



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NORTHERN VIRGINIA AND DC CHAPTERS

Arlington, Fairfax, Leesburg, Prince William, Reston, Virginia and Washington, DC  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

VOLUME 20, NO. 8

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*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.*

## THE REAL STORY

By Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

I waited a long time to watch the film *The Rabbit Hole*. It was intentional. There was too much media frenzy around the film, and I wanted to allow that to settle, wanted to be clear and present with the film in an unadulterated way.

Disappointedly, the film didn't move me. I shed a tear, maybe two, but there was an emotional lacking for me, an inauthenticity in Kidman's character with which I simply could not relate. But of course. How could a Hollywood actor possibly capture a mother's grief? It reminds me of a myth I'd heard long ago about Michelangelo's *Pieta*; he was hesitant to sculpt Mary's face for fear he could not possibly carve, with requisite honesty, the pain of a grieving mother.

After the film, I contemplated the many movies I've watched since my induction into bereaved parenthood in 1994. Many depicted traumatic death, and some even child death. Yet, none of the Hollywood enactments resonated any degree of substantive authenticity.

Tonight, I watched *The Greatest* for a second time. The first time I watched it, I found it to be one of the most sincere portrayals of parental grief and, though it still felt inadequate, I noticed that some memories unearthed during the second watching. Memories of *the real story* which had fallen victim to an ad hoc amnesiac state, but which were rapidly resurrected. These memories evoked powerful emotions tonight.

So, what *is* the real story - the one I wish Hollywood would tell - so the non-bereaved could really experience the truth about grief after the death of a child?

- I wish they would tell the story of how every single cell in our body hurts. Literally, it hurts from tip of our toes to the ends of our hair. The pain is indescribably physical and as merciless as the Mayan heart sacrifices of its helpless victims.

- I wish they would tell how difficult even basic bodily functions are: drinking becomes work as our throat is constantly tight and closes off to water, or food, or oxygen, or sustenance. Or how we are unable to carry groceries or the mail or the sadness in our arms as they ache with the phantom weight of our children. Or

how we cannot breathe because of the concrete slabs on our chest, heavy and dense and gray. Or how our legs buckle and we cannot bear to see other children, especially the ones who are their age and with their names walking gleefully with their parents; parents who may or may not take a moment or two for granted but who will tuck them into bed tonight as we lay sobbing, our salty tears saturating the shag carpeting, in our dead child's room.

- I wish they would tell the story of how, on the rare occasion when we do sleep, we awaken in the morning, nearly every morning, wishing we hadn't.

- I wish they would tell the story of how we look in the mirror at our unrecognizable self every day and wonder at the stranger we see. And how *every* relationship in our lives changes, even our conflicted relationship to the imposter-self. And how all the others - family, friends, colleagues - want us to be the person we were previously, but we know that person is irretrievably lost.

- I wish they would tell the story of how our primal mourning is most often done alone and that the supernatural sound of this mourning frightens us, like a wild animal being killed and eaten or like the flogging of human flesh or like the torturing of a prisoner or like Satan being cast from G\*d's presence.

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**NEWSLETTER TEAM****Editor**

Peggi Johnson  
tcfnewsletter@gmail.com

**Database Manager**

Brenda Sullivan  
TCFDBA@hotmail.com

**Treasurer**

Kent Womack  
1013 Riverside Drive  
Woodstock, VA 22664  
kent\_womack@hotmail.com

**Reporters****Arlington**

Lois Copeland  
loiscopeland52@gmail.com

**Fairfax**

Katy Frank, kmfrank@fcps.edu

**District of Columbia**

Veronica Stubbs  
veronica.s.stubbs@nasa.gov

**Leesburg**

Bev Elero, belero@gmail.com

**Prince William**

Jennifer Malloch  
Jennifer.redskins@hotmail.com

**Reston**

Kathy Grapski, specialkmg@aol.com

**Regional Coordinator**

Kathy Collins  
ccollins211@verizon.net  
4505 Rachael Manor Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22032

