



The Compassionate Friends

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Newsletter

April 2024

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 and 3rd Wednesday of each month via Zoom Online at 7:00PM. We also hold an in-person meeting on the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Aldersgate Methodist Church, 235 Park Street, North Reading at 7:00 P.M. PLEASE NOTE: Beginning in June we will be shifting to a meeting schedule of two in-person meetings per month and one online Zoom Meeting. Please consult the Website for June meeting schedule.

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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Upcoming Meetings

Monday, 5/6/24
7:00 PM

Online Video Meeting

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to participate

Topic: Open Sharing Session

Wednesday, 5/15/24

Online Video Meeting - 7:00 PM

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to participate

Topic: Open Sharing Session

-and-

Sibling Group Online Video Meeting - 7:30 PM

Please contact Aimeeb15@gmail.com if you would like to participate

Topic: Open Sharing Session

Sunday, 5/19/24
1:00 - 4:00 PM

SPRING EVENT

Wednesday, 5/22/24
7:00 PM

In-Person Meeting

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: Men / Women (split groups)

Chapter Leader: David Paul
tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com

978-771-6345

Newsletter Editors: Eden Paul
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RYAN J. GILLIGAN

*Excerpt from the song
"See You Again"*



*Sometimes I feel like my heart is breaking
But I stay strong and I hold on
because I know I will see you again
This is not where it ends
I will carry you with me
Until I see you again*

Happy 34th Birthday in Heaven!
Love, Mom

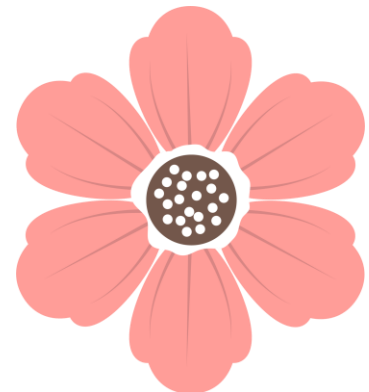
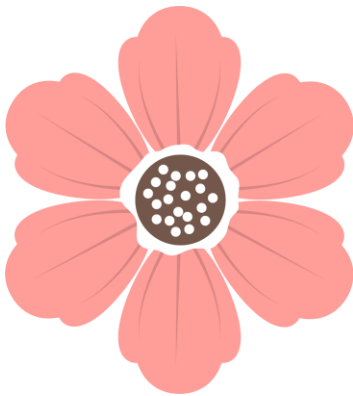
-and-

JULIA ANN FORMAN



They say grief is just love
with no place to go.
But I can't spend another day
with love swelling in my chest.
My heart is so full
of left over love,
it's beginning to leak
throughout my life.
It's dribbling onto strangers
and overflowing in the world.
It's flooding the neighborhood,
it doesn't seem to end.
I guess it's sort of lovely
but tragic too.
The world is filling up with
all the love meant for you.

I love you, mama



THE ROBIN'S SONG

Posted on April 19th, 2024



It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back towards the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.

Before my daughter Lori died, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd misnamed its larger, boring American cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was *cheep*!

Then one June day, almost a year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! . . . Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so, while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our "boring" American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered "the true harbinger of spring, singing "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily."

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily." I thought to myself, "Cheerily . . . No, that isn't what I hear." We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said "Cheerio!" to one another when we meant, "Goodbye" or "See you later!" There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say "hello!"

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that summer day, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

GENESSE GENTRY

Genesse Gentry is the author of two books of poetry, *Stars in the Deepest Night - After the Death of a Child* and *Catching the Light - Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child*. She lives in northern California with her husband Bill. They are the parents of daughters Megan and Lori, who died in a car accident in 1991 at the age of 21. Following Lori's death, Genesse and Bill joined the Marin County, California Chapter of The Compassionate Friends (TCF). Genesse has continued being involved in that organization ever since. She has been meeting group facilitator for both the Marin County and San Francisco meetings as well as chapter leader. She is currently on the steering committee of TCF Marin, as well as Regional Coordinator for Northern California. She presents writing workshops at national conferences of The Compassionate Friends as well as for northern California chapters.

MOTHER'S DAY: "BEFORE" AND "AFTER"

Posted on May 7th, 2022

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Shifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-Mom and stick-daughter standing alongside a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning-to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom", chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it

from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need any more "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Day after Nina died was a grief numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten.

I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is.

Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life – you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you – they are your child's gift to you.

CATHY SEEHUETTER

Cathy's 15-year-old daughter, Nina Westmoreland, was killed by an alcohol-impaired driver on Cathy's birthday while her family was vacationing in FL in May of 1995. In 2012, her police officer stepson Chris took his own life. She has been very involved as a volunteer in TCF, first as newsletter editor and then chapter leader for the St. Paul Chapter. She served for six years on the TCF National Board of Directors, and is Minnesota Regional Coordinator. Cathy was the Conference Chair for the TCF national conferences in 2011 in Minneapolis, MN, and in 2018 in St. Louis, MO.. She is very honored to have received the TCF Recognition Award from the National Board of Directors in 2015. Cathy has been published in *Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul*, and as a contributing writer to *The Tincture of Time*, *Open to Hope: Inspirational Stories of Healing After Loss*, the TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, and other grief publications and newsletters. Cathy is married, has three surviving children and five grandchildren; all of whom are the loves of her life.

