



# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

**June, 2003**

We all know that no age is an easy age for the death of a child. The infant, the teenager, the adult child - each of them, precious to the two people whose lives have been intertwined with theirs, however brief that may have been. During the ten years that I have been associated with the Compassionate Friends, I have met and grieved with so many of these families. The infants - born with physical frailty and taken before they utter their first cry. The teenagers - confident and sure that nothing bad could possibly happen to them. The adult children - suffering with illnesses or the victim of an accidental death.

But what about the middle years? Why does it shock us to hear of the 5 year old who died from cancer, the 9 year old who was hit by a car on his bike, the 12 year old who drowns. Maybe there is some false sense of security about the middle years. We have made it through infancy with its uncertainties and we

are not yet at the stage when our children take flight and leave us even temporarily. They are safe in our care, dependent on us... or so we think. But it really isn't that simple. Young children are vulnerable - and we as their parents are just as vulnerable.

Summer vacation at the mountains, the trip in the car, the ocean with its power, the crowds where someone can get lost... how my mind races with what can go wrong. But we can't lead our surviving children to this scary place. We must lead them to their future with confidence and calm, with hope and faith that no tragedy will befall them. So, I take a deep breath, say a prayer that God will watch over my children, and then just go through each day as carefully as I can. The rest is out of my control and that will have to do.

Lisa Beall

#### **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.

*The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated by  
Donald and Norma Jean Melcher and Cheryl Ann Lewis  
in memory of the life of  
Brian Richard Melcher*



The Compassionate Friends  
Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter  
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Programs: OPEN

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. **August submissions are due by June 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 Rebecca Fitzmorris (410-987-9175) 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**

June 5, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

**PROGRAM: MEMORIALIZING OUR CHILDREN**

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Park in the back of the church

**NEXT MONTH:**

July 3, 2003

**PROGRAM: HOW COULD GOD LET THIS HAPPEN?****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, single parent, daughter, 17, 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:**

\* **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, (410-321-7053).

\* Stephanie Roper Committee, **for victims of violent crime**, 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)**, second Saturday of the month, 1:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. For info., contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608, InLvMemory@aol.com); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049).

\* **Seasons, a suicide support group**, 3rd Tuesday, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lutherville (Dorothy Schanberger, 410-803-2098).

\* **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park (410-987-2129).

## CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

#### **June 5: “Memorializing Our Children”**

Many bereaved parents seek ways to memorialize their deceased children and to keep their memories fresh in the minds of family, friends, and the community. Paula Muehlhauser will introduce us to creating a **Chapter Quilt**. One of the sharing groups will work on starting the quilt. Background fabric will be supplied for everyone. You may want to bring a picture that can be transferred to the fabric for “your child’s” square, or a special drawing or piece of artwork that they did. You don’t need to have any sewing skills to be involved, just a loving desire to share your story.

#### **July 3: “How Could God Let this Happen”**

For some grieving parents, their faith helps them through the grief process. Others experience great anger with their god or religion. Janet will discuss her experiences in her early days of grief and the changes in her faith.

### CHAPTER WEBSITE

If you would like your child’s name to appear on our website, please either email Dave Alexander at [dralex@sdalex.com](mailto:dralex@sdalex.com) or send a note to him at PO box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401. In your email or note, include your name, your child’s name as you would like it to appear, and your child’s date of birth and date of death. If you send a note, include your email address in the note.

In addition to the children’s names, we plan to have pictures of our children. If you would like to have a picture of your child on the website, please email a digital file with the picture. If you only have a printed picture, send that to Dave at the above address and we will arrange to have it scanned onto the site. We will return the photo to you when it has been scanned. Be sure you include clear identifying information so that we will be able to know where to return the photo.

If you have any questions about this project, give Dave a call at 410-544-3634.

