



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Newsletter

August 2010

To all those newly bereaved, who are receiving this newsletter for the first time and to all our Compassionate Friends, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that you and your family have many friends. We, who received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow, now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help. You are not alone in your grief.

Meetings are held the 1st Monday of each month at the Aldersgate Methodist Church, 235 Park Street, North Reading at 7:30 P.M. We are a self-sustaining organization with no funds except what we receive through donations from members and newsletter recipients. Please join with us at a meeting.

Grief support after the death of a child

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

National Office:

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 8/2/10 **Ask it Basket**
Marnie
- 9/7/10 **NOTE TUES NITE DUE TO THE HOLIDAY**
How Grief is Affected by Seasonal Changes – Eileen/
- Chapter Co-Leader: Carmen Pope 978-998-4087
connect@tcfnorthshore-boston.org
- Chapter Co-Leader: Mariann Lindquist 781-938-5562
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Rmirabile@comcast.net

*This month's website is sponsored
in memory of:*

Victor Vogis

You are always in our hearts
And forever in our minds.
We miss you everyday.

Happy 30th Birthday our precious son.
Life just isn't quite the same without you.
Love, hugs & kisses,
Mom, Dad, Katya, Esther & Tony, Margo,
Yiayia's & Papou
and all your family and friends

Remembering Our Children



August Birthdays

Andrew Geljookian
son of Nancy & John Geljookian

Brianna Lee Paul
daughter of David & Melinda Paul

Cynthia A. Moores
daughter of Art and Barbara Moores

Eric Hill
son of Peggy & Tom Hill

Glenn James McCloy
son of June and Jim McCloy

Victor Vogis
son of Victor and Margo Vogis



August Angel Dates

Aaron Daniel Carey
son of Jim & Rachel Carey

Derek Anthony Broughton
son of Edward and Louise Broughton

Gale McLaughlin
daughter of Joan & Frank McLaughlin

Jason Foster
son of Michelle Foster

Jeannie O'Hare
daughter of Jean and Tom O'Hare

Michael John Smithers
son of Marnie Smithers

Steven Michael Kerr
son of Bob and Rosalie Kerr

Summerwind

The one who owns summer is not here,
Not here to know the tender summerwind,
Not here to share the glowing and the song.

The one who owns this summer did not live,
Not live to touch the richness of this day,
This in summer when you are alone.

Weep to the summerwind,
Weep and love again the one you remember.

Sascha Wagner,
The Sorrow and the Light

As a regular feature, the newsletter is used to acknowledge the Birthdays and Anniversaries of the death of our children/siblings at the request of parents/siblings. Permission must be given for us to print your child's date. If the information is missing or not correct please send the correct data to:

Cindi Bolivar
28 Colburn Rd,
Reading, MA 01867

Childs Name: _____

Birth Date: _____ Angel Date: _____

Parents: _____

All entries will be listed in the appropriate newsletter as accurately as possible. We are all grieving parents and mistakes can happen. Please let me know immediately if there is a problem and it will be corrected in the next issue

Chapter Sharing Pages

From the Chapter Leader

About a month ago, our family moved from a home where we had lived for over twenty-one years. In late June and early July, we also passed the 13th anniversary of my son, Tom's death and the 16th anniversary of my son, Christopher's death. Up until about 3 or 4 years ago, I would never have considered leaving the house where we lived when Christopher was born and where Tom spent most of his life; I was attached to that house because of the memories that were associated with it. The fact that I was ready to move away from that home was an indication to me that I have come a long way since the early years of my grief journey.

Although we are very excited about our new house, it will be a while before it truly feels like home. Moving is a tremendous amount of work; it is disruptive and absolutely exhausting. From time to time, I found myself completely overwhelmed and had a few "meltdowns" in the process of packing and unpacking. In a strange way, what I experienced during this move and its aftermath was analogous to what I experienced after the death of my sons. Please don't misinterpret this last comment; the challenges of the move were miniscule compared to the devastation I experienced after the death of my sons, but the process had significant similarities.