QUOTES

"I would recognise you in total darkness, were you mute and I deaf. I would recognise you in another lifetime entirely, in different bodies, different times. And I would love you in all of this, until the very last star in the sky burnt out into oblivion." – Madeline Miller, *The Song of Achilles*

"It has been said, 'time heals all wounds.' I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone." - Rose Kennedy

"How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard?" - A.A. Milne

"What we have once enjoyed deeply we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

And we wept that one so lovely should have a life so brief -William Cullen Bryant

"What is grief, if not love persevering?" It's from Marvel, Vision says it during the *WandaVision* series

"Where you used to be, there is a hole in the world, which i find myself constantly walking around in the day time, and falling into at night. I miss you like hell" – Edna St Vincent Millay

"So it's true, when all is said and done, grief is the price we pay for love." – E.A. Bucchianeri



April Birthdays

Adam Calogero Lavoie son of Fernad Lavoie and Joyce Calogero Brother of Reid Lavoie
 John Arthur Driscoll son of John and Susan Driscoll
 Kristina Corina Latham daughter of Kerry and Kevin Latham sibling of Josh Latham
 Charlotte Mae Martin daughter of Kara Paine
 Thomas "Scott" Gray son of Laura Gray
 Christopher Warner Fennelly son of Laurie Malonson & George Fennelly
 Lia Madigan daughter of Maile and Daniel Madigan
 Matthew Dalimonte son of Patti Dalimonte
 Ryan James Gilligan son of Paula Gilligan
 Jimmy Kiriakos son of Sandy Tsakirgis
 Colin Ambrose McComber son of Shari McComber
 Aaron Joseph DiBella son of Suzanne DiBella
 Andrea Martocchia son of Diana and Paul Martocchia
 Xavier Salaman son of Susan Salaman
 Julia Ann Forman daughter of Patricia Foreman Powell and step daughter of Robert Powell
 Daria Elise Pearlman daughter of Jill Pearlman
 Edward Chretien son of Donna Chretien
 Brandon Ste, Croix son of Andrea Green
 Robert Alan Greenwell son of Celeste Sullivan



April Angel Dates

Ricardo Melo son of David and Theresa Melo
 Tanya Jean Duncan daughter of Dawn Lee Black and Dan Golan
 Brian T Wilson son of Linda Wilson
 Adam Calogero Lavoie son of Fernad Lavoie and Joyce Calogero Sibling of Reid Lavoie
 Charlotte Mae Martin daughter of Kara Paine
 Jennifer Gianocostas daughter of Skip Gianocostas and stepdaughter of Diane Gianocostas
 Alexander John Whipple son of Richard and Nancy Whipple
 Reid Robert Sacco son of Gene & Lorraine Sacco
 Eric Hill son of Peggy & Tom Hill
 Bryan Robert Cadigan son of Debbie Daly
 Marquis Bergendahl son of Pauline and Chris Whynot
 Craig Gentleman son of Mary and Jack Gentleman
 Kenneth Barclay son of Rache
 Gabriel Feld son of Phyllis Feldl and Philip Barclay
 Lenardo Clement son of Muriel Clement




TCF North Shore-Boston Chapter Website Sponsorship

In order to help cover our chapter website fees, we invite our members to sponsor our chapter website for 1 month in memory of their children, grandchildren or siblings. The monthly website sponsor donation is \$25 per member and the maximum number of sponsors per month is 2. Sponsors may post a message to their children, grandchildren or siblings; this message will be displayed in the Website Sponsor column on the Home page of our website and will also appear in our chapter newsletter.

If you would like to sponsor our chapter website, please contact our Website Manager via email:

tcfnoshoreweb@gmail.com

Website sponsor signup sheets are also available at our monthly in-person meetings.

	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.	
Beverly	Carmen Pope, son, 3 days, anencephaly; son, 11, boating accident	978-998-4087
Reading	Sheila Thabet, son, 19, Pedestrian accident, Son 20, accidental overdose	781-670-0335
Gloucester	Melinda & David Paul, daughter, 20, sudden cardiac arrest	978-771-6345
Haverhill	Crystal Chambers, sibling, 28, cause unknown	508-523-2810
North Andover	Catherine Olson, daughter, 27, pedestrian accident	978-681-8341
Salem, NH	Regan Burke, son, 8, pneumonia/cardiac arrest	603-264-9391
Winchester	Reenie McCormack, son, 20, drowning	781-729-1878
Woburn	Nancy Whipple, son, 22 months, cancer	781-938-5840



Love Notes



In Loving Memory of Eric Hill

Eric - we love and miss you! It's hard to believe that 21 years have passed since we've been able to hear your silly laugh and see your beautiful smile. We know you are keeping busy in heaven and watching over us all the time. Xoxo

This section is reserved for personal messages in memory of our children, grandchildren, and siblings. Donations received help to cover the operating costs of the chapter; monthly meetings, refreshments, newsletter mailing, etc. While not expected, any donations are always appreciated.

Thank you to all who continue to leave donations in the box at every meeting

Love Notes are a way to share a message in memory of your child/grandchild/sibling. Donations received with Love notes help with the cost of publication of this newsletter.

Please send your Love Notes with donation by mail to

Bob Boulanger, 42 Chatham Rd. Billerica, MA 01821, or give them to the leader at the monthly meetings.

Please use the form below to assure notes are posted exactly as you want them. Love Notes for the next newsletter must be received by the **15th of the previous month**.

Love Gifts for future dates may be sent at any time; month to be published: _____

Love Gift from _____ **In memory of**

Message:

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 SEASONED 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

c/o Bob Boulanger
42 Chatham Road
Billerica, MA 01821



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIALS
PLEASE FORWARD



The Compassionate Friends

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

NEWSLETTER – April 2024



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
tcfnoshorenews@gmail.com