



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Rim Country Chapter

Rim Country Chapter
P.O. Box 3482
Payson, AZ 85547
(928) 978-1492

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2009

RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 3 NO. 12

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 Information

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

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CHAPTER NEWS

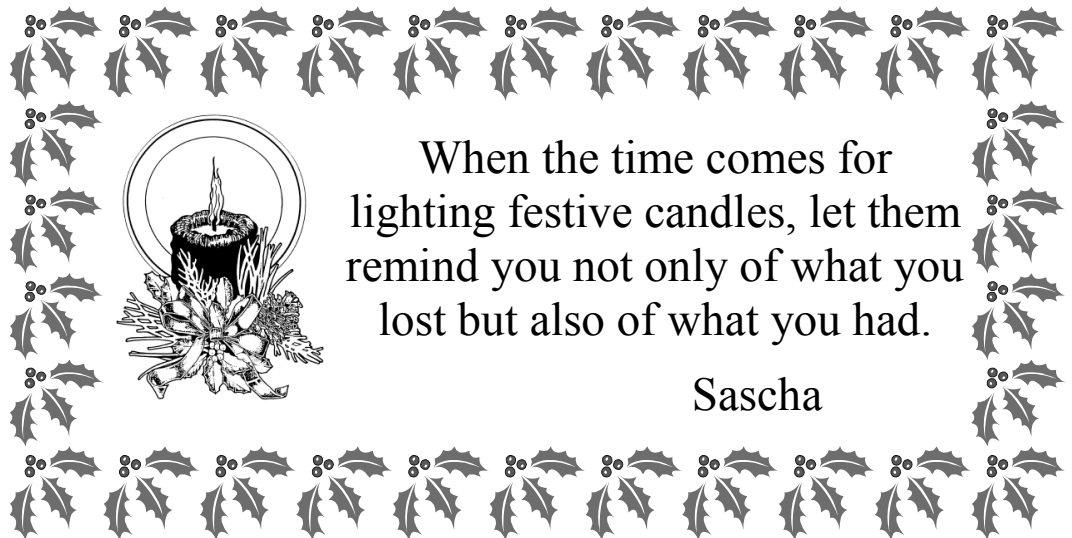
This is a difficult time of the year for many of us. Hopefully everyone will find some of the articles we've included this month helpful and meaningful.

We neglected to acknowledge a love gift last month from Michael & Georgia Salwitz in loving memory of their daughter Sarah Elizabeth Salwitz. Thank you for your generous gift.

Our meeting this month will be on December 8th. It will be an evening of music & remembrance. Dinner will also be provided. Please bring a special song, story, video, picture or anything else that you would like to share with the group. The meeting will start at 6:00PM to allow time for dinner before the program begins. It will be a special time that you won't want to miss.

Also, on Sunday evening, December 13th, we will be holding our 3rd annual "Candle Light Walk to Remember" at Green Valley Park. We had lots of discussion about whether to have this event outside again and even though it has been quite cold the last two years, many people have been asking and looking forward to this event. The event coincides with the Worldwide candle lighting held at 7PM in every time zone around the world. Plan to arrive about 6:30 where we will organize and have a brief program prior to our precise 7:00PM lighting.

Remembering our precious children this holiday season,
Bill



When the time comes for
lighting festive candles, let them
remind you not only of what you
lost but also of what you had.

Sascha

SOME IDEAS I HAVE FOUND USEFUL DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Realize that no matter what we do the holidays will come, and the anticipation is always worse than the actual day.
- Being in the presence of those who will let us talk freely about our child is best – very often, these are not relatives.
- You and your family come first; what is most comfortable for all is what should be done.
- Discuss with your children how they feel. Remember, this is a time of grief for them too.
- Don't force yourself to take on any more than you can handle.
- Try to use any support outlets you have, such as your spouse, friends, children and The Compassionate Friends.
- Remember those dear people who say dumb things? The holidays are no exception.
- Take time, maybe before dinner, to ask everyone to have a moment of silence to think of your child.
- Have everyone put a special thought about your child in his or her Christmas stocking to be read by anyone at any time.
- Burn a candle all day on special days in memory of your child. I usually burn a candle whenever I want a special closeness to my son.
- Finally, give yourself a special gift this holiday season: Peace. You deserve it. You have to live to survive the loss of a love. Share this peace with those you love. It will make beautiful memories for all of you.

