



# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

July, 2003

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

I'm sure that as I sit here at my desk and watch the rain pouring down, there are those of you who watch the same rain and feel down and melancholy. The sky is gray, the temperature is cool and it certainly does not feel like the day before the beginning of summer. Yet for me, the rain is beautiful and mesmerizing. I can hardly get my work done for the distraction of watching it fall. The sound is soothing and nearly puts me to sleep. I appreciate the way it sustains the plants in my garden. And despite the fact that we have had more than enough rain, I don't mind the wet forecast.

I think there is some symbolism to rain that I find comforting. Just as we might notice butterflies and rainbows, the rain itself symbolizes life and sustenance. To me, it is the loving hand of God providing water to cool and nourish us. I am drawn to an opportunity to feel a closeness with the Creator -

because of the desire to see those I love who have gone on before me, and because of divine love that is offered to me.

The closest thing to perfect love that I can see here on earth is the love offered by our compassionate friends. This is the love of understanding, wanting nothing in return, and hoping only for peace of mind for our friends. Even our family often falls short of this type of unconditional love. We are all human and imperfect, but we taste the divine when we share our grief with others. The connection between us is like a ladder being built, rung by rung, to the place where we will enjoy a wonderful reunion with our precious children. We don't have to feel alone - we have each other, and we have faith in the life after. How do we know? I don't know about you, but I feel it every time the rain falls.

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.

*Healing from the death of your child is much like wisdom;  
It can't be forced, yet it comes upon you if you let it.*

*Dr. Thom Frantz, Advisory Member  
TCF, Buffalo, NY*



The Compassionate Friends  
Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter  
P.O. Box 6280  
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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. **September submissions are due by July 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**

July 3, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

**PROGRAM:** Calvary United Methodist Church  
301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis  
Park in the back of the church

**PROGRAM: MEMORIALIZING OUR CHILDREN**

**NEXT MONTH:**

August 7, 2003

**PROGRAM: LOSS THROUGH ADDICTION**

**CORE GROUP MEETING: AUG. 19TH**  
(ANYONE IS WELCOME)

**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

#### **July 3: Memorializing Our Children**

Many bereaved parents seek ways to memorialize their deceased children and to keep their memories fresh in the minds of family, friends, and the community. Paula Muehlhauser will introduce us to creating a **Chapter Quilt**. One of the sharing groups will work on starting the quilt. Background fabric will be supplied for everyone. You may want to bring a picture that can be transferred to the fabric for "your child's" square, or a special drawing or piece of artwork that they did. You don't need to have any sewing skills to be involved, just a loving desire to share your story.

#### **August 7: Loss Through Addiction**

Deborah Sheehy, a member of our chapter, will provide a mother's story of her family's struggle with addiction.

### CHAPTER WEBSITE

If you would like your child's name to appear on our website, please either email Dave Alexander at [dralex@sdalex.com](mailto:dralex@sdalex.com) or send a note to him at PO box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401. In your email or note, include your name, your child's name as you would like it to appear, and your child's date of birth and date of death. If you send a note, include your email address in the note.

In addition to the children's names, we plan to have pictures of our children. If you would like to have a picture of your child on the website, please email a digital file with the picture. If you only have a printed picture, send that to Dave at the above address and we will arrange to have it scanned onto the site. We will return the photo to you when it has been scanned. Be sure you include clear identifying information so that we will be able to know where to return the photo.

If you have any questions about this project, give Dave a call at 410-544-3634.

### WEB ADDRESSES

<b>Bereaved Parents USA home page</b>	<a href="http://www.after-death.com">www.after-death.com</a>
<a href="http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org">www.bereavedparentsusa.org</a>	<b>TCF Sibling Internet Chat</b> - Thursday nights at 9:00 EST: (email <a href="mailto:tcsiblingrep@aol.com">tcsiblingrep@aol.com</a> for the password)
<b>Bereavement Magazine-</b>	<b>For bereaved parents</b>
<a href="http://www.bereavementmag.com">www.bereavementmag.com</a>	<a href="http://www.moms-dads.com/index2.html">www.moms-dads.com/index2.html</a>
<b>On Suicides -</b>	<b>CLIMB</b>
<a href="http://www.pbs.org/weblab/living">www.pbs.org/weblab/living</a>	newsletter@climb-support.org
<b>Paul Alexander -</b>	
<a href="http://www.griefsong.com">www.griefsong.com</a>	
<b>Judy Guggenheim's Home page -</b>	

**Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through Lisa Beall ([bealls@erols.com](mailto:bealls@erols.com)). Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$40 each month.**

### DO YOU USE AMAZON.COM?

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.

