



We Need Not Walk Alone

Compassionate Friends Northeast Baltimore Chapter

Volume X Issue I

www.baltimorectf.com

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New address !!!

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We'd love to include your original poems, reflections, essays, etc. For inclusion in the Winter 2006/2007 issue please send your submission(s) to:

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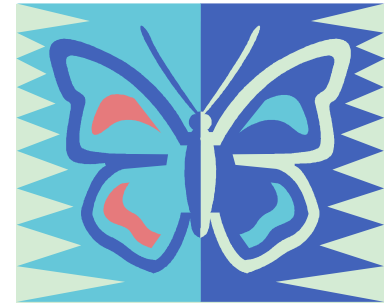
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Our Annual Memorial Service

Please remember that in lieu of a meeting in December, we hold an annual Memorial Service. The service begins at 7pm and is held in the chapel at Brown Memorial. Parents are invited to read personal poems, letters, thoughts; sing or play music; anything that moves your heart to remember and share your child. Family members are also encouraged to make a butterfly with the child's name to add to Madeline's Butterfly Garden. (For the full story of the garden, please refer to the chapter website at www.baltimorectf.com). After the service there are drinks, desserts, and lots of love to be shared. This service serves as a comfort to many people at the beginning of the holiday season which is often a difficult time for us. Flyers will be mailed in November.



GriefWalk 7

GriefWorks sponsors a healing walk each year in the tranquil setting of Brookside Gardens, at Wheaton Regional Park, to offer a reflective time to honor the deep and aching wounds of grief and loss. As you take the path to healing, decide what it is that YOU want to have happen - forgiveness, freedom from inappropriate guilt, a closure on some part of your past, or just a connection with other hurting people? The walk is free, rain or shine. Begin at the Visitor Center, where you will be given a written guide suggesting how to use the walk through the gardens in a helpful way. There is no need to pre-register, no T-shirts, no pins, just show up! More information is available at GriefWorks.com.

GriefWalk 7
Sat Nov 4th
Brookside Gardens, MD
FREE 3-5pm
Call or email for details
301-871-3478
cellaryan@griefworks.com

Meeting Dates for 2006

September 6th October 4th
November 1st December 6th (Memorial
Candlelighting Service)

All meetings are held at 7:30 except the December 6th meeting, which will be at 7pm

Directions

---- Off the Baltimore beltway (#695)
---- Exit # 25, Charles Street
---- Head South on Charles Street approximately 2 miles to the church
---- On the right side of the road, Brown Memorial Church is across the street from a 7-11 market.

Meeting Location

Brown Memorial Church
6200 N. Charles Street
Towson, Maryland

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

Remembering our Children

As long as we live, our children shall live in our memories. In each day that lies ahead, we lovingly remember these children, and we send our love and support to their parents.

Yves Cubillos 4/12/85-5/8/05

Parents: **Ledda Moraya-Hope and Oscar Cubillos**

Shane Foster 6/24/78-8/17/03

Parents: **Angel and Rob**

Son: **Gage**

Siblings: **Aaron and Jeremy**

Jamshid M Ghannad 1/7/69-6/29/99

Parent: **Heideh Shirazi**

John "Jack" Lulie 4/1/92-8/6/06

Parents: **Debra & Doug Lane and Richard Lulie**

Twin Brother: **Quinn**, Brother: **Alex**

Abigail Calvano McGuire 11/4/01

Parents: **Sharon Calvano and Maureen McGuire**

Twin sister: **Madeline C. McGuire**

Daniel Vincent Staib 5/15/83-6/20/06

Parents: **Donald and Linda Staib**

Siblings: **"Duffy" and David Staib**

Nieces/nephews: **Cierra, Alyssa, and Delaney Staib**

James Stallings 1/16/68-3/19/03

Jessica Stallings 8/15/73

Parents: **Barbara (Stallings) and Tom Allen**

Ashley Paige Tollenger 5/1/89-8/10/01

Parent: **Garrett Paige Tollenger**

Elijah Joseph Virago 9/21/99-12/10/05

Parents: **Melissa and Jodie Virago**

GRIEVING IN PAIRS

How many times have people said, "Well, thank God you have each other." How many times have you felt "each other" to be entirely inadequate at meeting your needs?

Alarming statistics are available telling us of the rocky road parents encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn't there before. It always seems that my "bad" day is my wife's "good" day, or the day she wakes up crying was the day I had planned on playing tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is himself face down in the mud?

Every person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of your life. And while at times you can face recovery as a team, sometimes you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it is shown, your partner hurts, too.