After the movers had completed their job and our belongings had been transported to our new house, every room was in a state of total disarray. We were faced with mountains of boxes in every direction. We didn't know where anything was and it was difficult to decide how to proceed and what to tackle first.

Similarly, after my son died, my entire life was in a state of disarray. I was completely overwhelmed and had serious doubts that I would ever be able to find what I needed to survive or to care about living again.

In the early weeks after we moved, I began, one step at a time, to open a few boxes, unpack the contents, and organize our belongings. I found myself waking up around 5:30 AM and working most of the day, sometimes until midnight, with short breaks for meals. I became consumed with wanting to get the job done. Little by little, I would organize one cabinet or one closet or arrange the furniture in one room. Feeling encouraged by the progress, I would proceed to open and unpack yet another box. Eventually, I was able to see over the stacks of boxes. I knew there was still a tremendous amount of work to be done, but some areas of the house were now more livable and more functional and beginning to feel like home.

Similarly, in the early phases of my grief process, I remember being consumed by my grief from the time I awoke in the morning until the time I fell asleep at night. I cried, processed my emotions, relived my son's life over and over, tortured myself with questions, received counseling, read many books about grief and related topics, and attended support group meetings. It was a physically, emotionally, and spiritually draining process. Eventually, one step at a time, I began to realize that I was, indeed, making progress. There were still areas that needed work, but I began to believe that my life, though it would never be the same, would be worth living again and that it would be OK.

We are far from being completely settled in our new home. It will take many more months before we totally finish unpacking, organizing and decorating. I am still learning all the nooks and crannies and getting used to functioning in a new environment. Some of the decisions we make about how to utilize our new space will have to wait until we have lived here for a while and become more familiar with our surroundings. There will probably be some boxes that we ignore or that will remain unpacked for a few more years, but I now trust that we will be able to turn this new place into an enjoyable home.

Similarly, I have learned that grief, in its later stages, continues to be a work in progress. For the most part, the initial "heavy lifting" has passed and life feels more normal now. However, there are still some surprises, some "unpacked boxes" that I will have to deal with from time to time. The work is ongoing, but more manageable. I have accepted that it will always be there on some level, but I trust that life will still be meaningful and enjoyable.

Many of you in the early stages of your grief are still facing that state of disarray with mountains of unopened boxes. You are totally consumed and overwhelmed. Remember that this grief is a process. You may not recognize your progress, but try to focus on opening "one box at a time". Eventually, you will find a new "normal" and realize that it is worth reinvesting in life.

Carmen

Chapter Sharing Pages

LOOKING BACK

As I arrived in Arlington VA for the 33rd National Conference I was immediately flooded with memories. It had been the site of my first conference almost a decade ago. I remembered arriving in the lobby, seeing everyone talking in groups and feeling very much alone. My son had died 4 years earlier. I had no idea what to expect or even what I hoped to accomplish on this weekend. Suddenly I was wondering if it had been a mistake to come. What if I actually should cry? The first person I spoke with in the lobby was an older woman who asked me how I was doing. I soon learned she had suffered the loss of four children! I was speechless. As the morning went on I was searching to find the one person I had met before, my friend Ceil. By the time the first day was over I would have met many new bereaved parents and TCF leaders, some of whom would become close friends. I also had my first taste of the wonderful support that this group offered and retired looking forward to the start of the opening. During that weekend I shared more about my son's death than I ever had before and learned much about my own grief. I had thought my loss had occurred too long ago to be needing a support group but soon met people whose losses had occurred 10 or even 20 years earlier. I had read many books in the past but this conference would teach in a very different way.

I did not want to miss anything so I attended as many workshops as I could fit in to the schedule. Ten conferences later, one of them entitled "Finding Joy Again" is still fresh in my memory. It was given by the late Richard Edler. I never could have imagined how many times I would quote his words at chapter meetings, candle lighting memorials, workshops and other events. This was a message of hope and I eventually learned that hope is what every bereaved family member yearns for. At the end of the weekend I left feeling supported, hopeful, confident but at the same time apprehensive about reentering that outside world where so few could understand my pain. I recall removing my ID badge that had become my security blanket for the last 3 days and suddenly I was reluctant to leave. I had made new friends and knew that I would be back the following year.

