



The Compassionate Friends

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

September, 2003

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

Our family vacation to California showed us the beauty of Pacific coast beaches and the glitz of downtown L.A. We traveled to Sequoia National Park and marveled at the timelessness of the great sequoias. This visit is not just about the awe that you feel at the size of these great trees, but the living history that each one represents. As we formed a chain and wrapped ourselves around the front of one of these trees, we embraced 2,000 years of growth, hardship, and the shadow of countless others who walked these same paths. In these trees I saw generations of families who looked to the greatness of nature for comfort, who saw what I did - that time marches on and it takes us right along with it. No one has found a way to stop time or to reverse it and undo the trauma inflicted upon us. We forge ahead as best we can and grow stronger from the trials we face and conquer.

The great sequoias also endure. On display is a slab cut from one of the trees showing the age and fire history of the tree. A wider ring immediately after the fire scar

indicates increased growth as a result of the tree's natural healing process. The tree on display survived 80 separate fires. Future sequoias benefit from fire as well; seed germination occurs best in fire-burned soil because it is rich in minerals.

I wonder what kind of growth could be detected in us following the "fire" that has burned us so severely. After the initial damage to our spirit, we frequently come back to recoup and even surpass the rate of our own growth as spiritual human beings. Maybe it takes so much energy to live through tragedy that it takes all of our physical and spiritual resources to propel us beyond the place where life has no meaning. We may resent this growth, because it somehow implies that we are better for what has happened to us. What it means to me, however, is that we chose to survive. Despite the tragedy, despite the pain, despite the fire...just like the great sequoias, we too will survive.

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
Janice and Chris Kunkel
in memory of the life of
Jason T. Easter*



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. **November submissions are due by September 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

September 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: HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL DAYS

NEXT MONTH:

October 2, 2003

PROGRAM: ART THERAPY FOR DEALING WITH GRIEF

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

September 4: Holidays and Special Days

The holidays, particularly those in November and December, can be very difficult for bereaved parents. A panel of TCF members will discuss these issues and offer suggestions on preparing for and dealing with holidays and significant dates such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentines Day, the birthdate of the child, the deathdate of the child, the day the child would have first gone to school, etc.

October 2: The Use of Art Therapy in Dealing With Grief

Sharon Strouse, ATR, is an Art Therapist with 17 years of experience using the creative process to heal and grow. On October 11, 2001 Sharon lost Kristin, her 17 year old daughter. Kristin, who was a freshman at Parsons School of Design in New York City, ended her own life. Over the past year, Sharon has turned to the creative process as a means of dealing with her own grief and pain. She will share with us, the process of her own journey and the powerful use of image in healing.

CHAPTER PLANNING MEETING

The next chapter planning meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 21st at 7:30. Meetings are held at Calvary UMC. Anyone with an interest in knowing more about the chapter and contributing ideas for effectively serving the needs of bereaved families is welcome to attend.

GRIEF: THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

The Wilmington, Delaware TCF chapter invites anyone who wishes to attend their meeting to hear the renowned and much loved speaker, **Darcie Sims**. The meeting is **Thursday, October 2nd** at 7:00. Those of us who have heard Darcie's unique way of dealing with grief can attest to her skill and her gift of using humor to lead us through some very difficult topics of discussion.

We may be able to get a carpool together to travel to Wilmington that evening. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Beall (410-315-9883).

WEB ADDRESSES

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

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, 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.

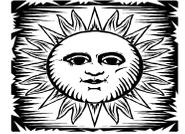
Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through Lisa Beall (bealls@erols.com). Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$40 each month.

WE MADE IT THROUGH THE SUMMER

We made it through the summer;
Another season has passed.
When I look back now,
I did not think I had the
Courage to reach this point
In time.

The worst may not yet be over,
But things seem better than yesterday.
I've realized it's all right to wish for you
Daily... and nightly...
It's my prerogative as your parent.

I do not have to look forward to
the seasons coming soon, but I will...
Because I know it's what
You would want me to do.



Just please know, I still love you
As though you were in our home.
That love will never die.

