



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS of Green Bay

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter by and for Bereaved Parents

May/June 2011

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.

The Compassionate Friends Newsletter- May 2011 Donna Wilkinson, chapter leader

MORE QUESTIONS

People are often asked how many children they have. I hear this question over and over again in social circles. It is one of the ways we get to know one another and it is usually a very simple question to answer. It often opens up a good conversation about children and friends and schools etc. But it is not an easy question for a bereaved parent to answer. Do we mention the child who died? It doesn't seem right not to include them but it's often very awkward. Just like our grief experiences, our responses will vary. I have decided to always include our son who is no longer with us. It opens up an entirely different conversation than the person probably expected but it's a good opportunity to educate people about loss and grief.

Another question often raised at our Compassionate Friends meetings is about how bereaved families are affected by life's milestones after the death of a child. Our grief journeys continue as we face many missed milestones over the years, whether these are first steps, first days of school, graduations, jobs, weddings and on and on. Our child's life is frozen in time but some of us may continue to add years to their age. I find myself saying that our son, Dustin, would be 29 years old now, although he never lived past the age of sixteen. The rest of our family has moved forward and I often wonder what he would be doing now. As our other 2 children have matured, we have enjoyed, with pride, their accomplishments. However, I have been surprised by another reaction- the overwhelming sense of relief that they have "made it". I think this is a symptom of the loss of innocence which accompanies the trauma we experience when we lose a child. I struggle to believe that my other children will be safe.

I share these questions and feelings as an example of how we are forever changed after the death of a child. We become more afraid and less trusting, but I hope we also become more sensitive, more realistic, more compassionate and more understanding.

I hope to see you at the next Compassionate Friends meeting, where it is always a safe place to ask questions as we support one another and look for answers together.

We need not walk alone.

Donna Wilkinson, Dustin's mom



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)

For further information contact:

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Monthly Support Group

Thursday, May 19, 2011, 7 p.m.

Kay Schumacher, Chaplain at Heartland Hospice, will speak on "Grief Work: the job nobody wants"

Thursday, June 16, 2011 7 p.m.

DVD Part 2, Documentary on Parents' loss and grief, "Space Between Breaths; What Loss can teach us about a Life fully lived"



Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me, Sunday, May 10, 1998, is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of this century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering - seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day, Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother—a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background, and my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge. The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well that from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year—Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death—is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

Barbara Atwood
In memory of Jacob

A Mother's Prayer

*Help me please
Oh Lord, I pray
To endure the trials
Of each new day.
Let me look them
Squarely in the face
And then put them
In their rightful place.
Give me patience
And strength to cope
But most of all God
Give me hope.
When all seems futile
Please let me say
"Look how far I've come
To reach this day".
Reach out Your hand
And pull me through
Cause, Lord, I'll never make it
Without You!*

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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In Loving Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny





Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes
TCF ~ Cincinnati, Ohio



Why does that phrase have so much meaning now? It used to be pretty simple. When I could find the time (not as often as I would have liked), my lap was a neat place to hold my young son for a few moments of special time together. Now—no son! Different use of the lap! Problems in Daddy's lap. (Thank God a 7-year-old daughter is there too, sometimes!) Being male becomes a more difficult task. How can I properly help those who are dependent on me—or can I admit to myself and others that this is one thing Daddy can't fix, like my son's broken toys? Is it "manly" to cry in public? Or do I care about "manly" now? It seems like so much garbage when my future has a hole in it.

I feel depressed too. My wife's suffering aggravates my own, which makes me angry at her for spoiling my attempts at coping. Maybe I should issue a household edict that "Richy's name or the subject of his death are OFF LIMITS around me." That should fix it! Except that my wife still looks at me, and I know what's on her mind. Also, I keep thinking about it—and wish I had a better outlet for myself. Certainly not work, or sports, or—God forbid—a shrink (think of my image); I need someone who's been there. My wife suggests we try The Compassionate Friends—maybe so! After the first time, I know it's not for me. After all, where are all the men? Obviously, they don't need it, right? Anyway, I go to TCF a few more times as it is one of the few unselfish things I do supportively for my wife, and my being there helps her. And when she's better, I'm better. PRESTO — we're both getting stronger again and still together and communicating.

Also, I listen to some of the other TCF members, and the message I get is that their "men," by and large, are denying themselves the privilege of grieving, and are destroying their own marriages by forcing their wives to grieve quietly or not at all around them. That's not manly. Dumb in my book, and self-destructive too. So some men don't like groups okay. But my solution is actually having results (for real), and I'm not suppressing the problem. My family and I will be scarred but not walking wounded. My particular masculine viewpoint is nothing special, except that I'm willing to share it in this newsletter.