By Eliane Patizzolo
TCF- Reading, Maine

Bereaved Parent Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house,
Only I was stirring, we didn't have a mouse.
The pile of Kleenex beside my chair,
Evidenced the grief for my son, so hard to bear.
This is the first Christmas you won't be here.
The house is quieter and emptier and so many tears.
Pictures cover our walls more than before
But - not the agony we feel because you won't be here, anymore.

We used to cheerfully fill your Christmas list,
Now we painfully stand by your grave in a frosty mist.
How could it be - we were given this grief?
Life just isn't the same - it's beyond belief.
Your clothes in your closet, your trophies on the wall,
Why do I feel you'll walk down the hall?
Your new dress shoes wait by your closet door
In hopes maybe you'd wear them once more.
My thoughts think of Christmas last year -
At Christmas Dinner, everyone was here.
One of your last pictures we did take
Now a most precious keepsake.

Beyond the presents, food and mistletoe,
Beyond the Christmas lights that twinkle low
The essence of Christmas is simple and neat
Being together, just together, is the treat.
But nevermore for us to be
Together at Christmas, around the tree.
We remember and talk about you through our tears
We all want you to know - we wish you were here.

Richard Lepinsky- TCF/Victoria, BC
In memory of his son, **Nathan**
October 25, 1975 - May 22, 1991

Merry Christmas From Heaven

I still hear the songs, I still see the lights
I still feel the love, on cold wintry nights

I still share your hopes, and all of your cares
I'll even remind you, to please say your prayers

I just want to tell you, you still make me proud
You stand head and shoulders, above all the crowd

Keep trying each moment, to stay in His grace
I came here before you, to help set your place

You don't have to be perfect all of the time
He forgives you the slip, if you continue the climb

To my family and friends, please be thankful today
I'm still close beside you, in a new special way

I love you all dearly, now don't shed a tear
Cause I'm spending my Christmas with Jesus this year

**copyright 1990 John Wm. Mooney Jr.

I will be There

Mom, tomorrow I will be there
Though you may not see
I'll smile and remember
The last Christmas, with you and me

Don't be sad mom
I'm never far away
Your heart has hidden sight
My memory will always stay

I watched as you touched the ornaments
Sometimes a tear was shed as you did
I touched you gently on your shoulder
And on tiptoes I proudly stood

I'm only gone for a little while mom
I'm waiting for the day to be
When God calls out your name mom
We'll be together , just you wait and see

But until that time comes
Carry on as you did when I was there
I tell the angels how much I love you
There are angels here everywhere!

I stand behind you some days
When I know that you are sad
I want you to be happy mom
It would make my heart so glad

So on this Christmas Eve, Mom
Think of me as I will be thinking of you
And touch that special ornament
That I once made for you

I love you mom and dad, also
I know you know I do
And I'll be waiting here for you
When your earthly life is through

Love, Your child in heaven

WRITTEN BY Sharon .J. Bryant

First Christmas

It can't possibly be Christmas
without her being here.
Yet the world is singing round me,
joyful tidings and good cheer.
Though I try to put on armor
and brave the sights and sounds,
a few moments worth of shopping,
and the tears are spilling down.
I pray for strength to do it,
find a path through holidays,
look for shortcuts, good ideas,
some directions through the maze.
Then I find at last the answer:
I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect;
her love's flowing down, through me.

By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry's
From " Stars In The Deepest Night "

Holiday Thoughts

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

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

Dennis Klass
TCF- St. Louis, MO

Preparing Is The Hardest Part

By the time Christmas Day arrives, we have survived the hardest part of the holiday season. Actually, by the time the day arrives the hard work is almost finished.