Pam Duke, TCF, Dallas, TX

SCHOOL STARTS

Strange things happen to you when your child died. You'll fail if you try to make sense of most of it. Both my children had finished high school when my son died, yet I found the beginning of school, especially that first year, to be difficult. The bus stops in front of my home for the neighborhood children. Suddenly, as they all gathered to wait for the bus, I found myself reliving those simpler, happier days of old, longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children were grown and gone, had a problem with school starting, those of you who have school age children must know that your pain is normal. It's another reminder that life goes on - with or without our children, and acknowledging that hurts! I came to the conclusion that it was all right to pine for happier times and it was nothing to get upset about. As with many remnants of grief, I recognize it, allow it and then get on with my life. Maybe you're like me; you'll always be a little nostalgic about school starting. That will probably happen to you.

Mary Cleckley



SEPTEMBER SONG

I wonder how many people think about what it's like for a parent not to have to pack a Snoopy lunch pail for their child ever again.

September marks the reentry of kids into the world of academia, but for some parents it's the reminder that the excitement of the children that electrifies the air won't be the same in their home this year. So many hopes and dreams and memories are wrapped up in what occupies a major part of a child's life... school time. Summer cushions us from having to be painfully aware that our child won't be walking to school with the other kids or won't be trying out for the lead part in the school play or won't need new school clothes or won't fall in love with the girl he sits behind in math class.

Parents who never had the pleasure of "letting them go" to school for the first time know what they missed. They remember their own "first time" and would have liked to have made it really special and to have asked all the questions their own parents asked them when they arrived home from school. Hopes and dreams for this child's future will never be realized. I wonder if my neighbors remember that if my baby had lived, this is the year he would have started kindergarten. I wanted him to have a Snoopy lunch box just like the other kids.

Author unknown

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

How do I answer such a painful question? Could they possibly understand my feelings for you?
I have no one to hold, no one to call me Mommy. In their eyes, I am childless. In my eyes, you are part of me.
I am not the same as before I had you. I love you, think of you, just as a mother would.
If they could only see into my heart, they would know you are with me always.
Yes, I do have children...

Joni Cross, DeSoto, TX

SIBLING PAGE

Children and adolescents grieve differently, just as do adults. What works for one individual may not work for another. Adolescents are already going through an emotional growth pattern: they are trying to mature, to find their own identity, to move away from their parents emotionally in their search for independence.

When a brother or sister dies, adolescent siblings may feel a need to turn to their parents and again become dependent: they don't like that and may find themselves in a constant state of turmoil. They want to be mature, they want to be independent and not depend on their parents, but who else can they turn to?

The problem is - where are their parents emotionally? I was not there emotionally for my surviving children for two and a half to three years. They had a mother, but only in the physical sense. My son was trying to mature, to find his own independence, but he needed a loving and nurturing mother. She wasn't there. We have had problems since then, but thank God, we have reconciled most of those.

It's vital to keep the lines of communication open for your infant, child or adolescent. If you keep the lines of communication open, one day they may begin to talk to you. If you don't leave that door open, there is little chance that they will talk to you about how they feel.

It's also important to keep in mind their age and level of development. For little children, death means the person will come back. They see it all the time on television: someone playing a character may die on Saturday morning, yet they will see the person again Sunday afternoon in a different role.

At around the age of 10 or 11, death becomes final in their minds: they understand that the person will not return and may have many questions ("where is heaven?") about where the loved one has gone.

There is no simple solution to grief for them, just as there is no simple solution for grief for us. There is no timetable they are on, just as there is no timetable for us. We can help surviving siblings grieve by helping and encouraging them to mourn. I believe I made a large mistake by never crying in front of my two children: I was not allowing them to see that it is okay to grieve for someone we love.

Often children will show their grief through their behavior rather than verbally. Infants and toddlers are capable of grieving and may show their grief through regressive behavior, sleeping disturbances, explosive emotions. Older siblings may have problems at school due to difficulty in concentrating.

Socially, problems may arise because of their difficulty in dealing with the anger felt over the loss of their brother or sister. I was an adult when my brother, who was three years older than I, died. I was very angry with him for not saying goodbye, and I was angry at God all over again. My daughter had died just two years before my brother died. Siblings need to know that it's okay to be angry at God and to know that He understands our anger.

Grief may also cause siblings to withdraw from their peers, and from you, and not want to interact with anyone. Language and communications skills may go down. They may feel guilt, show signs of depression, and many have very low self-esteem. Like adults, siblings do not "get over" loss, they become reconciled to it. They realize that life will be different without the presence of their brother or sister.

One of the biggest adjustments a sibling has to make is to their changed role. If there were two children in the family, the surviving sibling becomes an "only child". If the child who died was the eldest, the second child now assumes that role. Whatever the birth order was, an adjustment must now be made which may involve changing roles and responsibilities.

