



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS *of Green Bay*

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter by and for Bereaved Parents

Jan/Feb 2008

Our Mission Statement:

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child. The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health. The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved families. The object is to help those in their communities to be supportive, including family, friends, employers, co-workers and professionals.

Make a New Year's Resolution to Attend the Regional Conference Here in Green Bay

By Dave Wilkinson, Chapter Leader

As we begin a New Year we heard again the talk of New Year's resolutions. The latest statistics are in: 30% of all resolutions are broken within the first week. The remaining 69% are forgotten by the end of the month. Not very encouraging. Problem is, we don't really intend keeping them. We only say we are to impress impressionable people. Like the preposterous notion I'll actually eliminate all fats from my diet. HAH! Who am I kidding? Give up brats and cheese? Here in Wisconsin? Forever? Never! That's like giving up blinking. It can't be done.

If you look immediately to the left, you see in our Mission Statement the following line: "*The primary purpose [of The Compassionate Friends] is to assist [bereaved families] in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.*" Now there is a resolution worth keeping.

Many of our bereaved parents have been to a Regional Conference of the Compassionate Friends, and a few have been to National Conferences. Each parent will tell you how valuable these opportunities were in helping them toward a positive resolution of their grief. The combination of meeting many other bereaved parents over a weekend, listening to keynote speakers, attending a variety of great workshops, and participating in a moving remembrance program had a powerful impact on those who attended.

For the first time we are having a Regional Conference right here in Green Bay. Details of the conference are on page 2. I hope you will resolve right now to attend this conference. Whether your child died this past year or five or 10 years ago, you won't want to miss this opportunity. Registration forms are available online, or we would be glad to send you one by mail. We have already received some registrations from across the state as well as Minnesota and Illinois. Join us. It will be a resolution you'll be glad you kept.



The Green Bay Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.
at First United Methodist Church, 501 Howe Street, Green Bay.

*(Enter the parking lot off Monroe at Doty
and use the covered entrance on the north side of the church.)*

For further information, or just to talk,

contact one of our Steering Committee members:

Dave Wilkinson, Chapter Leader, weekdays at 920-437-9252

Dave or Donna Wilkinson at other times at 920-391-0734

Phyllis Calder at 920-468-4820

Bruce Shafer, Treasurer, at 920-469-1661

Georgia Schroeder, Newsletter Editor, at 920-437-9252

E-mail: TCF@firststumcgb.org

Monthly Support Group

Thursday, January 17, 7 p.m.

Jeff Stumbras, clinical social worker and marriage and family therapist at Prevea Behavioral Clinic, Ashwaubenton, will describe "*Seasonal Affective Disorder*" (SAD) -- a type of depression.

Thursday, February 21, 7 p.m.

Rev. Dan Carlson, a bereaved parent, retired pastor, and chaplain for police departments in Oneida, Howard, Green Bay, will speak on "*Bearing Grief Over The Long-Haul*".

Cancellation of our monthly meeting in stormy weather: If the Green Bay Public Schools are closed for the day, or have early release, due to a snow storm, the TCF meeting will be cancelled that evening.



Regional Conference of The Compassionate Friends to be held in Green Bay

March 7-9, 2008 at the Comfort Inn and Suites
Cost: Adults-\$75, Children (under 12)-\$35

Creating Ripples of Hope in the Waters of Grief

Exploring ways of bringing hope and peace back into our lives after the death of a child.

Keynote Speaker: **Paul Alexander**

Paul Alexander is a nationally recognized Bereavement Counselor, Certified Social Worker, singer and songwriter. Paul will be presenting the General Session Saturday morning, ***Ups and Downs of Grief***, 9 – 10:15 am, as well as a workshop titled *Signs of Hope*.



The conference begins Friday evening at 7 pm with opening remarks from the mayor of Green Bay and continues with a workshop from 8 – 9 pm.

The conference continues Saturday morning and runs through Sunday at 11 am.

Additional speakers include:

- Pat Loder – Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends and bereaved parent.
(Making Meaning Out of Loss and Managing Your TCF Chapter/Meeting)
- Bonnie Groessel, MSN, APNP – Bridge to Health
(Finding Peace in Difficult Times)
- Lisa DeSieno, MSE, LPC – Director of Outreach, Unity Hospice
(Navigating the Waters of Grief)
- Patricia Poole - Reconnective/Healing Practitioner
(Signs and Connecting with Our Loved Ones)
- Dave and Donna Wilkinson – Green Bay TCF Leaders and bereaved parents
(Sticks and Stones – Men's and Women's Grief and Using Creativity to Grieve [Donna])
- Pat Shafer – teacher and bereaved parent
(Scrapbooking Memories)

**Go to our website at www.tcfgreenbay.org/regionalconference for a complete brochure.
For further information call Jeanne Davis, 920-496-0629.**



Presidents Day

A compilation of presidents and the loss they each experienced in their lives.

