The Definition of Compassion is: to Suffer With
We are The Compassionate Friends
We are Survivors

The saving grace of our loss is that hardships are an opportunity for growth. We must be strong to handle grief, and in the end, grief brings out strengths we never knew we had. To experience and embrace the pain of loss is just as much a part of life as to experience the joy of love. This is not the end — merely the ending of things as they were. All changes involve loss, just as all losses require change. Being exposed to this pain brings us to a new level of sophistication, and from that point on we can never return to our original innocence. Peace lies at the center of our pain.

Denial is a safe place where we might find ourselves after the death of our child. This denial gives you moments away from your pain. It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle. This serves as a bandage. Survivors create a healthy and timely defense system which they shed by bits and pieces. As you become stronger you begin to face feelings you were denying.

Anger is another indication of the intensity of your love. Anger can be healthy as it affirms you can feel, that you did love and that you have lost. This anger is proof that you are moving because it will surface once you feel safe enough to know you will probably survive. It can also be used as an anchor, giving temporary structure to the nothingness of loss.

Depression during grief is a way for nature to keep us protected by shutting down the nervous system so that we can adapt to something we feel we cannot handle. As difficult as it is to endure, depression has elements that can be helpful in grief. It slows us down and allows us to take real stock of the loss. It makes us rebuild ourselves from the ground up. It clears our mind for growth. It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore.

Acceptance is where we find ourselves when instead of denying our feelings, we begin to listen to our needs; we move, we change, we grow, we evolve. We may start to reach out to others and become involved in their lives. We begin to reinvest in friendships and in our relationship with ourselves. We slowly begin to live again, but we cannot do so until we have given grief its time. In a strange way, as we move through grief, healing brings us closer to the child we lost. A new relationship begins.

Healthy grief has a flow, a natural continuing process, although that flow can include stopping to rest, reenergize, or take stock. This emotional rest gives us the opportunity to touch the pain directly for only so long until we have to back away. This is when distractions are needed. If we did not go back and forth emotionally, we could never have the strength to find peace in our loss.

~Dana Rogers, Mother of Rick Rogers
TCF, Galveston Co. TX

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**MEETINGS**

**April 2015**

**Wednesday, April 1, 2015**
7:30 PM Fairfax  
7:30 PM Leesburg

**Thursday, April 9, 2015**
7:30 PM Arlington

**Saturday, April 11, 2015**
2:00 PM Reston

**Wednesday, April 15, 2015**
7:30 PM Prince William  
7:00 PM Washington, DC

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Contact: Lois Copeland  
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arlingtontcf@gmail.com

**Fairfax Chapter**
Contact: Carol Marino  
carolmarino1@gmail.com

**Leesburg Chapter**
Contact: Bev or Bernie Elero  
(540) 882-9707

**Prince William Chapter**
Contact: Jennifer Malloch  
jmmalloch@gmail.com  
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**TCF Reston**
(for no surviving children)
Contact:  
Nancy Vollmer (VA)  
(703) 390-0589
Sharon Skarzynski (MD)  
(410) 757-5049

**Washington, DC Chapter**
Contact:  
Beverly Hill  
(202) 394-2851  
compassionate-friendsdc@gmail.com

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**Arlington Chapter**
Please send “Love Gifts” to:  
Wayne Hubbard  
23230 Linden Ct.  
Lexington Park, MD 20653

**Fairfax Chapter**
Please send “Love Gifts” to:  
Monica Clark  
5444 Ladue Lane  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
Attn: TCF

**Leesburg Chapter**
Please send “Love Gifts” to:  
Mrs. Anne Shattuck  
224 Walnut Ridge Ln.  
Palmyra, VA 22963

**Prince William Chapter**
Please send “Love Gifts” to:  
Melody Ridgeway  
9366 Dahlia Ct.  
Manassas, VA 20110

**TCF Reston**
North County Gov Bld.  
Reston Police Station Bld.  
12000 Bowman Towne Drive  
Reston, VA  
Second Saturdays 2:00 PM

**Washington, DC**
The Howard University  
Carnegie Bldg. Room B  
2395 Sixth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20059  
Third Wednesdays 7:00 PM
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...

