time of desperate need. Please consider doing this for your fellow compassionate friends.

As we welcome Dave to his new role, we would be remiss if we did not offer a huge thank you to Janet Tyler for her many years as chapter leader. During this time, she has evolved from a willing but uncertain leader, to a knowledgeable and sensitive spokesperson for our chapter. She has offered comfort to the newly bereaved as they made their first contact with our chapter by telephone. She has capably led the meetings and learned to express what she has learned for the benefit of all. You may not know this, but before TCF, Janet couldn't stand public speaking. I'm sure she would consider it just one of the many rewards she has gained from her years of leading the chapter.

So, as her sister, and as a member of our chapter, I offer this THANKS on behalf of us all!

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 of this newsletter has been donated through United Charities contributions
by Paul and Claudia Balasic
in memory of the life of
Bethany Anne Balasic*



The Compassionate Friends
Bereaved Parents of the USA
Anne Arundel County Chapter
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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. **April submissions are due by February 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 Sandi Burash 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

February 6, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM: USING MUSIC TO DEAL WITH GRIEF

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Park in the back of the church

NEXT MONTH:

March 6, 2003

PROGRAM: I NEED HELP...WHERE ARE YOU?**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, daughter, 17, single parent, 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).

CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

Upcoming Meeting Topics

February 6: Using Music in Dealing with Grief

Some bereaved parents find music can be helpful in dealing with their grief. Our speaker will relate her experiences in developing music for grieving parents and the role she believes music has in the grief process. Members are urged to bring CDs or cassette tapes with music they have found particularly meaningful and helpful as they deal with their grief. We will use these as part of the discussion in our Sharing Groups.

March 6: “I need help...where are you?!” — Dealing with Family, Friends, and Colleagues

Bereaved parents find that many friends, family and work colleagues are not very supportive in our grieving; in fact some can be harsh and hurtful. A panel of TCF members will discuss their experiences and offer suggestions on dealing with friends, family and colleagues. The panel will explore such issues of how one might respond to those who are supportive and how one might respond to those who are not. The panel will try to offer insights as to how we can help our friends, family, and colleagues to help and support us.

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.

WEB ADDRESSES

Bereaved Parents USA home page

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Bereavement Magazine-
www.bereavementmagazine.com

On Suicides -
www.pbs.org/weblab/living

Paul Alexander Home page -

www.paulalexander.com

Judy Guggenheim's

Home page -

www.after-death.com

TCF Sibling Internet

Chat - Thursday nights at 9:00 EST: (email tcsiblingrep@aol.com for the password(

For bereaved parents

www.moms-dads.com/index2.html

CLIMB

CLIMB@POBOX.ALASKA.NET

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.

SAVE THE DATE

5th Annual Hope and Healing Conference

**to be held on Saturday, May 17, 2003
at Calvary United Methodist Church
Annapolis**

Anyone wanting to be involved in the planning and working of the conference, please call or email Pat Schultz, Chair at 410-255-7760, email - jim.n.pat@juno.com

SIBLING PAGE

SIBLING SURVIVORS

Gloria Carton

The Loss of a Brother or Sister Can Recast a Child's Destiny... This was the title in the Washington Post Health section in January, 1993. A social worker whose sister died of a brain tumor when he was five now works with families of children who have cancer. Another surviving sibling is a laboratory chief at NIH who was driven to succeed after his sister died of leukemia.

The article explains how, many years ago a fourteen year old boy died of a brain hemorrhage. His mother stayed in her bed, refusing to accept a future without him. Her other son who was seven years of age began to write amusing stories to read to her. This son was James Barrie who went on to immortalize his brother by writing "Peter Pan", the Boy who Never Grew Up.

Surviving siblings know that their lives are shaped by the brother or sister who never grew up. Sometimes they overcompensate and try to live for two. Sometimes they build a protective wall so as not to feel the pain. Often the missing link in their lives is found after many, many years.

Such is the case of our daughter, Emily who responded to this article and last month decided that she was ready to let me read the following letter which was accepted and printed on the editorial page of the Washington Post in February, 1993.

Losing a Sibling

The article, "Sibling Survivors" (cover, Jan. 19), touched upon many issues that children face when they lose a brother or sister. My oldest sister, Isabel died of leukemia

when she was 15. I was five years younger. Besides the loss of someone I deeply loved and depended upon and who had been part of my constellation since birth, there was the loss of my parents to their grief.