Chuck Armstrong
In memory of Richy
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO





Forever Entwined

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable, yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear, the stuff of nightmares, cold sweats and anxiety. But when our children die, the anxiety of that possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of the reality. At first we freeze in time as our focus is on the primal.....breathe, drink water. After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died? I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward.....the pain is too intense. Death would be a mercy. Life is no longer a joy. My heart is broken. I will never see my child again.

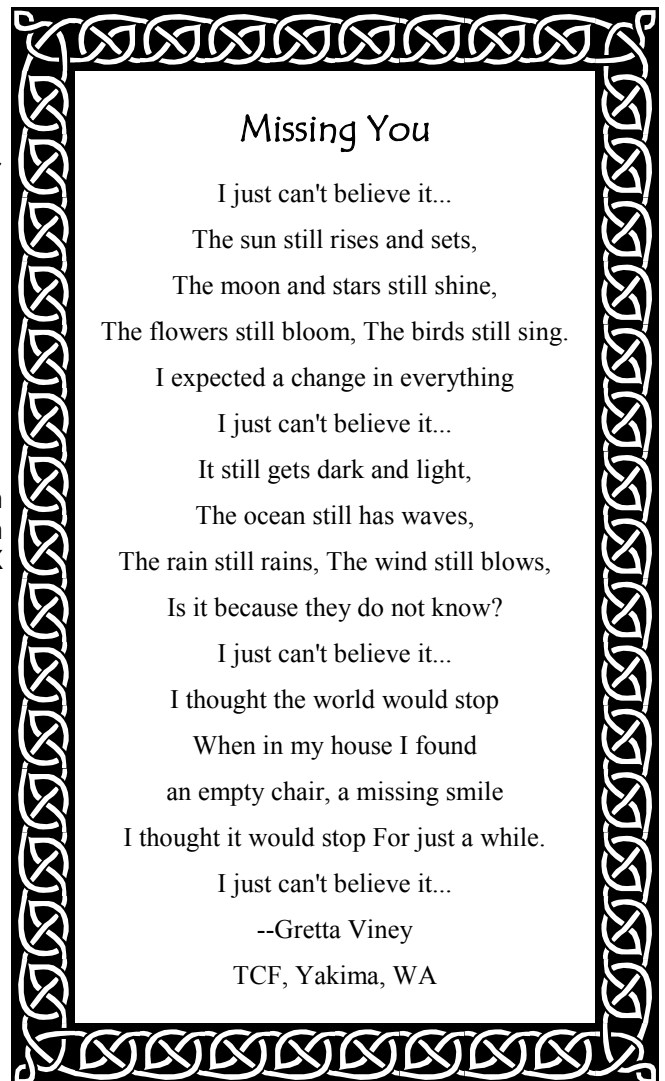
If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends Group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey.....and survived. Our first meeting is the most difficult.....at my first meeting the only word I could say was my son's name. Later, we tell our story to those who have experienced the death of their child and find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others and smile at the memories of their child.....we begin the healing process.

Now our lives are forever entwined with those of other parents who have lost a child to death. Like the Celtic knot, we are now part of an eternal paradigm: we are strands in the knot, weaving our stories into each others' lives. This interlace of our lives is a permanent and beautiful blending of souls seeking comfort from one another. Our reality is shared by others; we lean on them, they lean on us. We give, we receive.

Many friends from our lives before the death of our child hesitate to mention our child's name and even fear talking about our child's life and listening to our memories. But we don't want to forget our child as that would be the worst betrayal. We want to talk about our child's life and keep their spirit with us always. Those in our lives who do not share this feeling are not part of our eternal paradigm; they will never be entwined with us as we complete our journey on this earth.

The Celtic knot, the symbol of eternity, is symbolic of the relationships we have found at Compassionate Friends. These lives are forever woven into ours, we accept each other's perspectives and share their sorrow and the joy of their memories. There is a place in our Celtic knot for all parents who have lost a child. As other parents join us, they are enfolded forever into the eternal paradigm of healing and compassion.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



Missing You

I just can't believe it...
The sun still rises and sets,
The moon and stars still shine,
The flowers still bloom, The birds still sing.
I expected a change in everything
I just can't believe it...
It still gets dark and light,
The ocean still has waves,
The rain still rains, The wind still blows,
Is it because they do not know?
I just can't believe it...
I thought the world would stop
When in my house I found
an empty chair, a missing smile
I thought it would stop For just a while.
I just can't believe it...
--Gretta Viney
TCF, Yakima, WA

*Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory no one can steal. ~*

Found on a headstone in Ireland



Remembering our Children

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. Based upon TCF National policy, we will not print the year of your child's birth or death.