## LOVE

Life, love are synonyms, brothers. Though the first goes, there remains the other.  
 Death - you have taken much is true, but life - you enhanced; love - you kindled anew.  
 This writer could not have put it better: "A life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever".  
 Then will I remember and ponder, for love is life except it lasts much longer.

David Tepper, Madrid, Spain

## THE VISIT

In the early hours of this new day  
 Just as light creeps around the edges of morning  
 I await your visit.  
 Sometimes you come softly  
 Other times, it is as if you come with cymbals crashing!  
 But faithfully, relentlessly, you come.

I eagerly await your arrival, all the while dreading it.  
 For the reality is that here, in the quiet of my memory,  
 Here is the only place you and I can be "together".  
 I flip through memories, searching for the one we will share.

Some make me laugh  
 Most make me cry.

It doesn't really matter which memory is chosen.  
 You first walking on shaky legs...  
 You dashing out the door on your way to the beach...  
 You in the midst of your messy room...

You in the midst of my life, our lives...  
 Each memory brings smiles, but mostly tears  
 And pain - intense pain  
 binding up my heart to the point of strangling.

But, I would not forego this pain  
 It is there underscoring the love  
 The passionate feeling I will carry for you, forever in my heart.

Such intense pain, such immense love.



I'll see you tomorrow...

Susan Howard  
 TCF, San Diego, CA

It isn't for the moment you are struck that you need courage,  
 but for the long hard climb back to sanity and faith and security.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

## NO VACATION

There is no vacation from your absence  
 Every morning I awake  
 I am a bereaved parent.  
 Every noon I feel the hole in my heart.  
 Every evening my arms are empty.  
 My life is busy now, but not quite full.  
 My heart is mended, but not quite healed.  
 For the rest of my life every moment  
 will be lived without you.  
 There is no vacation from your absence.

Kathy Boyette  
 TCF, Gulf Coast Chapter, MS

## VACATION

My attention is captured  
 by tiny pebbles on the sand  
 swept up by an incoming wave  
 and then tossed aside as if of no consequence  
 their import eroded by the persistent pulsing of the tide

What matters here are things of substance -  
 that which will remain when the currents  
 have drawn back into the sea  
 the rubble and debris of our lives

Frankie Wilford, TCF  
 Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX

## SIBLING PAGE

### FIREFLIES DELIGHT

Fireflies  
 When we were young  
 Summer nights  
 We were having fun.  
 And I miss you, My Friend.  
 I miss you.

Precious smiles  
 Show me you care.  
 Sparkling eyes  
 How we both would dare  
 To be alive, My Friend.  
 I miss you.

And years have passed.  
 I dream of you  
 Midnight lights  
 And a sunrise view.  
 My soul survives, My Friend.  
 Do you?

Ocean waves,  
 Sunsets so bright.  
 I search for you  
 Dancing stars in flight  
 Like fireflies, My Friend.  
 I see you.

Fireflies within,  
 It's you.

Fireflies delight  
 My summer nights.

Nancy Braxton  
 TCF, Louisville, KY

### LOOKING TO THE LIGHT

It is difficult to articulate thoughts and feelings about a life-altering event such as the death of a brother. For a long time, the only thing I could do to find any solace was to read about the tragic experiences of others. I was often moved to tears, so strong was my identification with their anguish.

I never suffered from denial. My brother's death was always a very tangible thing. It was my grief. I owned it. In accepting it, I feel that the healing was somehow expedited. I don't mean to imply that I am now returned to the unaffected individual that existed prior to his death, that my acceptance of his death is now clear.

