



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NORTHERN VIRGINIA AND DC CHAPTERS

ARLINGTON, FAIRFAX, LEESBURG, PRINCE WILLIAM,
RESTON, VIRGINIA AND WASHINGTON, DC

VOLUME 20, NO. 4

MAY 2011

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Register Now for the TCF National Conference July 15-17, 2011 Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Compassionate Friends national conferences have always been a great healing experience for bereaved families and TCF's 34th National Conference, to be held July 15-17, 2011, in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, will be no exception. With the motto *Shining Stars – Guiding Hope*, the conference is now open for registration.



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



Our members can register for the conference online or by downloading a conference registration brochure from the national website. If you don't have Internet access, you can call the National Office Toll Free at 877-969-0010 to be sent the registration brochure.

For full information, visit TCF's National Website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on **TCF 2011 National Conference – Minneapolis** under **News & Events**.

Bereaved Parents of the USA 2011 National Gathering

Bereaved Parents of the USA is hosting its 2011 National Gathering on July 28-31 in Reston, VA, at the Sheraton Reston Hotel (near Dulles International Airport).

This year's theme is *Monumental Journey of the Heart*. Featured speakers include Darcie Sims, Rosemary Smith, Mitch Carmody, Drs. Gloria & Heidi Horsley, Becky Greer, Dave Roberts, and Ron Villano. Inspirational music will be provided by Alan Pedersen.

For additional information, check out the BP/USA website, www.bereavedparentsusa.org. For questions or more information, contact Jodi Norman at 703-910-6277 or via e-mail at bpusa@nova.yahoo.com.

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webmaster@tcfleesburg.org

Prince William Website

<http://www.tcfprincewilliam.org>
webmaster@tcfprwm.org

MAY 2011 MEETINGS**May 4 (first Wednesdays)**

7:30 PM Fairfax Chapter
7:30 PM Leesburg Chapter

May 12 (second Thursdays)

7:30 PM Arlington Chapter

May 14 (second Saturdays)

2-4 PM TCF Reston

May 18 (third Wednesdays)

7-9 PM Washington DC Chapter

May 19 (third Thursdays)

7:30 PM Prince William Chapter

Arlington Chapter

Contact: Lois Copeland
(301) 530-1115
loiscopeland52@gmail.com

Please send
"Love Gifts" to:
Kent Womack
1013 Riverside Dr.
Woodstock, VA 22664

Trinity Presbyterian Church
5533 N.16th St
Arlington, VA

Second Thursdays 7:30 PM

Fairfax Chapter

Contact: Carol Marino
Carolmarino1@gmail.com
or Diane Burakow
dkburakow@verizon.net
Chapter Phone:
(703) 622-3639

Please send
"Love Gifts" to:
Monica Clark
5444 Ladue Lane
Fairfax, VA 22030
Attn: TCF

OLD ST. MARY'S HALL,
next to St. Mary's Historic
Church and Cemetery
Fairfax Station Rd
and Route 123
Fairfax, VA 22030

First Wednesdays 7:30 PM

Leesburg Chapter

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

Please send
"Love Gifts" to:
Mrs. Anne Shattuck
224 Walnut Ridge Ln.
Palmyra, VA 22963

St. James Episcopal Church
Janney Parlor
14 Cornwall St NW
Leesburg, VA

First Wednesdays 7:30 PM

Prince William Chapter

Contact: Ken Adams
(703) 361-6574
adamsksbjk@comcast.net

Please send
"Love Gifts" to:
Melody Ridgeway
9366 Dahlia Ct.
Manassas, VA 20110

Grace United Methodist Church
Library, 2nd Floor
9750 Wellington Rd
Manassas, VA

Third Thursdays 7:30 PM

**TCF Reston
(for no surviving children)**

Contact:
Nancy Vollmer (VA)
(703) 860-8587
Sharon Skarzynski (MD)
(410) 757-5049

North County Gov Bld.
Reston Police Station Bld.
12000 Bowman Towne Drive
Reston, VA

**Second Saturdays 2-4 PM
(for no surviving children)**

Washington, DC Chapter

Contact: Olivia Gunter
(301) 552-2798

Please send
"Love Gifts" to:
Coralease Ruff
3314 Applegrove Ct.
Oak Hill, VA 20171

The Howard University
The Blackburn Center
2397 Sixth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20059

Third Wednesdays 7-9 PM

Resources and Information

The Compassionate Friends

home page: www.compassionatefriends.org

home page links:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Chat rooms

877-969-0010



Survivors of Suicide

www.suivivorsofsuicide.com

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org

888-333-2377

Parents of Murdered Children

www.natipomc@aol.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.nationalshareoffice.com

800-821-6819

MISS Foundation (miscarriage, stillborns, infant loss support)

www.missfoundation.org

local chapter: www.dcmissfoundaton.org

703-728-8446 Roberta Quirk

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

Please let us know if you've found a helpful website or organization you'd like to share.

