



The Compassionate Friends

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

November, 2003

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

Memories are not always pleasant. In fact, they can cause a great deal of pain when they remind us of short tempers, hurt feelings, or deeds done in anger. Is there a time that you can remember being angry with your child? Is there a time that you spoke harshly to them or punished them for misbehavior? How those actions hurt us now when we see what we had to lose. Many the parent has expressed regret for feeling angry or upset with their child.

How difficult it is to step back from these feelings and remind ourselves that we were doing what good parents do - trying to raise our children to be responsible and respectful people. Had we known that they would be gone too soon, would we have done any less? For those times that we were a little too strict, remember that our toughest critic is ourselves. Your child loved you - regardless of (and in part because of) your persistence and dedication to the job of parent.

There is such a tendency to blame ourselves for all that has happened, even when the fault is not our own. Let's

not add being a responsible parent to the list of things we should feel badly about. Instead, I would like for you to make a list of the top one hundred good things that you did for or with your child while they were here. Maybe your child died at birth but you took good care of yourself while you were pregnant. Maybe your child had long term problems but you prayed for him or her. Maybe you read books, played games, pushed them on a swing, told them you loved them, hugged them, pack their lunches, gave them advice, listened to them... the list could go on and on.

If after all this, you still feel regret, remember that parenting is not something most of us are prepared to do... we just do it the best that we can.

Lisa Beall

*While we try to teach our children all about life,
our children teach us what life is all about.*

Angela Schwindt

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
Maryl and Alain de Sarran, and Rita Whitby
in memory of the life of
Elizabeth de Sarran*

Albert Whitby, Jr., Dave Whitby, & Danny Whitby



The Compassionate Friends
Bereaved Parents of the USA
Anne Arundel County Chapter
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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. **January submissions are due by November 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

November 6, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.
Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.
Calvary United Methodist Church
301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis
Park in the back of the church

PROGRAM: SILENCE OF SNOW

NEXT MONTH:

December 4, 2003

**PROGRAM: INTRODUCING OUR CHILDREN
(and gift presentation)**

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

November 6: “Silence of Snow”

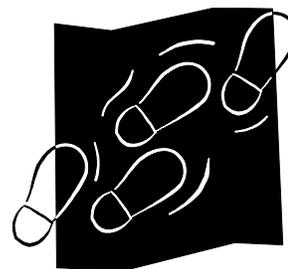
Lynn Rosenberg is the author of *Silence of Snow*. “Thirty years – almost half a lifetime – should be enough to dim the memory of the death of a loved one. But some memories are indelible; **a lifetime can pass and the memory is as vivid as the day it happened.** The *Silence of Snow*, a memoir written by a mother whose son died of leukemia thirty years ago, is proof that the sorrow from the death of a child is forever. In telling her story with graphic yet loving detail, Lynn has not only transcended her grief but resurrected herself and her son in the process.”

December 4: “Introducing Our Children”

The focus of this evening will be on our deceased children, and giving us a better sense of who these children were and are. There will not be a “Presenter”; the sharing groups are the focus. **Each person brings a picture or some memento of his/her child.** In the sharing groups each person holds the picture or memento facing the rest of the group and “introduces” his/her child, describing what the child was like, etc.

We also invite you to bring a gift in memory of your child to be distributed to a needy child (see article below for more

Our chapter’s **Memory Walk** on Saturday, October 18th was a real success. There were 64 walkers who represented 33 children. Next month, we will share some comments and pictures from the event. Here’s hoping that many more of us will be able to share in the walk next year - you will truly be blessed!



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.

WHEN ALL YOU CAN DO IS BUY FLOWERS

One of the many hurdles that I faced after my son Matthew died was not being able, during the holiday season, to buy him anything ever again. When the holidays rolled around, I had such an empty feeling. I was buying gifts for my surviving children and all I could get Matthew was flowers for his grave. That just wasn't enough! Shopping was such a chore because I didn't have the energy and the Christmas spirit just wasn't there. Not being able to buy anything for my Matthew was just unbearable.