### WEB ADDRESSES

<b>Bereaved Parents USA home page</b>	<a href="http://www.after-death.com">www.after-death.com</a>
<a href="http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org">www.bereavedparentsusa.org</a>	<b>TCF Sibling Internet Chat</b> - Thursday nights at 9:00 EST: (email <a href="mailto:tcsiblingrep@aol.com">tcsiblingrep@aol.com</a> for the password)
<b>Bereavement Magazine-</b>	<b>For bereaved parents</b>
<a href="http://www.bereavementmag.com">www.bereavementmag.com</a>	<a href="http://www.moms-dads.com/index2.html">www.moms-dads.com/index2.html</a>
<b>On Suicides -</b>	<b>CLIMB</b>
<a href="http://www.pbs.org/weblab/living">www.pbs.org/weblab/living</a>	newsletter@climb-support.org
<b>Paul Alexander -</b>	
<a href="http://www.griefsong.com">www.griefsong.com</a>	
<b>Judy Guggenheim’s Home page -</b>	

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

### DO YOU USE AMAZON.COM?

If you use Amazon.com, perhaps you could use the Chapter’s website to make the connection and purchase. We have a link to Amazon.com on the home page of our website. Amazon.com will give our chapter a commission of 5% of any purchases which are made through that link. Using the link does not increase the cost to the purchaser. Alert your friends, relatives, and colleagues to the link and suggest they use it as well.

Access the site at [www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org), click on the butterflies on the welcome page to enter our site, and then scroll down the first page to the bottom. On the bottom left corner is the Amazon.com graphic. Clicking on the graphic takes you to Amazon.com’s site. When it does so, it links information relevant to our chapter to the visit to the site. If a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. Purchases made without going through that link do not get credited.

Since our chapter is a not-for-profit organization and has no dues or fees, we are dependent on donations and fund raisers. We are hopeful these commissions will help fund some of our community outreach activities.

## LOVE

Life, love are synonyms, brothers. Though the first goes, there remains the other.  
 Death - you have taken much is true, but life - you enhanced; love - you kindled anew.  
 This writer could not have put it better: "A life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever".  
 Then will I remember and ponder, for love is life except it lasts much longer.

David Tepper, Madrid, Spain

## THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH

How do we fathers deal with the death of a child? We've been good fathers, doing our best to provide for our families both materially and spiritually. We have taken our responsibilities as family men very seriously. Heck, we haven't even cheated on our income taxes! Why do we have to suffer? Why were we given this burden? What wrong have we committed to deserve this pain? And most important, how can we find the strength to endure?

Hundreds of doubts assailed me as I struggled to adjust to the reality of my situation and to make some sense of Blake's death. It was difficult for me to accept that in a world governed by a loving and all-powerful Creator, innocent people suffer and die. Therefore, I decided I must have been guilty of some transgression. Worst of all, I could not imagine ever feeling happy again. I didn't think I would ever enjoy my life. I missed my son terribly, and I was consumed with worry about my wife and surviving children. That question of "Why" continued to plague me. I guess I was asking for knowledge and insight which no mortal can have. It was like a midnight search in a dark room for a black cat that wasn't there.

We do not know the reason, but we live in a world in which innocent people suffer. We need not add guilt to the pain we experience. Grief is a natural and important part of the healing process after the loss of a child. Guilt is not. The kind of despair that often accompanies guilt must be dealt with and overcome.

When we lose faith in the possibility of ever regaining happiness, we don't allow ourselves to believe that we can hope again. In truth, believing that we will get better is

healing. We must reach down inside ourselves and find something to push us in a hopeful direction. The first step is to make the choice to believe we can overcome our suffering. Despite the fact that we have no guarantees for the future, we have to accept hope. The alternative is to allow ourselves to be convinced that we will never be healed. How can we progress from there? Hope can return if we allow it to. Doubt and despair will impede the process. Only when we allow ourselves to take the leap of faith and believe in the chance for our renewed happiness can we begin to enjoy life once more.

So how do we begin our healing? Well, like it or not, the only way out is through. How do you get started? Start where you are. Start with your grief, your despair, your guilt. Start with your confusion and questions. Start with the fact that you ARE. Try to find some sense of gratitude about your own life. Don't try to figure out the why... you never will.

This Father's Day, try to trust in the goodness of life and to want that goodness again. Dedicate your talents and abilities to healing yourself and those around you. You'll know you're getting better when you can spend Father's Day celebrating the joy of your child's life, rather than the pain of his death.