For Siblings

A Sibling Dies

For Don

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over. How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother was 24; and I was 19 years old. Our family of five was irretrievably shattered. Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden. Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments. "Give me back my family - give me back my Christmas, you creep, Give me back your laughter," I want to shout at him. Who am I to miss him? Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry? Well, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor after all. One doesn't get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean. When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it's a waltz; other years a tango. It doesn't seem to matter if it's two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died, I get out my dancing shoes. I don't go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me. Some years I announce - around November 25th, "I'm over this." I act accordingly. I shop for Christmas Cards and don't go near my dancing shoes. It doesn't matter. They find me. It's not like I didn't have therapy. I've had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, creampuff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy . . . Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere. Seriously, losing a sibling is heart wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write. Other than to therapists, I've spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself? I adored my brother Don - he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother's energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part angora. We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil's lane, and my mother mourned my brother until the day she died. I'm sad to say that we never had Don's picture in our

home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago; so much remained hidden. Self-healing groups were non-existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving. I couldn't save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn't dead, I'd sure like to be. This is grief. And it does soften over time. It softens like water softens rock, in its flowing, gentle, rushing, mysterious way. It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep, knowing that love knits the bones of despair together, tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before. Knowing that the fires of your being burn the dross of despair. Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure and can take it and transform the pain into joy. Joy for having known this person, for a day or ten years or two months. Joy for having the courage to be. For knowing yourself in many garments. For taking a risk to love anyone again: a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself. The broken heart opens and mends itself. In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening. Joy seeps into me. After all, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor.

© BY L. NICOLE DEAN, IN MEMORY OF DON

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The Bitter Tears of Love Lost

Because of my status in society
I can look below to poverty
and realize no matter how frustrated I get,
I will always be very lucky to have a family
who loves and cares for me.
But still the tears roll down my face
and my cheeks are forever stained
because I know as long as I live
my heart will always be pained.
I was left in shock, pain, and fear,
left with your unspoken words which I will never hear
But in my days of sorrow when I feel that I will fall
I can only repeat the phrase to myself,
"It is better to have loved and lost than to never have
loved at all."

— Peter Smith, age 15; sibling to Gregory Smith

From the Editor...

Sometime during the last two years, as I have relentlessly read everything I can get my hands on about grief, I found the book *Let's Take the Long Way Home* by Gail Caldwell, an account of losing a best friend quickly and prematurely to cancer. In her book, she mentioned that she somehow had expected to get through life only being called on to bear "life's ordinary bruises". That phrase has stuck with me and I use it often. I know I got by with ordinary bruises for 56 years. When you lose a child, you learn the difference. Many people have to bear more than "life's ordinary bruises". Many people don't. But many do.

Recently, Ms. Caldwell reviewed *The Long Goodbye*, a new book by Meghan O'Rourke. The title of her review in *The New York Times* was "What Grief is Really Like." Those of us in this organization know what grief is really like. Ms. Caldwell highlights the "passage from the innocence of a relatively privileged life to the wider and more desolate country that great loss imposes." She acknowledges that "the territory of grief...is

both cruel and commonplace."

I know that personally I struggle with wanting to remember my son but continuing to find myself "assaulted" by the memories which bring unspeakable pain to me still. Ms. Caldwell puts it better: "memory is both the curse of grief and the eventual talisman against it; what at first seems unbearable becomes the succor that can outlast pain."

In The Compassionate Friends, many of us will have an opportunity to participate in a butterfly release on Mother's Day. The butterfly has become an important metaphor for TCF and I think has brought comfort to many parents. A different image that speaks to me is the phoenix, a fabled bird in Greek mythology. At the end of its life cycle, the bird burned itself on a funeral pyre and another phoenix is dramatically reborn from those ashes. I think that's what we are trying to do: give birth to our new selves from what seems to be a pile of ashes. It's hard work.

— *Peggi Johnson*
May 2011

Combined Summer Issue

The August & September issues of this newsletter will be combined. Material for both of those months (articles, poems, tributes, etc.) needs to be provided to your chapter reporter in July.

"The bereaved cannot communicate with the unbereaved."

—*Dame Iris Murdoch,*
British author and philosopher

New Layout of Newsletter

You will notice some differences in this current newsletter. We are striving to standardize our layout and format to make the newsletter as readable as possible and to create a template that makes the publication process more manageable. We are also printing information of use to all members (such as regional and national announcements, resource websites, and telephone numbers) on one page to reduce repetition and to give each chapter more room for their content on their chapter's page (or pages).