John Adams lost a son 20 years of age while Adams was president.

Thomas Jefferson had six children and only two lived to maturity.

James Monroe had a son die at two years of age.

John Quincy Adams had an infant daughter die, a son die while Adams was president and another son die five years later.

William Harrison had six children who died before he became president.

Zachary Taylor had two children who died as infants and a daughter who died three months after her wedding.

Millard Fillmore's daughter died at 22 years of age.

Franklin Pierce had two sons die in infancy, and an 11 year old son die two months before Pierce's inauguration. Mrs. Pierce secluded herself after the death of their second son for nearly half of her husband's presidency.

Abraham Lincoln had two sons die, one at four years of age and one at 11 years of age while Lincoln was president. Another son died at age 18 after Lincoln's assassination.

Rutherford B. Hayes had three children die in infancy.

James Garfield had two children die as infants.

Chester Alan Arthur had a son die as an infant.

Grover Cleveland had a daughter die at age 13.

William McKinley had both of his children die, one at four months and one at four years of age. McKinley's wife was overwhelmed with grief the rest of her life.

Theodore Roosevelt's son died at 21 years of age.

Calvin Coolidge's son died at age 16 during Coolidge's presidency. In his autobiography Coolidge wrote, "When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him."

Franklin Roosevelt had a son die in infancy.

Dwight Eisenhower's son died at age three.

John Kennedy had two sons die, one at two days of age while Kennedy was president.

George H.W. Bush had a daughter die at four years of age.

"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all... It comes with bitterest agony... Perfect relief is not possible except with time... You can not now realize that you will ever feel better... And yet this is a mistake... You are sure to be happy again... To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have experienced miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say." (Abraham Lincoln)

Love gifts were recently given by:

Tom & Bev Van Hemelryk in loving memory of Sheri Lynn Klemme

Deb Bell in loving memory of Andy Bell

David & Connie Van Lieshout in loving memory of Jeffrey Van Lieshout

Christine & Tim Newtols in loving memory of Makayla Lego

My Lesson On How To Grieve

Georgia Schroeder, Editor
Green Bay, WI TCF

I recently lost a very good friend. He was 51 years old. His parents are still alive as well as all of his six siblings. I discovered he had a very close relationship with his mother and from experience I know her heart is broken. It seems strange to think of my friend as someone's son, being a bit older and all. As a TCF "member" I had tended to assume our common ground was grief over a younger child that had died. But my friend was 51.

At his funeral a close friend read an excerpt from an AARP article titled "50 Things You Need to Know By 50". Item Number 21 – *How to Grieve* touched me as a parent who has lost a child and a friend:

"After the first death, there is no other," wrote Dylan Thomas. That doesn't mean the ones that come after won't break your heart, but it's the first that punches your soul's passport. Welcome, fellow human, to a different country than the one you woke up to this morning. The air's different here; so is the scenery. Your knees don't work so well; in fact, you may want to fall to them.

For a precious little while, you are allowed to be stunned into silence, or to shriek, or to talk—recounting stories of who he was, what she meant to you, and how it all came to an end.



Tell those stories. Some people may try to enforce "The Rules," to wit: Enough of This Drama Is Enough. Ignore them. Besides, if you treat yourself gently and take the time you need, someday soon you'll hear the faint but steady voice of your own good sense. Play music you love, sit in the sunshine if you can find some, and if anyone offers you a hand, hold it. Let them feed the cat, too, because they want to be useful. If your good sense does not kick in on its own, help it along: scramble some eggs. It will feel strange at first. But if you pretend that scrambling eggs is normal, eventually it will become normal. Soon you can squeeze some orange juice, too.

For some of us the stay in this new country seems endless. But time passes, seasons change, and, truly, would those we grieve for want us to mope? Come with me, back into the world. We'll return to this land someday, all too soon, but in the meantime the garden needs weeding, the bills need paying. Your other loved ones need you. And you, my sweet friend, you could use a shampoo. —Larkin Warren

This definition on how to grieve is one of a thousand but it helped me realize that the loss of a child, or anyone we love for that matter, is tragic and heartbreaking and survivable. I wish you all healing in 2008.

Other TCF Contact Information

The Door County Chapter of TCF meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at the Door County Memorial Hospital in Sturgeon Bay. Call Dawn Sandusky at 920-868-1488 for info.

The Kewaunee County Chapter of TCF meets at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month at St. Hedwig Church, lower level hall, located at E3306 Krok Road, in Kewaunee. Call Dorothy Konop at 920-863-8003 for information.

The Fox Valley Chapter of TCF meets at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month in Neenah at Faith United Methodist Church, 1025 Tullar Road. Call Deb Schultz at 920-725-6340 for information.