BIRTHDAYS

Maria Schumacher (daughter of Karen & Phil Schumacher)	5/4	Michelle Schriver (daughter of Annette Foster)	6/8
Craig Raether (son of Larry & Patricia Raether)	5/5	Alison Johnson (daughter of Lon & Carolyn Johnson)	6/10
Donna Prilepp (daughter of Angeline Brocker)	5/6	Jared Gehm (son of Mary Gehm)	6/16
Matthew Baudhuin (son of Jason Baudhuin and Dawn Baudhuin)	5/6	Stephen Charneski (son of James & Roberta Charneski)	6/17
Steve Knaus (son of Luke & Shirley Knaus)	5/7	Jon Daniel Strawser (daughter Brenda Choat)	6/17
Nicole Kowalkowski (daughter of Roman & Sharon Kowalkowski)	5/9	Ashley MacDonald (daughter of Yvonne Cerkas)	6/18
Timmy Parent (son of Steve & Cindy Parent)	5/13	Emily Schmeisser (daughter of Steve & Mickey Schmeisser)	6/19
Luke Stempa (son of Gerri & Steve Stempa)	5/13	Charlie Tinkham (son of Karen Tinkham)	6/19
Greg Lindbloom (son of Ginger Lindbloom)	5/17	Ian Seymour (son of Diane Seymour)	6/24
Joseph Chase Gillis (son of Charlotte Champeau)	5/21	Maria Cambray (daughter of Jack & Gerry Cambray)	6/24
Kevin Betker (son of Roy "Pete" & Renee Betker)	5/24	Drew Hohl (son of Helen Hohl)	6/26
Stephanie Corbeill (daughter of Sylvia & Richard Corbeill)	5/27	Joshua Webster (son of Julie Denny)	6/26
Mariah Klein (daughter of Micki & Mike Klein)	5/28	Chase Lasecki (son of Steven & Linda Lasecki)	6/26
Jeffrey Triatik (son of Carol Triatik)	6/2	Matthew Murphy (son of Kathleen Murphy)	6/26
Noah Froemming (son of Butch & Sara Froemming)	6/7	Ben Delain (son of Peter & Becky Delain)	6/29
Hunter Vincent (son of Dawn & Steve Vincent)	6/8	Steve Price (son of Jennifer & Steve Price)	6/30

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

~Abraham Lincoln

Love gifts were recently given by:

Sue Harris in memory of Lane Harris
Dan Kazik in memory of Jennifer Kazik
Mark & Grace Plate in memory of Justin Plate

ANNIVERSARIES

Lee Dagner (son of Sherri Dagner-Seese)	5/3	Nathan Jarosinski (son of Mark & Jean Jarosinski)	6/2
Jon Boettcher (son of Roger & Pat Boettcher)	5/5	Bruce Funmake (son of Cheryl Skenadore)	6/2
Charlie Tinkham (son of Karen Tinkham)	5/10	Stacie Lepp (daughter of Ginny Lepp)	6/3
Noah Froemming (son of Butch and Sara Froemming)	5/11	Ken Johnson (son of Kathy Johnson)	6/5
Austin Reeck (son of Ann Rieckmann)	5/12	Ashley MacDonald (daughter of Yvonne Cerkas)	6/5
Adam Federwitz (son of Mary & Gary Federwitz)	5/12	Jenah VanGroll (daughter of James (Jitter) & JoAnn VanGroll)	6/5
Michael Anderson (son of Ron & Lori Anderson)	5/14	Shane Bowhousen (son of Doug & Renie Bowhousen)	6/6
Noah Thomas Campbell (son of Kelli & Craig Campbell)	5/14	Chris Sauer (son of Ron & Kathy Sauer)	6/8
Melissa & Emily Schmeisser (daughters of Steve & Mickey Schmeisser)	5/15	Heather Rose Bomski (daughter of Paula Bomski)	6/11
David Staude (son of Irv & Bev Michaud)	5/15	Bruce T Blaser Jr (son of Bruce & Paige Blaser)	6/12
Matthew Baudhuin (son of Jason Baudhuin and Dawn Baudhuin)	5/21	Riviera Konen (daughter of Jennifer Konen)	6/17
Chad Kerscher (son of Margy Konopacki)	5/22	Drew Hohl (son of Helen Hohl)	6/19
Ryan Bergevin (son of Randy Bergevin & Barbara Vandebusch)	5/25	Katie Culhane (daughter of Muffy & Kevin Culhane)	6/23
Craig Raether (son of Larry & Patricia Raether)	5/27	Timothy Metoxen (son of Florence Petri)	6/28
Lynn Calder (daughter of John & Phyllis Calder)	5/28	Jessica Bouillion (daughter of Lisa & John Bouillion)	6/27
Kristin Lund (daughter of Bruce Lund & Debbie Lund)	5/28	Brian Kofler (son of Wendy Kofler)	6/30
Andrea Hoffman (daughter of Robert & Sylvia Hoffman)	5/28	Anna Eleanor Mayo (daughter of Craig & Missy Mayo)	6/30