*MARGUERITE KELLY, writer of the nationally syndicated column **The Family Almanac** since 1979, recently responded in her column to a reader who had written in struggling with grief following the losses of her husband and her father. When Ms. Kelly was contacted for permission to print excerpts from her column in this TCF newsletter, this is how she replied, "I am honored that you think this excerpt would be worthy of **The Compassionate Friends** – an organization that I have known and admired for many years and recommended many times. Use it with my blessing, and know that it is given with sympathy for your loss." Marguerite Kelly is a fellow bereaved parent, having lost her son Michael Kelly in 2003. Michael was a journalist covering the war in Iraq.*

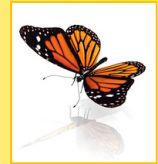
If you think that you should be done with the blues after just two months or a year, you're asking way too much of yourself. The more love you have given to someone, and the more he has given to you, the harder the waves of grief will hit you when he dies. Such is the price of love. You can expect these waves to keep hitting you for the next few years. But you shouldn't regret your grief, for it is giving you the time you need to draw on the strengths and the goodness of those you've loved and lost, and to dwell on the memories you have shared. As you stumble along, you'll find that grief is a journey and that you're going to feel pain along the way, no matter what you do. The pain will be less intense, however, and less frequent, if you remember the happy times more than the sad ones. You wouldn't want grief to define you. You may get rid of sad feelings in a creative way. You may not be able to paint or sculpt, but you can tear up scraps of paper and turn them into a collage that will be meaningful, if only for you. Or perhaps you can write your feelings in a journal. If you compare your early entries to ones you just wrote, you'll be pleased and somewhat surprised, to see that your mood has gotten brighter by the day. You might also grieve less if you try something you've never tried before, such as stargazing, bird watching, gardening or kayaking, because every new skill will introduce you to new friends and new ideas. You'll dig your way out of grief best, however, when you start paying more attention to the living than the dead. There is always someone who needs a meal to be delivered, an errand to be run, or a yard to be mowed. You should meet these needs whenever you can, because it is the right thing to do and also because you don't know what tomorrow may bring. We've been told to live each day as if it was the last one we'd ever have. But we might be nicer to our loved ones if we thought that it would be the last one that they would ever have.

Excerpted from **The Family Almanac** by Marguerite Kelly

Grief's Garden

When our innocence has ended
and the dark night has begun,
despair and heartache vie with numbness,
mind and body, shocked, unstrung.

Levels of pain and understanding
must be reached ere we see gain.
Taking longer than expected,
no one else can know the pain.



Grief, like clearing virgin farmland,
full of boulders, stumps and stones,
back breaking and bone crushing,
and, in great part, done alone.

Think when feeling strong emotion,
"Another boulder moved today."
When it's felt with all your being,
it can then be moved away.

If we feel the stone's not moving,
we may have to look beneath,
bring to sunlight what's in darkness,
so what's there may be released.

Treat yourself to gifts and blessings
that will help to keep you strong.
Give yourself to happy moments,
feel each feeling, then move on.



Work and work to clear the garden,
feel transcendence in the toil.
Under all the stones and boulders
will be found much fertile soil.

Watered by our weary weeping,
warmed by tender words and sighs,
green shoots sprouting all around us,
springtime comes through open eyes.

When we look to find what's growing,
we are shocked to see ourselves.
Now replacing fearsome chaos,
an awakening garden dwells.

— Genesee Bourdeau Gentry

STARS IN THE DEEPEST NIGHT, 1999

Arlington Chapter

Remembering Andy

Spring is upon us again and with that comes the memory of Andy's birth and death. Both are such vivid memories and both so different. So hard to imagine how there could be so much joy and so much sorrow in one month of the year. We will go to the cemetery and plant flowers at a grave that we wish was not there. If we had a garden filled with a flower for each time we think of him, we could walk for miles and never reach the end. But the planting helps as well as the beautiful blooms at a place so forlorn and sad.

*In Memory of Andy Womack,
May 1969 – May 1998. By Mom*

— Katy Womack, TCF Arlington, VA

The August and September newsletters will be combined and published at the end of July. Please send me any stories or poems by July 10. If you want to make a love gift donation, please have it to Kent Womack by the first week of July.

May

Springtime and Mother's Day coincide. They celebrate birth and renewal. We watch in awe as the bulbs bloom, buds burst out into flowers on the trees, the return of the chirping birds, and our children are set free from winter's hold. We celebrate Motherhood.

For those of us who have lost a child, sibling, or grandchild spring is a reminder of loss, not rebirth. Our children won't smell the daffodils, or marvel at the blue sky and hear the birds sing. I found out that first spring, though, that all is not dark. David had been gone for just two months when I stepped outside and felt the warm breeze against my face, smelled the beautiful blooms and heard the birds chirping, I said, "what a beautiful day". After a few moments I realized, in spite of my loss, I could still appreciate the beauty of spring.

Have a gentle and peaceful Spring and Mother's Day

— Lois Copeland, TCF Arlington, VA

Taylor

I miss you terribly as the anniversary of your departure nears. We missed our vacation to New England, Nantucket and the White Mountains last year. I missed the kayaking trips we would have taken in the summer when you were supposed to be home from school. I miss the late night games of Scrabble or listening to you and your brother or friends having fun just talking together. I miss all of the trips to DC to have dinner or lunch on a random weekend with you and your MaMa. I miss watching you play soccer, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee or wrestling and the way you positively interacted with everyone (yes everyone). I miss the way you always found a way to make us laugh. We could never stay mad when you were here or on the phone or texting me while I was working down in Mobile. The winter passed and your brother and I could not make our annual ski trip without you. We will someday but it was missed this year. I will miss you come home from school after your final exams. I miss you Taylor, so very, very much.