~Greta Viney, TCF, Yakima, WA

Not Guilt, Regret
“We Need Not Walk Alone”

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children safe from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn’t we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, whether of anger or left unspoken, haunt us. Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child we can feel guilty about that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child the correct name for emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn’t feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt – we feel regret.

~Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN
Survivors of Suicide Group

Hope For The Day

What am I going to do today? Every day that is the most difficult question that a person who is suffering loss faces. Am I going to get up and get out of bed, OR am I going to pull the covers up over my head and not face the day? Grief is hard work. It is painful. It is lonely. And nobody can do the hardest part of grief work for you - feel the pain. Yet we have help along the way. Every one of us has an extra source of help called “HOPE” that is lying dormant inside the depths of the heart. And when we call on this HOPE we can be certain we will be given the strength we need to face the day - hour by hour at first, but we will be given the strength to get through each day! Are you having trouble facing today? Call on your source of HOPE and wait for an answer. Sometimes it comes in the form of a butterfly lighting upon your window sill. Maybe you will see hope in a fluffy white cloud that is in the sky. Perhaps you’ll see hope spelled out in a rainbow that follows a storm. Or maybe your hope will come in the still whisper of the gentle breeze blowing in your ear that reminds you that you are never, ever alone. Take courage in today and look for YOUR special HOPE! It’s there, and it will not fail you. Don’t worry about tomorrow, as that’s another day. Just look for your HOPE for TODAY and be assured that you will get through! “Today I will deal only with today and I know that I can do it hour by hour, minute by minute, hope by hope.”

~Clara Hinton, Cape Cod TCF Chapter
Fairfax Chapter

Welcome to New Members

Marjann Caldwell of Springfield, VA
mother of Anna Caldwell
Robin Legg of Lorton, VA
mother of Meredith Elise Legg Stapleton

Did you know?

If you purchase items on Amazon.com 0.5% of your purchase may go to The Compassionate Friends. Go to Smile.amazon.com to request TCF Fairfax as your charity. More information can also be found on The Compassionate Friends national webpage, www.compassionatefriends.org

March 2015 Fairfax TCF Meeting

The TCF Fairfax Meeting in March dealt with how Men and Women grieve differently. We divided into a Men’s Group and a Women’s Group and then rejoined to discuss and learn from both groups. Although everyone’s grief is unique and we refrain from making stereotypical judgments, we found commonality in the following observations:

From the Men’s Point of View:

Feel they have the same emotions as women - sadness, depression, anger, frustration, but don’t talk about it as much or at all, which can lead to communication issues.

Feel failure and guilt about the loss, as they were the leader/protector of the family.

Find forgiveness hard if someone caused the loss and now struggle to get over it.

Can’t talk with other male friends who have not lost a child but bonded with this group.

Men felt women were more spiritual in dealing with grief which was also a help to them.

From the Women’s Point of View:

Women’s grief is more outward, based on emotions that come from the heart.

Men’s grief is more inward, based in reason, they try to stay stoic and strong.

Women feel they were supposed to take care of the family/child and failed.

Women cry, express their feelings strongly and want men to talk about their feelings too.

Women want to be comforted, but think men don’t always know how.

Women talk to their friends about it, men seem to just keep busy doing things.

Meeting in the Middle:

Couples who have lost a child can form a close bond (of just the two of them together) in really understanding the loss of their child like no one else does.

They often walk the journey parallel to each other.

Each tries to do their part to help the other but in different ways.

Due to the great feedback, particularly from the men who were much more talkative in their male bonding group, we will be dividing into a men/women group a few times per year to serve their needs as we continue to delve into the many facets of grief experienced by both men/women, mothers/fathers, brothers/sisters. A special thanks to Fedor Yelicie for leading the men’s group and to all who participated in both groups.

~Carol Marino, TCF, Fairfax, VA Chapter Leader

Sincere Thanks for the Love Gifts

Dave & Cynthia Morrell
in memory of their son, Darren Morrell
Leesburg Chapter

Tread Gently

Tread gently near
The tender souls
Who’ve lost a child,
Whose hearts are
Bruised and bleeding;
For healing comes slowly,
With pain in every
Forward step.
Tears in every
Backward look.
So much love still flows
For that special one—
Arms reach out to hold
And back to cling.
But reach forward
Only humbly,
Fearful of forgetting
Or being disloyal
By going on.
There is guilt
In laughing,
Feeling pleasure,
Even being alive.
There are questions
Longings, heartaches.
But slowly, surely,
Strength and healing come,
In God’s own time—
Not as answer,
Nor as forgetting,
But as acceptance,
That this pain, this loss,
Is ours to live with
And somehow,
By God’s grace
To use to bless.