Each day, I questioned the reason for her death and the reason for my survival. Secretly, I wondered if my parents had wished it had been me. Instead of compensating for my sibling's death by trying to live and to achieve for two as those described in the article did, I became paralyzed and lived below my potential. I could not overcome the feeling that to live and to embrace life fully would mean a betrayal of her memory.

Decades later, the birth of my children brought all my unresolved feelings to the surface. Loving my son and daughter with the intensity and abandonment with which I had once loved my sister opened the door to memory. Only now, 30 years after my sister's death am I able to acknowledge that my life had been formed by the experience and that most of my choices, including my social work profession have been in response to that event.

Through the hard and painful work of sifting through that time of life, I am able to forgive myself for surviving and to forgive my parents for the grief that paralyzed their own lives. I only wish that there had been someone in my life who understood what I was going through and could have helped me through the wrenching emotional odyssey that followed.

Emily Carton
Washington, D.C.

GRIEF IS LONELY

Grief is lonely. When my sister died two years ago, everyone knew about it and talked about it. Everyone was in shock - but now, two years later, the anniversary of her death came and went without even a card in the mail. No one at work remembered the day. No one called to say, "I am thinking of you." No one asked, "How are you feeling?" My family has stayed in close contact and we talk about Susan all the time.

But when it comes to grieving over Susan, everyone grieves alone. No one knows how I feel about my little sister and how it hurts me so deeply to know she is not here. Everything else in life can be shared with someone else, but not grieving. No one can fully understand the pain because everyone's pain is different. When the pain is the greatest, the loneliness is the greatest too. I never thought I could feel this much pain and still

survive. I am alone in my grief. There is no one else here with me.

Susan was born when I was almost 11. She died by suicide when she was 16. The baby of the family, the youngest of four kids; our hearts are broken forever.

Cherie Bagadiong
TCF, St. Mary's County



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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





GOING TO A SUPPORT GROUP FOR HELP

Perhaps the best explanation of why a support group can work so well comes from the mother who wrote:

I never will be able to take Bryan or Dougie to the park or zoo, but I can take them to my support group and be able to talk about them very openly without someone saying, "When are you going to get over this?"

Think about it: Some parents who have experienced a stillbirth themselves are uncomfortable to hear other parents talk about it at a meeting.

Can you then imagine how cold most people who have not experienced a stillbirth can be when the subject of the stillbirth is brought up by a parent? "When are you going to be over this?" This is the kind of insensitivity these parents are dealing with on almost a daily basis. There simply has to be a place to talk openly and honestly, and for many parents that place is at a meeting of grieving parents.

But each parent brings a slightly different set of problems, and each brings different ways of approaching a solution. Sharing these ideas helps each person become a little better at coping. The greatest benefit: we all need as many friends as we can get in this mad world.

From Stillborn: The Invisible Death

One beautiful aspect about the group

FOR TRIA FROM GRANDMA ALBA

A cold wind flows and the first frost is on your grave
And still I mourn the life in you ended too soon
And I think of the happy times of a dear child held
Warm and secure in welcoming arms
And the joys you hold so dear, during your brief time here
Friends, lovers, concerns for those less fortunate and the
warmth of your smile
My heart is heavy and I seek to find answers to help
understand

The snow will soon cover your resting place but you will
have everlasting a
Place in my heart, warm and secure until we meet in the
eternal life.

This was written by Noel's mother (Alba Castiglia, now age 93),
after Tria died in 1984. We were cleaning out the house in CT
and found this poem.

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
James and Sheila Mohan, in memory of Scott Joseph Mohan

Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

Contributions:

Dorothy and Norm Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Kenneth Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

ELEVEN YEARS PAST AND STARTING OVER AGAIN

My son, Paul, at the age of 19 died 11 years ago in an automobile crash and just three months ago my 18-year-old nephew, Matthew, died in a horrible incident. At the time my son died, Matthew was only 7 years old. At that young age, it was Matthew who helped me through some of my darkest moments. It was this little boy to whom I could talk about his older cousin, Paul, and not have to pretend that it didn't hurt so much. His child-like questions were fresh and to the point and it allowed me the freedom to speak the truth without feeling I would be upsetting someone by my response.