*I miss you and will love you forever.
Daddy*

— Wayne Hubbard, TCF Arlington, VA

Dearest My Taylor

I simply miss you more and more as time goes by, your smile, your husky voice, tight squeezed hug and picking me up...never get to used to the reality, you won't be able to come home to Daddy, me, Sean, Biscuit and Zingi. I am so sorry your life was cut so short. I didn't realize how happy our life was when we all had each other and that was all we needed. Taylor, you will be with me always...I love thinking of you. You will live in our lives, our thoughts and hearts throughout our life. Please help MaMa keep going forward somehow. Even if just little baby steps, my love will be with you forever my dear baby.

MaMa

— Kay Hubbard, TCF Arlington, VA

Love Gifts

**Kayoko and Wayne Hubbard, in loving memory of their son,
Taylor Hubbard**

**Kent and Katy Womack, in loving memory of their son,
Andrew "Andy" Womack**

Fairfax Chapter

Welcome to our new members

We welcome our new families with open arms:

Janell Luff

of Alexandria, Va, mother of Devin Rae Luff

Tiffany Trojca

of Alexandria, Va, sister of Cord Duff

Joan Wedell

of Fairfax, Va, mother of Scott Wedell

Sincere thanks for the love gift

*June Barry, in memory of her granddaughter,
Ryan Marie Boykin*

The Price of Love

In loving memory of Casey Elizabeth Butler

By Robin Sanford

On June 11th, I lost my daughter, Casey, in a car accident. There were days to come since that day that my grief would overwhelm me. I would cry until I thought that surely, there couldn't possibly be any tears left, and still they would fall.

One day, I received an email from a dear friend. He sent me an anonymous quote:

"Grief never ends, but it changes. It is a passage, not a place to stay.

The sense of loss must give way if we are to value the life that was lived.

Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith. It is the price of love."

It has now been several years since Casey died. And yes, my grief is still there, but it has changed. It is a slow underlying part of my life that will never go away. Sometimes it bursts to life and I am once again taken to that awful place of deep sorrow. I miss her smile, and her beauty and grace. I miss her laugh and the sound of her voice. There are those days where there is no consolation. She is gone and I will never see her again in this life. I hope beyond all reason that I will see her in the next. So I keep this quote where I can read it again and again. It reminds me that I had her for 18 wonderful years. That if I could, I would not trade one single moment of those 18 years, if it would spare me the pain of losing her. That yes, if there was a choice to be made, I would choose to pay the price of love.

In Loving Memory of



Leigh Anne Marino

May 15 ~ Dec 8

Leigh Anne . . . the cherry blossoms on the Yoshino tree are blooming again. The tree we planted in memory of you grows strong and healthy, yet so delicate and beautiful. There, we leave flowers for you and Nikki and somehow imagine you are both watching and happy. You are with us always, but spring especially brings such thoughts of you. There is a poem that reads . . .

***"When I was a stone I lay asleep
for a million years dreaming of trees,
and when I was a tree I whispered my name
to the birds who sang to me,
and when I was a bird I watched the way
humans live from my place in the sky,
by the time I was human, I believed
in the glory of change so I wasn't afraid to die."***

Love forever, Mom and Dad

Submitted by John and Carol Marino



Butterfly Release

The annual TCF Fairfax Chapter Mother's Day Butterfly Release will be held on May 8th. Please order your Butterflies well in advance (see the Chapter e-mail for details on ordering and confirmation). The Butterfly Release takes about 30-40 minutes and is a beautiful event to honor the memory of our children.

Fairfax Chapter

**In Loving Memory of
Tiffanie Amber Collins
on the 15 year Anniversary of her Sunset Date
and her 35th Birthday**

Tiffanie's Timeless Gift

Feeling a little sadder than usual, one afternoon I was going through my nightstand. As I reached into the drawer examining the contents, my hand brushed the corner of a small box hidden in the corner. It was a gift box decorated in red paper with a small gold ribbon and bow. Glancing at the label, I remembered it was a present from our daughter Tiffanie many years ago. I had completely forgotten about it, and the box had remained in my drawer for many years. The attached label reads:

To: Mom + Dad

*This is a very special gift
That you can never see.
The reason it's so special is
It's just for you from me.
Whenever you are lonely
Or ever feeling blue,
You only have to hold this gift
And know I think of you.
You never can unwrap it.
Please leave the ribbon tied.
Just hold the box close to your heart . . .
It's filled with love inside.*

Love Tiff

So many years later Tiffanie's gift brought me comfort, just as she intended. I don't know how she knew someday, long after she had left us, I would need her special embrace. As the fifteenth anniversary of her death approaches, each time I hold that box in my hands, I am comforted all over again. Thanks Tiffanie! Love Mom and Dad



Special Thank You

Jane and John Trimble - thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your past service as Chapter Co-Leader and Treasurer (respectively) for the last 4 years. Your children in heaven, Leisa Reno Trimble and John Christopher Trimble would be so proud that you did this in their honor. You have helped this Chapter and so many bereaved parents along the way. We are thankful for all that you brought and shared and know that you will continue to give in other ways as you remain a part of the TCF Fairfax Chapter family.

