



Waiting for Answers

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring, air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared *were* true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said, "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too."

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

Mary Clark
 In memory of Max
 TCF, Sugar Land-SW Houston Chapter, TX

When your mind
 cannot find
 an answer,
 open your heart
 and ask
 for peace.

Prescription for Healing:
 Share a memory with an understanding friend.

Legacy
 Memories are a legacy
 Of hope and courage,
 Left to help us go on
 When the giver is gone.

From The Poems of Sascha Wagner
 TCF 2008



Looking Back on a Difficult Time

July 29th was the seventh anniversary of Chad's death. I am writing to share my thoughts and actions, as I once again pondered life, without my third born son.

I knew, when I turned over the page of the calendar, that July held tragic memories for our family, but wasn't thinking "sad" because we have all reinvested in life and have once again felt joy and laughter. Therefore, it surprised me as the 29th grew closer and closer that feelings of fragility crept back into my body and my eyes burned with held back tears. I grew "grouchy" and found fault with my husband at the slightest infraction. I was constantly exhausted even though my schedule wasn't overly stressful. It wasn't until one of my Compassionate Friends invited Roger and me to a movie with her and her husband, that I realized how hard I was fighting against what my body and subconscious was experiencing.

We went to see a show whose plot allowed me, and half of the audience, to cry openly. It was there that I set free the deep feelings that I had been trying to stuff down all month. There in the dark, with my husband, my friend and her husband, I didn't have to hold back any more. As I cried for those dying on the screen, I cried for my son, cried for the children he didn't have, for the fiancée he left behind, for his brothers, sister, and father who miss him so, and I cried for me and all mothers who have had sons and daughters die.

This experience allowed me to bring front and center what I had been holding inside all month. I decided to ask my prof for the day off, Roger decided to take the day off of work, and we made plans to take care of ourselves on Chad's anniversary.

The days preceding the anniversary, I was contacted by telephone and sent cards and gifts by my dear Compassionate Friends, and on July 29th my husband and I went to the cemetery and paid honor to our son through ritual, flowers, 'nilla candles, and tears. We then drove to Camano Island and spent the day on the beach gazing out into the azure blue sound, remembering stories about him, and looking for heart shaped rocks to place at the foot of the tree we planted in his memory.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because I am so thankful that Compassionate Friends was recommended to me when my Chad died. It was there that I learned about the grief process, where I learned it was okay to cry and cry and cry. It was there that I was given the opportunity to process what I was thinking and feeling at chapter meetings, where I began remembering Chad, and all children, in ritual. It was at TCF meetings where I got permission to go ahead and take as long as I needed, where I got loving support to grieve my son, and where I met the people who have traveled these long seven years with me and whom I know will be there seven, no seventy years in the future. These are my Compassionate Friends, bereaved parents, like myself, like yourself who will go the extra mile for another mom or dad, who will be there for the duration, and who will never question my tears and say, "Gee, I thought you'd be over it by now."

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To receive this newsletter via e-mail please contact Steve Haupt at shaupt1@rochester.rr.com

TCF Rochester Donations:

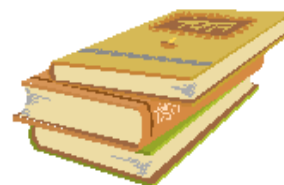
If you would like to contribute to our Compassionate Friends Chapter please forward your Love Gifts and Donations to The Compassionate Friends of Rochester at 130 Portview Circle, Rochester, NY 14617. Please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, NY. Sincerest Thanks.

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My hope is that you, too, have developed your own support system of Compassionate Friends and others who will be there for you. If this is not the case, I invite you with the utmost sincerity to come to a TCF meeting and meet the parents who attend. I realize support groups are not for everyone, and I realize not everyone will bond with everyone. But I do know that The Compassionate Friends organization will be there for you as long as you desire and beyond.

Sue Anderson
In memory of Chad
TCF, Seattle, Washington

Book Reviews



The library cupboard is available at each meeting. Please feel free to browse and borrow a book. Both of these books below are available in the TCF Rochester Library.

Messages and Miracles - Extraordinary Experiences of the Bereaved by Louis E. LaGrand, Ph.D. (donated by Carol Ann Britt)

Louis LeGrand is a certified grief counselor and a pioneer in after death communication (ADC's) research and in this book explores the reasons why ADCs occur and how they help the bereaved.

... keeping Clarke by Stephanie Benbenek (donated by the author, Stephanie Benbenek)

Stephanie contacted me and wanted to donate her book about her son (Clarke). "A deeply moving memoir written by Stephanie Benbenek, whose only child, Clarke, was killed suddenly in an automobile accident ... how she survives under this unbearable weight is told in a voice that is compelling, honest and relevant."

Welcome New Friends

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief.

Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable.



Upcoming Planned Events—Mark Your Calendars:

April 12, 2011—Guest Speaker, Marc Hare—breakout session. Marc, author & columnist, will share his experiences of grief through those he has interviewed & talk about the book he authored.

April 26, 2011—Yoga-Plus! Breakout session (Barb Silverstein)

May 24, 2011—Steering Committee Meeting at Lifetime Care—5pm (bring your dinner).

June 28, 2011—Annual Balloon Release—Fellows Road Park in Perinton—details will follow.