The next time I wrote down my reflections was after the 2005 conference in Boston. It had special meaning for two reasons. It happened to be hosted by my own state but, more importantly, came shortly after I had suffered a second loss. My son Richard had died in 1997. On November 21, 2004 I

attended a lunch in Boston with several members of TCF where plans were being made for the upcoming conference. I arrived home to discover that my daughter Lynn had suddenly died at the age of 30. The journey had begun once again but, in the midst of my pain, I somehow realized that it would not last forever. I would have to make use of the knowledge and skills I had learned in the previous 4 years. I was immediately surrounded by the love and support of more compassionate friends than I could have imagined. One month later, someone wiser than I suggested that I chair one of the committees for the upcoming event. With great hesitation I agreed while continuing my duties as chapter leader and newsletter editor. The following 6 months were a blur of activity and I did recognize this as a temporary distraction that might aid me in coping with my recent loss.

When that conference ended I felt that I had accomplished something extremely important in the face of tragedy. To this day my participation in that conference remains one of the most rewarding activities I have been a part of since my children died. From that time on I now knew I was capable of leading a useful and productive life. I also knew that it was time to slow down and deal with the reality of my grief.

The 2010 conference has come to a close. This year I did not arrive frightened but rather eagerly anticipating the opportunity to renew the many friendships I have made over the last nine years. I knew that it would not be long before I received the many famous TCF hugs that we all need. I had arrived early in order to help with the many tasks that needed to be done to prepare for an event of this size. Within a few minutes of my arrival old friends seemed to be found at every turn. Within a short time I was hard at work but this is a labor of love. I was no longer the frightened parent approaching the registration desk but looked from the other side and saw the faces and eyes of all who arrived and immediately recognized those who were attending the conference for the first time. I did my best to extend a warm greeting and reassure them to the best of my ability. I no longer felt the need to attend workshops throughout the day but did feel an obligation to be available and lend a word of encouragement, share my experience and, most importantly to listen to someone's story and give a hug when needed. Before I knew it another weekend had passed and the conference ended with the usual quick goodbyes and promises to see my friends next year.

Chapter Sharing Pages

Much changes in the course of ten conferences. Grief softens; we become older, perhaps a bit wiser and hopefully better able to handle our loss. We also learn that life does go on and the loss of a child does not protect us from whatever life might have in store for us. I certainly arrived at this conference feeling I had more to give than was the case in the past. But what never changes is the fact that, as much as I could ever give, I always leave the conference with much more than I arrived with- more hope, optimism, courage, love and of course hugs!

Rick Mirabile
(Rick is former chapter leader of South Shore Chapter in Hingham MA and is currently the Regional Coordinator for MA& RI)



Like the Butterfly

It fluttered there above my head,
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand,
It lit upon my finger.

Waving glistening wings together,
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, and reached deep
Finding all those cherished memories.

As it flitted off through the sunlit morning,
I knew we had said hello
Once more.

Leslie Langford, TCF, North Platte NE



The Butterfly In Our Lives

We often hear of the butterfly representing the lives of our children who have died. Their spirit lives on and our memories live on, often in fleeting movements. But I think the butterfly's life cycle metamorphosis could just as easily represent our own lives. We seem to fit the four stages.

THE EGG

When we are small, we are protected, changing, living in a somewhat small and safe world-much like a butterfly egg attached to a leaf somewhere.

THE CATERPILLAR

The caterpillar is much like our lives before death of our child or children. We go through the day doing what we need to do. We grow a lot and we change some-what slowly. We devour many things in daily life- work, church, Little League. And then the child is gone. We change!

THE COCOON

After death of our child, we shut our selves off from so much because of our grief. We often encase ourselves in the blanket of grief and depression because that is what protects us from the horrible pain. We don't want to be a part of life because of all the painful memories. There are reminders out there which cause pain.

THE BUTTERFLY

The pain lessens and we begin to heal as we work through the grief process, we begin to see a ray of light -a little color. Some of the weight is removed. We break open our cocoon and begin to reach out ever so slightly and touch life again, just to see if it will hurt too much. As we discover the brighter days and brilliant colors of life we become more like a butterfly. We are free to once again be a part of life, and we can move about more easily and begin to take some nectar from life.