Some suggestions:

If you can, try to treat your surviving children the same way you did before the death of their sibling.

Try not to be overprotective.

Let them be themselves.

Mary Bailey
BP/USA, Birmingham, AL



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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



Jon Russell Aikin
grandson of Elizabeth and Barry Aikin
September 4, 1983 - November 19, 2001

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

Alexandra Ann Denevan
daughter of Gregory J. Denevan
September 18, 1985 - August 21, 2002

Jason T. Easter
son of Chris and Janice Kunkel
January 30, 1973 - September 9, 1999

Ronald Wesley Farley
son of Dorothy Farley
September 15, 1955 - June 28, 2000

Kevin Murray Kerr
son of Debra Ann and Richard Kerr
January 19, 1980 - September 4, 2001

Nicholas Paul Liberatore
son of Pat and Larry Liberatore
September 27, 1980 - June 9, 1997

Chad William Muehlhauser
son of Paula and William Muehlhauser
October 3, 1983 - September 16, 1992

Amelia Evans Mufson
daughter of Beth and Neil Mufson
April 6, 1995 - September 28, 2002

Kathleen "Katie" O'Connor
daughter of Anne and Jim O'Connor
September 21, 1986 - July 11, 2003

Scott Thomas Palmer
son of Frances A. Palmer
August 3, 1983 - September 1, 1996

Daniel Maurice Rothman
son of Juliet and Leonard Rothman
January 20, 1971 - September 17, 1992

Jami Leigh Smith
daughter of Rev. and Mrs. G. Smith
October 19, 1977 - September 30, 1987

David Tomaszewski
son of Rick and Carol Tomaszewski
September 4, 1974 - February 6, 2001

Michael Lee Wallace, II
son of Regina Offer
February 16, 1969 - September 14, 2000

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





Let's go home... My eyes pleaded to my husband. We don't belong here. This is crazy. These people are still hurting. Two, seven years later and they are still coming here.

Let's go home... We don't belong here. We won't, we can't be like that!

Perhaps... If I don't speak. If I don't tell them why we came... it won't be true.

Wait... Why am I nodding at what he's saying?

Why do I feel I must say something to that couple who is in this nightmare even less time than we? They all seem to know what I'm feeling...without my even saying it. Just not flinching at my tears, that steady stream of tears that seems will never stop.

Perhaps... One day I'll join their laughter?

Let's wait...Perhaps we shouldn't leave just yet.

TCF of Maryland, Inc., BP/USA



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:

Janice and Chris Kunkel, in memory of Jason T. Easter

Dorothy Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Juliet and Leonard Rothman, in memory of our son Daniel, who died 11 years ago on September 17th.

Kenneth A. Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

Walter and Marlene Evans, in memory of our son, Bill Evans

So I am glad... not that my loved one has gone

But that the earth she laughed and lived on was my earth, too. That I had known and loved her and that my love I'd shown. Tears over her departure? Nay a smile that I had walked with her a little while.

Barbara Bush

SYMPHONY

When I was a young musician my dad liked to tease me by playing the notes of the C-Major scale: "DO-RE-MI-FA-SO-LA-TI..." Then he would stop, step back and wait for my reaction. No matter where I was, my response was certain. It would drive me absolutely crazy until I rushed to the piano and played the final note that would make the scale complete.

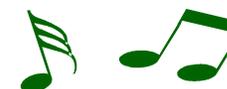
I feel much the same way about Lindsay at times. Five years ago we opened the pages of a manuscript and began what appeared to be a very interesting overture in our lives. We didn't just open a book, we were the composers and she was our composition. The love and promises grew within me, along with a multitude of ideas and plans we had for the way things would be. We were shaping the future - ours, the baby's and the world's.

We had  only

concluded the prelude when the book suddenly and abruptly closed with the clashing of cymbals, just as tightly as the lid on her tiny white casket. There was a supreme silence in her death, but our hearts thundered on as the pounding of timpani drums. I could plead, I could cry, but I could not change what happened. I tried to bargain with God. I tried to deny it. I tried to run from it. For awhile, I tried to pretend it didn't hurt. Our lives were overshadowed by an ominous quality - life was uncertain, death was not. We could not escape it. No matter how hard I tried to understand, it was far beyond my comprehension. I chased my "elusive dream" in circles, around and around, until I was utterly exhausted from the effort.