What has helped me so much throughout the years, is our St. Peters BP/USA support group meeting. **At our December Potluck Picture and Gift night, we are asked to bring a gift. The gift is something that we would have bought for our child if he/she were alive.** This is not mandatory, but the majority of the group does participate. We go around the table and each person displays what he/she bought and explains why it was bought. Hearing the funny stories that are told is just

wonderful. I hear laughter and see tears at the same time. The gifts are later taken to a local children's home. At first, the gifts that were taken to the children's home consisted of a couple of bags. However, the generosity has grown more and more every year. The parents that don't attend meetings anymore throughout the year will come to the meeting in December, just to bring a gift for their child. **On Christmas morning when my surviving children are opening their gifts, I sit back and picture a child that probably would not have gotten a gift at Christmas, opening the gift that I bought Matthew. That gives me such peace.**

I will not wish you joy this holiday season. That is something that will come later. But I will say this: do as much or as little as you can handle; don't push yourself too much. I will, however, wish you peace.

Sabra Penrod, BP/USA, St. Louis, MO

MOMENTS IN LIFE

There are moments in life when you miss someone so much that you just want to pick them from your dreams and hug them for real!

When the door of happiness closes, another opens; but often times we look so long at the closed door that we don't see the one, which has been opened for us.

Don't go for looks; they can deceive.
Don't go for wealth; even that fades away.
Go for someone who makes you smile, because it takes only a smile to make a dark day seem bright.
Find the one that makes your heart smile.
Dream what you want to dream;

go where you want to go; be what you want to be, because you have only one life and one chance to do all the things you want to do.

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to make you happy.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

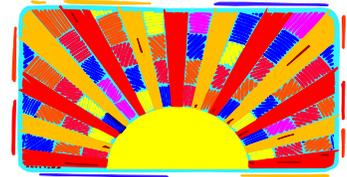
The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past;

you can't go forward in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches.

When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling.
Live your life so at the end, you're the one who is smiling and everyone around you is crying.

Don't count the years -
count the memories

KAY WEITZEL



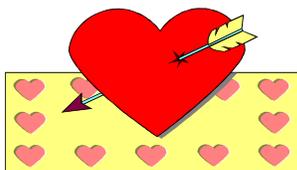
It isn't for the moment you are struck that you need courage,
but for the long uphill climb back to sanity, faith and security.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Dear Compassionate Friends:

We were overwhelmed by the dinner you gave us on October 4 . Words cannot describe how we felt in our hearts to be honored by you. We have learned over the years in dealing with our own grief that by helping others, you help yourself. It has been our honor to be able to help others deal with the loss of their dear children. You don't know how much you have helped us in this process. We have seen probably over a thousand families since we began, and get to see many of them at the Memorial Service each year. We know that they are still with us and that makes us happy.

There are many people to thank for that special night. We want to thank especially Janice and Chris Kunkel for making all the arrangements and making it such a special night. Another big thank you to Dave Alexander for being the "master of ceremonies." We thank Senator John Astle for the Resolution that was passed in the



Senate to honor us both and we thank the many compassionate friends that were also honored that evening: Noel Castiglia, Marlen & Gene Maier, Pat & Jim Schultz and Lisa Beall. Without their help, support and guidance we could not have done any of the work for which you are honoring us. It has always been a team effort in this organization and we hope that it always continues.

We also want to thank those who sent cards and notes to honor us. There were a lot of tears and memories brought up that night and they will last us a lifetime.

Again, with gratitude in our hearts we say a heartfelt thank you dear friends for all your love and support throughout the years.

Blessings of peace
Ann Castiglia
Janet Tyler

SIBLING PAGE

A SPECIAL THANKSGIVING TO ME

This Thanksgiving is different but special
And I want to make it clear
That we still must be very thankful
Because of the presence that is here

On the table there is food to eat
At our sides, are people we love
A warm house is under our feet
And our dear Bryan is right above

Although he's only here in spirit
At this special Thanksgiving meal
He should not be put out of our minds
For our memories are very real

Think of one wonderful moment

When Bryan made you smile
And be thankful for that memory
For that makes this time worthwhile

As I feel a tear form in my eye
I smile instead of cry
Because I know that is a tear
That will not be shed by Bry

For he now is in a place
Where he will be happy forever more
And we will all see him again
That is what I'm thankful for...