I don't think you ever "get over" such a loss. What happens is that incorporation of that loss into your daily life. In my case, that process brought a number of changes in attitude and priority which, as it turned out, were in my best interest. I had become centered on myself and my career to such an extent that I was armed against life's disappointments. When meeting me, it became clear to others that "career" was what is was all about.

I keep pictures of my brother all around so that I can see him several times each day. In doing so, I am alternately both comforted and saddened. But mostly, I am comforted. I know he is in heaven and I believe he looks in on me and is aware of the magical events that have taken place in my life. When I look upward through my kitchen skylights, I can see the sky and the top of the big old elm in the lights. I talk to him in my heart and I know he is near. I still shed my tears, for I miss him and will the remainder of my life.

Given a choice, I wish he had never become ill and that he hadn't ended his life. Today, some two years after his death, I can accept it and understand his choice. The love we feel for a loved one never has to leave us, even though our loved one has departed physically.

Rhonda St. John  
 Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

### A PART OF ME

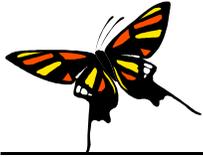
You were not just my brother, but  
 You were my friend as well.  
 You were supposed to be here always  
 Or till the world came to an end.  
 I know that we argued and  
 Seemed to disagree.  
 But I could always count on you

To be there for me.

You may be gone from this world I see  
 But you will always be a part of me.



Donna Montville  
 TCF, Gardner, MA



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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



Cortney Belt

daughter of Terre and John Belt  
August 26, 1979 - July 9, 1996

Edward C. Blakeney III

son of Bonnie and George Hughes  
July 2, 1976 - July 14, 2001

Tria Marie Castiglia

daughter of Ann and Noel Castiglia  
July 6, 1963 - October 14, 1984

O. Steven Cooper

son of Elsie Cooper  
July 5, 1954 - September 26, 1998

Michael Robert Leger

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

Eric Eugene Maier

son of Marlen and Gene Maier  
August 8, 1961 - July 5, 1984

Kelly Ann Schultz

daughter of Pat and Jim Schultz  
July 19, 1964 - January 1, 1996

Charles Hottel Willis

son of Barbie and Dick Willis  
July 16, 1972 - August 25, 1993





### THE BIRTHDAY TABLE

No rustling tissue paper  
scattered ribbons or burst balloons  
No shouts of Happy Birthday  
break the silence in this room.

Nonetheless, a birthday has rolled round again  
though the beloved children  
who reveled in the cheer  
no longer blow the candles out  
at the turning of the year.

Loving hands may bring  
a photograph of that precious life to share  
and place it on the Birthday Table  
with utmost tenderness and care.

For though the world may not recall  
the laughter or the joy  
we treasure every memory  
of our birthday girls and boys.

Frankie Wilford  
TCF, Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX

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:**

Rita Whitby, in memory of my sons Albert Jr., Dave, Danny, and help with mailing

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

## GOOD ADVICE

Acknowledge the loss. Accept the pain of grief. Try to live through it, not avoid it. Share your thoughts and feelings. Find enough compassionate listeners. You can talk more than one person can listen. Understand each person has an individual timetable for grief. Each person grieves separately and differently. We each move through grief at our own pace. Find your sense of humor - try to hand on to it. Get some physical exercise - if nothing else, jog your memory. Learn to hug again. Accept yourself. Begin to understand you are someone new. Acknowledge that change.

Darcie Sims

TCF National Newsletter, Spring, 1991

## THE PIT OF GRIEF

The day my child died, I fell into the pit of grief. My friends watched me struggle through daily life, waiting for the person I once was to arise from the pit, not realizing "she" is gone forever. The pit is full of darkness, heartache and despair. It paralyzes your thoughts, movements and ability to think. The pit leaves your forever changed, unable to surface the person you once were.

Some of my pre-grief friends gather around the top of the pit, waiting for the old me to appear before their eyes, not understanding what's taking me so long to emerge. After all - in their eyes I've been in the pit for quite some time. Yet in my eyes, it seems

as if I fell in only yesterday.

