



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Newsletter

December 2009

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.

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www.thecompassionatefriends.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 12/7/09 **NO MEETING – see below**
12/13/09 **Annual Candlelighting Service - 6:30 PM**
details inside
1/4/10 **How Our Relationships with Others Are Affected - Carmen & Reenie**

NEW INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY:
In the event of inclement weather necessitating the closing of North Reading public schools, our chapter meeting will also be cancelled.

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Thank you to our recent Web Site Sponsors - without our sponsors our website cannot be hosted. Please consider sponsoring the web site for a month in memory of your child. Contact Carmen Pope if you are interested in doing so, and help us keep our web site going.

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

Joel Lindquist

A day doesn't go by when we don't think of you
and hold you in our hearts.
Dad, Mom and Andrew

-and-

Christopher Wooster

"No time on earth is long enough to share with those we love or to prepare our hearts for that last good-bye".
Alarie Tennille
We love you and miss you! Love, Mom and the gang!!

Remembering our Children



December Birthdays

Andrew Dargan
son of Tod and Jane Dargan

Deirdre Helene Olson
daughter of Catherene Olson

Gregg Matthew Wolfson
son of Jack and Sheila Wolfson

Joel Wesley Lindquist
son of Roy and Mariann Lindquist

Jonathan Corey
son of Maureen McCormack and Ron
Corey

Kristin Amico
daughter of Joseph Amico

Michael John Smithers
son of Marnie Smithers

Patrick James Murphy
son of Brian & Jeanne Murphy

Sean Michael Fitzpatrick
son of Ann Marie Fitzpatrick

Sheryl Ann Meehan
daughter of Don and Eileen Veitch

Suzanna Lynne Campbell
daughter of Lynn & Scott Campbell

Thomas Hart (Tom) Pope
son of Carmen and Jeff Pope



December Angel Dates

Christopher James Wooster
son of Debbie Linnehan

Eric Howard Krasker
son of Barry and Cheryl Krasker

Faith Pendleton
daughter of Deniece Pendleton

Joey Bolivar
son of Reggie & Cindi Bolivar

John Joseph Nelson
son of Gladys & Robert Nelson

Jonathan Dean Trefry
son of Phyllis Gorman

Matthew Charles Schille
son of Paul & Debra Schille

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. Information needs to be received by the **15th of the month prior to the issue** when you want your child remembered.

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

We are in the midst of the season that is so often feared by bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents because it means having to get through the holidays with a huge void in our lives. At our last meeting, several of our more seasoned grievers expressed that the anticipation of those “dreaded” days is often worse than the day itself. Conversely, there are other times when we don’t anticipate feeling any worse than usual, and when we least expect it, we are hit with a myriad of overwhelming emotions, which can leave us reeling. For several of the “older” members of the group that night, New Year’s Day was one of those unexpected “lows”, in part because it means moving forward from the year when your child was still alive. I share this to help some of you who may soon be experiencing your first New Year’s Day since the death of your child. If this occasion is particularly difficult for you, it is a normal reaction and you are not alone.

When I was newly bereaved, our chapter’s Candlelight Remembrance Service was instrumental in helping me cope with the days I was dreading, including my son’s December birthday and Christmas. The tears I shed that night, triggered by the music and inspirational readings, were a gift in disguise. The release of emotions helped me to regroup and move through the holiday season more peacefully and more courageously. The service also enabled me to “spend time” with my sons. I encourage all of you to share in this special Worldwide Candle lighting event on December 13th, whether you attend our chapter Candlelight Remembrance Service at 6:30 PM, or whether you light a candle in memory of your child in the privacy of your home.

Because the holiday season is upon us, it is also a good time to try to recognize the gifts we have, as difficult as this may be for those of you who are newly bereaved. Soon after my son, Tom, died, I realized that there were so many times when I had neglected to truly appreciate the gifts in my life. For example, I would occasionally feel frustrated about the amount of laundry I had to do, the ever increasing cost of groceries each week, and the craziness of the youth sports schedules. I realized pretty quickly after he was gone that I missed doing

Tom’s laundry, cooking his favorite meals and satisfying his growing appetite, and driving him to all of his activities. The “chores” of doing laundry, grocery shopping, cooking and chauffeuring were actually gifts in disguise.

