



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.
Fredericksburg Chapter, Fredericksburg, Virginia
Telephone Numbers: (540) 775-8430

Nonprofit Self-Help Organization for Families Who Have Experienced the Death
of a Child

A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

JANUARY 2008



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. Parents who have experienced the death of their child at any age are welcome to attend our meetings. There are no dues. If you are receiving our newsletter for the first time, it is because someone told us our sharing might comfort you. We meet the **THIRD TUESDAY NIGHT** of each month at **7:30 PM**, at the Redeemer Lutheran Church, the fellowship hall of the church, 5120 Harrison Road, Fredericksburg, VA.

CHAPTER LEADER - Kathie Kelly

TREASURER - Clyde Richardson

OUTREACH COORDINATOR - Gloria Blake

SIBLING LEADER – Vickie Headley

HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR - Odessa Cuffy

BUTTERFLY AMBASSADOR – Delores Martin-Lam

LIBRARIAN - Cathy Taylor

NEWSLETTER TEAM - Keith & Kathie Kelly

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Chapter Leader's Corner

Happy New Year to all! I trust that you all had a nice holiday. Although we yearn for our children, we can still remember the good times had with them and know that they are watching over us. As the New Year comes, it is a time to start over a new. I, like all of you, would like us to start over again and have our children with us, yet that is not possible, so we start over a new way of life. As you get into the new year, try to set a goal for your self, doesn't have to be huge, something as small as helping someone else in their time of need. I hope you all have a Happy New Year.

Our meeting will be January 15, 2008 at Redeemer Lutheran Church, 5120 Harrison Road, Fredericksburg, VA in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 7:30 PM. I would like to thank Pastor Koehler for having us at his church.

If you would like to contribute something for the newsletter, deadline is December 20th for the January newsletter. Thank you!

Well, I hope that you all have a wonderful month. If you are in need of anything, please call me at 540-775-8430, if there is no answer, please be sure to leave your name and number so I can get back to you or e-mail me at kellykathie@hotmail.com.

*Your Compassionate Friend,
Kathie Kelly
Chapter Leader
Kevin Robert Kelly's Momma
7/19/94 – 5/10/98*



WHEN TOMORROW STARTS WITHOUT ME

When tomorrow starts without me,
and I'm not there to see;
If the sun should rise and find your eyes,
all filled with tears for me.
I wish so much you wouldn't cry,
the way you do each day,
While thinking of the many things,
we didn't get to say.
I know how much you love me,
as much as I love you;
And each time that you think of me,
Please know I'll miss you, too.
But when tomorrow starts without me,
please try to understand,
That an angel came and called my name,
and took me by the hand.
And said a place was ready,
in heaven up above;
And that I'd have to leave behind,
all those I truly love.
I had so much to live for,
so much yet to do.
It seemed almost impossible,
that I was leaving you.
When tomorrow starts without me,
don't think we're far apart;
For every time you think of me,
I'm right here in your heart.

By: Capuchin Franciscan Friars
Submitted in memory of **Perri**
by Marilyn and Anthony Andre', TCF-Phoenix



Survivors of Suicide

Parents and siblings of a young person who has completed suicide face an almost overwhelming burden of emotions. It is one of the cruelest tragedies that can happen to a family. To pull oneself out of the emotional wreckage is a mighty struggle. Each parent can be utterly devastated and unable to be supportive to their mate or to surviving children. Other family members are shocked and unable to cope with the event. They do not know how to console or help us. Our friends wonder, "How could such a thing happen?" They too, do not know how to help us. We struggle with the "Whys"...the unanswered questions and painful memories.

We, who count ourselves as survivors—we've made it a year, two years, some of us are in the third year—would like to share a few thoughts. First, you are not alone. We understand whatever you may be feeling for we have been there! Suicide can intensify the feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, depression—all a part of the grief process. The course of recovery is up and down. Give yourself plenty of time. You need a great deal of support, at least through the first year. The suicide of one's child raises painful questions and doubts and fears. We can find ourselves in a spiritual crisis. We question our beliefs and may feel cut off from God. Through sharing with others and listening to others who have walked the same path, you may gain some understanding of your reactions and learn some ways to cope.

But most of all, we, who are in the process of rebuilding our lives, have not forgotten the dark hours of those early days and weeks when we thought we could not live again. We cannot offer you any short-cut through the pain. There isn't any. But you can help yourself along the way to healing. We can offer you support, encouragement, and the hand of friendship.

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

CHAPTER INFORMATION PAGE

LOVE GIFTS

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Just as our chapter is run entirely by volunteers interested in furthering the work of TCF, your voluntary, tax-deductible donations make it possible for us to mail this monthly newsletter, contact newly bereaved parents, continue our participation in TCF/National, and meet other chapter expenses.