**TCF National Headquarters**

PO Box 3696  
Oak Brook IL 60522-3696  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>  
(877) 969-0010

**Arlington Website**

<http://www.tcfarlington.org>  
Webmaster: Mary M. Bell  
m.m.bell@verizon.net

**Fairfax Website**

[www.tcffairfax.org](http://www.tcffairfax.org)

**Leesburg Website**

<http://www.tcfleesburg.org>  
webmaster@tcfleesburg.org

**Prince William Website**

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

**THIS MONTH'S MEETINGS****October 5**

7:30 PM Fairfax  
7:30 PM Leesburg

**October 8**

2-4 PM Reston

**October 13**

7:30 PM Arlington

**October 19**

7 PM Washington DC

**October 20**

7:30 PM Prince William

**Arlington Chapter**

Contact: Lois Copeland  
703-835-3242  
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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

**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**

# Arlington Chapter

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

It is always hard to welcome parents who come to our meetings for the first time. We are so sorry for the reason you have found The Compassionate Friends. However, we are glad you found the courage to reach out for help.

**Rick Monat**, father of Scott Monat  
**Bill and Leyla Rapp**, parents of Lola Rapp

Even if it was sad or painful to attend one of our meetings, please come again. It will get easier.

## HALLOWEEN

What a carefree time, those past Halloween days. I always took pictures while my kids and their father carved the pumpkins—one for each child and our family pumpkin.

My kids hurried home from school, quickly did homework, gobbled down dinner and changed into their costumes. “Can we go now, Mom, Dad?”, they shrieked. Their yearly ritual continued when they returned home. They showered and then organized their stash. First they would arrange their candy in categories—chocolate bars, Jolly Ranchers, SweetTarts, etc., and then make trades depending on the amount in each category. But first, they presented their Mom with her favorite candy bar - Baby Ruth. “Here, Mom, I saved this for you!” I didn’t have to limit their candy intake because they wanted their candy to last forever. Every year I cried. This ritual continued until David was fourteen.



I thought that our family would live “happily ever after.” These memories now bring tears of sadness as well as joy. Those first few Halloweens after David died we could not bring ourselves to be home. We left candy on the doorstep and lit one pumpkin. Now I put on my Halloween mask, answer the doorbell, gaze into the eyes of those adorable children and no one sees the tears running down my cheeks.

Those who are newly bereaved be gentle with yourselves and do what is comfortable for you.

~Lois Copeland, TCF Arlington, VA~

## ANGRY

I read the beautiful poems so lovingly written by grieving parents,  
And I feel angry.

I read about the angels on their parents’ shoulders  
And I feel angry.

I listen to parents relate how they communicate with their child gone from this earth  
And I feel angry.

We memorialize our children with beautifully written books, scholarships, gardens and candle lighting  
And I feel angry.

That the world continues, in spite of our children dying  
And I feel angry.

Our surviving child’s first steps, first day of school, graduation, wedding are bittersweet  
And I feel angry.

I will grow and change and maybe find hope again because I have been through the worst possible loss  
And I feel angry.

But most of all, I feel angry that our children, grandchildren and siblings have died and we will never see them again.

~Lois Copeland, TCF Arlington, VA~

## FOR SIBLINGS: REFLECTIONS

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn’t fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn’t good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister’s death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the gift of time—to heal and to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister’s life.

~Cathy Schanberger

On October 13, there will be a Steering Committee Meeting @ 6pm. Potluck dinner. All members welcome. Agenda includes our candle lighting service and our spring project.