Source: www.groww.org

Chapter Sharing Pages



TELEPHONE FRIENDS



Our telephone friends are here to help you if you feel the need to connect with someone outside of our usual meeting night. We are not professionals - we are all bereaved parents seeking to find a way through our grief.

Please be considerate in the timing of your calls to these volunteers.

Billerica	Jeff Moore, son 17, moped accident	978-663-8539
Danvers	Carmen Pope, infant son, anencephaly; 11 year old son, boating accident	978-750-4043
Andover	Steve Hartel and Lisa Alecci, daughter ,6, leukemia	978-470-2323
Plaistow, NH	Lynne Jeffries, son, 4, drowning	603-382-4134
Rockport/Cape Ann	Jim and June McCloy, son, 32, complications during bone marrow transplant	978-546-7634
Lynn	Pat Karakashian, son, 29, Drug Overdose	781-593-5875
North Reading	Margo Vogis, son, 20, automobile accident	978-664-0688
North Andover	Catherine Olson, daughter,27, pedestrian accident	978-681-8341
Marshfield	Trudy Seveir, daughter, 27, suicide	781-837-3171
Cambridge	Lin Campbell, daughter, 23, drug overdose	617-576-9290
Woburn	Alaina Huxtable, grandson 4, accident	781-933-6845
Lynn	Gladys Nelson, son 24, cancer, special needs	781-595-4124
Winchester	Maureen McCormack, son 20, drowning	781-729-1878
Malden	Marnie Smithers, son 13, ATV Accident	781-322-1722

Summer Thoughts

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, a time when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it. Seeing children, babies, and teenagers is not easy for us, and we see them everywhere from shopping centers to beaches. Everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children, and we want to scream, "It's not fair!" I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk recently listening to the shouts of children playing, and I was crying as I remembered the sounds that my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought what a long summer this was going to be.

In my reverie, I was reminded of a recent comment that I had heard at a TCF meeting: "My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter." I also remembered a good friend telling me to "count my blessings" and naming all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at that time. Nothing I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead.

Now, sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I determined that this summer would not be an eternity: I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only

take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple things that used to give me so much pleasure, like flowers, and working in my garden. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessing that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, friends, etc.

It has been almost five years for me, and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course I still have times of sadness; I know I always will. But I have decided that in the process of grieving we close so many doors, the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child, but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn and grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel that way, and I know I still have a long way to go, but in the meantime, I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as he would have done.

Libby Gonzalez, TCF Huntsville, AL



LOVE NOTES



From Deniece Pendleton. In Loving Memory of Faith G. Pendleton. Your memory lives on in my heart. I miss you every day. Love, Mom

From Marnie Smithers. In Memory of John Smithers. On your seven year anniversary you are talked about daily and always missed. Love you most buddy. Love Mum & Chanel

From James & June McCloy. In Loving Memory of Glenn James McCloy. We will always love you. Love Mom & Dad

From John & Elaine Kingston. In Loving Memory of our daughter Patricia Kingston. We think of you often and wish that you were here with all your family. Love, Mom & Dad.

From Frank & Maureen Dawkins. In Loving Memory of Kelly Dawkins Lavigne. Happy Birthday Kelly. Your little girls insist we have cake on your birthday. They miss you so much. Ronnie, Dad, & I do too. We love you, Birthday Girl.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief or comfort you. Remember we have all been there and even though circumstances may be different we really do understand. You are not alone

TO OUR OLDER MEMBERS

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back.... remember hearing from others farther along than you...“your pain will not always be this bad it really does get better” Come to the meetings and share your wisdom. Show others that there is hope, from someone who has found it.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NorthShore/Boston Chapter
PO BOX 1117
Billerica, MA 01821-0961

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIALS
PLEASE FORWARD



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
North Shore-Boston Chapter

NEWSLETTER – August 2010



National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

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.

***** CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org *****

Help us save money and paper.....

To receive these newsletters via email please send an email to the editor.