To contact the **National Organization:**
The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

P.O. Box 3696,
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Phone Toll-free: 877-969-0010
Web site: www.compassionatef.org



To contact the **TCF Regional Coordinator:**

Jim Staniforth
4705 Eisenhower St.
Oregon, WI 53575
Phone: 608-835-7493

During the two months that each newsletter covers, we include your child's birthday and the anniversary of your child's death – if we know those dates.



Birthday:

Marisa Nelson 1/1/95
(daughter of Amy Nelson)
Ben Garot 1/7/72
(son of Keith Garot)
Jami Daigneault 1/13/96
(daughter of Penny & Armand Daigneault)
Corey Calaway 1/14/70
(son of Paul & Nancy Calaway)
Travis Christenson 1/17/77
(son of Cherie Buhr)
Dustin Wilkinson 1/21/82
(son of Dave & Donna Wilkinson)
Justin Banaszynski 1/21/83
Jason Banaszynski 1/21/83
(sons of Donna Pagel)
Brian LaViolette 1/23/77
(son of Doug & Renee LaViolette)
Daniel Horner 1/24/80
(son of Sandra Horner)
Shaun Davis 1/26/78
(son of Dan & Jeanne Davis)
Austin Lindberg 1/28/96
(son of Todd & Sandy Lindberg)
Dylan Krings 1/28/04
(son of Jay & Joleen Krings)
Amy Laedtke 2/2/87
(daughter of Debra & Fred Laedtke)
Jeff Baenen 2/3/76
(son of Susan Baenen)
Adam Federwitz 2/3/90
(son of Mary Federwitz)
Maggie Pavlowski 2/8/97
(daughter of Michelle & Karl Pavlowski)
Sam Compton 2/13/91
(son of Mark Compton and Sandra Scheffen)
Ryan Jozwiak 2/15/86
(son of Lenee & Eddie Jozwiak)

Katie Culhane 2/15/92
(daughter of Muffy & Kevin Culhane)
Nick Hietpas 2/23/85
(son of Bruce & Diane Hietpas)
Brandon Blue 2/26/82
(son of Rondell & Barb Blue)
Lucas Shallow 2/27/82
(son of Robert Shallow)
Karen Schley 2/27/87
(daughter of Jon & Ann Schley)



Anniversary:

Maggie Pavlowski 1/1/98
(daughter of Michelle & Karl Pavlowski)
Eric Garson 1/1/03
(son of Barb Peterson)
Natalie Aitken 1/6/06
(daughter of Rachel & AJ Aitken)
Mark Shafer 1/10/94
(son of Bruce & Pat Shafer)
Ben Garot 1/11/02
(son of Keith Garot)
Chad Schaefer 1/11/04
(son of David & Miriam Schaefer)
Cameron Baenen 1/13/01
(son of Linne Baenen)
Craig Kozloski 1/14/04
(son of Bobbie & David Kozloski)

Brina Bierke 1/21/04
(daughter of Kathy Bierke)
Matthew Murphy 1/21/04
(son of Kathleen Kuehne Murphy)
John Charniak 1/24/76
(son of Maynard & Jeanette Charniak)
Troy Jacques 1/26/61
(son of Sally Martin)
Heidi Lessmiller 1/26/86
(daughter of David Lessmiller & Catherine Frey)
Maria Schumacher 1/26/02
(daughter of Karen & Phil Schumacher)
John Van Rossum 1/31/03
(son of Joanne Van Rossum)
Matthew Arnold 1/31/04
(son of Carrie & Bob Arnold)
Mark Starr 2/1/98
(son of Ruth Duprey)
Tara Kieff 2/3/05
(daughter of Machaelyn Kieff)
Chris Krueger 2/5/02
(son of Cheryl Krueger)
Dylan Krings 2/8/04
(son of Jay & Joleen Krings)
Corey Calaway 2/9/03
(son of Paul & Nancy Calaway)
Jeff Baenen 2/12/03
(son of Susan Baenen)
Chad Seitzer 2/13/00
(son of Sandi & Fred Seitzer)
Nathan Axelrod 2/19/04
(son of Johanna Axelrod)
Chad Zimmerman 2/24/01
(son of Dale & Linda Zimmerman)
Cooper Schroeder 2/25/05
(son of Mark & Georgia Schroeder)
Shane Hopfensperger 2/28/04
(son of Mike & Joann Hopfensperger)
Michelle Schriver 2/29/04
(daughter of Annette Foster)

Grief and Marriage

When our son was killed, I remember thinking through the haze of pain that this most horrifying of life experiences would somehow bring my husband and me closer. Sharing the loss of a child created and loved by both of us for 20 years would surely deepen the bond between us. I was in for a surprise.

We clung almost blindly to each other until the shock began to give way to ugly reality. As we each moved to our individual pattern of grieving, differences began to emerge. I felt like a time bomb about to explode. I needed desperately to talk about our son. My husband refused to verbalize his feelings and became angry at my overtures. I stopped trying to communicate.