It was Matthew who helped me decorate my son's grave the first Christmas without him and also the second Christmas. As I stood over my son's grave, this little boy delightfully decorated the grave with colored tinsel, flowers and other items and he was so proud of himself as he shuffled around and around until everything was perfect to him. As I looked over his shoulder I could see that this wasn't the prettiest decorated gravesite, but it was adorned colorfully with his loving hands and that made it more special to me than any other. I thanked God especially that day for sending me someone so special when I was helpless and hopeless those first Christmas holiday seasons. It dawned on me as I was watching Matthew decorate the gravesite that young children possess such magic that as adults sometimes we cannot see. All I could

see was the sadness over the loss of my own child and all Matthew could see was the beauty of his work and how proud it made him to do something special for his Uncle Paul.

Now my heart breaks all over again as I watch my sister suffer the same loss as mine. Watching her travel the road as a grief stricken parent takes me back to those years when I too traveled that same road.

Someone once said, "What can't be cured, must be endured." Bereaved parents' hearts can never be cured and made whole again, but we can endure our trials and tribulations and grow with the help of family, friends, co-workers and even strangers who reach out to one another. This is called "hope" and is what will sustain us through years to come.

During this holiday season, may someone give you hope and understanding and help you along your hard journey and may God send you someone special to decorate your child's resting place. This may not come in the form of decorating a gravesite, but rather a phone call, a card, or a prayer from someone who loved your child. May God richly bless each and every one of you.

Dedicated to the Memory of Matthew Henson, from Aunt Debbie

Debbie Michael, TCF, Anne Arundel Co, MD

THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF WINTER

When February comes, there is died, was like that image of winter. my heart. finally an end in sight to the long For somehow, even during the darkest, In living hopefully and lovingly, the winter. Sometimes, melting snow coldest moments, an unexpected sign seasons of the heart can change. The reveals the green tips of an early of hope would intrude. And as the loving memories of your special child, crocus or even the exquisite blossom hours and days and months dragged like the flower in the snow, can be the itself, a soft flower of hope invading a on, my heart finally learned, once beginning of the end of winter. harsh landscape of graying snow and again, to be open to the promise of new life. Painful memories melted into loving ones. Life that seemed forever promise of new life to come. My heart, grieving for my son who dormant once again sprang forth from

Maryann Kramer, TCF, Arlington Hts., IL

RAGE

by Gail Rosen, for Gilda

No, I can't comfort you.
I won't try to soothe you.
Have your rage. You need this fury.
Hold it. Cling to it.
When there's no air to breath,
perhaps your anger will sustain you.

Are you glad she was in your life?
Grateful that you held her for these too few years?
Thankful for the rationed months, weeks, days,
minutes? Gone. Finished. Ended. It was not enough!
Yes. You are glad her suffering is ended.
Yes. She no longer feels pain,
But your pain will not ease. Your fury will not cease.
This is not what you prayed for.
You want her back.
Not in pain, not in fear. You want her whole.
You want her well and happy.

What container can hold your rage?
Poetry? It is too measured.
Music? Too tender.
Humor? No, the edges of laughter are sharp and
brittle.

You try profanity,

A VALENTINE TO ALL MY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

We who have had our hearts so badly broken
know each other.
We have lost a child, grandchild, a sister or brother.
It matters not if we've seen each other's faces.
We share mending hearts full of aching places.

At first our hearts feel shredded and torn,
We might even wish that we'd never been born.
We don't understand how our lives went so wrong,
Everyone tells us they're glad that we are strong.

All we know is that we hurt to the core,
Because a child dearly loved is with us no more.
With time, patience and understanding we begin to heal,
We begin to accept what is, and life starts to seem real.

but those are words of living bodies, their actions and
their functions.
They will not encompass death.
Blasphemy, then.
But shocks and disturbs only the living.
It does not bring back the dead.

Where is there room for your rage?
Will we hear it?
Will we hold it?
Can we bear it?
Do we have room for your rage?

Where is there room for your rage?
I will hear it.
I will hold it.
I can bear it.
Here. I have room for your rage.

Gail Rosen was the speaker at our January meeting. Her use of stories to understand and deal with grief were insightful and comforting.

Each time we tell our tale, each hug we
receive,
Puts a band-aid on the hurting spots, giving
us reason to believe,
That we will feel joy again, that life does
go on,
Though we're never quite the same, since our
child is gone.

Compassionate Friends teach us ways we can cope,
Until we can live again and face life with hope.
So to TCF friends, whether we have met or not,
Thank you for all the band-aids on that bruised,
healing spot.



Kathy Hahn
TCF, Lower Bucks, PA

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Bereaved Parents of the USA
Anne Arundel County Chapter
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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.