



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

**Rim Country Chapter
P.O. Box 3482
Payson, AZ 85547**

A national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause.

October 2007

RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1 NO. 5

MISSION

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Payson, Arizona Meeting Info

2nd Tuesday of the month -
6:30 PM—8:00 PM

Ponderosa Baptist Church
1800 N. Beeline Hwy
(Just South of Home Depot
& the Roundabout)

Chapter Website

www.RimCountryTCF.org

E-mail Address

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CompassionateFriends.org

Regional Coordinator:
Gene Caligari 480-361-1877

CHAPTER NEWS

We really want to make this OUR chapters' newsletter and your contributions and writing would help tremendously. If you have an item you would like to have appear in our newsletter, or have a suggestion or correction, please feel free to send it to us by mail or e-mail.



We would like to thank the Ponderosa Baptist Church for the use of their facilities and their support of the Compassionate Friends.

Upcoming Events

Worldwide candle lighting.....Dec. 9, 2007

What is a Compassionate Friend?

By Rob Anderson, Sugar Grove, Ill., excerpted from Grief Digest, Vol. 2, Issue 3

What is a Compassionate Friend ?

The dictionary definition is, "a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to help alleviate the suffering." Friend is defined as "a supporter or sympathizer." My "heart" definition of a compassionate friend is someone who "gets it" and never, ever forgets it.

The power of a compassionate friend's empathy in the face of the tornado of agony that is the newly bereaved parent's life can be critical to their healing. If we, as healing bereaved parents, are willing to step in to the role of caregiver for the broken soul of another bereaved parent, it's important not to lose touch with our pain. Not to lose touch with that kick in the stomach we felt when we first learned of our own child's death. As

our hearts heal, it can be easy to fall into the role of a teacher where we start to advise or pass judgment on how another bereaved parent grieves. If we want to help others heal, we must continue to relate to that instant that our child died. Love has undeniable power when given with a clear and pure heart, where nothing is expected in return and in a compassionate, caring way. In other words, like a compassionate friend.

Trick or Treat

The night is dim
And the pumpkins grin
At children on the porch.

The doorbell rings
“Trick or Treat” they sing
My heart burns like a
torch.

The Dracula’s face
And a princess in lace
Are peering in at me.

How I’d love to ask
“May I lift your mask?”
And hiding there you’d be!

You’d get such a kick
From that silly trick
But disguised you must stay.

In the wind that blows
My heart still knows,
You’re playing October charades.



Kathie Slier
TCF-Tulsa OK

We Need Each Other

By Steve Goodier

Many living things need each other to survive. If you have ever seen a Colorado aspen tree, you may have noticed that it does not grow alone. Aspens are found in clusters, or groves. The reason is that the aspen sends up new shoots from the roots. In a small grove, all of the trees may actually be connected by their roots!

Giant California redwood trees may tower 300 feet into the sky. It would seem that they would require extremely deep roots to anchor them against strong winds. But we're told that their roots are actually quite shallow — in order to capture as much surface water as possible. And they spread in all directions, intertwining with other redwoods. Locked together in this way, all the trees support each other in wind and storms. Like the aspen, they never stand alone. They need one another to survive.

People, too, are connected by a system of roots. We are born to family and learn early to make friends. We are not meant to survive long without others. And like the redwood, we need to hold one another up. When pounded by the sometimes vicious storms of life, we need others to support and sustain us.

Have you been going it alone? Maybe it's time to let someone else help hold you up for awhile. Or perhaps someone needs to hang on to you.

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119K miles—as is \$450. Call.

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away—all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

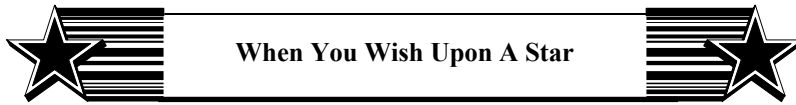
For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things—even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring
TCF, Penn-MD Line Chapter, MD





When You Wish Upon A Star

Every time I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." Those wishes, unfortunately, can never come true. Another wish I hear is "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew all of the "crazy" grief reactions that I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent".
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are a terrible times for us. I wish you would tell us that you are thinking

about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.

11. It is normal and good that most of us re-examine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches, and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me - - maybe you'll still like me.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us , or we can sit and wait, I believe our children would want us to help the world understand.