# Fairfax Chapter

## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

### **Bob & Carol Matthews**

*Fairfax, parents of Ronnie Matthews*

### **Pat & Phil Church**

*Fairfax, parents of Ross Church*

### **Ruby Hamilton**

*Reston, mother of Sekou Hamilton*

### **Rachel Stroman**

*Vienna, mother of Christopher Jonathan Stroman*

### **Liz Snedaker**

*mother of Jeffrey Call*

## DEATH IS NOTHING AT ALL

Death is nothing at all. It does not count.  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
Nothing has happened. Everything remains exactly as it was.  
I am I, and you are you, and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged. Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.  
Call me by the old familiar name. Speak of me in the easy way you always used to.  
Put no difference in your tone. Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.  
Laugh, as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.  
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.  
Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was.  
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.  
What is this death but a negligible accident?  
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner.

Be well.

*~Sir Henry Scott Holland*

*~Submitted by Brenda Sullivan, TCF Fairfax, VA*

## In Loving Memory of Kyle Sullivan

*There are times...*

There are times when I feel if I turn around fast enough I will catch a glimpse of you.

There are times when I venture into your room - I think of the life you had and the life you will miss.

There are times when it doesn't feel so much like a punch in the stomach but more of a hole in my heart.

*~Brenda Sullivan, TCF Fairfax, VA*



## In Loving Memory of Aidan Frank June - Oct

*We love you Aidan!*

Three years have passed in the blink of an eye and I still long to see your beautiful smile as you lie in your crib or I am holding you in my arms. How can it be that you are not here? There is a reason and someday I will find out the truth. But, when that day comes I am not sure it will matter because I will be able to hold you in my arms once again.

We visit you every weekend, but you know that already because you send your bird to visit us. I imagine that you are sending us signs wherever we are. I imagine you running around with Emma and Cole chasing the geese and playing ball. I imagine that you would look exactly like your brother. Emma asks about you often, will you help her imagine you too?

*~Love Forever, Mommy*

*Submitted by Katy, Gary, Emma, and Cole Frank*

## MANY THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS LOVE GIFTS

### **Nancy and Martin Mayer**

*in memory of their granddaughter, Madelyn E. Khilevsky*

### **Kathy Atanasov**

*in memory of her son, Alexander Atanasov*

### **Jane and John Trimble**

*in memory of their daughter, Leisa Trimble Reno*

### **Deborah and Frank Rowland**

*in memory of their daughter, Elizabeth Rowland & Jason Clover*

### **Richard and Joyce Myers**

*in memory of their daughter, Karen J. Myers*

# Leesburg Chapter

## TEN YEARS AGO

Ten years ago when our son died, we didn't want to be alive.  
 God, You gave us the will to go on and survive.  
 Ten years ago our world was rocked with sorrow and pain.  
 You gave us the reason to go on and live life again.  
 Ten years ago we cried a river of tears.  
 You gave us comfort and hope, you cried with us through the years.  
 Ten years ago we were in darkness and we could see no light.  
 You gave us hope and led us to walk by faith and not by sight.  
 Ten years ago our lives were filled with uncertainty and fear.  
 You gave us courage and let us know that you are always near.  
 Ten years ago we didn't know how we could carry the burden of such a great loss.  
 Jesus, You took it from us when we laid it down at your cross.  
 Ten years ago sleep was hard to come by and we were filled with terror and fright.  
 You sent angels to guard us and keep us through the night.  
 Ten years ago we wanted to know why our son's life on earth was erased.  
 You didn't answer us but you let us know that our son is in your everlasting embrace.  
 Ten years ago we didn't know how we could run the grief race.  
 You helped us persevere, you gave us strength and your amazing grace.  
 Ten years ago we didn't know how we would make it through.  
 You turned us from caterpillars to butterflies and made us anew.  
 Ten years ago we didn't know how to live with a broken heart.  
 You gave us your love and let us know we would never be apart.  
 Ten years ago, and always, you give us your mercy and love.  
 You help us live our lives with hope until we get to heaven above.

~Beverly Elero, Leesburg, VA TCF  
 In memory of my son Brian 12/30 – 10/29

## HALLOWEEN

It is here, this day of merriment and children's pleasure.  
 Gremlins and goblins and ghosties at the door of your house;  
 and the "other children" come to the door of your mind. Faces  
 out of the past, small ghosts with sweet, painted faces. They do  
 not shout. Those children no longer march laughing on a cold  
 Halloween night. They stand at the door of our mind; and you  
 will let them in, so that you can give them the small gifts for  
 Halloween; a smile and a tear.

