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# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

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## January, 2003

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January seems like a good time to talk about making changes - New Year's resolutions are, of course, very popular. The problem with them is they rarely last longer than the thirty-one days of January. Despite our good intentions, we don't lose the weight, stop smoking the cigarettes, etc...

What kind of New Year's resolution is right (or even possible) for a bereaved parent or sibling? We might resolve to find something to feel good about each day. But some days, we can barely get out of bed, let alone feel good. Should we abandon our resolution when we have a bad day? Unfortunately, for bereaved families, consistency is one of the things that we lost when we became bereaved. What we really need is patience with ourselves. Just when you think you are making some progress, a bad day just takes everything out of you. It's tempting to give up and decide that it will never get better again. But making our way through grief really is a series of tiny steps. We want to feel better, but it will take a long time.

We recommend that your resolutions take the form of gentle reminders - that life has dealt you a terrible blow... that you are not the same person you used to be and never will be... that you will get through this with the help of your family and friends... that life holds promise beyond the pain.

A friend told us recently that her mother grieves for the son who died 30 years ago, especially at Christmas time. Her eyes fill with tears and she longs for the child who has been gone for so long. She misses her child, and she always will, yet she lives a happy and productive life with her family and her church. Life can go on for us, even when we continue to miss and love our children and siblings. We must hold on to that hope for our lives to continue to have meaning. We urge you to resolve to live - not just to live, but to live with meaning. It is possible for all of us to make the New Year a year of promise. Our resolution is to be there to help you make that happen.

Lisa Beall

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### GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
- to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
- to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
- to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
- to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.

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*The printing and mailing of this newsletter is donated by  
Bob and Sandi Burash  
in memory of the life of  
Paul J. Burash*



The Compassionate Friends  
Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter  
P.O. Box 6280  
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It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand...your compassionate friends.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editors 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed. **March submissions are due by January 20th).**



Our **lending library** is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above.

Thank you.

**The Compassionate Friends** is a non-profit self-help organization. We operate on donations from the community we support and concerned professionals in order to produce our newsletter, Service of Remembrance, library, and other needed services. Donations are tax deductible.

**Refreshments at our monthly meetings:** A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting or you may call Sandi Burash to sign up. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter.



**Inclement weather on a meeting night -** meeting canceled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect at 5:00 p.m.

**MEETING INFORMATION**

January 2, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.  
Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

**PROGRAM: UNDERSTANDING GRIEF THROUGH STORIES**

Calvary United Methodist Church  
301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis  
Park in the back of the church

**NEXT MONTH:**

February 6, 2003

**PROGRAM: USING MUSIC TO DEAL WITH GRIEF****TELEPHONE FRIENDS**

Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

**Marie Dyke, daughter, 17, single mother, only child, car accident**

**410-969-7597 Janet Tyler, daughter, 5 and brother, 33, car accident**

**410-360-1341 Tia Stinnett, miscarriages and infant death**

**410-721-6457 Sandy Platts, infant death**

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

\* For information on the **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, please call 410-321-7053.

\* The Stephanie Roper Committee, **for victims of violent crime**, issues a newsletter. The Anne Arundel County chapter representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).

\* The Compassionate Friends, **Reston Satellite Group (support group for parents who are now childless)** meets on the second Saturday of each month, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. Contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608) for information.

To participate in the planning of our **Annual Service of Remembrance**, call Ann Castiglia (410-974-1626).

## CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

#### **December 5: “I need help...where are you?!” — Dealing with Family, Friends, and Colleagues**

*Note: Our December meeting was canceled due to the snow storm. This topic has been rescheduled for the March meeting.*

#### **January 2: The Grief Process**

Grief over the loss of a child tends not to be linear nor have a clear end. In fact most bereaved parents find they grieve the loss of their child for the rest of their lives and that, while there may be stages of grief, the stages do not necessarily occur in the same sequence for each person and they will often find themselves cycling through various stages for years. Our speaker, a professional storyteller, will explore the grief process, using the medium of stories.

#### **February 6: Using Music in Dealing with Grief**

Some bereaved parents find music can be helpful in dealing with their grief. Our speaker will relate her experiences in developing music for grieving parents and the role she believes music has in the grief process. Members are urged to bring CDs or cassette tapes with music they have found particularly meaningful and helpful as they deal with their grief. We will use these as part of the discussion in our Sharing Groups.



**Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through Lisa Beall (bealls@erols.com). Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$40 each month.**

### WEB ADDRESSES

**Bereaved Parents USA home page**

[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

**Bereavement Magazine-**  
[www.bereavementmagazine.com](http://www.bereavementmagazine.com)

**On Suicides -**  
[www.pbs.org/weblab/living](http://www.pbs.org/weblab/living)

**Paul Alexander Home page -**

[www.paulalexander.com](http://www.paulalexander.com)

**Judy Guggenheim's**

**Home page -**

[www.after-death.com](http://www.after-death.com)

**TCF Sibling Internet Chat -** Thursday nights at 9:00 EST: (email [tcsiblingrep@aol.com](mailto:tcsiblingrep@aol.com) for the password)

**For bereaved parents**  
[www.moms-dads.com/index2.html](http://www.moms-dads.com/index2.html)

**CLIMB**  
[CLIMB@POBOX.ALASKA.NET](mailto:CLIMB@POBOX.ALASKA.NET)

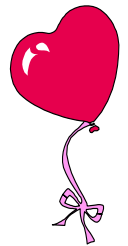
Our **February newsletter** will feature love letters from you to your child or sibling.

Letters do not have to be signed.

Please email them to [bealls@erols.com](mailto:bealls@erols.com)

or send them to our post office box.

We must have them by January 10th to make it into the newsletter.



### **Many thanks to all those who made the ANNUAL SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**

a loving tribute to our children and siblings

**Thank you, Ann! for chairing the committee and to all who helped - we appreciate you!**

September 9, 1990

Dear James Ryan...

I have been thinking about the “things” that people say that cause pain to bereaved parents. I know that most of these things are said with good intentions and not meant to harm an already sensitive spirit BUT often these things do hurt, for example:

They told me - you are lucky you didn't get to know your son. I said - I knew you since the moment of conception. I anticipated, I prepared for your role in our family. I gave birth to you. I watched you fight for your life. I felt your death - I knew you!

They told me - you are fortunate to have two other children. I said - I know, yet I am incomplete. I am the mother of three, now I mother only two.

They told me - death was a blessing. I said - I know, I live with the emptiness of this blessing. I live with the pain of such a blessing.

They told me - life goes on and you should too. I

said - I know, I will and I shall in my own time and in my own way.

They told me - you have changed. You are not the person I used to know. I said - I know, I am grateful. I would hate to think that your living, your dying, left me unchanged.

They told me - “things”. I said - I know, yet I knew in my heart that they didn't know - not really! I knew how fortunate they were NOT to know. I tolerated their ignorance of my pain. I prayed that they were counting their blessings!

Love, Mom

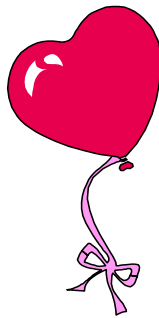
I have found that writing letters to my son helped me to discover buried feelings and to heal through experiencing them. I would like to encourage each of you to try writing as a form of healing.

Donna Rohrbaugh

## YOU LIVE ON

You live on  
in your older sister's smile,  
your younger brother's humor  
and in the way your baby sister  
squeezes out of her car seat, as I look  
for a place to pull over on the highway.

You live on  
in the heart of your dad and  
in the heart of me, your mom.  
You live on when we eat only the  
inside of egg rolls, pancakes  
swimming in syrup, soggy bowls of  
cereal and when we pick croutons out  
of a salad.



You live on when we choose  
not to make mountains out of mole hills,  
to give to charities, to whisper  
“I love you”, to find beauty in the dusty  
toad in the garden.

You live on, my child  
here on earth everyday,  
and we anticipate when we will live  
again with you in eternity.

Alice J. Wisler  
TCF, Raleigh, NC

From BP/USA:

Just a note, to sadly let you know Paul Kinney of Louisville, KY, who has served as our BP/USA treasurer died today (12/10/02) after a long battle with cancer.

If you would like to send a card to Paul's wife Pat and family, the address is:

Pat Kinney  
1902 Emerson Ave.  
Louisville, KY 40305

John Goodrich, our former treasurer has agreed to step in and be our acting treasurer.



## SIBLING PAGE

### A BROTHERS DEATH

Barbara Lazear Ascher's brother Bobby died of AIDS at the age of 31. Her family was aware that her brother was gay and thus was spared learning simultaneously about his homosexuality and the diagnosis of AIDS. Her parents, she writes, "broke through ... barriers of denial by making it clear, in their son's obituary, that the cause of his death was AIDS." Following is an excerpt of a beautifully written and sensitive article describing the author's struggle with grief. In an almost poetic style, Barbara Ascher brings to life the chaos of grief. 'A Brother's Death' was originally printed in the New York Times Magazine.

When we first learned of Bobby's illness, it seemed incomprehensible that this could be happening to our baby brother. My sister and I began a journey into paralysis. There were days when it seemed we had to concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other if we were to walk at all. If we traveled more than a couple of blocks, we were exhausted for the rest of the day.