Often, as they find hope and healing within the group, parents make a contribution usually in memory of a child who has died, or maybe a gift of thanksgiving for their surviving children.

These contributions are our only source of funds. All proceeds given to the our chapter are used within the community for outreach and to provide a place for newly bereaved families to seek support.

Gifts are tax deductible. If you would like to make a donation, please send to The Compassionate Friends, The Fredericksburg Chapter, P.O. Box 172, King George, VA 22485. All gifts are welcome and truly appreciated.

THANK YOU!

Mr. & Mrs. Lowe in loving memory of their son, Christopher Lowe.

Clyde & Sheryl Richardson in loving memory of their son, Bryan Richardson

Delores Martin-Lam in loving memory of her son, Jeff Martin

Gloria Blake in loving memory of her son, Jonathan Blake

Vickie Headley in loving memory of her brother Richard Briggs and her nephew, Jesse Willard Dunnivan Briggs

Mr. & Mrs. Blakley in loving memory of their son, Mathew Shane Blakley

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN UNITED WAY

Our chapter is participating with the Combined Federal Campaign. Please use the following code to made donations for our chapter.

Our code is 63330. Thank you in advance for your support.



NEWS FROM NATIONAL



TCF National Conference for 2008 in Nashville

Nashville, Tennessee, known as the home of country music, will be the host city for the 31st national conference of The Compassionate Friends July 18-20, 2008.

The conference committee selected the theme Volunteers for Healing—Friends for the Future, a name that is very appropriate as TCF national conferences are always regarded as great healing experiences and a great place to find friends for life. The 2008 conference will have special guest speakers and entertainers, more than 100 workshops covering most aspects of grief following the death of a child, and many additional activities including the ninth annual two-mile Walk to Remember at 8 a.m. Sunday July, 20. A pre-conference day for professionals will be Thursday, July 17.

Among the keynote speakers will be Joe and Iris Lawley, founding parents of The Compassionate Friends, who will fly all the way from England for what may be one of their final TCF speaking engagements outside of their home country.

To allow everyone to be a part of the 2008 conference committee experience, the conference committee plans to decorate the conference area with real 7" vinyl records that have pictures of our TCF children remembered in the center. The "sponsor a record" program is similar to programs available for previous conferences. For a nominal charge (to help defray the cost of the conference), pictures sent in of our TCF children will be placed on the records (which are pressed with real grooves, but will not have music) and will decorate the registration area, and reflection and hospitality rooms. To participate, download the sponsor a record order form and follow the easy instructions. Whether or not you are able to attend the conference, a child, sibling, grandchild, or loved one can still be remembered.

Those who attend the conference and have a record made will be able to carry them home. After the conference concludes, those unable to attend who would like their child's record can have it mailed to them.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel and special room rates will be available for guests attending the conference. Watch TCF's national website for the latest information as it becomes available. More than 1,200 people are expected to attend.

To Our First-Time Readers and New Members and To Our Long-time Members



If you are receiving our newsletter for the first time, it is because someone has told us that you might find it helpful or you asked us to send it to you. We cordially invite you to attend any of our meetings which are held on the third Tuesday of each month at Redeemer Lutheran Church, in the Basement, 5120 Harrison Road, Fredericksburg from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Nothing is required of you. There are no fees or dues. You need not speak a word. Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. If you have never come to a meeting, you are probably wondering what this group of people that you don't even know can do for you. It is here that comfort and support can be given by those that "have been there". We've all had chunks of our hearts torn out. Yet those holes get smaller with the loving touches, friendly smiles and kind reassuring words from each other.

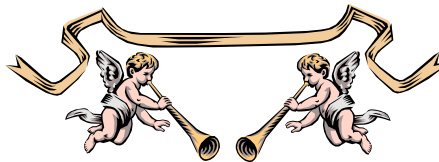
Try not judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. At your first meeting you were hoping that TCF could get you over your terrible pain and depression and loneliness and guilt and anger and all of the other faces of grief. You came expecting to go home, feeling "better, if not cured." Instead you met other parents who are still coping with forms of grief after months or even years. Perhaps you didn't notice there were some parents who were doing "OK." But the bottom line is you may go home from the first meeting feeling worse than when you came. Give it another try you will probably find, that each meeting uncovers a piece of the puzzle of life after the death of a child. It may take several meetings, but, hopefully, you will find the road to recovery like we did.

To Our Long-time Members

"TCF gives me a sense of purpose. A good enough reason for you to consider sticking around a while after you feel you have reached an acceptance or at least worked through your grief. Others need you. Pass the love on—adopt a bereaved parent!"

