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# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

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**March, 2003**

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One more article... that's all I need and this month's newsletter will be finished. How can it be so hard to find one more article among the thousands at my fingertips. Yet an hour passes and still I am reading articles - searching for just the right words to speak to our readers. Sometimes I am amazed at the awesome capacity that people have for expressing themselves in writing. Their grief is as real and as personal as it can be to someone who doesn't even know them. By writing their words for us, they offer a gift to help us in our own struggles. It is but one source of comfort in our grief.

Other people offer themselves in person or by telephone. You can only imagine how difficult it must be to receive a phone call from a newly bereaved parent who is asking someone...anyone... to relieve their terrible pain. Yet, our members continue to be on the "front line" where they are needed.

Many people work behind the scenes to put together conference workshops, the service of remembrance, and programs for our meetings. They know that some

bereaved parents will hear just the words they need to get them through another month. It's an important task that some of our members feel called to do.

No matter where or when it happens, most bereaved parents and siblings eventually feel the need to reach out and help others in similar circumstances. This is a healthy outcome from a very unhealthy beginning. Your work doesn't have to be through a Compassionate Friends chapter (though we welcome it). You might want to volunteer at a nursing home, collect blankets for the homeless, help out at a Thanksgiving dinner for the needy, or some other worthy cause. We never expected to become more compassionate as a result of our grief, but often that is what has happened. We don't even have to be glad about that - it's just the way it is. But please, take advantage of your compassion and your own particular gifts to share with someone else. If nothing else... I'm always looking for articles!

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 of this newsletter has been donated through United Charities contributions  
by Donna and Doug Rohrbaugh  
in memory of the life of  
James Ryan Rohrbaugh*



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. **May submissions are due by March 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**

March 6, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

**PROGRAM: I NEED HELP...WHERE ARE YOU?**

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Park in the back of the church

**NEXT MONTH:**

April 3, 2003

**PROGRAM: HELPING OUR SURVIVING CHILDREN****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 parent, 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 (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month (7:30-9:00 p.m.), Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Rd. (410-987-2129)

## CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

#### **March 6: “I need help...where are you?!” — Dealing with Family, Friends, and Colleagues**

Bereaved parents find that many friends, family and work colleagues are not very supportive in our grieving; in fact some can be harsh and hurtful. A panel of TCF members will discuss their experiences and offer suggestions on dealing with friends, family and colleagues. The panel will explore such issues of how one might respond to those who are supportive and how one might respond to those who are not. The panel will try to offer insights as to how we can help our friends, family, and colleagues to help and support us.

#### **April 3: “Helping Our Surviving Children”**

The surviving children in our families have issues of their own. These issues can be vastly different depending on the age of the surviving child, his/her location in the order of the family, etc. Dr. Peter Wilcox will describe his experience in dealing with the issues faced by the siblings of deceased children, and offer ideas on how we might help them.

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The **Annual National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia** this year (July 3-6). This conference is an opportunity for bereaved parents, sibling, 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 variety of topics for the bereaved family. For information and registration forms, go to the conference website ([http://www.tcfatlanta.org/2003\\_conference/](http://www.tcfatlanta.org/2003_conference/)).

### 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)

Many of you who receive our **newsletter** were referred by a friend, physician, or clergy. You may have never attended a meeting. In this case, it is likely that your child's name does not appear in our **monthly list of “Children Remembered”**. This is because we require your permission to do so. If you would like your child's name added, please send a note to our post office box. List your child's name, your name(s), and the dates of your child's birth and death. Please allow 6 weeks to be sure it arrives in time for the appropriate month.

### SAVE THE DATE

**5th Annual Hope and Healing Conference**

**to be held on Saturday, May 17, 2003  
at Calvary United Methodist Church  
Annapolis**

**Anyone wanting to be involved in the planning and working of the conference, please call or email Pat Schultz, Chair at 410-255-7760,  
email - [jim.n.pat@juno.com](mailto:jim.n.pat@juno.com)**

**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.**

We extend our sincere sympathies to TCF member, Joan Para, on the death of her husband, Carl.

Dearest Katie,

It's hard to believe that it has been 10 years this month that you left this life for another.

I'm writing today just to say "thank you" for being my daughter and for bringing so much joy into my life. I miss you today as I will miss you always.