We were hungry, we weren't hungry. We made chocolate chip cookies and chocolate brownies and didn't eat them. We opened and closed the refrigerator door, looking for something that might cushion the pain, fill the chasm that was opening from within.

Now I realize that this was the beginning of grief which starts in the stomach, yawning like the gaping mouth in Munch's painting "The Scream." But what did we know of grief? We were young; our beloved had not yet died. I began to understand that grieving is like walking. The urge is there, but you need a guiding hand, you need someone to teach you how.

I went to speak with a wise and trusted minister at my church who warned that there were bad times ahead. The death of a sibling, he said, grievous in itself, is also a starting reminder of our own mortality. I suppose it's not dissimilar to the time in youth when we first learned of our origins and began to understand, if they made me, then they can make another. After that we became the nervous sentinels of our territory. When a sibling dies, the absolute certainty of death replaces the cherished illusion that maybe we'll be the exceptions. When a sibling dies, death tugs at our own shirttails. There's no unclasping its persistent grip. "You too," it says. "Yes, even you."

When you are new to grief, you learn that there's no second-guessing it. It will have its way with you. Don't be fooled by the statistics you read: Widows have one bad year, orphans three. Grief doesn't read schedules.

One morning three weeks after Bobby died, I

arose feeling happy and energetic. Well now, I thought, I guess we've taken care of that. Wrong. The next morning I was awakened by a wail I thought was coming from the storm outside until I realized it was coming from me.

Grief will fool you with its disguises. Some days you insist that you're fine, you're just angry at a friend who said the wrong thing. One day I wept into the lettuce and peaches at our local market when an acquaintance approached to scold me for my stand in an old battle. Of course, we both assumed that she was responsible for my tears.

You learn that you can cry and stop and laugh and even follow a taxi driver's commands to "Have a nice day", and then cry again. You learn that there is no such thing as crying forever. Three months ago I was certain that I would never be happy again. I was wrong.

Grief is like the wind. When it's blowing hard, you adjust your sails and run before it. If it blows too hard, you stay in the harbor, close the hatches, and don't take calls. When it's gentle, you go sailing, have a picnic, take a swim. You go wherever it takes you. There are no bulwarks to withstand it. Should you erect one, it will eventually tire of the game and blow the walls in.

We cannot know another's grief, as deeply personal as love and pain. I cannot measure my own against the sorrow of my brother's friends who must wonder every day which among them will be next ... I shy away from the magnitude of my brother's own grief when, upon being diagnosed, he heard the final click of a door as it closed on possibility.

A friend of mine said of her son when he died at 30, "He was just beginning to look out at the world and make maps." So was my brother. And then there was no place to go.

Barbara Lazear Ascher, New York, NY





## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Love shared can bring comfort to a broken heart.  
Please remember the following families this month.





## DEAR CHILD OF MINE

Dear Child of mine, who died before your time,  
I am grateful for your life.  
Though death brought the end of hopes and dreams,  
Still I am grateful for your life.  
Through you I have known joy and sorrow,  
laughter and tears.  
Through you my life has been enriched,  
My compassion heightened and  
I am more keenly aware of the grief of others.  
I am grateful for your life.  
Now I draw upon my memories of you,  
some happy, some sad.  
They keep you close in many ways.  
They are priceless, precious memories  
that help me bear the pain.

Through them I will learn to live again.  
I am grateful for your life.  
I have been blessed by your life and left with your love.  
I will share that love and strive  
to live to be a blessing to others.  
Dear Child of mine, though you died before your time,  
You are never far away from me,  
I have loved you in my heart of hearts  
and there I will love you through eternity.  
I am grateful for your life...Dear Child of mine.

Betty Stevens  
TCF, Baltimore, Maryland

These days are the winter of the soul,  
but spring comes and brings new life and beauty,  
because of the growth of roots in the dark

Iris Bolton

Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the memorial service, library books, and other literature. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

**Contributions through United Way, Central Md.:**

Deborah and Paul Michael, in memory of Paul Brian Michael

Peggy and Gordon Haines, in memory of Matthew Haines

Paul and Claudia Balasic, in memory of Bethany Balasic

Donna and Doug Rohrbaugh, in memory of James Ryan Rohrbaugh

JeanMarie O'Sullivan, in memory of Courtney Belt

James and Sheila Mohan, in memory of Scott Joseph Mohan

Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

**Contributions:**

Bonnie Boone-Adamecz, in memory of Traci Lynn Boone

John and Suzanne Mulloy, in memory of Ryan John Mulloy

Mr. and Mrs. John H. Goetz, in memory of "my precious son John Joseph Goetz, Sr., my brother Joseph L. Srevroski, MIA in Korea since 1951, and my sister Rose Marie Srebroski"

Issy and Chuck Mattis, in memory of Donald L. Severe, Jr. (Donnie)