Elaine Grier, TCF Atlanta, Ga
Submitted by Nancy Soto in memory
Of her daughter **Pammy Berkemeier**

A Special Message To Our New Compassionate Friends:

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you may feel that you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel." Please give us at least three tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel this journey of grief and assuredly, find hope along the way. We truly care about you.

If Only They Knew...

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For 26 years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

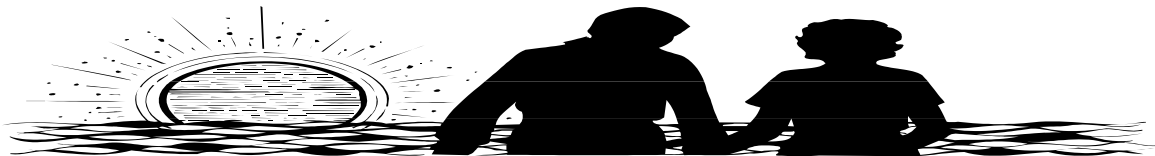
If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self-indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, it's not in self pity for what I have lost; I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, ... for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death, if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: "time heals...you'll get over it," "it was for the best... God takes only the best," and realized that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we try to stand in the shoes of others. If only they knew that we will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

Jan McNess,
TCF- Victoria, Australia



Reflections of a Step-parent

I watched my mate go through pure hell, and I felt helpless, useless and sometimes...invisible.

Other times, I stood strong while bearing the brunt of my love's anger that lashed out at the world, as an angry God would open the heavens with roaring thunder and lightning.

I was accused of not understanding, and surely I could not.

I felt heavy pain for my stepchild, the one I took as my own. I grieved for the good times we had together. The tugs at my heart that always pierced through any resentment.

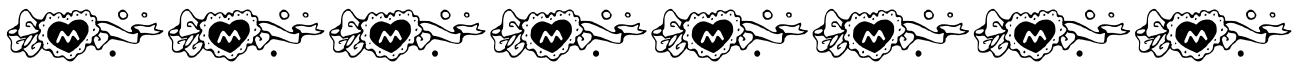
The guilt weighed heavily on my shoulders for the times we didn't communicate, and I wondered if I could have made it better.

At the funeral home, I felt even a pang - Yes -jealousy toward the natural parent of my beloved stepchild knowing that he and my mate shared a room from the past that I could never enter.

Life must go on - this day-to-day existence, but things are different now. I offer my support as I see eyes staring off into a distant land. I hold a hand and kiss away the teardrops. With added sorrow, I wonder if my love will return to me or stay in that far-off land forever.

For deep in my heart I how that this tragedy will bring us closer together or tear us completely apart.

Peggi Hull
TCF- Houston Bay Area, TX



There was a mommy a daddy
A daughter and a son.
Such a happy family we were!
All those family vacations and family hugs.....
Then the unthinkable happened.
Our son was taken from us at 19.
It's been 7 years now.
I am expected to move on.

I AM moving on,

I am getting out of bed each morning, aren't I?
People on the street see me smile.
They don't know the pain in my heart.
How can they not see it?
How can they not hear my soul cry?

I've cried silent tears

Quietly so no one hears

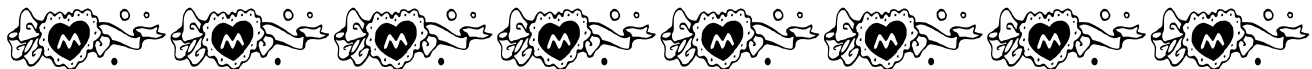
Every day for 7 years.

Once upon a time
We were a happy family.
Now, we are a broken family.
And we live, ever after,
Because we have no choice.

Author: Karen Matteo, TCF Camden County NJ Chapter

Mother of Jimmy Terenzi

6-26-81 to 8-30-00

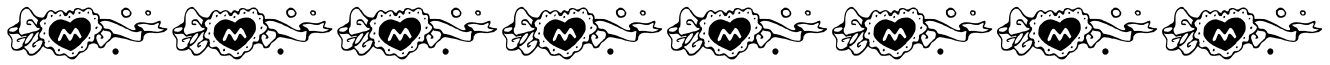


Special Birthday Table

Our chapter has a monthly Birthday Table. This is a special table set up for those who have a child's birthday in that month.