For all of our members...

My Special List

I have a list of folks I know...all written in a book,
And every now and then...I go and take a look.

That is when I realize these names... they are a part,
not of the book they're written in...but taken from the heart.

For each Name stands for someone...who has
crossed my path sometime,
and in that meeting they have become...the reason
and the rhyme.

Although it sounds fantastic...for me to make this claim,
I really am composed...of each remembered name.

Although you're not aware...of any special link,
just knowing you, has shaped my life...more than you
could think.

So please don't think my greeting...as just a mere routine,
your name was not...forgotten in between.

For when I send a greeting...that is addressed to you,
it is because you're on the list...of folks I'm indebted
to.

So whether I have known you...for many days or few,
in some ways you have a part...in shaping things I do.

I am but a total...of many folks I've met,
you are a friend I would prefer...never to forget.



Chapter Treasury

Monica Clark has been voted in as the new Chapter Treasurer. Monica brings a lot of experience to this position as she has been an accountant and previous Treasurer in other organizations. She has stepped down from the Chapter Secretary position to accept his new role. Thanks Monica, we know you will do a great job in honor of your daughter Cindy! For members wishing to send Donations to the TCF Fairfax Chapter please send them to:

Monica Clark
5444 Ladue Lane
Fairfax, VA 22030
Attn: TCF Fairfax

As always, checks are made payable to TCF Fairfax Chapter and we are always thankful for the Love Gifts!

Leesburg Chapter

A Letter to My Mom from Heaven

Dear Mom,
 In my mind and in my heart you are always with me. I am part of you and you are part of me, forever. I can still hear the echo of your sweet voice through the years – singing me a lullaby, reading stories to me, laughing at my jokes, praising me, encouraging me, praying for me, and telling me that I'm special and that you love me. In my memory you are smiling at me. I can still feel your loving arms around me and I can feel the kisses you give me. You are always near to me! You hold me close in your heart as I hold you close in my heart. I am happy here in heaven and there are no more tears of sadness. God showed me the tears that you have cried because He keeps them all in a bottle. I have been told by an angel that the tears turn to gold. We will be together again, mom. My love for you is eternal. I love you always and forever.

A Blessed Mother's Day to you from heaven.
 Love, Your Eternal Child

Dear Bereaved Moms,
 I pray for a blessed Mother's Day for you. My heart goes out to each of you with love and compassion. Your child or children have died but love never dies. I'm praying for you to have a Mother's Day filled with love, peace and beauty. I pray for God to give you a sweet little sign of love from your child/children.
 God Bless you with love,

Beverly Elero, Leesburg, VA, TCF

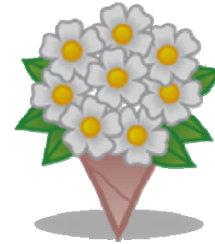
*"...these three remain: faith, hope and love.
 But the greatest of these is love. Love never fails."*

1 Corinthians 13:13, 8a

A Warm Welcome

Cindy Evarts, Mom of Tristan Hugh
 Stephanie Kennedy Sister of Tristan Hugh
 Judy Erskine, Grandmother of Tristan Hugh

Margaret Watson, Mom of Sarah



Wishing You Comfort on Mother's Day

Motherhood is an eternal place within your heart...a sacred place that belongs to you. Deep within the very essence of your existence, you are all mothers, whether you have living children or not—you're still mothers—beautiful and loving mothers. And while you may not be able to care for your child/children on earth, that sacred place of motherhood remains within you. Remember always that the love of a mother is stronger than any other force in the universe. The love of a mother transcends death.

Joanne, TCF

Never To Be Forgotten

They say you died at birth...
 How wrong they are!
 For nine months
 Wrapped in love's cocoon,
 You seemed already
 One of us...
 How we laughed and dreamed.
 When you came
 That snowy night
 And gently closed your eyes
 Against all cruelty,
 Your tiny hands forged
 Tighter family ties.
 Your special warmth,
 A blessed radiance.

TCF Regina, SK, Newsletter

Prince William Chapter

Bent But Not Broken

To the mother who has lost her only child, or has no surviving children, the thought of Mother's Day sends a stabbing pain that only the ones of us who are in this situation can understand. We begin to notice Mother's Day cards slipped in right after Valentine's Day along with the Easter cards. Even before Easter the TV advertising starts. We try to blot this all out but our subconscious keeps reminding us, the day is coming closer.