Our children, grandchildren and siblings are gifts in our lives. As painful as it is to learn how to cope with life after the death of our children, I think we would all agree that we would rather have had them in our lives for a short period of time as never to have had them at all. Let us all move forward through the season trying to appreciate our gifts, both obvious and hidden. I wish you peace and encourage you to call on your fellow Compassionate Friends when you need help.

Carmen



THANKS

Thanks to the friend who did know the right words to say: “There is a group in town who might help you.”

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about “that group.”

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk – and talked.

Thanks to the dad who said, after the first meeting, he could never come back – but did.

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was able to bake cookies for her “compassionate friends.”

Thanks to the homemaker who never could talk in front of people – who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men – and didn’t say he was sorry.

Because of you, we will be able to help someone who we don’t even know – next month.

~John DeBoer, TCF, Greater Omaha Chapter, NE

Chapter Sharing Pages

TCF North Shore/Boston Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service

The Chapter will hold its annual Candlelight Remembrance Service on **Sunday evening, December 13, 2009 starting at 6:30 p.m.** at the Aldersgate Methodist Church. This will coincide with the Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony. In case of snow, the **alternate date is Monday, December 14, 2009 at 7:30 pm.** We will remember our children with readings, music and a slide show in a beautiful ceremony conducted by members of our group. Family members and friends are invited. There will be a reception and a raffle after the non-denominational service. Refreshment donations are appreciated for the reception. This ceremony will replace the regular sharing meeting in December.

NEW THIS YEAR: During the service, we would like to present a slide show with pictures of all the “children” of our chapter. Cindi Bolivar has volunteered to coordinate the slide show. One or two photographs may be sent to her electronically at cinbol@gmail.com or by mail to: Cindi Bolivar, 28 Colburn Road, Reading, MA 01867. Pictures should be 5x7 or smaller and must be received by November 15th to be included in the slide show. Please send the following information with the picture: child’s name as you want it shown, birth and death dates, age at time of death. If you do not have an electronic copy you may visit your local Walmart, CVS, Walgreens or similar store where you can scan your photos to make copies to send to Cindi so you don’t have to worry about the original. If we have enough interest we will produce the slide show for this years event, if not we will work on it for 2010.

We will need approximately 10 to 15 readers and 15 to 20 singers. There will be **sign up sheets at the November 2nd** meeting if you would like to participate. You may also contact the following chapter members if you would like to sing or read and cannot attend the November meeting.

Singers:

Reenie McCormack will coordinate the choir. You do not need to be a “professional” to help our choir - If you would like to sing, please contact **Reenie McCormack** at **781-729-1878** or mmccormack2@mac.com. The choir will rehearse at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church on Sunday, December 6, 2009 at 4:00 PM.

Readers:

Mariann Lindquist will coordinate our readers. Each person will be given a selection to read aloud during the ceremony. You will receive your reading before the ceremony so you can become familiar with the piece. If you would like to be one of the readers, please sign up or contact **Mariann Lindquist** at **781-938-5562** or rdlindquist@rcn.com.

Raffle Donations:

Maureen Dawkins will coordinate the raffle donations and sale of raffle tickets. If you would like to donate something to the raffle please contact Maureen or bring it to the event. TCF is a non-profit organization and we rely on the ticket sales and donations to help keep our chapter going. Contact **Maureen Dawkins** at **978-372-8205** or noonieandg@verizon.net.



Chapter Sharing Pages

Gifts of Love

As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered. My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and admonish that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears. It has been four and a half years since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about: one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade

ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on, so many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memories. Beautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone. No one can ever take those priceless memories away, though they may hurt now and probably always will, but not as intensely. Give yourself a gift, the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

by Cathy Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN~reprinted from
Holiday Memories by TCF Atlanta Online
<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/HolidayMemories.htm>

LIGHT A CANDLE

And I will light a candle for you.
To shatter all the darkness
and bless the times we knew.
Like a beacon in the night.
The flame will burn bright
and guide us on our way.
Oh, today I light a candle for you.
The seasons come and go,
And I'm weary of the change.
I keep moving on,
you know it's not the same.
And when I'm walking all alone,
Do you hear me call your name?
Do you hear me sing the songs we used to sing?
You filled my life with wonder,
Touched me with surprise,
I always saw that something special
deep within Your eyes.
And through the good times and the bad,
We carried on with pride.
I hold onto the love and life we knew.