I am her mother, and yet her life seemed so incomplete, without purpose or accomplishment. It was my responsibility to mold and shape her life, and I thought I had been

denied that privilege until I talked with my bereaved friends. I discovered we can open the pages of our book again. We are still her parents, and she can still make a difference in someone's life - but only if we allow ourselves to let her. Only I can write the notes that complete her life. And I know now the last note will never be written until we hold her in our arms again. Then it will sing forever!

 I thought the symphony was over; that the pomp and circumstance of her life had been stilled, but that is not true. It is playing, yet in a different way than we ever dreamed or originally planned. The melody becomes more beautiful each time we touch another person with love and understanding, and that feels very comforting to us. I believe she would approve.

Dana Gensler
South Central Kentucky

WHAT KIND OF LUGGAGE ARE YOU CARRYING?

For some time the tourist industry has urged us to travel "light" and with more convenience in order to save energy, time and general wear and tear:

- ◆ We can choose softside luggage, "weightless" garment bags that fold, duffels and kits designed for certain items, totes with side pockets and roomy interiors for carry-on or car pack, bags that hang from the shoulders, Velcro and zipper closures, adjustable/removable straps and handles, and plastic bags for layering.
- ◆ We can take less clothing by choosing separates that can be mixed or matched for different occasions and materials that are wrinkle-proof and washable.
- ◆ We can learn from those who do testing how best to pack our belongings.
- ◆ We can also let someone help us carry our bags.
- ◆ It seems to me there are cues in this for us in our grief journey. After all, we choose what we will carry and for how long. What do you have in your luggage? What choices are there for you?
- ◆ Unresolved grief: Feelings left from experiences of the past (fears, anger, guilt, rejections). You may decide some are not worth carrying longer and others that cannot be discarded may well be given another look.
- ◆ Helplessness and hopelessness: They are garments that take much space when you start out, but you may be able to fold them more neatly later on.
- ◆ The "Why" questions: Why this? Why mine? They are part and parcel of this trip, but after traveling a distance, you may pick up the "what" question - What am I going to do with my life? - and then the "how" question - How am I going to do it? These last are important - hold on to them.
- ◆ Expectations: Some are helpful, some hurtful, and you may not be able to sort them out until you are under way. If you have a goal or time table set by someone else, remove it early in your journey and proceed in your own way and at your own pace. If you expect others to understand and meet your needs, you risk disappointment and resentment that will delay your travel. Try substituting a resolution to tell those near you what you need and how they can help you. Then let them do it.
- ◆ Vulnerability: You may be afraid to take this with you, but as you acknowledge and come to understand your feelings, the fear will diminish and lighten your load.
- ◆ The "shoulds": I should have - and the "if only's" - if only I had, are heavy to carry, but you will find they are disposable.
- ◆ A stubborn, positive attitude: This will come in handy, but you may not put it out to wear at first.
- ◆ Tears: Have them readily available. Not only is it all right to cry, but to cry as often as you feel the need and on someone's shoulder. If you hold back, you waste energy.
- ◆ Courage and spirit: Summon as much as you are able and expect to add more whenever and wherever you can, to make sure you keep on going - through the valley to the other side.
- ◆ Time: Use it for layering, but be sure it is time you intend to use.
- ◆ Hugs: Carry them in your shoulder bag or outer pocket and have them at the ready several times a day. This is good therapy for the grieving traveler.
- ◆ Patience with yourself and others and real personal forgiveness: A three-piece suit, one you won't wear for every day, perhaps, but it looks good on you and there will be occasions, more and more of them as you discover who you are now; when it will be comfortable.
- ◆ Memories and mementos: Tuck them in the corners and in the spaces between items. They will even the load.
- ◆ An understanding of the enormity of your loss: Pack this so you can put it on daily for a while and gradually you will become aware of a new feeling - the wonder of living. If you exclude this, you put your grief on hold and it waits for you.
- ◆ A sense of hope: If you think you might as well leave this behind because you won't have use for it on this trip, remember: Even Doris Nelson, polio victim who spent 36 years in an iron lung, had "an expectancy to something more."
- ◆ A Plan: I hope you have room so you can add a plan when you run across one. A plan for some activity you may not consider within the realm of possibility for you now. To miss this would be another grief.

May you have a safe and productive trip.



Helen Way
TCF Abilene, TX

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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.