For the first two years we celebrated Mother's Day for my mother and sister very quietly. The third year after my daughter Shawna's death, we decided to go to a local restaurant featuring a nice buffet. We arrived early hoping to avoid the crowd. A very flustered hostess greeted us and found a table for us. The tables had been pushed close together to accommodate more people. It was already becoming very crowded. She asked the question, "How many mothers?" It was then we noticed the flowers she was carrying. Someone managed to stammer out, three – three mothers. She handed us each a flower, while glancing around to find a table for the next group of people. She didn't notice the one she handed me was pretty battered.

My sister wanted to give me hers or get another. "No, it's ok," I said. The stem was bent, but not broken completely. A wilted tired flower was hanging from the stem.

I brought it home and propped it up in a glass of water to revive it. You see, I could identify with that flower. As a mother without my child, I have felt so bruised and battered. Somehow through all the pain, tears and loneliness, like the flower, I have been bent but never quite broken.

*Donna Frechec
TCF, Enid, OK*

Adjusted

"It's been several years since you died,"
They say, "Surely, you must have adjusted by now."
Yes, I am adjusted - -
Adjusted to feeling pain
And sadness and grief
And guilt and loss.
Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.
Adjusted to seeing people made uncomfortable upon
Hearing me say, "My son died."
Adjusted to losing my best friend because I'm not
always "up."
Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious
And TCF meetings are "morbid."
Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.
Knowing I won't hear his voice, but listening for it still.
Knowing I won't see him drive his Toronado. But
staring at every one I see.
Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday
And wishing for just one more time with him.
Adjusted: As life goes on - -
To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet
To wear a bandage - - just because
I am still bleeding...

*Shirley Blakely Curle
TCF, Central AR*

Thought for the Day

It is pretty impossible to remember back to our babyhood days, when first learning to walk meant a lot of stumbling and falling. But things got easier and we moved faster when someone held our hand. Being a bereaved parent is something like that—a lot of stumbling. But I have found some "compassionate friends" to hold my hand and make things easier. I'm walking a lot better now, even though I still stumble and fall at times.

TCF, NW Central Jersey Chapter

Reston Chapter

Reston, VA Compassionate Friends is a group of parents who are now childless. We meet at the North County Government Center, Reston Police Station Bldg., 12000 Bowman Towne Drive, in Reston, VA, from 2 — 4 PM on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Virginia residents call Nancy Vollmer at 703-860-8587; Maryland residents contact Sharon Skarzynski at 410-757-5049 or benskal@verizon.net. If you would like to put a poem or article on this page, contact Kathy Grapski at specialkmg@aol.com. Deadline is the 5th of each month.

A Mother provides us with two things –
roots and wings.

— Author Unknown

Mother's Day can be one of the most difficult holidays of the year for us. We smile at our memories of happier times when our child was with us. But we are sad because they are not here with us now. Having a plan for the day may help, whether you go to the movies, garden or have dinner with other parents who are bereaved. One suggestion I saw was to bake your child's favorite cookies or dessert and take them to a Sunday School Class or a children's wing at a hospital or just enjoy them yourself!

— Kathy Grapski

A Letter to Mom

Mom, please don't feel guilty, it was just my time to go.
I see you are still feeling sad, and the tears just seem to flow.
We all come to earth for our lifetime, and for some it's not many years.
I don't want you to keep crying, you are shedding so many tears.
I haven't really left you, even though it may seem so.
I have just gone to my heavenly home, and I'm closer than you know.
Just believe that when you say my name I'm standing next to you,
I know you long to see me, but there's nothing I can do.
But I'll still send you messages and hope you understand,
That when your time comes to "cross over" I'll be there to take your hand.

— Joy Curmutt, Bereaved Parents of the USA

The Butterfly Effect

To most eyes, a butterfly invokes feelings of wonderment and delight. Generally speaking, the butterfly is a symbol of life in transformation. In the eyes of the bereaved, a butterfly's transformation is symbolic to not only the loss of a loved one, but also to the renewal of hope for themselves. As the unofficial symbol of lost children, it represents the child as it emerges from death, to a light, a beautiful life, flying about as carefree beings, visiting us when we least expect it, and flying away to make others feel awe and joy. The butterfly also represents the journey of those bereaved starting with the unspeakable death of a child, the challenges parents must face in working through their grief to the emergence of a new life in celebration of that child.

Following are suggestions for creating a butterfly garden:

- ✿ Use the right plants, such as milkweed, butterfly bush, salvia aster, hibiscus to name a few.
- ✿ Herbs also draw butterflies: dill, parsley, fennel and lavender.
- ✿ Use a sunny location with brightly colored plants and pots. Landscaping plants in clusters offer a more natural setting, which is more conducive to attracting butterflies.

Butterflies may not appear in the first season of growth, so wait for the next season for the butterfly show! Planting a butterfly garden has been a source of healing for several chapter members.

— TCF, Frederick, MD



Washington, DC Chapter

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Elizabeth's father)

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(Amber's Sister)
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A Mother's Journey Through the Valley

Is anybody out there listening? Help, oh help! I am drowning in a sea of pain likened only to molten lava. My child has died. Disappeared from my life, no longer held, or comforted or dressed, or smelling of baby powder and nuzzled in the folds of a soft little neck, or rocked in the oneness of a mother's arms outside the womb.