Please bring a photo/memento and share a special memory of your child. You are also welcome to bring your child's favorite food or birthday cake to share with the group.

We hope you will take this opportunity to share your child with us.



LOVE GIFTS AND DONATIONS

A love gift is to **"REMEMBER THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN."** Since TCF has no membership dues, we rely upon tax-deductible donations for funds to pay the three chapters' expenses: printing and mailing of our newsletter, books for our lending libraries, our 24-hour phone message line and information packets sent to newly bereaved families and professionals in the community. Books donated for our libraries and volunteer work for your chapter also qualify as "love gifts." Make your checks payable to The Compassionate Friends and mail to: PO Box 3482 Payson Arizona 85547. **Love gifts received prior to the 10th of each month will appear in the following month's newsletter.**

MEMORY PAGE

If you wish to have your child remembered on our Memory Page, please complete the form below and Mail to PO Box 3482, Payson Arizona 85547

PARENT(S) NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

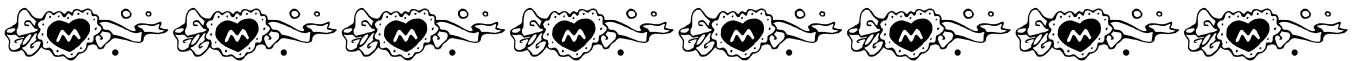
CHILD'S NAME _____ M or F (circle)

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

Enclosed is a love gift in memory of my child to help deray costs of the Rim Country Chapter:

_____ \$5 _____ \$10 _____ \$25 _____ Other **THANKS!!!!**

The anniversary of your child's birth and death are often extremely painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents who are observing such days in August. In this newsletter is the memory page update. If you haven't sent one in yet, please take a moment to fill it out and send it in. We would like to share your memory days with you.



OCTOBER MEMORY PAGE

Our children ... always loved, missed, remembered ...

- Slade David Gibson....died on 10/19/2003, son of Slade & Becky Gibson**
- Leon Michael Valencia...born on 10/19/2006, grandson of Brad & Kristin Croak**
- Jimmy Harris....died on 10/29/2006, son of L.Q. Harris**

PICK MORE DAISIES

"Pick more daisies" was the most popular expression in our family. I picked it up from a magazine article about a 94 year-old lady in Kentucky who, when asked what she would do differently if she had her life to live over, responded "I would take more chances; I would eat more cream and less beans, I would have more real troubles but few imaginary ones; I would climb more mountains; I would swim in more rivers; and I would pick more daisies."

Our son, Mark, seized the daisy expression as the theme both for his life and his entrance exam essay at UCLA. His essay helped him get an academic scholarship. Daisies became our family flower. They marked our attitude about living. And they marked our son's memorial service.

It has taken me almost two years to return to really thinking about daisies and what that quote really means. During that time I made a pretty big mess of things. I did the best I could, but I was often going through the motions outside but empty inside.

To me what this quote means is we really do have to pull ourselves together again and go on. Our pastor at our church noted "going through the steps of grief is like walking through the valley and shadow of death. Keep walking, but don't camp there." Our children would not want us to "camp there", but to go pick more daisies...to somehow live an even more meaningful life in their name.

As I go on I am truly a different person. I don't suffer fools or superficiality very well anymore. As one of my best friends said..."I get tired of beige people." Yet I will drop everything to help another bereaved parent. I certainly have more "real troubles and fewer imaginary ones." But it's OK. I like myself better that way.

And I am returning to embrace life each day again. But this time I am following my heart instead of my "expected career." I am taking more chances, climbing more unfamiliar mountains and picking more daisies in huge handfuls. Mark would want it so..

Rich Edler
TCF- South Bay Los Angeles, CA



.. Our loved ones died, but the love we share
between us can never be destroyed.

It is secure, peaceful and there to
sustain us whenever we need it.

Darcie Sims- *Footsteps Through The Valley*



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***We need not walk alone... We
are The Compassionate Friends.***

E-mail us at info@rimcountrytcf.org or call us at 928-978-1492 if you receive this newsletter and do not wish to receive it or to change an address or add an address.

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 for strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in a 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 grieve as well. as to grow.