I love you,  
mom

Carol Fritz  
TCF, Anne Arundel Co., MD

## HOPE

Hope is not an easy word for grievers.  
But we, more than most others  
Need to understand what  
Hope can mean for us.  
Hope means finding strength to live with grief.  
Hope means nurturing with grace  
The joy of remembrance.  
Hope means embracing tenderness and pride  
Our own life  
And the gifts left to us  
By those we have lost.

Sascha Wagner  
from WINTERSUN

## MEMORIES

There is a place  
That we call Memory -  
A province by itself  
Which, though unseen,  
Is home and haven  
To the Heart -  
And there,  
In peace and beauty,  
Waiting,  
Are those with whom  
We shared our yesterdays.

Nancy Cassell  
TCF, Holmdel, NJ

## SEARCHING

Closing my eyes, I search for you.  
I breathe in the light of love,  
and release the tensions  
of this physical existence.  
I reach with my mind to the spiritual land,  
While you watch with an amused smile,  
Groping thru the fog and clutter,  
I feel for the physical warmth of you...  
And "see" you laugh.

"Mom", you say, "you can't feel love with your hand.  
You have to feel it with your heart."  
Okay, I think. I can do that...  
And once again I breathe...  
In with love...out with the physical...  
In with love...out with the physical.

"MOM!! Stop trying so hard. Just listen..."  
My reply to him pounds in my head  
"I AM TRYING!"  
I want so much to hear you.  
I miss your laugh, your smile.  
It has been so long...  
In with love...out with the physical...  
In with love...out with the physical.

"Mom...I'm here."  
I feel his smile  
I hear him laugh...  
"Who did you THINK you were talking to?"

Silence...  
Warmth fills my heart as an  
unanticipated smile touches my lips.  
"Well... I THOUGHT I was talking to a part of myself..."  
and a soft whisper replies...  
"and who more than your son is a part of you?"

Breathe...  
in with love...  
out with the physical...  
In with love...out with the physical...

Author unknown

## SIBLING PAGE

### A BROTHER'S DREAM

One night I had a dream. It was an ordinary dream. It started before I was even asleep though, and that made it very unusual to me. It started on a mountain I used to go to when I was little. I would go there with my mom, Aunt Margaret, my sister Jacie and my three cousins. We used to have great times up there.

In my dream, I relived a time when we were up there and heard cow bells. Thinking a stampede was coming, we hid in some oak brush. They turned out to be horses. These weren't ordinary horses though. These were the horses that would take us to Heaven when we died, all in our own time.

I remember actually thinking this as I watch my mom pet my certain horse...the horse that was destined to take my sister to Heaven when her time came. Maybe, just maybe,

I thought, my mom was making sure that when my sister did make her journey later on in life, this steed would be the one to take her.

The dream kept fast forwarding and wrapping up all my memories. It fast forwarded before I could tell Jacie thanks for the fun and good times...and before I could tell her I loved her.

My dream ended there, but sometimes I see the horse, the gray horse that took my sister to Heaven. I see him in my dreams sometimes, only for a moment, but long enough to see my sister on the other side of his eyes.

Brandon Taylor (1995)  
TCF, Mesa Co., CO

Brandon's only sibling, Jacie, died from murder on June 4, 1994.

### THE SIBLING POEM

Will we ever meet again? And what will be our first reaction? Will we hug? Or will we cry? Will we laugh? Or will we just hold each other? Will you remember me as the last time you saw me? Or will you try to imagine how I have changed? Will we reminisce about the good old days? And cry about all of the bad days? The ultimate question is: Will we ever meet again?

Jenny McDermott, in loving memory of her sister, Meggan McDermott (1976-1991)

### GRIEF IS O.K.

Grief is normal, grief is O.K.

Grief is the way your body has to say  
that you love the son, daughter,  
brother, sister, even a friend that  
died.

But sometimes it makes you cry.

Steve Horn, age 10  
TCF, Hinsdale, IL

### FOR A MOMENT

I thought I saw you today.  
He looked just like you.  
For a moment I pray  
But no...  
As he turned around  
It wasn't you, I found.  
I felt like I was losing my mind.  
He had the same build,  
He had the same hair.  
I hope no one noticed,  
When I looked over his way,  
The tears I cried, the confusion I felt  
While I continued to stand there and stare.

Judy Prather to Glen - age 14, Atlanta, GA



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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





He told me that he had called because he was concerned about his wife. It had been five months since their child had died and she wasn't doing well. I asked him what she was doing that bothered him, and he told me that she was crying a great deal, wanted to talk about their child much of the time, wasn't sleeping well, was up a good part of the night wandering around as a matter of fact, wanted to go to the cemetery almost every day, spent a lot of time looking at the child's pictures, and didn't want to change anything in "the room".