Jeff Dyson  
 TCF, Beaumont, TX

**The Annual National Bereaved Parents of the USA Gathering** will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, from June 26 - 29. The National Gathering is a time for parents, siblings and families to come together to remember our children, attend workshops and to assist each other in learning new ways to cope through this devastating nightmare. The over 100 workshops and sharing sessions will address all aspects of grief. The presenters will range from parents and professionals, to your favorite authors. For information and registration forms, go to the conference website at [http://](http://www.bpusastl.org/2003_national_gathering.htm)

[www.bpusastl.org/2003\\_national\\_gathering.htm](http://www.bpusastl.org/2003_national_gathering.htm)  
**The Annual National Compassionate Friends Conference** will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, from July 3 - 6. This conference is an annual opportunity for bereaved parents, siblings and other special people to gather with others from around the world who have similar circumstances for a weekend of help and healing. The Conference will offer over 90 workshops, addressing a wide variety of topics for the bereaved family. For information and registration forms, go to the conference website at <http://www.tcfatlanta.org/2003conference/>



## SIBLING PAGE



### THE OTHER 'I LOVE YOU'

"Wow. " That one word meant everything to me. There I was, the picture of nervousness in white. The ceremony was just a few minutes away, and there I sat in that room on the brink of one of the biggest days of my life. I looked up, and there you stood in the doorway, all 6'3" of "little" brother complete with tux. I braced myself for what would come next as I saw your face curl into the smile we had always shared.

"Don't touch my stuff." "Cow." "Stay out of my room."

This was the extent of our heart-to-hearts growing up. I'd go to my room for peace and quiet and seconds later, your music would be shaking the windows. You drank out of the milk carton, left the bathroom a mess of puddles, and thought nothing was ever your fault. You could spoil even the best of my moods in five seconds flat and then breeze out of the room to finish your day.

For years our contact was restricted to passing each other on our way to somewhere else - maybe a wave if we happened to pass on the road. By our late teens, we had grown into our own lives, and they had very little to do each other anymore.

I remember one day I'd noticed you'd started shaving. Another day I was shocked to finally see a hint of muscle on that beanpole frame. It wasn't until my wedding day, though, that I realized that you really, finally had grown up. And it isn't until now that I realize that in such a short time you taught me some really big lessons about life and love. It was impossible to think that in one moment you'd be gone. It was unimaginable to me that the first funeral I'd ever go to was not for my 87-year-old grandmother, but for my 20-year-old brother. And it was crazy to think that this same bratty, brother would be the one to teach me how to live my life and even what it means to really love someone.

One Sunday morning, a phone call from my mom made the unthinkable a reality. Suddenly, those wishes I had always made out loud about being an only child began to echo in my head. I spent the first few nights just rocking and crying and repeating the same four words. "I love you, Mike." "I love you, Mike." Oh, why didn't I ever just tell you that? All that silence, all that yelling, all those opportunities I wasted in getting to know you were eating up my soul. This wasn't the plan. We were supposed to become friends again when we grew up. There was supposed to be so much time left. Time to start over and meet again as adults. How could we just leave things like

this? How could we have been so cheated?

I got my wedding pictures back right around the time that you died. When I saw them, I remembered that day and what you had said. It was not what I had expected, not "that dress makes you look fat" or "what happened to your hair?" but just one simple word: "Wow."

With some people in your life, the words "I love you" just come in another form. The bond between siblings can be a quiet thing that even they don't always realize is there. We may have driven each other crazy all those years, but we couldn't have been so good at it if we hadn't known each other so well. I may not get any more days with you, but I got at least one that meant everything to me. I got one day when you weren't my bratty little brother and I wasn't the stuck-up older sister. I got at least one day when we were more than family; we were friends.

It's been a year now, and I think of you every day. I think of you when I feel I'm doing more of what I think I have to do than what I want to do. I remember how Mom ended up being so thankful that you decided to ditch work to go to the lake the day before you died. I think of you when I'm tempted to judge someone because they don't fit in my standards. I remember the friends of yours I had called "losers," who showed up by the hundreds to say how much you meant to them and to be there for your family at the toughest time of our lives. I think of you when I pick up the phone to talk to Mom and Dad every few days, just to keep close and let them know I love them. Because ultimately, the people you love in this life are really all that matter. You taught me that real love persists through anything: the longest silences, the harshest words, and even death, and that sometimes that can be the most painful thing in the world.