~Sascha Wagner, from Wintersun

## A Warm Welcome

**Joan Gorman**, *mother of David*

**Karen Seidenberg**, *mother of Noah*

**Jean Rosenbluth**, *mother of Douglas Chambers*

**Anne & Roger Cline**, *parents of Brian*

**Robi Huggins**, *mother of Kenneth*

## THE FALL OF FALL

What is it about the season  
 That takes me back in time  
 Everything I do,  
 I find you are on my mind.  
 Haunting dreams find me  
 At night when I try to sleep  
 And every little detail is replayed,  
 and the sadness falls so deep.  
 Something about the close of summer  
 Seems to bring it back  
 Making it so hard to move onward and stay  
 on track.  
 Something about the dying and fading of the trees  
 Brings my heart to sorrow, with the falling of the leaves.  
 How I long to stop it, to keep the fall away  
 But time marches on, and summer just won't stay.  
 I know with the fall, winter's not far behind  
 Another lonely season, and the memories flood my mind.  
 I cry my tears of sorrow, and pray for spring to come  
 A rebirth of the earth, and the warmth of the sun.  
 It makes the memories softer and gentler to recall  
 But now my life is saddened with the nearing of fall.



~Sheila Simmons  
 In memory of her son, Steven  
 TCF Atlanta Online Sharing

## THANKS

**to Susan and Roy Cleveland**

*For their love gift in honor of their son, Chris.*

# Prince William Chapter

## DEAR CHILD OF MINE

Dear Child of Mine, who died before your time, I am grateful for your life. Though death brought the end of hopes and dreams, still I am grateful for your life. Through you I have known joy and sorrow, laughter and tears. Through you my life has been enriched, my compassion heightened, and I am more keenly aware of the grief of others. I am grateful for your life. Now I draw upon my memories of you, some happy, some sad. They keep you close in many ways. They are priceless, precious memories that help me bear the pain. Through them I will learn to live again. I am grateful for your life. I have been blessed with your life and left with your love. I will share that love and strive to live to be a blessing to others. Dear Child of Mine, though you died before your time, you are never far away from me. I have loved you in my heart of hearts and there I will love you through eternity. I am grateful for your life; Dear Child of Mine.

~Betty Stevens  
TCF ~ Baltimore, MD

## To Honor You

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath and start another day without you in it.

To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile and the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.

To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked, and sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.

To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back, risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.

You were my light, my heart, my gift of love from the very highest source. So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.

Now I live for us both, so all I do to honor you.

~ TCF Atlanta online sharing

## PLEASE ASK

Someone asked me about you today. It's been so long since anyone has done that. It felt so good to talk about you to share my memories of you to simply say your name out loud.

She asked me if I minded talking about what happened to you or would it be too painful to speak of it? I told her I think of it everyday and speaking about it helps me to release the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head.

She said she never realized that my pain would last this long. She apologized for not asking sooner. I told her, .Thanks for asking..

I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask, but I told her, Please do it again sometime soon..

~Barbara Hudson  
Cincinnati, OH



In his new novel, *The Leftovers*, Tom Perrotta explores the premise that the Rapture has occurred and millions of people just suddenly disappeared. Those left behind have a variety of ways of coping. One character, Laurie, finds that she can't go back to "pretending things were more or less okay, that they'd hit a bump on the road and should just keep on going, attending to their duties, uttering their empty phrases, enjoying the simple pleasures." She began seeking "a regimen of hardship and humiliation that at least offered you the dignity of feeling like your existence bore some sort of relationship to reality."