~Paul Alexander

Chapter Sharing Pages

HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

Those who have been through one or more holiday seasons following the death of our child offer these suggestions:

KNOW WHEN YOUR HOLIDAYS ARE:

Holidays are not just at Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas or New Year's. Holidays are those times when family and friends get together for fun. It may or may not be associated with the traditional days of celebration.

- Mark on your calendar the months during which your family's holidays occur.
- Begin early to plan your coping strategies.

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT HOW YOU PLAN YOUR HOLIDAY:

Together, as a family, examine the events and tasks of the celebration and ask the following questions:

- Do we really enjoy doing this? Is it done out of habit, free choice, or obligation?
- Is this a task that can be shared?
- Would the holiday be the same without it?

DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE COMFORTABLY:

- Whether we are open to talk about our child.
- Whether we feel able to send holiday cards this year.
- Whether we can handle the responsibility of the family dinner, holiday parties, etc., or if we wish someone else would take over some of these traditions this year.
- Whether we choose to stay at home for the holidays or choose a different environment.
- Shopping is definitely easier if you make the entire list out ahead of time. Then when one of the "good days" come along, you can get your shopping done quickly and with less confusion. Shopping by phone or from catalogs also helps.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES. IT CAN REALLY MAKE THINGS LESS PAINFUL:

- Let the children take over decorating the tree, or invite friends in to help.
- Open presents the night before the holiday instead of in the morning.
- Have dinner at a different time. Change the seating arrangement.

-
- Burn a special candle to quietly include your absent son or daughter.

OUR GREATEST COMFORT MAY COME IN DOING SOMETHING FOR OTHERS:

- Giving a gift in memory of our child to a meaningful charity.
- Adopting a needy family for the holidays.
- Inviting a guest (a foreign student, senior citizen, someone who would otherwise be alone) to share the festivities.

EVALUATE YOUR COPING PLANS:

- Do your plans isolate you from those who love and support you best?
- Do your plans allow for meaningful expression and celebration of what the particular holiday means to you?

LET YOUR PLANS AND LIMITS BE KNOWN:

- Write or phone family and friends to let them know of any intended changes.
- Share with friends and family how you plan to approach the holiday and how they can best help you.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN:

- Enjoyment, laughter, and pleasure are not experiences in which you abandon your lost child. You have not forgotten him/her. Your child would not want you to be forever sad; you need not feel guilty over any enjoyment you may experience.
- Give your self and members of your family permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holiday.

Finally, as you seek to make sensible plans, remember to make them firm enough to support you but flexible enough to leave you some freedom. Most important, take time to love and let yourself be loved – for this is the real gift of the holiday season.

Lovingly lifted from TCF, Birmingham, AL

Chapter Sharing Pages

When We Remember

When the snow falls, and silence drifts in white
across the earth, we remember their joy, the glad
cries that broke the hush of fresh winter.

When the family gathers, caught in wonderment
around the Thanksgiving table or the holiday tree,
we remember their excitement, the anticipation that
was impossible to contain.

When the sun sets and Christmas lights sparkle
and shine to challenge the night, we remember
their tired but glowing faces, alight in a thrill of
happiness that made our day.

When we remember, we feel afresh that brightness,
that energy, and we smile . . . and we cry.

For what was, for what can never be.

In our remembering, we are the vessels of
yesterday, the bearers of the light, the victims of the
dark.

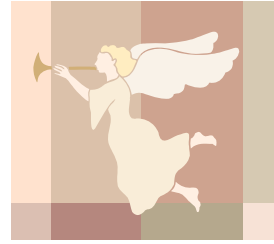
And in our remembering, we are parents, hurting,
healing, gathering our strength and our passion to
live once more, to destroy an endless night with
the sun and starlit joys of the past, forging our
memories into the promise of a new and different
dawn, a re-investment in life itself, even without our
child.

For we have loved, love still, and have been loved
in turn.

Our memories tell us; our intellect compels us,
ultimately, to answer our child's love with our own
unending love, showing through the quality and
commitment of our own lives that both loves have
enriched us beyond measure.

May the holidays, for all their sorrow and all their
pain, help each of us to build anew our lives, using
our joys from the past to create a new day, where
sorrow, though never gone, no longer governs our
every waking hour.

Don Hackett, TCF, South Shore Chapter, Hingham, MA



Holidays in Heaven

The Holiday Season is just not the same,
A smile is missing when saying one name.