Not all of my pre-grief friends gathered at the top of the pit. Some are helping me climb out of the darkness. They climb side by side with me and from time to time, but mostly they climb ahead of me, waiting patiently at each plateau. Even with these friends I sometimes wonder if they are also waiting for the pre-grief me to magically appear before their eyes.

Then there are the casual acquaintances - you know, the ones who say, "Hi, how are you?" when they really don't care or really don't want to know. These people are the people who sighed in relief that it was

my child who died and not theirs. You know, the "better you than me" attitude.

My post-grief friends are the ones who climb with me, side by side, inch by inch out of the pit of grief. They have no way of comparing the pit climber to the pre-grief person I once was. You see, they started at the bottom of the pit with me. They are able to reassure me when I need strength. They have no expectations, no memories, no recollections of how I "should" be. They want me to heal, to smile more often and find joy in life. But they've also accepted the person I've become - the person who is emerging from the pit.

Cindy Early

*"Grief is a passion to endure. People can be victims of it, stuck in it. They can meet it, get through it; become the quiet victors through the active, honest and courageous process of grieving."*

## THE RIGHTS OF THE BEREAVED - INDEPENDENCE DAY

Independence Day is our country's anniversary as a free and independent nation. As Americans, we have learned to exercise our rights that were so sorely earned. But what are the rights of the bereaved parent? Our freedom can sometimes be stifled by well meaning people.

As a bereaved parent, you have a right to:

- \* Miss your child, even after many years.
- \* Talk about your child who died as you would your living children.
- \* Cry when some small remembrance hits you like a brick.
- \* Tell people how you really feel when they ask.



- \* Grieve in your own way, and in your own time.
- \* To be happy again!

Bereaved parents have a right to express their feelings of grief, to exercise their expressions of loss, to remember their loved one lived!

So, dear parents... Claim your freedom to be you... and one day you will claim your independence from grief.

Nancy Cassell  
TCF, Monmouth Co. Chapter

To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die.  
The ocean has its ebbings - and so has grief.

Thomas Campbell, 1777-1844

## AS THE TIDE RECEDES

It has been two years since our son Nathan died, and I am often amazed at how much our family has changed during that time. I think of our grieving process as being like a stroll along the beach at high tide. In the beginning, when our loss was fresh and new, the waves of pain were unbearably intense, coming at us without pause. They seemed to hit us everywhere at once - in the face, in the stomach, in our hearts - knocking us down to the ground.

The grief and anger we felt swelled up over our heads; we were drowning in emotions we could not understand. And we began to wonder if we would ever be able to breathe normally again. "How can life go on," we asked, "when it hurts so much?"

But time passed, and the tide receded. The water dropped to the level of our knees. The waves seemed to strike with less frequency, and when they did hit, their power was diminished. And yet, we sensed that we were still not free. Sometimes, when we least

expected it, a huge wall of grief seemed to rise out of nowhere, pounding us with the memories. We stumbled but did not fall.

One day we looked up and discovered that we were walking only on wet sand. We had been battered by the waves, but still stood erect. And we recognized that our loss had given us an enduring strength.

Scattered on the shore before us were numerous beautiful treasures that had previously been hidden by the deep water. These treasures, which sparkled like jewels in the sand, were all of our priceless memories of our child that we had submerged in our pain. Now it was possible to gather



up our thoughts of the happy times and hold them close to our heart.

Today we walk through the shallow, lapping

waves with a new confidence, leaving our wet footprints in the sand. Following behind us, however, there is another set of footprints, invisible prints which are quickly washed away by the swirling water. These are the steps which our child will never take.

The past, like the salt of the sea, clings to our skin. We know that the tide will return - with anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and special family occasions - but the grief will never be as powerful or as strong. We have learned to live with the flotsam which floats on the surface of the water. Ride gently with the waves; let the grief carry you forward, so that you will be ready to stand strong and upright when once again your feet touch solid ground.

Jeanne Lyet Gassman  
TCF - Pikes Peak 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.**