Is anybody listening? Tell me it is not true, that the worst nightmare of my imaginings has not happened. And if it is a bad dream, please wake me up now, for the ache and heaviness in my being is more than I can bear. Day after day and night after night march by in an endless procession of grief. I endure life. Its wonders are lost to me. A desert of weeks and months tell the demise of one as dear as life itself.

Then I am aware of being stalked by an unseen threat, an ominous foreboding of things to come. The day is approaching in relentless pursuit of my consciousness and my unconsciousness as well. I slyly take the approach that perhaps I can delude myself into thinking that she is on a trip and that I will get a letter soon or hear "Hi, Mom" on the telephone. Better yet, I feel there may be some stone I left unturned while throwing myself between my child and the threat. Yes, that's it. If I can figure out the key to the abominable puzzle the picture will be different. And still the point of no return draws nearer and the pain more intense. At 4:00 a.m. I am awake. My heart begs for a different outcome, but at dawn the reality of the cold light of day tells me this is all there is. I am floating prostrate in a flat plane of grief. Stay away from me! Leave me to my suffering because you cannot make it go away nor change the course. Nothing in between is acceptable on this day of days, so get away from me!

It seems unreal. The fever pitch of the day that passed. My limbs remain leaden, but I am upright again. I am doing what I would have been doing. Because it is mechanical I can function again. A year has passed. And

another, and another. Each cycle of my loss is less intense. Though the pain never leaves me, sometimes it is pushed back in my consciousness so that an occasional shaft of light and sweetness filters into the dark recess of my mind where I have hidden. I am cautious in accepting these offerings of release for they might turn on me and wound me again.

One day I reach the crest of the hill I have been climbing, and I feel the sun on my face, and I am not afraid to look below to hopes of serenity in pieces to be assembled like a patchwork quilt. I look back, where I've come from and am grateful for progress. I see that I am not the same unsuspecting person I was, taking for granted the continued presence of my loved ones. At last I am moving on. I know I will never be the same, but today I can live with that and appreciate the good left to me.

— Jackie Thompson, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

**Read the article on
our very own Chapter member,
Barbara Joe:**

<http://www.womansday.com/Articles/Life/Personal-Stories/Achieving-Your-Dreams-Over-40.html>

Our next meeting is scheduled for
Wednesday May 18, 2011, 7:00 –
9:00 PM.

Please remember to submit your
poems, stories, or a special note to
your loved one to be placed in the
June newsletter by May 12.

Our May Children Remembered

on their birthdays

Sydney Black	May 1	Timothy Black	Fairfax
Alison Elizabeth Nichols	May 1	Karen and Ted Nichols	Leesburg
Robert Williams	May 1	Lenora Bracey	DC
Chris Porter	May 2	Russ and Nancy Porter	Prince William
David Eugene Semanchick	May 2	Eugene and Joanne Semanchick	Arlington
Angelina Isabella DeVita	May 4	James and Lisa DeVita	Arlington
Bryan Sean Miller	May 4	Roger and Mindy LaBruno	Arlington
Hayden Whitney Smith	May 4	Julia and Peter Smith	Fairfax
David Lebowitz	May 5	Steve and Karen Lebowitz	Arlington
Madeleine Machi	May 5	Mark and Angelika Machi	Arlington
Brenda Marealle	May 5	Felista Koaale	Reston
Jessica Morgan	May 6	Marie Morgan	Fairfax
Jonathan Zinsli	May 8	Peter Zinsli	Arlington
Eunice Calcaterra	May 10	Lynette and Dennis Calcaterra	Fairfax
Richard Shephard Murphy	May 11	Barbara and John Murphy	Arlington
Jennifer Wysocki	May 11	Edward and Marlene Wysocki	Prince William
Sean Singh Aranipour	May 12	Candis and Jeff Roussel	Reston
Joan Margaret Daley	May 12	Tim and Annette Daley	Arlington
Donald Gordon Barrett	May 14	Donald and Kathy Barrett	Fairfax/Reston
Joel Culpepper	May 15	Iris and Hurare Culpepper	Fairfax
Leigh Anne Marino	May 15	Carol and John Marino	Fairfax
Peter Christopher Johnson	May 18	Neire and John Johnson	Fairfax
Tiffanie Amber Collins	May 19	Charles and Kathy Collins	Fairfax
Casey Butler	May 20	Robin Sanford	Fairfax
Ilkhom Khashimova	May 20	Elena Khashimova	Arlington
Jonathan Zanin	May 20	Coleen and Mark Zanin	Fairfax
James Curtis Deskins	May 22	Vandy and Connie Deskins	Prince William
Ronald "Chad"wick Powell	May 22	Ron and Patty Powell	Prince William
Nicole Wade	May 22	Patty and Rhett Wade	Leesburg
Kent Andrew "Andy" Womack	May 22	Kent and Karen Womack	Arlington
Mathew Brindle	May 23	Eugene and Connie Brindle	Arlington
David Walker Epp	May 23	Janet and George Epp	Fairfax
Danny Frank	May 23	Nancy and Mike Frank	Fairfax
Patrick Ryan Gay	May 23	Pam and Tom Gay	Prince William
Theanos "Teddy" Ayalneh Ejigu	May 24	Ayalneh and Webishaw Ejigu	Arlington
Matthew Lanzaro	May 24	Marilyn and Robert Lanzaro	Fairfax
Lydia Margaret Petkoff	May 24	Susan Carter	Fairfax
Bradon Rogers	May 24	Shane Rogers	Fairfax
Alyssa LeighAnn Beach	May 27	Peggy Beach	Prince William
Tyler Lee Harris	May 28	Renee Harris	Arlington
Meghan Gambino	May 30	Jeff Gambino	Fairfax
Candice Monique Ruff	May 30	Willie and Coralease Ruff	DC