Bonnie, sister of Bryan Todd
TCF, Burlington County, NJ

**Learn from yesterday.
Live for today.
Hope for tomorrow.**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US?

My sister died last summer,
Mom cries,
Dad sits in his chair - staring into space,
channel surfing, or sleeping.
Nobody talks about her.
It hurts too much.
What is happening to us?

Grandma invited us to Thanksgiving dinner.
Mom doesn't want to go.
She cries.
Dad just sits in his chair.
"Maybe we should go; it would help us feel better," I said.
Nobody answers.
What has happened to us?

Mom doesn't want to have Christmas
"But Christmas was her favorite time of year," I say.

"She would want us to have Christmas."
Mom is standing at the sink pretending to wash dishes, but
I can tell she is crying.
Dad just sits silently in his chair.
A tear trickles down his cheek.
What will happen to us?

I go to my room. Quietly, I close the door.
I am so lonely.
My whole being aches with grief.
I wish we could go to Grandma's.
I wish we could have Christmas,
But nothing will ever be the same again without her.
I don't know what to do.
What will happen to us?

From *"The Heart of Samantha"*
Nancy Glenn
TCF, Goshen, IN



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

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



Jon Russell Aikin
grandson of Elizabeth and Barry Aiken
September 4, 1983 - November 19, 2001

Jolene Dawn McKenna
daughter of Charlene Kvech
February 8, 1967 - November 22, 1971

Michael D. Nokes
son of Ellen Foxwell
November 9, 1963 - March 15, 1988

Nicholas Grant Poe
son of Karen and Mike Willey
son of Nelson and Shirley Poe
November 9, 1982 - January 23, 2002

Joseph William Remines
James, Jr. and Bobbi Remines
November 16, 1980 - January 3, 1994

Gary Spirt
son of Dee Spirt
November 19, 1962 - November 21, 2002

Luther Stowe II
son of Agnes and Luther Stowe
August 27, 1963 - November 12, 2001





THE MAGIC WE FIND IN FALL

How often do we marvel at nature's beautiful hand as she plays her creative masterpiece across each of earth's precious regions? The wonder of such hue intensity as we watch each leaf turn from one glorious color to another.

I think that autumn has us all so speechless due to the similarities we find between nature and ourselves as bereaved parents. It was just months before that Spring saw the buds and blossoms which nature had produced at the start of life's season - as we did with each of our children. The intensity of summer brought not only growth but maturity as well: infant to toddler to school to graduation. Does our child's life not seem to have been so equally short? Then it is as if a silent alarm went off signaling the need to end one life so that preparations may begin for the whole process to repeat



itself once again. Unfortunately, life goes on whether we want it to or not. It goes on no matter how shattered our hearts may be. It goes on just as unfairly as it did when our child was alive.

But it is Fall when the vibrant leaves fall to the ground that we see the mirrored symbolism in our lives. Our children were a central part of our family tree and they too have slipped from our grasp. Even though more leaves will appear again and again, none are the same as the one which has died before it. Only our compassionate friends seem willing to hold the course that our children may not be forgotten.

It is Fall when I seem to need my Friends the very most.



Jack Frost - Jason's Dad
TCF, South Central Kentucky

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
Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

Contributions:

Maryl and Alain de Sarran, in memory of Elizabeth de Sarran

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

Carol Fritz, in memory of Katie Fritz

I once thought
that my only link to you
was my grief.
I couldn't let go.
I knew if I did
I would lose us both.



But one day
when I couldn't take the pain
anymore,
I decided to try.
So slowly and carefully
I let go of my deathline to you
and I was surprised to find myself
being held by God.

Little by little, step by step.
I learned that I didn't need
to hang onto the death
to remember life.
What a joyous discovery!



Kittie Brown McGowin
TCF, Montgomery, AL

THANKSGIVING OF LIFE

Only a month after Daniel's death, Thanksgiving arrived, full of symbols of plentiful harvest and thankfulness, while we felt bereft of everything. We fled to Maryland. There, among the many around my sister's table, Daniel's empty place stood out less starkly than at home. Love and family pressed around to hold back despair and the loneliness. Though we could not feel the spirit of Thanksgiving, we did appreciate the support and caring of our family. We marveled that any positive feelings were able to emerge.