TCF 2011 National Conference

TCF's 34th National Conference will be held in Minneapolis/St. Paul July 15-17, 2011 at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel. You will find it to be another great conference with around 100 workshops, sharing sessions, special keynote speakers at the Opening, Closing and Friday Afternoon and Saturday Evening banquets, Hospitality Room, Butterfly Boutique, Reflection Room, a completely stocked bookstore, special Friday evening entertainment and a Remembrance Candle Lighting. TCF's Walk to Remember will be held Sunday morning. Visit www.compassionatefriends.org for more information

Chapter Information:

Meeting Location:

Lifetime Care Care
3111 Winton Road South
(across from Valley Cadillac)

Meeting Days for March 2011:

Tuesday the 8th and Tuesday the 22nd
7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social
7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. - meeting

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or www.compassionatefriends.org

Send news letter inputs or web comments to:
colleenkohl@hotmail.com



February Donations and Love Gifts

J C Kuitems in memory of Robert Kuitems

Dolores Carr in memory of Bill Purol

See Brenda for TCF Bracelets (\$2.00) and Memorial votive candle holders (\$5.00)

Rochester Chapter TCF Mission:

The MISSION of the Rochester Chapter 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.

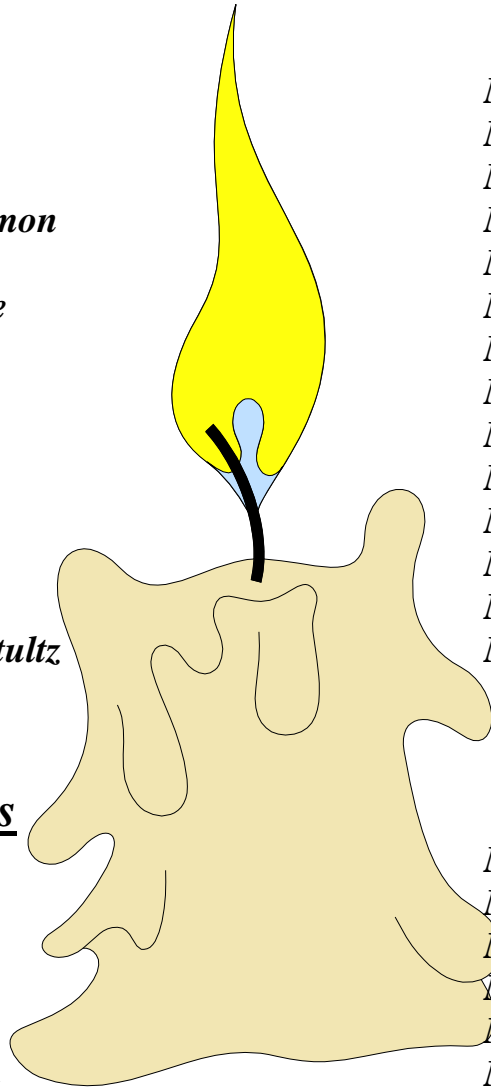


Our Children Remembered ***March, 2011*** ***Birthdays and Remembrance Days***

Birthdays

David Willmes
William Joseph Purol
Evan James Parkison
Kimberly Susan Fitzsimmon
Brendan T. Barry
Shontia Charnelle Slade
Anna Kiner
Robert Anthony Yacono
Robert Joseph Kuitems
Abrianna Michelle Sack
GretchenAnn Protulipac
Joey Giardina
Mark Buckenmeyer
Robert "Rob" William Stultz

March 3, 1973
March 4, 1968
March 5, 1986
March 7, 1967
March 8, 1987
March 8, 1979
March 11, 1961
March 12, 1958
March 16, 1961
March 16, 2000
March 21, 1993
March 22, 1958
March 26, 1983
March 30, 1983



Remembrance Days

Douglas Outterson
Chrictopher Czerw
Michael David Mueller
Paula Mix Spanganberg
Carrie Jean Kubarycz
Oliver Fox Maira-Walsh
Shontia Charnelle Slade
Kevin Patrick Lynd
Zackary Monroe McCarthy
Jillian Kristine Boda
Evan James Parkison

March 1, 1963
March 3, 2010
March 5, 2005
March 10, 1997
March 11, 2007
March 19, 2010
March 23, 2009
March 24, 2003
March 24, 1999
March 28, 2007
March 28, 2007



Invite you to join us for...

“Exploring Eight Critical Questions when Someone Dies”

A Community Seminar

Featuring Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Author – Educator – Grief Counselor

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

(registration begins at 5:30 p.m.)

Asbury First United Methodist Church

1050 East Avenue

Rochester, NY 14607

Who Should Attend

The capacity to love requires the need to mourn when someone you love dies. This program will be helpful to anyone who is experiencing grief. If you know anyone who may benefit from this opportunity to embrace hope and healing, please let them know about this program. We look forward to having you with us.

About the Presenter

Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt is a noted author, educator and grief counselor. Recipient of the Association for Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, he serves as the Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, CO.

A frequent guest of the media, Dr. Wolfelt has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, the Larry King Show, the NBC Today Show, and Nick News.

He is the author of over thirty books on grief and loss. Among his titles are *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*, *Healing Your Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas*, *The Journey Through Grief*, *Healing the Bereaved Child*, and *Creating Meaningful Ceremonies*.

Agenda

Among the content areas to be explored in this program are the following:

- Will I grieve this loss, or will I mourn this loss?
- Will I befriend the feelings that flow from this loss, or will I deny, repress, or inhibit them?
- Will I be a “passive witness” in my grief?
- Will I embrace the uniqueness of my grief experience, or will I assume I mourn like everyone else?
- Will I identify the six needs of mourning and work on them, or will I fall victim to the cliché “time heals all wounds?”
- Will I move toward “reconciliation” of my grief, or will I believe I must come to a complete “resolution” of my grief?
- Will I embrace my transformation from this loss, or will I keep trying to get my old self back?
- Will this loss add to my “divine spark,” or will it take away my life force?

No fee for this program; reservations are requested for planning purposes. Please call (585) 214.1574 to RSVP.