Fay Harden, TCF - Tuscaloosa, AL

CAN YOU HELP? Do you remember your first meeting of The Compassionate Friends, those first months of your grief journey? You desperately needed someone to talk to, someone who knew the pain of losing a child, someone to hug you, cry with you, listen to you. And there are newly bereaved parents who now need your help. Are you willing to be there for them? If two years or more have passed since the death of your child, and you feel that you are ready to give back some of the support that was shown to you, please consider a place of service in our chapter. There is a job for everyone. Don't wait call me at 540-775-8430. If you can't serve, please, at least, come to meetings to lend your support and understanding to our newly bereaved families. We have had so many new members join us the past few months. We need all the help we can get to help them. Thank you from all of our children.



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SIBLING CORNER

For all of children who have lost brothers and/or sisters



THE BITTER TEARS OF LOVE LOST

Peter Smith, age 15; sibling to Gregory Smith

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."



TCF Sibling Pen Pal Program

This program is offered for bereaved siblings of any age, wishing to meet other siblings with similar interests, hobbies, and whose sibling may have had a similar cause of death. This is an email list of bereaved siblings for The Compassionate Friends that offers one more avenue to communicate with others who are walking the same path of grief. It is a most rewarding method for our Compassionate Friends to extend the bonds of friendship that we all need so much to help with the heartache of grief. Please e-mail the TCF sibling liaison Daniel Yoffee at tcfsibling@compassionatefriends.org for URL .

****TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2008 7:30-9:00 PM**

**AT REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHURCH
5120 HARRISON ROAD
FREDERICKSBURG, VA**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.

We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

Need to talk? Need a Friend?



TELEPHONE FRIENDS & REFERRALS: Do you need someone to talk to? Here is a list of Friends who can offer a listening ear. Please don't hesitate to call if you need someone to listen - - that is why we are here.

Gloria Blake (804) 633-9521
Dee Martin-Lam (540) 582-6921
David & Cathy Taylor (540) 582-2760
Kathie & Keith Kelly (540) 775-2015
Clyde & Cheryl Richardson (540) 659-6564
Odessa Cuffy (804) 633-6708
Wayne & Gloria Whitley (540) 371-9092
Millie Fleming (540) 373-5324
Greg & Cathleen Baker (540) 370-4838

Young Teen Accidental Death
Young Teen Accidental Death
Adult Accidental Death
Toddler/Sudden Death
Adult Sudden Death
Illness
Suicide
Adult Accidental Death
Unexpected/Expected Newborn Death

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, FREDERICKSBURG CHAPTER NEW SUBSCRIPTION – RENEWAL – CHANGE FORMS – DONATIONS

If you are receiving our newsletter for the first time...everyone within the Compassionate Friends Organization wants to say...We are sorry you have the need for this publication but we are glad you found us and we hope our newsletters will be helpful on your journey. Someone may have lovingly sent you the newsletter...and if so and you find it helpful, please complete the data sheet enclosed and return it so that we may add you to our newsletter database for future mailings. This is to insure that all the information we have is correct and complete. *This is for internal use only.*

Please print, filling in all applicable blanks/boxes:

Your Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Phone (including area code): _____ Email: _____

Do you prefer to receive the newsletter by (check one): Mail _____ Email _____

Child's Full Name: _____ Male: _____ Female _____

Child's Birth Date: _____ Child's Remembrance Date: _____

Cause of Child's Death (optional): _____

Child's relationship to you (e.g. son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild) _____

Names and ages of all surviving siblings living with you:

*How did you find out about The Compassionate Friends? Please circle one: Family, Friends, Hospital, Church, School, Funeral Homes, Internet, Newspaper, Employer (Human Resources) or Other

Note: The information you have given above will be confidential (used for internal purpose only) unless you answer "yes" to one or more of the following questions:

1. Do you want your child's name to appear in the newsletter's "***Our Children Loved and Remembered***" section of birth and remembrance dates? Yes _____ No _____
2. Do you want your phone number given to another member for one on one support, otherwise known as Telephone Friends? Yes _____ No _____
3. Do you wish to have your child's name included on the Wall of Memory on our TCF Fredericksburg Web Site? This is currently in the process of being put together Yes _____ No _____

Voluntary donations are TCF Fredericksburg Chapter's only source of income. The Compassionate Friends needs to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

Yes, I want to help with TCF Outreach...a donation is enclosed in Memory of _____

I would like to apply my donation toward the following outreach:

Newsletter _____ (recommended amount for paper newsletter is \$12.00 which would go towards postage, paper and copying) Library _____ General Expenses _____ Birthday/Remembrance Date Cards _____
Newly Bereaved Packets _____ Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service _____

Make Checks Payable to: The Compassionate Friends **Please Return To:** The Compassionate Friends, Fredericksburg Chapter, P. O. Box 172, King George, VA 22485