



Mothers' Day, "Before" and "After"

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Shifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-Mom and stick-daughter standing along side a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning-to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina." Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom", chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need anymore "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Days after Nina died was a griefnumbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten. I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

continued on page 2



continued from page 1

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have.

This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there

to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is. Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life – you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you -- they are your child's gift to you.

With gentle thoughts and peace on your special day,

Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN



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.

Annual Garage Sale

Joan and George Carafos will be hosting the garage sale at their home this year on June 4, 5 & 6. Group members, friends, and family donate the items that will be sold at the sale. As you do your "spring cleaning", please see if you have any items for the sale. This garage sale is the major fundraiser for our group. Beginning in mid-May, donations can be dropped off at Joan & George's (phone number is 425-2778 to call prior). Sign-up sheets will be circulated at upcoming meetings to help set up the items for sale, work at the sale, and pack up after the sale. *Thank you for your support!*

Annual Balloon Release

The Annual Balloon Release is held each June in place of the first meeting of the month. The Balloon Release is a special event that starts with social time during which some people bring their dinner to eat with others at the picnic shelter. After this, everyone gathers together and decorates or puts a written message on their balloons (which are provided). The ceremony consists of beautiful music, readings and poems, reading of our children's names, and ends with the releasing of the balloons. It is truly a very moving and memorable experience.

This event is held at Kreag Road Park in Perinton. The park is very easy to find and is just a short distance from the 490 East exit for Bushnell's Basin.

National TCF Conference—2009

The 32nd National TCF Conference will be held in Portland, Oregon and runs from Friday, August 7th through Sunday, August 9th. Information about the conference, workshops, and much more is available on the TCF website. Some of the local chapter members have attended in the past. It is a very welcoming group and the conference topics are meaningful.



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



Upcoming Planned Events— Mark Your Calendars:

Breakout Session— topic will be "Psychics"- at the May 12th meeting.

Annual Yard Sale—June 4, 5 & 6 at George & Joan Carafos' home—will need to gather items to sell

Annual Balloon Release—June 9th—save the date.

April Donations and Love Gifts



Anna Loeb in memory of Joey Giardina

Eleanor DeClerck in memory of Joshua Price

Kathleen Lynd in memory of Kevin Patrick Lynd

Suzanne Cook in memory of Kevin Cook

Clyde & Mary Stephens in memory of son, Greg

Deborah Buckenmeyer in memory of Mark Buckenmeyer

Hugh & Barbara Outterson in memory of Jeff Outterson

Chapter Information:

Meeting Location:

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

Meeting Days for May 2009:

Tuesday the 12th and Tuesday the 26th
7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social
7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. - meeting

Contacts:

Linda Haines— 315-879-7739
Cathy Spoto - 585-254-6983
TCF Regional Coordinator:
Jacquie Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814
TCF National 877-969-0010
or www.compassionatefriends.org

Send news letter inputs to:

Colleen Kohl at: colleenkohl@hotmail.com

May Event

Lifetime Care's May event is "*Good Grief: Lessons from the Garden*". It is part of the survival tips series. There will be messages about butterflies, flowers, and friendships. It will be held on May 15th from 3:30pm-5:30pm at Lifetime Care on Winton Rd. This event is free of charge and refreshments will be provided. Please RSVP at 214-1570 if you plan on attending.



See Linda 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 *May, 2009*

Birthdays and Remembrance Days



Birthdays

Meaghan C. Latone
Debra Willmes
Tommy Camillaci
Michael Simons Burbank
Shaun Michael Bohrer
Jeffery James Yates
Reynold Armand
Michael Paul Funk "Mickey"
Katherine C. Shirley
William F. Beyerbach II
Stephanie A. Lagree
Norbert Lipinski Jr.
Danny Hunn
Slade Gertsner

Remembrance Days

Kendra Marie Nelson
Michael Clark Van Valkenburgh
Erik T. Ray
Matthew James Gnage
Sean Patrick Cristo
David A. Willmes
Tommy Camillaci
Gregory Paul Crawford
Jacob Paul Hampson