Upon our return to New Jersey, we were greeted by a neighbor flushed with surprise and excitement. During our absence, Daniel's dog, Puffy, had given birth to three puppies - in her powder room! Our caring neighbor had served as midwife throughout the night of their birth, alternately crying for the loss of Daniel and laughing with the joy of new life.

That Thanksgiving, eleven years ago, held many special messages for us: messages of love, family, neighbors, and giving. Greatest of all was the message of life. Though we went away, we could not flee the holiday nor the pain of separation; we could not run from life. It was waiting for us at my sister's. It was waiting for us upon our return.



Yet, a long time passed before we could accept living again. Puffy's puppies, however, were the beginning. As they nibbled our Fingers or wet the carpet, they caused us to care about them and their antics. Their damp noses and velvet ears helped us to feel something beyond the pain of Daniel's death. When they grew up, they forced us to interact with the community through searching for their adoptive families. We also practiced letting go as each puppy left.

For us, holidays are again happy occasions for the same reason they were originally difficult. Holidays are days set aside for love, togetherness, sharing, and families. The death of a child turns those wonderful aspects of holidays into pain. What we discovered that Thanksgiving long ago is that even with the pain comes the beginning of healing from the love, togetherness, sharing, and families that holidays include.

So change your routine or surroundings this Thanksgiving, but do not try to flee from life. Life is the pathway to recovery. Allow yourself the reassurance of feeling life's healing power this holiday.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Marcia E. Alig
TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

YELLOW BUTTERFLIES - a message for Veteran's Day

 At the turn of the century, in a small town in Virginia not far from Arlington, there lived a dear little flaxen-haired boy named Jimmy. He had beautiful curly hair and when he played in the sunlight, it made his hair look like gold. His mother noticed yellow butterflies hovering over him as he played and remarked that they were the color of his hair.

 The child grew older and was now ready to go to school for the first time. His mother walked down the garden path to the gate to see him off. She loved this little boy very dearly and was quite sad, for she knew she would miss him very much. As he went through the gate and was turning to wave to his mother, the yellow butterflies flew all around him; and one came to rest on his head. He liked to see them near, and never tried to catch them or harm them.

 As he grew to be an older boy, for some reason the yellow butterflies flew around him many times. The years passed very quickly. Now the young man was graduated. About this time there was dread and fear of war. His mother's heart was heavy, for her son, Jimmy was already talking about enlisting if the United States declared war. War was declared in April, 1917. He enlisted. The day he left for training camp, his mother and childhood sweetheart went to the train to see him off. He tried to be cheerful, and make them feel the same, but his mother's heart was nearly broken and his sweetheart was very sad. They heard the train whistle and knew in a moment he would be gone. But just before the train arrived, again the yellow butterflies were there...flying all around him. He said, "The butterflies are still with me, and they will be here to welcome me back."

 He went to war, and as soon as he could he wrote letters home, telling his mother and

sweetheart to cheer up. The war would not last long, and he would soon be back. They received many letters, but suddenly they stopped coming. His mother thought he may be in action and couldn't write, and hoped to hear from him later. But there were no letters for mother or sweetheart. They scanned the casualty list. He was never reported wounded or killed in action, nor did they hear anything from the government concerning him. The war ended, and there was no news of any kind.

Time passed on. The broken-hearted mother read in the newspapers of the dedication to take place in Arlington. She went. There she saw the tomb and wondered who's son was lying there. In her heart she felt it might be her Jimmy. She tried to listen to the speaker, but heard little of what was said. Her anguish and pain was almost unbearable. At last she heard something like this: "We have come to honor this soldier. He was selected from a number of unknown soldiers. No one knows whose son is lying here."

Just then, Jimmy's mother gasped. It was all she could do to keep from crying out. Hovering all about the tomb were swarms of beautiful, yellow butterflies. She knew whose son was lying there. She thought, these people have gathered here to honor my son. It is his tomb they dedicate. And then she breathed a silent prayer, "Oh God, I thank Thee for those beautiful butterflies. They have come to welcome Jimmy back home."

Anonymous
TCF, Providence, RI



PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair and anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because we are human - we cannot take in all the pain and the meaning of death at once. So, we let it in, a little at a time.

from "How to go on living" - Peppers & Knapp

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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.