Gerry Hunt

TCF, White River Junction, VT

My Dog Died

"I know how you feel — my dog died." These words can bring murderous rage to the hearts of bereaved parents when spoken by well-meaning, but errant friends. I never actually had this experience, but several of my friends did and the result was always the same — a compelling desire to strangle the person with one's bare hands.

On the morning of December 21, my husband and I said a tearful final goodbye to Gretchen, our beautiful Doberman, who had been a constant companion, loving friend, protector, and source of great joy for nearly eight years. She was, in a word, magnificent.

The pain and feelings of sadness are tremendous. As I look around at the empty bed, the dish in the kitchen, the favorite toy, I am overwhelmed with an intense sense of loss and sorrow. Memories of happy times, daily rituals and the unconditional love that only a pet can give assail from all directions. Tears flow uncontrollably. I really hurt.

No, it can't compare with the loss of my son. This pain will pass before long; we will get another dog (although there can never

be another Gretchen); in years to come we will remember her with love and wonderful memories; she will never be forgotten.

But it is not the same. I know this because I have lost a child. Only one who has walked this road can know that no other loss, no matter how profound, can compare with the death of a child. If I had not had this experience, I, too, might be tempted to say "I know how you feel — my dog died."

We must endeavor to understand that these words are spoken from the heart — from someone whose pain is intense and who knows no better point of reference. And we must pray that those who speak those words will never know....

My pain is assuaged somewhat by my firm belief that Gretchen is now in the loving care of my beloved Robert, who will enjoy and love her as we did. She is in good hands. I know they are having a wonderful time.

Carole Ragland

TCF, West Houston Chapter

I don't know why.
I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I have to do is make a choice about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before,
or I can be destroyed by it and,
in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal.
That my family and my children were also.
That tragedy happened only to others.
But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living,
making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends
in a way never possible before.

..... from the book, *My Son, My Son*, by Iris Bolton, whose son Mitch died by suicide.

Barbie and Tommy have gone to live in God's heavenly mansion,

this I know for certain to be true.

But if you talk too much of their good fortune,

it only makes me yearn to be there, too!

The Gravity of living pins me to this earth,

but your love and God's good grace,

Have made my home, right here, right now,

in this world, for me A Better Place.

-Carol, TCF Northeast Baltimore

THE REASON FOR TCF MEETINGS

One could ask, "Why go and listen to the woes of other people when it is easier to get wrapped up in our own?" It is not to compare tragedies, nor assess the right or wrong means of grieving, nor to pressure or complicate or confuse a bereaved parent with timetables of grief. This is not the reasoning behind TCF meetings.

When a child of a family dies, the emotional pain can be intense. It is tempting at times to try to run either into solitude or avoidance. A balance is needed to survive and live more than a resigned existence. Finding a way isn't easy when the "rest of the world" rushes by, taking little notice that our life has changed.

The monthly meetings of The Compassionate Friends is a special time we can set aside to gain and maintain our balance. We need a lot of encouragement to endure and experience our emotions and to express ourselves while grieving. Coming to a meeting can help alleviate the feeling of being alone in sorrow. The environment of other bereaved parents offers a means of keeping in touch with reality, in which there can be a sharing and mutual understanding. There is sustained support knowing that others are willing to acknowledge that though a child's song might be over, the melody of memories will remain woven throughout the remainder of our lives.

N. Hunt

TCF, Sioux Falls, SD

January, 1994

Dear Compassionate Friends,

I wrote this letter for my co-workers and posted it in the office where everyone would see it because I found that although everybody had been extremely kind and generous during Laurie's last brief illness, some of them didn't seem to know how to deal with me or what to say after she died. The idea for the letter and some of its contents are from a book on grief work by Bob Deits. (Editor's

note: the book referred to is *Life After Loss: A Personal Guide Dealing With Death, Divorce, Job Change and Relocation.*)

Marcia Davis, TCF
Contra Costa County, California

Dear friends and co-workers:

I want to thank all of you for your kindness and support during the last few months. I have experienced a loss that is devastating to me. It will take time, perhaps years, for me to work through the grief I am having because of the loss of my daughter, Laurie. Although Laurie was our oldest child, she was the child of my third pregnancy, so she was very much wanted by the time I gave birth to her. She was also the child who was most like me, both in appearance and personality. Perhaps because of this, I actually feel I have lost a part of myself. I would gladly have given my life in exchange for hers, had I had that option.

I will cry more than usual for some time. My tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of hope or faith. They are symbols of the depth of my loss and, I am told, a sign that I am recovering. I find that I become angry without there seeming to be a reason for it. My emotions are all heightened by the stress of grief. Please be forgiving if I seem irrational or unfriendly at times.