Even before our child died we frequently felt let down on Christmas Day. Many times the day didn't turn out to be as enjoyable as we had anticipated. Could it be that before our child died the real joy of Christmas was not in the day itself, but in the shopping, planning and preparing that went on for weeks before? Could it also be that now the pain is in that same shopping and planning and preparing?

Before Arthur died I so enjoyed the holidays! The excitement in the little one's eyes, the secrets the older children shared with each other, choosing just the right gift for each brother and sister, putting up the tree, decorating, party planning, all created excitement and happiness. How painful these same activities were after he died.

The real torment of the holidays is in the preparations. Shopping for the children and family members is hard when we can't buy for our child. Just the right sweater or that special toy screams at us in the stores. His favorite Christmas song seems to be played over and over again on the radio. You don't want to bake her favorite cookies, but you have to because the rest of the family love them too. As you pull out the decorations that have been packed away since last year, the first one you find is the scruffy but beautiful wreath he made in kindergarten. Every day of the week, everywhere you turn, there are reminders that he/she isn't going to be there this Christmas.

Most of us have to go through these actions to make the holidays good for the rest of the family. But in these preparations is the pain- it is the loss of the very thing that caused us joy before-our child and his/her presence-that causes us so much pain now.

Christmas day itself, outside the significance as the birth of the Christ Child, is just another day to get through, just 24 hours like any other day. It too will be over. So in the next few weeks when the dread of Christmas hits you, remind yourself that you are doing the hardest part right now. EVERY DAY of the holiday season is painful. Ask yourself if getting through Christmas Day can be any worse than what your are "getting through" today.

Margaret Gerner

TCF-Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX

Confessions of a Pastor

When I left the seminary there were many things I was prepared for, my mistake was believing I was prepared for everything. In fact, I was not prepared for everything, but I did not realize how totally unprepared I was until I spent some time as a pastor of a community church. Even though I had been through four years of college and four years of seminary, there was much I was not ready for. Funerals I knew how to do— at least we had discussed them in school. When it came time to help families through the grief experience, however, I soon realized how inadequate my training had been.

I believe many pastors leave seminary feeling as I did— ready to take on the world. I believe many soon discover what I did— that the more they experienced as a pastor, the more they realized how little they really knew. For instance, I used to believe that the grief experienced by a woman whose husband had died, or a man whose brother had died, or the parent whose child had died was all the same. I was wrong.

As a caretaker of those God had entrusted to me, I set out to do my best at the funeral, to visit afterward, and then I expected the family to get on with their lives. For the most part people did, that is except for one group. This particular group puzzled me. I could not figure out why their tears lasted for not just months, but years longer. I believe you know which group this is. I wanted to know why those group, bereaved parents— got hit so much harder, and what I , as one who cared for them, could do.

I set out to learn what I could about the death of a child. The more I learned I worse I felt. The group I had been treating like any other turned out to be like no other. I no longer believed that all grief was the same— that is to say, that all deaths yielded the same reaction in the grieving process. Some may disagree, but as far as I'm concerned the greatest loss any human can sustain is the death of a child.

I thought over what I had said to bereaved parent to ease their pain. It hurt me to learn that I had been just as much a part of the problem, as I thought I had been part of the solution. I also realized that solutions, though possible, are very hard to come by. I learned how inadequate my answers were in the face of a child's death. I came to understand that although it goes against a preachers constitution, it is often better to keep my mouth closed and listen as one who cared than it was to offer verbal dribble. It was embarrassing to find that I too, was guilty of the disappearing pastor syndrome following the death of a child.

Seminary cannot prepare us for everything, and by God's grace, and that of our people, there is forgiveness in our shortcomings. If your pastor still hasn't figured out what you need, perhaps you might help him. Your local chapter has a list of books that might be helpful, or some extra newsletters might provide some insight. Better yet, sit with him at dinner and tell him what bereaved parents go through. It might surprise him to learn how long grief lasts, or that many parents leave their child's room untouched for years.