~Joan Splettstoesser, TCF, Monte Vista, CA

Be a Blessing

Be there (in person)
Be available with your time
Be compassionate
Be accepting
Be non-judgmental
Be kind
Be caring
Be gentle
Be a comforter
Be merciful
Be a good listener
Be encouraging
Be a light in the darkness
Be patient
Be empathetic
Be thoughtful
Be open to pain and suffering
Be supportive
Be a giver of hope
Be loving
Be an answer to prayer
Be a messenger of the hope of heaven
Be reliant on God’s grace to be a blessing.

~Bev Elero, Leesburg, VA TCF

A Warm Welcome

Ellen Osborne, mother of Caroline

Acceptance

It isn’t letting go. It’s going on.
It isn’t only shadows, and it isn’t only dawn.
It isn’t getting through it, it’s letting it come through me.
Not living in the darkness, though the darkness I can see.
It’s living with the sorrow but finding memories sweet.
It’s knowing that it takes both sides to make it all complete.
It’s soaking up the sunshine along with the rain.
It’s learning to let laughter live side by side with pain.
It’s knowing that the years won’t change a love that’s real.
Or take away the joy you brought, or the sorrow that I feel.
It’s knowing tears and laughter can live on the same face.
And your impression in my heart can never be erased.

~Gwen Flowers, TCF, Tyler, TX

Spring Thaws The Wounded Heart

That first spring
came too soon
why did daffodils
show sunny faces
around the grave stone
why did warm breezes blow
clouds away
my world, a gray dismal
had no room
for this season.
Now years later
the blossoms of love,
hope and healing
have broken through
grounds of utter despair
warmed by memories of you
I join the daffodils
bringing my own smile.

~Alice J. Wisler, Inspired by the life of David Paul Wisler

Easter Thoughts

One more winter overcome,
One more darkness
Turned to light and promise.
Winter is the price for spring,
Struggle is the price for life.
Even in sorrow, remember
To prepare your heart
For celebration—
Next spring perhaps,
Or the spring after that…

~Sascha Wagner
Just wanted to thank everyone for coming out to our first Comfort Crafts event! It was a really great time and I think we all got something positive out of it just being able to take time to create. Our next Comfort Crafts event is going to be held on April 11th from 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm at the Buckhall Church, Manassas, VA. We are going to be starting on our “Healing Journals.” Please send me an email if you plan to attend at mazzybluestudios@gmail.com. Hope to see you all there!

~Selina Farmer-Williams, TCF, Prince William, VA

As long as I can I will look at this world for both of us. As long as I can I will laugh with the birds, I will sing with the flowers, I will pray to the stars, for both of us.

~Sascha Wagner

Remembrance

What do we do when we love someone
But they have gone away
When all our days of bright sunlight
Have turned to shades of gray?
What do we say when no comfort comes
From words of love and hope
When efforts made seem pointless
As we fight each day to cope?
How do we act when we hear their name
And we cannot help but cry
This isn’t fair, they were barely here
It’s not time to say goodbye!
We promise them that they have made
A place within our hearts
Where they will live forever
Though we are far apart
We call upon the memories
As time allowed and then
Tuck them safely in our minds
To visit now and again

~Mary Ehmann ~ TCF, Valley Forge, PA

Thoughts About Progress

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to “recovery,” when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really?

Let’s keep in mind most of us have had no previous experience “recovering” from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference — it’s all new to us. Actually the “roller coaster” of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left — just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute.

After a couple of months we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM — back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let’s be realistic! There is something wrong — terribly wrong: we have each lost a child.