And when I asked how he was doing, he told me that he was doing fine. Been working 13 or 14 hours a day. Hadn't always worked that much, but had been for the past

two or three months. Said he didn't need to talk about their child, or look at the pictures because he had put it all behind him; he had accepted it and he thought she would be better if she would do the same. Sleep? Well, he sleeps fine. He'd found a few drinks before he went to bed, plus a tranquilizer when he awakened in the middle of the night and more of each on the weekend helped him quite a bit.

Now, if she's doing "poorly" and he's doing so "fine", why is it, do you suppose, that I keep worrying about him?

Mary Cleckley  
TCF, Atlanta, GA

## CRYING

When your heart says "cry" but your mind says "don't", listen to your heart. It could be your pride, not your mind that is saying "don't cry", for tears are hard for one's pride to accept. Crying because your child has died does not mean you are not a strong person.

Tears do not mean you are having problems with emotional instability. You are crying because you are hurt. You loved your child, and now that child is dead. Not letting it out little by little through tears may mean you are bottling it all inside. Is this good? Next time your heart says "cry", listen to it. You'll feel better for it, in the long run.

Rose Moen  
TCF, Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

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:**

## SPRING IS COMING

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first" spring, you may be surprised at some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks.

We hear much about the beauty of spring - the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first" year I expected that spring would cheer me up and make me feel lots better.

How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days that life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was in "the pits". When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?", I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day - that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified. Gradually I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope.

When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work we all must do before we can

be "healed".

The coming of spring can't make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's processes will continue and that can offer us hope.

I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, the forsythia, the daffodils, and the greening of the world.

Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

Evelyn Billings  
Springfield, MA



## I KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING TO ME WHEN...

- \* You come quietly into my private world and let me be.
- \* You really try to understand me even when I am not making sense.
- \* You grasp my point even when it is against your sincere convictions.
- \* You realize that the hour I took from you has left you a bit tired and drained.
- \* You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they might be wrong.
- \* You do not take my problem from me but allow me to deal with it in my own way.
- \* You hold back from giving a word of "good advice".
- \* You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.
- \* You give me room to discover for myself what is really going on.
- \* You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how it makes you feel good being helpful.

Glen Crawford  
TCF, Perth, Australia

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness. I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears. I never expected to actually laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face. I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die. I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise, I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return. But I was wrong and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you too will come to understand that life goes on... that it can still have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

Don Hackett  
TCF, Hingham, MA

## MARCH

Crocuses reach for the light above,  
winds sigh around my windowpanes,  
cedar wax wings journey to the north  
and stop to gorge on berries  
in our holly trees.

Forsythia blooms yellow, bright and bold  
against the graying afternoons.  
All these are harbingers of spring.

Oh, that this spring will bring me  
and you a sweet comfort in a new life,  
new hope, new peace, new joy,  
new strength to meet our challenges,  
new thankfulness for all that is and  
all that's yet to be,  
and new delight in memories  
of what once was - of who once was -  
and calm surrender to a love that never dies.

Shirley Ottman  
BP/USA



## MARCH WINDS

He raced against the wind as if his  
very life depended upon it.

Eyes bright, cheeks glowing from the  
still almost chilly March wind,  
throwing me a smile now and then to  
make sure I was watching.

I was, and when I caught a smile I applauded.  
His efforts so great for one small boy.

I don't remember now if his kite flew, sometimes in  
spite of heroic efforts they don't...

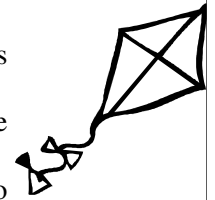
But I remember the day, the nip in the air, his cheeks  
glowing, his fresh clean smell, my afternoon of  
playing catch with his smile.

I remember every year when March winds begin to  
blow.

Even if he had not died long after the age of flying  
kites, I would still remember.

Maybe if he were still here, teaching his own small  
boy the delicate art of flying kites and catching his  
own smiles, it wouldn't hurt so when March winds  
begin to blow.

Faye Harden  
from Songs From the Edge



**Science tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle,  
can disappear without a trace.  
Nature does not know extinction. All it knows is transformation...  
and everything that science has taught me...  
strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death.  
Nothing disappears without a trace.**

Werner von Braun

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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.**