I try to remember two things on those really bad days that still come around from time to time. One is that grief is an amazing testament to the person who has left. The more hurt I feel, the more I understand how much you really touched my heart. The second is that sometimes love just hides in strange places for a while, but sooner or later it always turns up, sometimes in the form of just one simple word and a smile. But in any form it takes, it's something to be treasured.

Kim Singletary, We Need Not Walk Alone  
National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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



Ronald Wesley Farley  
son of Dorothy Farley  
September 15, 1955 - June 28, 2000

Mark C. Knepper  
son of Patricia and Joe Knepper  
June 28, 1968 - October 17, 1988

Nicholas Paul Liberatore  
son of Pat and Larry Liberatore  
September 27, 1980 - June 9, 1997

Brian Richard Melcher  
son of Norma and Don Melcher  
brother of Cheryl Lewis  
August 30, 1960 - June 14, 2002

Christopher Lewis Strader  
son of Peggy and Lewis Strader  
May 27, 1979 - June 21, 1997





And when we have remembered everything,  
We grow afraid of what we may forget.  
A face, a voice, a smile! A birthday! Anniversary!  
No need to fear forgetting. Because the heart remembers always.

Sascha

### HOW LONG?

How long does it take to put yourself back together? That's one of the questions in the early days of bereavement. There's no one answer that's always right. It's not  $64 + 36 = 100$ . It all depends: maybe the sun is shining, maybe a flower blooms, maybe something is funny and you laugh, maybe the storm ends with a rainbow. But there are also days when none of those cheering things happen.

Do you really have to be 100% every day? Be reasonable with yourself. You knew your child would stumble, now and then, when he learned to walk. Figure that you have to do the same as you try to learn to walk without him.

Just take one step at a time. It will help you to walk through one hour at a time and one day at a time.

As the days go by, perhaps into the thousands, you'll

realize you have some energy. Your act has some semblance of shape. Not the way it used to be, but better than it has been. Some things seem to get done. This is surprising and pleasant.

Remember, there will be down days when nothing goes right, nothing gets finished. If you do demand of yourself some daily success, a small list of mindless jobs for those days might be useful. Mine includes pulling weeds, washing floors or windows, polishing silver or copper pans. You probably have some good ideas to add. The point is to be reasonable. Set one goal. One weed pulled, one pot polished, that's an accomplishment.

You don't need to meet someone else's standards.

Joan Schmidt

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 Cortney Belt

James and Sheila Mohan, in memory of Scott Joseph Mohan

Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

**Contributions:**

Dorothy and Norm Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Janice M. Withers & Capt. Joseph K. Sikes, USN (Ret) Ken Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

Terre Belt, contribution for the website, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman and all our children who have died too soon

Daisy K. LaCovey, in memory of Joe Esterling

Ella Mae McGinness, in memory of Jeffrey and Julie McGinness

Elsie Cooper, in memory of Steven Cooper

Ethel E. Cleary, in memory of Scott Thomas Palmer

## A BALL OF GRIEF

Sometimes on the phone or in meetings a parent will hand you a ball which he says contains his grief. When you examine this ball, each of its components is so perfectly dovetailed with the others that it is difficult to find a place to separate them. When you are finally able to dissect this ball you find not only does it contain grief for the child but many old problems, as well. Every new problem is just integrated into and becomes a part of this ball of grief.

These parents seem not to be able to resolve and let go of any of the troublesome things in their past. You could adequately describe their recitations as a whole litany of woes. They choose to look backward instead of forward, but they bring forward every bad thing that has ever happened to them over the years.

They use all the old hurts and wounds to justify their not getting better. They tell of every loss, death and otherwise. They seem to say in essence, "It's okay for me to stagnate here in the grief process. Look at all the bad things that have happened to me. I have a right not to recover." It's as though they're going on an important trip and they feel they must take with them every piece of clothing they have ever owned in their entire lives. And there they are — struggling with all that old excess baggage, and because of it they miss the plane that is to carry them away.

Have you examined your ball of grief lately? If you are out there dragging old excess baggage along, I hope you will choose to do something about it. If there are old wounds you need to bandage, make the decision now to do what is

necessary to heal them. It simply isn't good enough to attend the meetings or sit at home and do nothing more to help yourself than moan and groan about your bad lot in life.