Let’s be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, “laughing on the outside — crying on the inside.” We want to be acceptable to society. “You are doing so well,” we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean, “getting over it,” it means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let’s not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person’s general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy. Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that, and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us, and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

~Mary Ehmann ~ TCF, Valley Forge, PA
Kathy Barrett, one of our members, says her mom used to keep this poem on her refrigerator and read it from time to time to gather a bit of strength from its words of wisdom:

Nine Requisites for Contented Living

- Health enough to make work a pleasure.
- Wealth enough to support your needs.
- Strength to battle with difficulties and overcome them.
- Grace enough to confess your sins and forsake them.
- Patience enough to toil until some good is accomplished.
- Charity enough to see some good in your neighbor.
- Love enough to move you to be useful and helpful to others.
- Faith enough to make real the things of God.
- Hope enough to remove all anxious fears concerning the future.

-~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German Author b. 1749- d. 1832)

Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery.

-~J.K. Rowling

Wounds don’t heal the way you want them to, they heal the way they need to. It takes time for wounds to fade into scars. It takes time for the process of healing to take place. Give yourself that time. Give yourself that grace. Be gentle with your wounds. Be gentle with your heart. You deserve to heal.

-~Dele Olanubi

The fact that you’re struggling doesn’t make you a burden. It doesn’t make you unlovable or undesirable or undeserving of care. It doesn’t make you too much or too sensitive or too needy. It makes you human. Everyone struggles. Everyone has a difficult time coping, and at times, we all fall apart. During these times, we aren’t always easy to be around — and that’s okay. No one is easy to be around one hundred percent of the time.

-~Daniell Koepke

When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.

-~Haruki Murakami
Washington, DC Chapter

As we attempt to recover and rebound from one of the coldest winters we have experienced in many years our thoughts gladly and willingly turn to spring. However, for the bereaved this can be a time of mixed emotions. While the rest of the world embraces the newness of spring, anticipation can often make our pain and longing that much more acute. My prayer is that we all find peace and comfort as we prepare to celebrate spring, the season of hope.

~Veronica Stubbs, TCF, Washington, DC
Darrin’s Mom, Jay and Sean’s Aunt

Somewhere It’s Spring

It’s spring in some places now. And in some places it will be winter for another couple of weeks (months?). Somewhere the tulips are beginning to push through the soft earth and somewhere the birds are returning to sing. Somewhere the air is warmer, the breezes more gentle, the land begins to awaken from a frozen sleep. The trees are beginning to bud and even the air smells fresh and clean.

Somewhere windows are open and the sound of the vacuum can be heard, marking the beginning of spring cleaning… a ritual given to us long before our forefathers set sail for a new world. Somewhere the last holiday decoration is being packed away (those holiday diehards!) and somewhere a lawn mower is being readied for a new season.

As spring approaches, we begin to shed our overcoats and stand in front of the mirror… examining the body for the extra lumps we’ve accumulated during the hibernation season. We lace up our jogging shoes and make our way to the sidewalks, high school tracks and to the gym, eager to strip away the added inches that came because it was dark and gloomy and food seemed to soothe and comfort during the dark days of winter.

Somewhere someone is planning a wedding, a graduation, a family reunion. Vacation brochures begin to appear and plans are discussed in anticipation of summer.

Spring is the reawakening season… the great wake up call for the earth. Somewhere, someone is answering that get up call… greeting the new season with vim, vigor, and vitality. There are smiles and renewed energy and hope seems to simply float on the softened air. Somewhere… all that is occurring, but not within me.

It’s still snowing inside my being. It’s still winter inside here and there aren’t any tulips about to burst open in my spirit. I’ve still got my snow boots on and the sun hasn’t quite made it to my world. It’s still winter inside me… I wonder if spring will ever come.

Oh, there have been moments of spring in the past. Wonderful, warm fleeting moments. Moments when I “forgot” about the pain, the emptiness, the despair, the grief. Moments when the world was right side up and the music made me dance. But they were only moments and I’m waiting for spring to arrive in me.

Hope… the major ingredient in spring, seems to elude my grasp. Just when I think there might be some hope, a memory comes creeping across my soul and it’s winter again in my heart.

It’s this lack of hope that seems especially cruel during spring time. I thought this winter inside me would end and I was looking forward to a more peaceful time in my life. I thought we would settle down, plant a garden and live our life filled with memories and the opportunity to make new ones. HA! I thought grief would end at some point. The books all say it will… everyone else looks like their grief has subsided… how come spring missed us?!

A season without hope is the ultimate in despair and I’ve spent too many such seasons. Where does hope go and how do I get it back?