How Long Will I Hurt



How long will I hurt
And carry this pain
That seems to come and go
Like a summer rain
How long will I cry
With my heart breaking in two
How long will it hurt
That I live without you?
How many years
Can a heart feel like this
Knotted up and tight
Like a boxer's fist
How long will I think
Of how things used to be
When we were together

Just you and just me
How much can a mother
Stand this type of pain
That comes on as quickly
As the warm summer rain?
To hurt is to love
Those who are not here
To love is to hold
Memories we hold dear
I will hurt forever
This I now know
And cry softly
Like a soft winter snow
How long will I hurt?
As long as I love....

The child God sent to me
From heaven above
My hurting will stop
When it's my turn to leave
I'll depart this world softly
Like a warm summer breeze
And Glory will be the day
When we're together again
Mother and child
My love has no end

Sharon Bryant
Andy Dunbar
January 22, 1972 - October 24, 1977
I'm his mom and he's my angel.....forever

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ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENTS, & MISC.

Note from the Center for Grieving:

Dear Folks~

Just a note to say Thank you for being there. I just read your newsletter for the month, and find it such a helpful resource for families in need. I appreciate being able to offer your support groups to grieving families as they come to the center. So many wonderful resources in the area and yours is one of them.

From Carol Wautlet, The Resource Coordinator:

We have recently added the DVD "The Tillman Story" added to the resource library. This is the story of Pat Tillman who leaves an NFL career to join the military after 9/11. He is later killed while on active duty in Afghanistan in 2004. This documentary portrays the struggle his family has in the complicated search for the truth about the circumstances of his death

Rabbit Hole Review

Recently, I finished watching Rabbit Hole. I loved/hated it because I felt it did an incredible job depicting the vast quantities of emotions that, at any given time, can erupt. I came to the realization I still battle some of those feelings, seven years later. The sense of being disconnected, isolated, and alone, even when surrounded by loved ones. The anger at virtually nothing yet everything. The desire to slap strangers or friends. It was very emotional. I found it very cathartic as well.

I later discussed the movie with a friend who had seen it. Her reaction included hope for the couple to encounter some sort of "happy ending", like in having another child. I was discouraged by this. There isn't a happy ending. Life can definitely move forward, and even move forward peacefully and with happiness. Yet the longing for your child never leaves.

*When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that
which has been your delight.*

~From The Prophet
by Kahlil Gibran



34th National Conference
Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN
July 15-17, 2011



THE COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

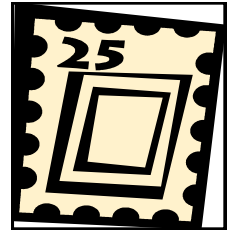
Reserve Rooms Now for 2011 TCF National Conference in Minneapolis, MN

Room reservations can now be made for TCF's 34th national conference, this year in Minneapolis, Minnesota July 15-17. The conference, which has the theme "Shining Stars-Guiding Hope" is being held at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South, only about 10 minutes from the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport (shuttles will be available to and from the hotel—as well as the hotel and the Mall of America). Special room rates are \$129 per night for King or Double Bed with third and fourth persons at an additional \$10 each in the same room. Reservations can be made online or by telephone. Go to TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on "TCF 2011 National Conference – Minnesota" under "News and Events" for how to reserve a room and for latest up-to-date information on the conference and the Walk to Remember, held on the final day of the event. Information will also be made available on Facebook at The Compassionate Friends/USA.



The
**COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

of Green Bay
PO Box 211
Green Bay, WI 54305



Our monthly
support group
meets next on:

Thursday,
May 19, 2011
at 7 p.m.

at First United
Methodist Church,
off Monroe at Doty.
Call 920-496-0629
for information.

We need not walk alone!

OTHER TCF CONTACT INFORMATION

The Door County Chapter meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at the Door County Memorial Hospital in Sturgeon Bay. Call 1-800-589-2669 (voicemail).

The TCF of Kewaunee County Chapter meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month at the Casco branch of the Bank of Luxemburg. (across from the Village Kitchen) Use west facing doors on the left. Call Dorothy Konop at 920-863-8003 or Kathy Benes at 920-837-2869 for information.

Oneida, WI, has a new chapter that was recently chartered. They meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6:30pm at Parish Hall – 2937 Freedom Road, Oneida, WI. Contact Jean Williquette at 920-469-4135 for more 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.compassionatefriends.org

To contact the **TCF Regional Coordinator:**

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



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