~Tom Perrotta, excerpts used with permission

# Washington, DC Chapter

## REMEMBERING NICOLE LYNETTE SCOTT LEE

Four years ago today  
 My precious daughter passed away.  
 It was during the middle of night  
 God called and her soul took flight.  
 No clue, no warnings, no goodbyes  
 Just broken hearts and tear stained eyes.  
 My love for her will never cease  
 Until that day I rest in peace.

Eternally,  
 Mom  
 ~Copyright 2011 Portia Scott

## BIRTHDAY MEMORIAM OCTOBER 16, 2011



*When I opened my eyes this morning,  
 I looked to the heavens above  
 And whispered softly out loud,  
 "Happy Birthday, My Love"*

*Another birthday,  
 another year the time swiftly passes along  
 But memories of you linger like the melody of a  
 song*

*Your smile, your voice,  
 your laughter hold a love that will live forever*

*Reminding me of the days,  
 weeks and months of our short time together*

*Though my heart was broken into pieces  
 when we had to say farewell*

*On this another birthday,  
 I ring the celebration bell!*

*Yes, I'm thinking of you on your birthday Nicole,  
 but that is nothing new*

*For hardly a day dawns or ends without a thought of you*

*There are no gifts, cards or flowers to send,  
 and your hand I cannot touch,*

*But I pray that God will wrap His arms  
 around the one I love so much*

*Happy 40th Birthday in Heaven Nicole!*

*Love eternally, Mom*

*~Copyright 2011 Portia Scott*

## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

*Colleen Gaydos*

*Sarah Otto*

*Mary Ellen McGuire*

## THE POWER OF BEARING WITNESS

There are times in life when the highest honor, the greatest love is paid to another by simply bearing witness to his or her experience. Bearing witness is largely nonverbal. It is the choice to give the gift of a pure expression of love and respect -- being a compassionate observer to the unfolding of another person's life or a particular moment or event.

When we bear witness, we lovingly give our attention to the other without judgment. We comfort without smothering. We play a supporting role -- powerfully upholding the other starting in his or her life. We make a profound decision when we do not try to fix their pain and suffering or share in their experience by telling how we had a similar experience. Bearing witness says, "You are not alone. I see you. I witness what you are experiencing. What you are experiencing matters to me. I surround you with my love."

As a life coach and grief counselor, one of the primary things I do for my clients is to simply provide a safe space for them to speak their truth -- to reveal what they think and feel about their own life. So much of our lives are spent with hidden truths because there is no time or because we don't want to be a burden or to be judged, or do not feel safe to share. So, we keep our truth to ourselves and often feel very alone as a result. When we allow another to bear witness to us, we give ourselves the freedom to be known.

When someone we love is hurting, it is easy to feel helpless and to want to somehow end the suffering by fixing the situation. These are often the times that call us to a higher response -- to simply bear witness to another person's life journey -- not to engage in it, but to stand beside them in loving support. The focus is not to make the pain go away, but rather to let that person know that they are not alone and that we trust them to do whatever it is they need to do to go through that particular experience. Sometimes, this is best done in silence.

For those of you who struggle with going to see a (suffering) friend or relative because you just don't know what to say or do, try just showing up and bearing witness. Often, it is our own discomfort and the feeling of helplessness that we are avoiding by not going into these situations. Sometimes we forget that our job is not to fix the situation at hand, but rather to help lift the burden of the other person by letting them know we care enough to show up.

*~Judith Johnson, PhD, excerpts used with permission*

*The Reverend Johnson is available for public speaking  
 engagements, workshops, grief counseling and private coaching.  
 Email: judithjohnson@hvc.rr.com*

# Reston Chapter



*September 10 was a beautiful day for our annual picnic at Lake Fairfax Park. Good food, good friends, lots of sunshine, and a balloon launch in memory of our children.*

## AUTUMN

In the fall  
When amber leaves are shed,  
Softly-silently  
Like tears that wait to flow,  
I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly in the fall;  
'Tis then I miss you Most of all.