For parents who've lost a daughter or son,
Nothing can bring back the delightful fun,
Of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.

The memories are all that we do have now,
We do go on.....only God knows how.

A New Year comes as midnight arrives,
Our Angels still a big part of our lives.

If only we could trade the presents we receive,
For one more day with those whom we grieve!

But nothing can bring back our beloved child,
The one that laughed, cried, and often smiled.

They are together in a much better place,
Watching us cry.....touching our face!

Although we miss them on Holidays to share,
Be assured their loving presence fills the air,
At home, in church, at New York's Times Square!

So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do,
But always remember they are thinking of you too,

Wishing you happiness and showing their love,
Not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!

*-Dan Bryl, Lawrenceville, GA TCF
In Memory of his daughter, Jessica*

*Too often we underestimate
the power of a touch, a smile,
a kind word, a listening ear --
all of which have the potential
to turn a life around*

~Leo Buscaglia

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 |
| Reading | Stacey Smith, son 23, suicide | 781-944-5841 |

Helping Children Grieve During the Holidays

Holidays are times of sharing and togetherness. But after a death in their family the holiday season can be difficult to endure for everyone, including the children. Traditions that bring about memories may bring a flood of emotions for a child. Some families mistakenly try to deny these feelings by avoiding certain holiday customs like putting up a tree or exchanging gifts, according to Alan Wolfert, author of Helping Children Cope with Grief.

“Such avoidance is an impossible task in an environment that constantly reminds us of the holidays,” Wolfert says. “Families might consider withdrawing some from excess holiday activities.” Holidays are very stressful, and the combined emotional weight of grieving may drain children. While there is no easy formula for helping children deal with grief, Wolfert gives the following suggestions for adults to consider:

- Be aware that your behavior influences a grieving child. The child’s ability to cope with the problem depends on the ability of important adults to express their grief and convey to the child that it’s okay to express a full range of feelings. Adults must let children know that tears are not a signal of rejection, but sadness. If a parent says, “I feel sad because I miss Grandma,” the child will understand that emotions are an acceptable demonstration of grief.
- Don’t avoid family traditions during the holidays. Children find comfort in customs, such as decorating the tree or baking cookies. Traditions provide a structure for the expression of the child’s thoughts and feelings.
- Create a special time during the holidays to talk about the deceased family member. Younger children might find it helpful to look at family photographs when they discuss their memories.

While helping children cope with the pain of their grief during the holidays is difficult, slow and wearing, the process can also be enriching and fulfilling for loving adults.

TCF Metrowest, MA Chapter newsletter

Chapter Sharing Pages



LOVE NOTES



In Loving Memory of Patricia "Patty" Kingston. Thinking of you at Thanksgiving and Christmas 2009. Love, Mom, Dad & Family

In Loving Memory of Perley Cobb, Jr.. Remembering you at Thanksgiving, Christmas and your Birthday, Dec. 29th. Love, Elaine, John and your wife Debbie.

In Loving Memory of Faith Pendleton, 4/2/70 – 12/20/97. Faith, your bright spirit lives on in our hearts. Love always, Mom

In Loving Memory of our son and brother, Roger Costa during the holidays. We will always remember the excitement you brought us every day, but especially at Christmas time. We love and miss you buddy! Love Mom, Dad and Matt.

In Loving Memory of Tom Pope. Sending you our love on your 24th birthday. We hold you forever in our hearts. Love, Mom, Dad, Kelly & Dave.

In Loving Memory of Christopher & Tom Pope. Always in our thoughts, We will miss you and love you forever. Love, Mom, Dad, Kelly & Dave.

In Loving Memory of Victor G. Vogis. Merry Christmas, we love you & miss you every day. Love, Mom, Dad, Katya, Ester, Tony & Margo

In Loving Memory of our son Don Tottingham at Christmas. Love, Mom and Dad

In Loving Memory of my son Harold on Christmas. We miss you very much on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. You have not been with us for Christmas since 2002 and the holiday season is not the same without you. Our family misses you very much and you are always in our thoughts. With Much Love, Mom and family.

Chapter Sharing Pages

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 – DECEMBER 2009

NEW INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY: In the event of inclement weather necessitating the closing of North Reading public schools, our chapter meeting will also be cancelled.



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.