As a result of my post-seminary crash course in parental grief, I've learned a lot of good things. I do not ever tell a parent that they can always have another child. I don't attempt to answer "why ?" I love them even when they get mad at God. I reassure that they are not crazy. I help them through their anxiety attacks. I listen more than talk. I never tell them I know how they feel—they know and I know that I don't. I never ask them to tell me what I can do for them; they won't. I just show up regularly to say I remember and I care. I never let them blame themselves for things God alone has control of. I talk about their child frequently and openly.

Don't expect your pastor understands everything that you are going through to the depth of your pain. I believe he would thank you dearly if you took it upon yourself to teach him how to better care for those in his flock who have suffered the loss of one of His dear little lambs.

Rev. Greg Hubbard, Goodland, KS
Reprinted from National TCF newsletter, Spring 1991.

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery
TCF-Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

"A Child of Mine"

By Edgar A. Guest

"I will lend you, for a little time, a child of mine." He said.
"For you to love the while she lives. And mourn for when she's dead."

"It may be six or seven years, or twenty-two or three.
But will you, till I call her back, take care of her for me?"

"She'll bring her charms to gladden you, and should her stay be brief,
you'll have her lovely memories as solace for your grief."

"I cannot promise she will stay since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there I want this child to learn."

"I've looked the wide world over, in search for teachers true
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes, I have selected you."

"Now will you give her all your love, nor think the labor vain,
Nor hate me when I come to call to take her back again?"

"I fancied that I heard them say, 'Dear Lord, thy will be done'
For all the joys thy child bring, the risk of grief we'll run."

"We'll shelter her with tenderness, we'll love her while we may,
And for the happiness we've known, forever grateful stay."

"But should the angels call for her much sooner than we've planned,
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes, and try to understand."

Submitted by Nancy L. Soto
In loving memory of her daughter,
Pamela R. Berkemeier, 6/1/64 - 12/23/95

Christmas Thoughts

Beyond the twinkling lights, the red and green candles, the poignant aroma of evergreen...Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels and stars and beloved carols...Beyond the presents, the shopping, the baking and cooking...Beyond all of these sights and sounds of Christmas...Beyond all of these...there is hope.

Hope...It is hope that sustains us through the days of grief and anger and frustration and loneliness.

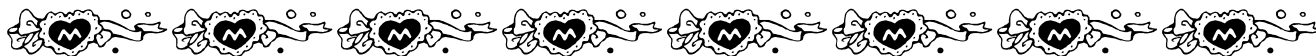
The hope is that someday the pain of the deaths of our children will be eased. The hope is that someday our smiles will be real. The hope is that once again we will laugh and love and cry completely without fear and hollowness.

It is the hope that someday we can remember our children with a tenderness merely tinged with sorrow and not overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you I would wish hope, peace, compassion, love, sympathy, understanding, sharing, and listening.

In the sharing of our grief with one another and in the emotional support we give to one another, we receive and learn all of these gifts.

TCF-Wabash Valley Chapter



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 chapters expenses: printing and mailing of our newsletter, books for our lending libraries, our 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 23rd 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 defray 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 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.

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

DECEMBER MEMORY PAGE

- MALINDA (LIN) ANN SACKETT... Daughter of Mary Ann Brown**
- MALINDA (LIN) ANN SACKETT... Daughter of Michael Cobo**
- LEON MICHAEL VALENCIA... Grandson of Brad & Kristin Croak**
- STRIDER JESS FREEBURG... Son of Tony & Kim Freeburg**
- JORDAN GAAL... Son of Kirby & Karen Gaal**
- AARON KELLY GARDNER... Son of MaryAnn Gardner**
- KAITLYN MARIE GOOCH... Granddaughter of Jack & Barbara Gooch**
- JOSHUA G OAKLAND... Son of Jim Oakland**
- JASON VINCENT TAYLOR... Son of Tom & Chris Taylor**
- RANDY HESS... Son of Patricia Treglawny**



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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 would like to submit articles, be added to or removed from this newsletter mail list or to correct information.

Newsletter printing & mailing donated by Able Steel Fabricators in memory of Cory James Clark

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**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.