~ Lily deLauder, TCF  
Van Nuys, CA

## SPRING PLANTING

You might consider planting daffodil and tulip bulbs now in memory of your child. Then, in early spring, you will see the tiny spots of color as the flowers pop through the soil. When you see the beauty in the flowers, maybe they will also bring you a smile as you remember your son or daughter and the love they placed in your hearts.

~Kathy Grapski

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I wondered if my own heart would ever heal... I soon learned that I could help myself by helping others.

It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy. I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time.

~Barbara Bush

## TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

We are glad you found us. Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not our group will work for you. At the next meeting you may find the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief walk. Please join us again next month.

## THE PRICE

It is not a question  
of whether I could have wanted  
never to have you with me,  
if I had known  
how deeply your dying  
would break my life today.

There is one certain truth:  
even if I had known  
that there would come to me  
the cruel grief I suffer today,  
I would endure it all again  
for the wonder of  
having had you in my life.

~by Sascha Wagner

Pain has an element of Black—

It cannot recollect

When it began— or if there were

A time when it was not.

~Emily Dickinson

***Life must go on; I forget just why.***

~Edna St. Vincent Millay

This is my last message to you: in sorrow, seek happiness.

~Fyodor Dostoevsky

## THE REAL STORY

*Continued from Page 1*

- I wish they would tell the story of grief's incessant state of craze: pacing the hallways late at night, the inability to focus on anything, the intolerance of music, or laughing, or expressions of joy, sensitivity to lights and other benign stimuli, racing video tapes that replay in our heads as we wish-for-changed outcomes, the constant self-accusations of blame and responsibility, the unconscious roulette of risk with Death as our challenger.

- I wish they would tell the story of how we are terrorized by insidious ruminations of our other children dying, and we either over-protect to maintain illusory control or under-love to maintain illusory protection from recurrent grief.

-I wish they would tell the story of the dark and ugly thoughts about other people and their happy and naive lives. Or how we become fierce imaginary protectors of children who are neglected, or unloved, or scolded, or abused by their "parents".

- I wish they would tell the story of how a mere turn of a corner in the grocery store that confronts us with baby food, or car magazines, or cereals can unhinge us to the point of utter helplessness and madness, frantically abandoning \$200 worth of unpurchased frozen foods for an exit sign .

- I wish they would tell the story of how this brings us to our wounded knees. On the floor. Face in the dirt. Begging and pleading for a different life. Willing to do anything, anything to turn time back and go through another door. Or how we fantasize about time machines and contemplate self-institutionalization.

- I wish they would tell the story of a pain so deep and so wide that no word in the English language can begin to express it. That no subsequent child, no new job or house, no distraction- no pill- no drug- no G\*d- no joy- no self-induced suffering is sufficient to fill the chasm of the loss.

- I wish they would tell the story of how we pray, even in the absence of a belief in a Creator- we pray, that the suffering would end, by any means.

-I wish they would tell the story of how well-meaning others cause us to recoil with their platitudes and mindless remarks about G\*d's will and His garden, the one which needs tending, and something idiotic about making lemonade.

- I wish they would tell the story of how this mother and that mother and this father and that father would have given their life in a moment to save their child, and that we continue to negotiate that with a G\*d in whom we may or may not believe for months or even years.

- I wish they would tell the story of how life goes on but that everything has changed, and that we *have* died in a sense, and must choose to be reborn.

- Mostly, I wish that they would tell the story of a bittersweet survival that does not include a fallacious or contrived "end" to the

grief after a prescribed six months. This is *not* reality for most of us. Yes, I wish they would tell a true story of the anguish absent the "happy" ending. Not that we, at some point, aren't capable of pure love and joy and contentment. In fact, having really "*looked into the eyes of such sorrow*" is the *only* way to such pure joy, as Gibran says. But there is no bypassing the tortures of child death, its effects perennial and relentless for much longer than the unsuspecting world believes.

And there is so much more I wish they would tell.