If you need professional help for a short time so you can learn how to deal with and then release those old hurts, seek it. Seeking help simply says, "I'm smarter today than I was yesterday." By so doing, you shrink your ball of grief so that it becomes more manageable and keeps it current. We are advised to take one day at a time when we are recovering from the death of a child; except for simultaneous loss, we would be wise to take one grief at a time, as well.

Mary Cleckley  
TCF Atlanta GA

## THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF SUMMER

The boys and girls of summer,  
No longer in our sight -  
Those sun-kissed happy faces  
Now fill our dreams at night.

Long years ago they played and swam,  
Their laughter echoed along the lake.  
Fishing, camping and firelight talks,  
Youthful dreams of the life they'd make.



Those boys and girls of summer,  
Now swim on a distant shore.  
The memory of their faces,  
Bring summer's joy to the fore.

Boys and girls of another time,  
Now crowd the sands at the lake.  
Laughing, splashing, in sun and spray,  
Unaware of hearts that watch and ache.

Arleen Simmonds

## THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER

My junior year of high school ended yesterday. It was the first day of the summer outdoor swim season. I groaned as I fumbled for the raucous alarm clock at 5:30 a.m. Despite the cool temperature, the sun was shining brightly, and I looked forward to the summer swim season and my summer internship in Washington, D.C.

The early morning swim practice was followed by rehearsal for the senior graduation exercises. Then, since I was not yet acclimated to the summer's rigorous long distance practices, I took a much needed nap. Several hours later my brother awakened me with a warning that afternoon swim practice was about to begin.

Returning home to get ready for ushering duties at the graduation ceremony, I noticed a bright red, shiny new mountain bike parked in the garage. Only then did I realize the significance of the day - it was my twin brother and sister's eleventh birthday. I was so preoccupied with my own schedule that I had completely forgotten this important day. I ran upstairs to wish my brother a happy

birthday and to apologize for my memory lapse.

That evening when the graduation ceremony was over, I drove to a florist and purchased a red rose. I drove west towards the Midwestern sunset, which had colored the horizon a deep crimson. Finally, I left my car and wound my way through the trees, marble blocks, and flower arrangements. I came to the stone which was dated "June 2, 1978-November 21, 1981" and placed the rose gently upon it.



I stood at the grave site in the late evening sun. It was the moment between the darkness of the early evening and the last waning rays of a vivid sunset that still hugged the horizon. What a spectacularly beautiful sunset - as pretty as my baby sister. Perhaps the loveliness of the evening was my sister's way of thanking me for the rose, and the rose was my way of easing my pain.

Jonathan Eden, Chicago, Ill.  
This Healing Journey, An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings



It's so hard to watch your child grow up in your mind.

Jim Summersgill, TCF Houston

## GRADUATION TIME, ONCE AGAIN

Since Trina's death, we have tried to "stand tall" and attend the sweet sixteen parties, the graduations, the weddings of our nieces, nephews and friends' children, and to celebrate and take joy in the birth of our friends' grandchildren. We took heart in knowing that Trina would have been excited by all these events, because she loved all of these people. We gathered our strength from knowing that Trina would have wanted us to share in their happiness.

Yes, at times there was anxiety beforehand, and we shed tears during the various ceremonies, but always we managed to "get through" and even enjoy ourselves.

It's been almost four years since her death. Why then could we not attend the high school graduation of her class this June? Why were we so totally overwhelmed? Desperately, we tried to steel ourselves to make an appearance. But we could not. I was even a bit disappointed in myself until our younger daughter said, "Mom, some things hurt too much. Why should we give ourselves more pain?"

It occurred to me then, that she had included herself in that statement. She was telling me she, too still hurt. So many times this child has spared us more anguish by silently bearing the pain and going with us to all these events.

Then I recalled what I have heard time and time again from my friends at TCF meetings: there is no right or wrong. Do what is best for you and your family. Do what you must to endure.

We bereaved parents learn that each moment is different, and so our reactions are different as well. What we are unable to do today, we may do tomorrow. I realize now that it is not a sign of weakness - but of strength - to accept our own limitations.

Mary Sullivan  
TCF - Central CT

The Compassionate Friends  
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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.**