This was beyond my comprehension. Where was my helpmate, my best friend? I felt rejected, unloved and terribly alone. Anger overwhelmed me as I bitterly realized that I wasn't going to be able to share my grieving with the person who meant the most to me in the world. I knew that many marriages fail after the death of a child. Dear God, how could we possibly survive an additional tragedy?

We attended a few Compassionate Friends meetings and then I continued alone. The gentle acceptance of others who had lost children permitted me to talk or cry without guilt. Our problem was definitely not unique; many other parents expressed similar frustrations. So many couples experience marital difficulties after the death of a child that it is now considered the norm. We weren't going crazy; and just because our grieving styles were different didn't mean that our whole marriage would fall apart.



My anger began to dissipate as I slowly faced the fact that I had been placing unrealistic expectations on my husband. Hurting at least as much as I am, he simply could not meet my needs for support.

Much later, the knowledge that support had been there all along from my friends – if I had only asked for it – saddened me. I had to admit that I simply had been too proud to reveal myself as a suffering person in need of help. I will be forever grateful to Compassionate Friends for being there with loving, open arms.

We began to have some honest discussions, agreeing that we needed each other's nurturing in order to survive and find meaning in life. We learned to respect each other's feelings. We tried to please each other in little ways: a hug, a special meal. Anything that expressed caring. Patience with each other smoothed over many rough moments. Time spent alone together was very healing. It took a conscious decision from both of us to try harder. Some days, we didn't have any energy left when grief was particularly painful. It wasn't always easy as we couldn't talk about our son for a long time.

As I look back, I see that ignorance of grief and the impact it can have on a marriage was the basis for our problems. But in retrospect, how could we possibly have been prepared for the onslaught of paralyzing emotions that overwhelmed us? Anguish of this intensity can reveal a spouse you've never seen before. Deeply wounded, both of you will be inevitably changed from the experience of losing a child. Back then, understanding these simple facts would have helped us immeasurably.

~Pat Retzloff
TCF, Oshkosh, WI

SIBLING GRIEF

I have come to think of sibling grief as “discounted grief”. Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people’s eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal “favorite” line said to siblings is, “You be sure and take care of your parents.” I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me – I knew I couldn’t.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor. The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling’s first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of siblings are also often discounted when decisions are being made – on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things – such as favorite clothes or music – can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that’s why I’m writing this – so people will know.

~ Jane Machado, TCF Tulane, CA

When An Adult Sibling Dies

When a sibling dies the world changes in a heartbeat. A unique group of siblings is the *adult* survivor. In the case of an adult sibling, attention and words of comfort are usually aimed at the parents, spouse, and children, and not the siblings who may live far away.

The Loss of History

Each family has its own special history and the shared bonds that are a part of that history. When a sibling dies, the bonds are shattered, and the history forever has a void that cannot be filled.

As they grow, children develop certain characteristics and talents. Brothers and sisters tend to complement each other by developing a balance of interests in different areas. However, surviving siblings will need to redefine their roles in the absence of this relationship.

The Loss of Future

When a sibling dies, all future special occasions will be forever changed. There will be no more shared birthday celebrations, anniversaries, or holidays. There will be no telephone calls telling of the birth of a new nephew or niece. The sharing of life’s unique and special events will never again take place.

Excerpted from the TCF website www.compassionatefriends.org.



Resources for siblings

**The national organization of TCF
has resources for siblings.
Visit the online Sibling Resources Page
at www.compassionatefriends.org.**



The
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

of Green Bay

501 Howe St.
Green Bay, WI 54301

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Green Bay, WI
Permit No. 562

Our monthly
support group
meets next on

Thursday,
January 17
at 7 p.m.

at First United
Methodist Church,
off Monroe at Doty.

Call 920.437.9252
for information.

We need not walk alone!



THE HOLIDAY OF LOVE

Valentine's Day is a day of remembering our loved ones with small gifts and great feelings. When your child was living, did you often remember him/her on Valentine's Day with a card or a balloon, perhaps a gift of candy or something special that was wanted? So, why stop the tradition?

Remember your child with love on this special day; a single rose left at a grave; a special holiday balloon to float around the house, reminding you each time you look; a special photo in a nice frame to sit on the mantle. These are ideas that float around but may seem strange to you after the death of your child.

It seems like a pretty good idea, though, doesn't it? What a better way to celebrate the Holiday of Love than by enjoying fond memories of your child.

Try making his/her favorite dinner and treating the family. Use special photos scattered around the table to talk about some fun facts about him/her. It's important to show the others in the family how much they are also loved so don't forget some small Valentine's gifts for them too!

Just because our hearts are broken, we don't need to ignore the *Holiday of Love*.