Rita A. Whitby, in memory of Albert W. Whitby, Jr., David W. Whitby, and Danny A. Whitby

Karen L. Coulson, in memory of Craig Steven Nelson

Helen Jones, in memory of Derra Jones

Juliet and Leonard Rothman, in memory of Daniel M. Rothman

Fran Cease, in memory of Richard Watts

Stephanie and Doug Rice, in memory of Charles Hubner Rice

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. DiLego, in memory of Andrew Thomas DiLego and Alexandra DiLego

Patricia A. Hall, in memory of James Michael Hall

Diane M. Borngesser, in memory of Christopher Lewis Borngesser

Randy and Mark Williams, in memory of Grant Alan Williams and Samuel Mark Williams

Karen and Mike Willey and Nelson and Shirley Poe, in memory of Nicholas Grant Poe

Marie Dyke, in memory of Michelle M. Dyke

Charlotte and Paul Koehler, in memory of Stephen Aaron Luck

Robert and Sandra Burash, in memory of Paul J. Burash

In memory of my beloved son  
Donald L. Severe, Jr. (Donnie)  
8/23/56 - 12/13/84

We miss you so much, we were left with a lot of memories, your brothers Chuckie and Rod really love and miss you too. Till we all meet again in Heaven,

Your Loving Mom and Dad



"It's different, a child dying.  
It isn't just that children are supposed to keep on living.  
It isn't just what everybody always says either -  
that a child dying is unnatural.

It's much more than that old people die with achievements,  
memories. Children die with opportunities, dreams.  
They carry the hopes of all of us when they go off.  
Probably a child's death is more intolerable for us  
than for the child."

From: ALEX, THE LIFE OF A CHILD  
by Frank Deford

Once I saw a grown man cry.  
"Now there goes a man with feeling", said I.  
He was strong, able, quite well built, with muscles, gray hair and charm to the hilt.

I moved toward him slowly and said, "What's wrong"?  
The look he gave me was tear-filled and long,  
"I cry for a child. My grandchild has died."  
So I sat beside him and two grown men cried.

Author unknown

## NEW YEARS COUNTDOWN FOR GRIEVING FAMILIES

Ten...

10 more minutes until the new year. And one more year farther away... Farther away from the memories I hold so dear... Please, God...I'm so afraid I will forget... please help me remember...year after year.

Nine...

9 more minutes until the new year...And one more year farther along...farther along my journey of grief...I thought I walked alone. Continue to walk with me...as no roads are walked alone...you are always with me...until I also return home.

Eight...

8 more minutes until the new year...A new year to help others realize...that grief does not have a timeline...and mine is not too long. Please, God...help others to understand... that I am normal...and that my grief is so strong...because my love was so strong.

Seven...

7 more minutes until the new year...A year that I pray...my friends and family will not avoid my pain or look the other way...Please, God...when tears form in my eyes...help my friends and family find the right words to say.

Six...

6 more minutes until the new year...A year that brings hope that others will not forget...that they understand my pain when I call them late at night. Please, God...bless my family in the new year...and when there is darkness...shine Your loving light.

Five...



5 more minutes until the new year...a new year for me to reach out to others who are grieving...and help them along this road. Please, God...guide me in the new year...and grant me strength and courage to help lighten another's load.

Four...

4 more minutes until the new year...As I take this time to thank You for the friends I hold so dear... who listen and help me when I fall. Please, God...help remind others ... that saying something... is better than saying nothing at all.

Three...

3 minutes until the new year...A new year to carry on the memory of our loved one...whether a child, a grandchild, or sibling. Please, God...encircle us in your love... and grant us peace.

Two...

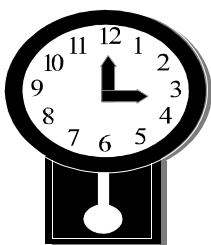
2 more minutes until the new year...And thank you God for loving me... for Heaven above...where my loved one is finally free. Please, God...on this New Year's Eve...send my love...up above...as always... from me.

One...

1 more minute until the new year...whether I am ready or not...a new year is nearly here. Please, God...grant me the strength, courage, and peace to walk through the new year...with little fear.

Wishing you peaceful days and beautiful memories in the new year. God bless.

Laura/Heavenly Lights  
Childrens Memorial  
(do not reprint)



**TIME** is the passing of moments lived one at a time. Our recovery depends on what we do with each moment. We cannot sit back and say 'TIME will heal me'. **TIME** is merely the movement of the clock. Our successful return to comfortable living is what we do while that clock is moving. We have to look at the beauty left us in life instead of what we no longer have. We must find reasons to go on.

Margaret Gerner, TCF, St. Louis

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## The Compassionate Friends CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in 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 to grieve as well as to grow.

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