I wish they would tell the story because I wish others knew. Certainly, if the others knew, they would have to be kinder, more compassionate, more loving to bereaved parents. Wouldn't they?

Wouldn't they?

Yet, I find even my own words fall woefully short of the real story.

As the Michelangelo-myth goes, some things cannot be expressed in sculpture or form or film or with words. The real story is one we can never *truly* tell.

*\*\*What is your story that you wish they would tell?\*\*\**

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## From the Editor...

I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to be a bereaved parent. I don't know how to stay in a world that seems to be missing what mattered so much to me. I don't know how to reconstruct a different life when the one I planned for – the one I worked for – is lost to me. *I don't know how to live without my son.*

I know others have figured this out. I know others have learned to endure the pain and live with the loss. Many have created meaning and purpose. Some have grown to find joy and pleasure. I am grateful to them for their testimony. I am thankful for their example. I admire them.

I know in the past I have learned how to do things I did not know how to do. Some of these efforts to learn have been successful.

Others? Less so. I never really did master skiing, for example, in spite of a fair amount of effort. I am, at best, a very mediocre piano player, even though I have invested years of practice and lessons. I am perfectly wretched at speaking French, after much instruction, extensive travel, and endless repetition of tapes.

But there have been things I did learn to do with some competence. So, will bereaved parent ultimately fall into the "competent" category? Or will it be another thing that eludes me?

Just like I don't know how to do this, I don't know how to answer that question.

~Peggi Johnson

# Our October Children Remembered *on their birthdays*

Humberto "Beto" Cruz	Oct 1	Jane and Ronaldo Cruz	Fairfax
Ryan Matthew Trant	Oct 1	Tim and Peggy Trant	Prince William
Cord Duff	Oct 3	Tiffany Trojca	Fairfax
Patricia (Patti) Annette Ware	Oct 3	Dawn and Ron Cain	Arlington
Leslie E. Gooding III	Oct 4	Leslie Gooding & Olive Davies	Prince William
Timothy Susco	Oct 4	Nancy and Tom Susco	Fairfax
Karen Jeanette Myers	Oct 5	Joyce and C. Richard Myers	Fairfax
Daniel Brian Earl	Oct 6	Kara and Mark Earl	Leesburg
Baby Guinn	Oct 8	Gary and Linda Guinn	Prince William
Danica Canfield	Oct 10	Sandy and Jeff Canfield	Fairfax
Jamie Alexander	Oct 12	Dave Alexander	Arlington
Nicole Marie Megaloudis	Oct 12	Gail and Thomas Rongen	Leesburg
Collin Taamai	Oct 14	Emily Swanson	Fairfax
Mary Ellene Robertson	Oct 15	Sandra and Alfred Robertson	Fairfax
(Elizabeth Marie) Lisa Champlin	Oct 16	Linda and Glen Nielsen	Reston
Linda Clark	Oct 16	Ellie Clark	Fairfax
Teresa Gail Gustafson	Oct 16	John and Melinda Scott	Leesburg
Joshua Ryan Lutz Leven	Oct 16	Yvonne and Brett Leven	Leesburg
Pamela Marealle	Oct 16	Felista Koaale	Reston
Siobhan Russell	Oct 16	Lynne and Andrew Russell	Fairfax
Thomas (Tom) Brendan Gallagher	Oct 18	June and Robert Gallagher	Arlington
Alex Atanasov	Oct 20	Kathy Atanasov	Fairfax
Johnny W. Lender Jr.	Oct 20	John Lender	Leesburg
Herve J LeBoeuf, IV	Oct 21	Renee and Herve LeBoeuf	Fairfax
Hana Kimble	Oct 22	Michael Kimble	Fairfax
David Lee Lauderback	Oct 22	Gaye and Wayne Lauderback	Fairfax
Samuel Wilson	Oct 22	Maria and Jason Wilson	Leesburg
Scott Wedell	Oct 23	Joyce and Ken Wilson	Leesburg
Toby Kline	Oct 23	Joan Wedell & Jessie Wedell	Fairfax
Mary Elizabeth Robinson	Oct 25	Bessie Kline	Leesburg
Bryan Weed	Oct 25	Cecil and R. Townsend Robinson	DC
Keirston Ann-Michelle Caywood	Oct 25	Karen and Jim Weed	Reston
Renee Parkinson	Oct 26	Morgan and Madeline Caywood	Leesburg
Connor Murray	Oct 26	Natalie Parkinson	Leesburg
Sarah Winthrop	Oct 27	Erin & Eric Murray	Fairfax
Caroline Schippereit	Oct 27	Joanne and Tom Winthrop	Fairfax
Angela Gardner	Oct 29	Marianne and Stuart Schippereit	Fairfax
	Oct 30	Liz and Gerry Gardner	Fairfax

*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 October Children Remembered

*on their remembrance days*

Aidan Frank	Oct 1	Katy and Gary Frank	Fairfax
Alan Michael Evenson	Oct 2	Harriett and Jack Evenson	Reston
Toby Kline	Oct 2	Bessie Kline	Leesburg
Cody Cooper	Oct 4	Diane Baldino	Fairfax
Elisa Smith	Oct 4	Kevin and Sharon Smith	Arlington
Erica Lynn (Lucy) McGraw	Oct 5	Kay McGraw	Leesburg
Brent Jason Rhoads	Oct 5	Stephen and Lynn Rhoads	Arlington
John Joseph Mullins	Oct 6	Margaret A. Mullins	Prince William
Michelle Gardner-Quinn	Oct 7	Diane Gardner-Quinn	Arlington
Baby Guinn	Oct 8	Gary and Linda Guinn	Prince William
Craig Michael Scott	Oct 11	Frederick and Anita Scott	Arlington
Derek Michael Tierney	Oct 11	Larry and Janet Tierney	Prince William
Joanna Alise Reed	Oct 12	Kent and Karen Womack	Arlington
Katie Beach	Oct 14	Peggy Beach	Prince William
Jessica Blair Szymanski	Oct 15	Dennis and Kathleen Szymanski	Arlington
Dana Denise Wood	Oct 15	Franklin and Marchelle Wood	Arlington
Alex Burke	Oct 16	Sharon Burke	Arlington
Laura Lynam	Oct 17	Terry and Melinda Lynam	Arlington
Johathan Zinsli	Oct 17	Peter Zinsli	Arlington
Garrett Christopher Guinn	Oct 18	Gary and Linda Guinn	Prince William
Hal Davis Jr.	Oct 19	Anne and Hal Davis	Reston
Jessy Lauer Richardson	Oct 19	Windy Beck	Fairfax
Maggie Ofuiero	Oct 20	Judy and Larry Oufiero	Fairfax
Kyle Jared Sullivan	Oct 20	Brenda and Tim Sullivan	Fairfax
Leo Santaballa	Oct 21	Jose and Elena Santaballa	Fairfax
David Christopher Sheehy	Oct 21	Laura and Daniel Sheehy	Arlington
David Eugene Semanchick	Oct 23	Eugene and Joanne Semanchick	Arlington
Curt Bannon	Oct 24	Emily Bannon	Fairfax
Mallory Anne Fraser	Oct 25	Carla and Mike Fraser	Leesburg
Ilkhom Khashimova	Oct 25	Elena Khashimova	Arlington
Jamie Alexander	Oct 26	Dave Alexander	Arlington
Brian Patrick Elero	Oct 29	Beverly and Bernie Elero	Leesburg
Bradon Rogers	Oct 29	Shane Rogers	Fairfax
Vanessa Pean	Oct 30	Gail and Leslie Pean	Fairfax
Jennifer Strowe	Oct 30	Helene DiSanto	Fairfax
Erin Renee Gaston	Oct 31	Joan and Vince Shiban	Prince William



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“Grief is a tree that has tears for its fruit.”

~Philemon

**October 2011**