If there are any errors or omissions in the two Our Children Remembered pages, please contact your local chapter leadership so our data bases can be corrected.

Our May Children Remembered

on their remembrance days

Frank Franklin	May 1	Brenda Ford	DC
Catherine Johnson	May 1	Ruby Lewis	Arlington
Chris Edward Morawetz	May 2	Carolyn and Art Foley	Reston
Donald Gordon Barrett	May 3	Donald and Kathy Barrett	Fairfax/Reston
James Russell Dail	May 4	Margaret Armstrong	Leesburg
Angelina Isabella DeBita	May 4	James and Lisa DeVita	Arlington
Thomas "Tom" B. Gallagher	May 4	June and Robert Gallagher	Arlington
Sophia Meagher	May 4	Joanna and Keith Meagher	Arlington
James Robert Vollmer	May 4	Nancy and Jim Vollmer	Reston
Brenda Marealle	May 5	Felista Koaale	Reston
Pamela Marealle	May 5	Felista Koaale	Reston
Jarrold Weston	May 5	Meggan Strasbaugh	Fairfax
Tiffanie Amber Collins	May 6	Charles and Kathy Collins	Fairfax
Alexis Michelle Laureano	May 7	Richard and Hellen Laureano	Prince William
Timothy Lee Long	May 7	Lee and Sandra Long	Leesburg
Jonathan Zanin	May 7	Coleen and Mark Zanin	Fairfax
LCPL Nicolas Cain	May 8	Beth and Michael Belle	Fairfax
Brian Scott Margolis	May 8	Linda Margolis	Fairfax
Keith Clark	May 9	Meedie Bardonille	DC
Stephen Lokke	May 10	Rita Lokke	Arlington
Jennifer Rebecca Toler	May 10	Carol Brinegar	Prince William
Patricia "Patti" Annette Ware	May 11	Dawn and Robert Cain	Arlington
Brittany Binsted	May 12	Carol and Ron Binsted	Fairfax
Maci Danielle Miller	May 12	Michael Miller	Prince William
David Stephen Forde	May 13	Mike and Claudia Forde	Fairfax
Erin Aurora Navarrette	May 13	Luis and Julie Navarrette	Fairfax
Jose Roberto Lozano	May 14	Bertha Lozano	Leesburg
Sydney Black	May 16	Timothy Black	Fairfax
Taylor Isao Hubbard	May 16	Kay and Wayne Hubbard	Arlington
Daniel Selmonosky	May 16	Deborah Selmonosky	Arlington
Kent Andrew "Andy" Womack	May 16	Kent and Karen Womack	Arlington
Peter Christopher Johnson	May 18	Neire and John Johnson	Fairfax
Christopher Gascoigne	May 20	Terry Gascoigne	Fairfax
Richard Shephard Murphy	May 21	Barbara and John Murphy	Arlington
Caroline Schippereit	May 21	Marianne and Stuart Schippereit	Fairfax
Barry Mitchell Lawrence	May 22	Allen and Louise Lawrence; Brette Lawrence	Arlington
Madeleine Machi	May 23	Mark and Angelika Machi	Arlington
Matthew Charles Oliver	May 23	Susan Oliver	Prince William
Samuel Wilson	May 25	Maria & Jason Wilson; Joyce & Ken Wilson	Leesburg
Michael Alexander Zmidzinski	May 26	Andy Zmidzinski; Renee Youngs	Arlington
Joan Margaret Daley	May 28	Tim and Annette Daley	Arlington
Shey Allen	May 30	Darcel and Josh Allen	Fairfax
Chris Smith	May 30	Lauren Smith	Fairfax
Colin West	May 30	Hilary and Louis West	Fairfax
Joseph Amoury	May 31	Cathy and Jeff Amoury	Fairfax
Evan Matthew Cuomo	May 31	Amanda and Justin Cuomo	Fairfax
Korri Summer Duffield	May 31	Troy and Samantha Duffield	Prince William



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Trinity Presbyterian Church

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“We are all in this alone. Together.”

— *Lily Tomlin*

May 2011