I need your understanding and your

friendship more than anything else. If you don't know what to say, just touch me or give me a hug to let me know you care. Do not be afraid to mention Laurie's name – she is gone from this life but she will never be gone from my memory or my heart. And please don't hesitate to call me – it is reassuring to hear from supportive friends.

If you, by chance, have had an experience of loss that seems anything like mine, please share it with me. You will not make me feel worse. And if I get emotional or tear up – you are not making me cry – I am crying inside all the time anyway!

This loss is the worst thing that could happen to me. But, I will get through it somehow and I will live again. I will not always feel as I do now – I will laugh again.

Thank you all for caring about me. Your concern is a gift I will always treasure.

Sincerely,

Marcia

THANKSGIVING
You may ask, "What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?" After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts? Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 1 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I'm truly thankful I had my child. Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up. There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, The Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life. I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—CompassionateFriends.
Edie Kaplan
TCF, Ft. Lauderdale, FL



TO MY MISCARRIED BABY
By Betty Ruder ~ TCF, North Shore Chapter IL
Out of our love you came,
Planned, wanted, welcomed.
Your announcement created excitement, joy.
Friends and family inquired,
Do you want a girl or boy?
Will you take Lamaze?
What colors for the nursery?
Then suddenly you're gone — and silence.
No one talks about a baby that won't be.
Were you real or a dream?
I feel alone and empty.
Where can I put my love that was for you?
Now what does it mean?

Each day that I wake up I have to make a decision to live. First I must open my eyes, but my eyelids are so heavy it is hard to keep them open. Then I must sit up, but my head is so heavy it is hard to keep my head up. Then I must move my arms and legs, but my arms and legs are so heavy it is hard to move them.

Each day that I wake up, that quiet inner whisper of God reminds me that "those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles, they will run and not get weary, they will walk and not grow weak." Isaiah 40:28-31.

Some day, some day when I wake up I know the crushing weight of grief will be lifted by the gentle persistence of Faith and Prayer.

-Carol, NE Baltimore TCF

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 who no longer march laughing
 On a cold Halloween night,
 They stand at the door of your mind-
 And you will let them in,
 So that you can give them
 The small gifts of Halloween-
 A smile and a tear.

-WINTERSUN by Sascha Wagner

To Bereaved Grandparents

I am powerlessness. I am helplessness. I am frustration. I sit here with her and cry with her. She cries for her daughter and I cry for mine. I can't help her. I can't reach inside and take her broken heart. I must watch her suffer day after day and see her desolate. I listen to her tell me over and over how she misses Emily, how she wants her back.

I can't bring Emily back for her. I can't even buy her an even better Emily than she had, like I could buy her an even better toy when she was a child. I can't kiss the hurt and make it go away. I can't even kiss a small part of it away. There's no Band-Aid large enough to cover her bleeding heart. There was a time I could listen to her talk about a fickle boyfriend and tell her it would be okay, and know in my heart that in two weeks she wouldn't even think of him.

Can I tell her it'll be okay in two years when I know it will never be okay, that she will carry this pain of "what might have been" in her deepest heart for the rest of her life? I see this young woman, my child, who was once carefree and fun-loving and bubbling with life, slumped in a chair with her eyes full of agony. Where is my power now? Where is my mother's bag of tricks that will make it all better? Why can't I join in the aloneness of her grief? As tight as my arms wrap around her, I can't reach that aloneness. Where are the magic words that will give her comfort? What chapter in Dr. Spock tells me how to do this? He has told me everything else I've needed to know.

Where are the answers? I should have them. I'm her mother. What can I give her to make her better? A cold wet wash cloth will ease that swelling of her crying eyes, but it won't stop the reason for her tears. What treat will bring joy back to her? What prize will bring that "happy child" smile back again? I know that someday she'll find happiness again, that her life will have meaning again. I can hold out hope for her someday, but what about now? this hour? this day? I can give her my love and prayers and my care and my concern. I could give her my life. But even that won't help.

Margaret Gerner, St. Louis, Missouri

TO MY SISTER

By Cindy Keltz ~Arlington Heights IL

You touched us all, you loved us all,
 Forever giving, forever caring,
 Forever forgiving.
 Never wanting in return.
 Blessed are those who shared your life
 Rich are those who carry your memories.
 Please rest now; your chores we will finish.
 'Til we meet again . . .

If you have moved, wish to be included in the mailing list, or removed from the list, please let us know by writing to :

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Or emailing: newsletter@baltimorectf.com

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