Hope is that elusive something that keeps us moving, even in the dark. We are only powerless when we have no hope, no vision, no faith in our own abilities. We may be helpless at times. We may question the arrival of spring but we are only truly powerless when we have no hope no dreams…

Don’t lose the hope! Search for it! Fight for it! Demand its return. Hope changes as we do and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found -- in the moments of our memories. We probably won’t ever have totally happy lives again… We probably didn’t have that kind of life anyway, we just thought we did.

Don’t let death rob you of the moments of joy still to be remembered, and found. Don’t let grief rob you of those spring places where love and joy live forever in the heart.

Somewhere it is spring… Deal with the anger, the guilt, the depression as it comes and then let it go as you can… so there is room for joy to come again. Let hope come in… it’s spring.

~Darcie Sims

Love Gift

The DC Chapter gratefully acknowledges a love gift from Jean Pierce in memory of her son Dorian Parker II

The Compassionate Friends • Northern Virginia and DC

APRIL 2015
Resources

Survivors of Suicide
www.survivorsofsuicide.com

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org 888-333-2377

Parents of Murdered Children
www.pomc.com 888-818-7662

Haven of Northern Virginia
www.havenofnova.org 703-941-7000

CrisisLink
www.crisislink.org 703-527-4077

SHARE (pregnancy & infant loss support)
www.nationalshare.org 800-821-6819

MISS Foundation (pregnancy/infant loss support)
www.missfoundation.org. (national)
www.dcmissfoundation.org (local chapter)
Roberta Quick 703-728-8446

Washington Regional Transplant Community
www.beadonor.org 703-641-0100

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-8255 (TALK)

Other helpful websites:
- www.griefnet.org
- www.goodgrief.org
- www.thebereavementjourney.com
- www.griefwatch.com
- www.journeyofhearts.org
- www.bereavedparentsusa.org
- www.healingheart.net
- www.childrenofdome.com
- www.spacebetweenbreaths.com
- www.holdingontolove.com
- www.griefhaven.com
- www.centerforloss.com

Men Do Cry

I heard quite often “men don’t cry.”

Though no one ever told me why
So when I fell and skinned a knee
No one came to comfort me.

And when some bully boy at school
Would pull a prank so mean and cruel
I’d quickly learn to turn and quip,
“It doesn’t hurt” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years
I learned to stifle any tears.
Though “Be a big boy.” it began,
Quite soon I learned to “Be a man.”

And I could play that stoic role
While storm and tempest wracked my soul.
No pain or setback could there be
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby
And helplessly watched my son die.
And quickly found to my surprise
That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame
I cannot play that “big boy” game,
And openly, without remorse
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can’t abide
A man you’ve seen who’s often cried,
Reach out to him with all your heart
As one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see
Their loss of immortality.
And tears will come in endless streams
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

~Ken Falk, TCF, Northwestern CT
# Our April Children Remembered on their birthdays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connor Wilkinson</td>
<td>Apr 1</td>
<td>Caroline &amp; Alan Wilkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andres Callo Cajiao</td>
<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>Ximena Cajiao</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Christopher Sheehy</td>
<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>Laura &amp; Daniel Sheehy</td>
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<td>Garrett Wesley Robinson</td>
<td>Apr 5</td>
<td>Bessie Hayes</td>
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<td>Eric Unger</td>
<td>Apr 5</td>
<td>Sharron Unger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talmage Brock</td>
<td>Apr 6</td>
<td>Deanne &amp; Bret Anita Das Brock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathanial Jonathan Fossett</td>
<td>Apr 6</td>
<td>Ken &amp; Tammy Fossett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdul Michaux</td>
<td>Apr 6</td>
<td>Deborah Battle</td>
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<td>Alan David Castro</td>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Deborah Castro</td>
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<td>Jonathan LaBroi</td>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Alexis &amp; Jonathan LaBroi</td>
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<td>Marina Landi</td>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Frederica Landi</td>
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<td>Neale Thompson</td>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>David &amp; Angie Neel</td>
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<td>Matt Enos</td>
<td>Apr 8</td>
<td>Debby Tinker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Peterson</td>
<td>Apr 8</td>
<td>Dolly Peterson</td>
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Please contact your local chapter leadership about any errors or omissions.
Our April Children Remembered on their remembrance days

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Please contact your local chapter leadership about any errors or omissions.
The Mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

“Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson