



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Meg Avery, Editor

WINTER 2010/2011

December, January and February

CHAPTER MEETING AND CONTACT INFO:

Gwinnett Chapter- 7:30 PM on the 3rd Thursday of every month. **Trinity Christian Fellowship, 1985 Old Fountain Road, Lawrenceville, 30043** Contact June Cooper by phone 770-995-5268, or email jc30044@flash.net, **next meetings:**

Dec. 16, Jan. 20 and Feb. 17.

TCF Atlanta website: www.tcfatlanta.org Gwinnett

website: www.tcfgwinnett.homestead.com/index.html

Georgia Regional Coordinator: Muriel Littman, 404-603-

9942 Email muriellittman@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends National Office: 1-877-969-0010

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL DAY

The senate has, for many years, at the request of The Compassionate Friends, proclaimed the second Sunday in December as National Children's Memorial Day to coincide with The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting. Members of all TCF chapters join tens of thousands of families worldwide in lighting candles at 7 pm as an act of symbolic remembrance. This is an annual event where persons around the globe, united in the loss of a child, light candles for one hour the second Sunday in December. Candles are first lit at 7 pm local time just west of the International Date Line. As candles burn down in one time zone, they are then lit in the next, creating a virtual 24 hour wave of light as observances continues in countries around the world. **TCF Gwinnett Chapter will sponsor a Candle Lighting Ceremony on Sunday, December 12, 2010, at Betheseda Park at the Senior Center Pavilion on the lake, 225 Betheseda Church Road, Lawrenceville, 30044. The park is easily accessible from either Ronald Reagan Parkway or Hwy 29. We will begin lighting our candles promptly at 7:00 pm. Please plan to arrive by then.** You may bring your own candle and picture of your loved one. We will have extra candles. This is a very special, heart-warming ceremony to remember our child, sibling, grandchild during the busy holiday season. Many of us have discarded old traditions, kept some traditions and found new rituals to connect us with our children. This may be one of your new traditions, a memory to cherish. Please join us on December 12th.

A non-denominational self-help support group offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause.

"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."

www.tcfatlanta.org and www.thecompassionatefriends.org

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

Dear Friends,



The Gwinnett newsletter is available both in print and through e-mail. **If you have received this issue in print and would prefer to receive e-mail instead, please notify us at tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com or 770-932-5862.** This will help keep our postage and printing costs down. We welcome your suggestions to improve our chapter newsletter.

We need your input for the newsletter. Poetry, letters and comments submitted by parents, siblings and grandparents will be an important part of each issue. Our next issue, Spring 2011, will cover the months of March, April & May.

We will also continue to recognize birth and death dates as times of special remembrance within our TCF family. Please communicate this important information to us if you have not already done so.

MEETING LOCATION

TCF Gwinnett has a new home for our monthly meeting. We are now meeting at **Trinity Christian Fellowship, 1985 Old Fountain Road, Lawrenceville, 30043.** We meet in the 100 Building. Visit their website, www.tcfchurch.com or TCF Gwinnett's website: www.tcfgwinnett.homestead.com/index.html for specific directions. Meetings are the Third Thursday of every month at 7:30 pm.



Pieces of Me

By David Roberts

David is a bereaved parent, whose daughter Jeannine Marie died on 3/1/03 of a rare form of cancer at the age of 18.

My perceptions about grief and the way we deal with loss has radically changed since the death of my daughter, Jeannine, more than seven years ago. Prior to Jeannine's death, I grieved the deaths of other people in my life for a specific period of time and eventually returned to life, as I knew it.

Ongoing connection to our loved ones as a way to negotiate grief was not a part of my grief vocabulary. I never viewed grief as a lifelong process that permanently changed the way we related to the world and transformed us as human beings.

Finding meaning after loss wasn't something with which I could readily identify.

After Jeannine died, I discovered that my prior beliefs about grief were not going to help me manage the pain of the worst loss of my life. Jeannine's death permanently changed the way that I viewed grief and the world around me. The pain that I experienced as a result of her death triggered a complete spiritual transformation.

Last year, I started working on a concept that I call "Pieces of Me." My hope was to develop a way for parents to identify the best qualities of their children and incorporate them into their own lives so that they can maintain a continuing bond and find meaning after the death of their children. Doing this helped me tremendously in my grief journey.

In her eighteen years of life, Jeannine was, among other things, determined, playful, honest, compassionate and heartfelt. By incorporating those characteristics of my daughter into my life, she became a partner with me in the service work that I now do with bereaved parents. Incorporating those characteristics also allows me to maintain a continuing relationship with her.

"Pieces of Me" involves a total redefinition of the self following the death of our children. It is a self that is enhanced because the essence of our children is a part of who we are now. If we wish to redefine our selves following the death of our children there are three basic questions that we can ask:

1. What qualities or characteristics of (child's name) do you admire the most?

2. How can you make these qualities a part of your own life so that you can find meaning and joy, amidst the sadness of grief?

3. How can you make these qualities a part of your own life so that you can be of service to others?

There is no time frame to begin answering these questions. As our grief journeys as bereaved parents are lifelong, you can start any time that you are ready. These questions can also be used by anyone who has experienced a loss of any kind, and who desires to stay connected to their loved ones.

"All I know is that I have breathed your name for what feels like a lifetime I can't let go, you're a part of me."

Lyrics from the song "Hand on My Heart" by Foreigner - Written by M.Jones/L.Gramm/B.Turgon- Published by Somerset Songs Publishing, Inc.

Dave has written articles for Living with Loss Magazine and the Compassionate Friends national magazine, We Shall Not Walk Alone. He has presented at national conferences for The Compassionate Friends in both 2008 and 2009 and for The Bereaved Parents of the USA in 2009.

Dave has co-authored two books with Linda Findlay of Mourning Discoveries. The first is titled: Mourning Discoveries: A guide to help families navigate through grief towards healing...During the Holidays. The second is titled: Mourning Discoveries: A guide to help families navigate through grief towards healing...The Loss of a Pet. (Ordering information for both books may be found on Dave's website located at www.bootsyandangel.com)

Dave lives in Whitesboro, New York with his wife Cheri and Jeannine's two cats, Bootsy and Angel. They have two sons.

Dave's website: www.bootsyandangel.com is devoted to providing support and resources for individuals experiencing loss. He can be reached at info@bootsyandangel.com

Hanukkah Thoughts

At this season of lights
We remember the light
you brought into our lives:
The light of your laughter
The light of your wit and
intelligence
The light of your love
May the time not be distant
when the memory of these lights
Will illuminate our hearts and minds
and eradicate the darkness therein.



WE REMEMBER BIRTHDAYS



The light of life never goes out, and so we remember their birthdays

December

Christina VauTrot	Dec. 1
Connor Devine	Dec. 3
Tim Walton	Dec. 6
Mark William Evans, Jr.	Dec. 6
Ross Creel	Dec. 9
Lindsey Marie Townsend	Dec. 13
Jimmy West	Dec. 15
Cristina Jane Vargas Howerton	Dec. 18
Kyle Copija	Dec. 20
Robert West	Dec. 21
Michael Faulkner	Dec. 24
Sandra Banderas	Dec. 30

January

Ryan Pilgrim	Jan. 1
Terry O'Donnell	Jan. 2
Linda Strauss	Jan. 4
Michael Dale	Jan. 6
Brandon Harper	Jan. 7
Christopher Downs	Jan. 9
Tiffany Maxwell	Jan. 18
Jessica Bryl	Jan. 19
Tyler Ivey Rice	Jan. 28
Christopher Boyd	Jan. 29
Christian Pach	Jan. 30

Birthday Invitation

Every month we have a Birthday Table and you are warmly invited to please come share your child's birthday with us when his/her birthday is that month. This is your chance to tell us a favorite story, or share a poem or thoughts that either you or your child wrote, or whatever remembrance you choose in memory of your child. Our child's or grandchild's or sibling's birthday will forever be a very special day and we at TCF knows how important that day is and how helpful and healing it can be to share with others.

Please plan on attending the meeting of your child's birthday and filling our Birthday Table with pictures and/or mementos. You are also more than welcome to bring his/her favorite snacks.



February



Clayton Thomas Sechrist	Feb. 1
Kimberly Lange	Feb. 5
Matthew Turner	Feb. 5
Clayton Shadinger	Feb. 8
Ronald "Scott" Long	Feb. 9
John Andrew Sims	Feb. 12
Quintin Jones	Feb. 14
Dee Cooper	Feb. 14
Christopher Patterson	Feb. 15
Xavier PierreLouis	Feb. 17
Drew Adams	Feb. 20
Stephanie Fortner	Feb. 21
Nathanael Tate	Feb. 24
Claire Nelson	Feb. 24
David Whitley	Feb. 26
Julie Duncan	Feb. 27
Max Fiandt	Feb. 27

When I See You Again

When I see you again
 Will you still have that face
 That beautiful smile
 Will you still move with Grace
 When I see you again
 Will you still have those eyes
 Bright piercing glances
 With sarcastic little sighs
 When I see you again
 Will you still have that laugh
 The one that makes me smile
 Guess I'll wait awhile
 When I see you again
 Will you light up a room
 The way you've always done
 You're such a lovely one
 When I see you again
 Will I hold you to my heart
 You've been there all these years
 That end will never start
 When I see you again
 Will you know how you were loved
 Will you know all the truth
 Of lives gone by
 Will you share your love with me
 And look into my eyes
 When I see you again
 My soul will sing with joy
 My heart will bleed tears of happiness
 And I will hold you my Dear Boy

*Written June 13th, 2009 for David Thomas Calvert
 By; Thomas Patrick Calvert.....I love you David*

Dec., Jan. & Feb. Anniversaries

So that their lives may always shine, our children are remembered. As long as we live, they too shall live for they are part of us in our memories

Jonathan Hesfeld	Dec. 2
Arnessa Royster	Dec. 3
Jessica Rose Riley	Dec. 3
Tyler Durden	Dec. 5
Johnia Berry	Dec. 6
Rachael Fouquet	Dec. 7
Frankie Ortiz	Dec. 13
Tim Walton	Dec. 15
Don Walton	Dec. 15
Connor Devine	Dec. 16
Terry O'Donnell	Dec. 21
Christopher Patterson	Dec. 22
Julie Lyn Donaldson	Dec. 23
Adyson Claire Smith	Dec. 23
Norma Mucha	Dec. 25
Samantha Mucha	Dec. 25
Matthew Turner	Dec. 26
Michael LeVierge	Dec. 27
Brannon Springer	Dec. 28
Michael Rivero	Dec. 28
Jason Pettus	Dec. 30
Gary Pruitt	Jan. 1
Cathy Hayes	Jan. 1
Gabrielle, Malachi & Xavier PierreLouis	Jan. 1
Clayton Shadinger	Jan. 2
Jeff Bradley	Jan. 4
Ben Ellerd	Jan. 4
Karissa Palmer	Jan. 7
Stephen Owens	Jan. 7
Kimberly Lange	Jan. 11
Justin Todd Stephens	Jan. 11
Jayla Cook	Jan. 11
Clayton Olvey	Jan. 12
"Lonnie" Chylon Gregory	Jan. 13
Brandon Harper	Jan. 16
David Whitley	Jan. 17
Michael Dale	Jan. 19
Christina VauTrot	Jan. 20
Natalie Sparks	Jan. 22
Kimberly Dawn Marshall	Jan. 30
Amy Hannigan	Jan. 30
Corey Adam Price	Jan. 31
Christian Pach	Feb. 3
Olivia Rodriguez	Feb. 4
Jamie Ann Quillen	Feb. 9
Jimmy West	Feb. 11
Dee Cooper	Feb. 11
Michael Faulkner	Feb. 11
Fara "Nicole" Choate	Feb. 13
Clayton Sechrist	Feb. 20
Kathryn Collier	Feb. 24
Grant Nelson	Feb. 24
Chris Moise	Feb. 24
Kathryn Collier	Feb. 24
Kapri Bradley	Feb. 27
Chanda Leigh Wooden	Feb. 29



Wintersong

Season of lights, season of love
and peace
Season of shadow, season of
memories,
Season of warmth and joy, season
of secret tears.

Give us the courage to laugh again
Give us the vision to hope again
Give us the power to love again -
For all our new seasons
And all our new years.

*By Sascha Wagner,
From her book The Poems of Sascha
Wagner*

Tis the Season

It is trying to be
A warm and loving time,
With kindness and light,
And a feeling of hopeful renewal.

Find what blessings you can.
Help your heart to remember
That the children who died
Are about us, everywhere,
Trying to make this,
Even for you,
A warm and loving time.

*By Sascha Wagner, from her book,
The poems of Sascha Wagner*



For more information, Click the following link
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=43057397614>

You will need to log into Facebook to join the group. You will also need a Facebook account (they are free). Our hope is that you will be able to connect to someone to help you in your grief journey.

Remember "We Need Not Walk Alone"
<http://www.facebook.com>

Candles in the Night

By Jim Lowery

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded.

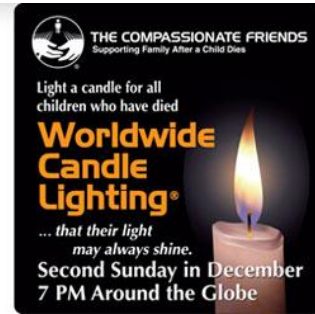
The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children. Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents.

Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand. For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now.

A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief. We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world.

We miss them so much.



Worldwide Candle Lighting

All of our lost children, young and old,
We gather now and gently hold,
Remembering with our every breath,
That love never ends, not even in death.

A heartbroken group of fathers and mothers,
With a sorrow unimaginable to others,
Struggling to overcome the most devastating blow,
Bonded in grief we never thought to know.

With each candle that we light,
We feel our children's spirits burning bright,
Every beloved child's face we see,
Forever in our memory.

In the candles' golden glow,
Even though our tears still flow,
We cherish every moment we had with you,
Though the days were far too few.

We love you now, we'll love you forever,
As your parents we will always treasure,
The blessing of our daughters and sons,
Our dearly loved precious ones.

By C.A. Stevenson, written in loving memory of our son,
Graham Thomson Stevenson, age 22
From We Need Not Walk Alone,
The Compassionate Friends Magazine, Winter/Spring 2009-
2010

Please join TCF Gwinnett on Dec. 12 for our World Wide Candle Lighting Remembrance at Bethesda Park in Lawrenceville at the pavilion beside the Senior Center. We will begin lighting candles at 7 pm. More information is on page 1 of this newsletter.

Grief Support For Siblings

When a child has died, siblings are often referred to as “the forgotten mourners.” While parents usually receive much support, siblings usually receive little—often being asked “How are your parents doing?” The Compassionate Friends is an organization that is not just for bereaved parents. It’s also for bereaved siblings (and grandparents). Some chapters have sibling subgroups while many welcome adult siblings to their meetings. Contact your local chapter to find out their policies on siblings and their meetings. On The Compassionate Friends national website, you will find support in a number of different ways.

[Online Support Community](#) (live chats) allows you to talk with other bereaved siblings from across the country during the Online Support Community sessions held every week. These sessions are limited in number of participants and have trained monitors who are also siblings. Check out www.compassionatefriends.org and go to Resources/Siblings.

Prepare to Make it Through the Holidays

By Shirley Wiles-Dickinson

With the holidays fast approaching, I think about last Christmas.

Last year was the first Christmas without my sister. Personally, I felt like skipping over the entire season. I knew in my heart that others were depending on me to help make the holidays bearable, so I helped.

I did ask less of myself though. I did most of my shopping on line. When I did go out to the malls I was surrounded by happy, laughing people and I felt very alone. I didn’t feel like laughing and being happy. I was almost angry that everyone around me was going on with their lives. Did they not know my sister was brutally murdered? Did they not know the world is a terrible place? Did they not feel my pain? The answer to those questions was simply “no”. They did not know, they did not feel my pain, how could they?

I was attending a weekly support group at the time. (I still attend a support group.) Our group leader was so helpful when it came to the holidays. She told stories of how others coped with the holidays. She gave us suggestions and ideas and most of all, she told us that however we chose to spend the holidays was okay. It was our choice.

It was okay to spend the time alone. It was okay to spend the time with family. It was okay to cry. It was okay to laugh. Whatever we chose to do was okay.

That helped me immensely. I was able to take some of the pressure off myself by understanding that Christmas of 2009 would not be the same as every Christmas before that and it was okay. The group leader also asked us to make our plans. Then she asked us to have a plan B. My husband and I planned to travel back to my home state to celebrate Christmas with my family. We had the day set, all of the family would be together.

I was nervous about that day. How would I react when Sandy wasn’t there? Would I cry all day? Would others think I was weak? We were gathering at my childhood home. The only home I remember as a child. I thought about all the

Christmas’s we celebrated in that home, all the Christmas’s with the entire family together. Now we would be gathering again at that home, without my Dad or my sister. Oh, how hard that day would be.

About a month before Christmas, our group leader told stories of how other families had honored their loved ones at family celebrations. One family had an empty chair. The chair that their father had always sat in. Another family made a centerpiece out of their Dad’s old fishing hat. The used it on Thanksgiving day and it became a tradition for them. What could I do to honor my Dad and sister? I felt the need to do something. One day, one of my brave days when I ventured out to Wal-Mart I was walking through the store, the craft department and I saw it. I knew immediately what I would do. In his retirement, my Dad had made wooden birdhouses to give away. He enjoyed cutting the boards, building the house, painting them an array of colors. When my sister died and we had to clean out her house, we saw bird houses lined up on a soffit in her living room. I had always known she collected birdhouses, I was just surprised at how many she had. So as I stood in Wal-Mart in that craft section staring at a ready to finish birdhouse, my idea came to life. I bought everything I needed. I went home and worked diligently on that bird house. I painted it red and green. On one side, I neatly printed ‘DAD’. I then used stickers of all the things he loved to decorate Dads side of the birdhouse. On another side, I neatly printed Sandra. On her side I used different stickers representing all the things she liked. I added some Christmas stickers and I neatly printed ‘Family’ above the perch and hole on the front of the birdhouse. On the day of our family celebration, I carefully unveiled the birdhouse. It was a huge success. My Mother turned it so she could study each side and she smiled. The birdhouse became a family tradition. It would travel to each home that was hosting the annual family Christmas celebration.

I made it through last Christmas. I had a back-up plan ready to go, but didn’t need it. It was difficult being in the house we all grew up in. I found myself walking through the rooms remembering all the times I shared with my sister. I found myself staring out the kitchen window hoping she would pull into the driveway like I’d seen her do so many times before. It was then that a few tears would fall. I missed my sister, I still do. I missed hearing her squeals of delight when she opened a gift. I missed her laughter and her sparkling eyes. If I closed my eyes, I could see her, I could hear her laugh, see her smile. I knew she was there with me. And knowing that, I made it through the day. I held onto those memories and I smiled.

This year, I find the holiday season a little more bearable. We have two new family members this year: my first grandchild, Henry, and a new great niece, Quinn. Two new sets of eyes to see the traveling family centerpiece. Two new lives to help us celebrate the holidays.

Whatever we chose to do during the holidays is okay. We can continue with tradition, we can make new traditions or we can sleep through the day. Whatever we chose is okay, it is our choice.

From Open to Hope November Newsletter,
www.opentohope.com

A GRANDPARENT'S HOLIDAY DILEMMA

By: Margaret Gerner

Bereaved Grandmother and Bereaved Mother

St. Louis, MO

A difficult part of being a bereaved grandparent at the holiday time is that we are expected to be all things to all our children. To those who have healthy and complete families we are expected to share in their joy. To our bereaved child we are expected to understand, empathize and, above all, be aware of the special difficulty the holidays bring for them. We are put in the middle between our children, happy families on one side, and a sad one on the other. In addition, we have our own pain to deal with. It seems to me that this is an impossible situation and frequently we are expected to do the impossible, but I don't think we can, nor do I think we should try. Because I am a bereaved parent myself and I have experienced that special grief, I know my bereaved daughter's second Christmas without her Emily will be a hard one, maybe even harder than the first one. It will be especially hard for her because this year my oldest son and his (complete) family will come from Minneapolis to St. Louis for Christmas. He has three little ones; the oldest is the same age that Emily would be. Seeing Bob's children, especially Robbie, will remind Dorothy even more that Emily will not be physically a part of our holidays.

For weeks I have been tormented with thoughts on how I will handle this situation. Will I act at the holidays in a way that will make my son happy, or in ways that will be supportive of my daughter? Granted, there will be separate times when I can be happy that my son and his family are here and happy to see my grandchildren, whom I don't see often; and there will be a time when I can be totally supportive of my bereaved daughter. But this will not be possible for all the time, especially on Christmas Day. I have decided that, as hard as it may be to do, I must make a choice between them this year, and I choose to be supportive of my bereaved daughter. This may sound unfair, but is it? When our children were younger, weren't there times, such as when one was sick and needed our special attention, didn't we give it to them, oft times to the neglect of the others? This didn't mean we loved the sick child more than the others. It simply meant that the sick one needed us more than the others at that time. Our bereaved child is experiencing the most pain he/she will ever experience in his/her life and right now, needs us more. Unfortunately, our child with the complete family may resent our attention to the bereaved child and feel neglected maybe even hurt, and for that we are sorry, but our child who has not lost a child has not experienced the constant pain and hurt our bereaved child has for a year or longer. We cannot let ourselves be too concerned that he/she may feel neglected or hurt for a few days. To benefit ourselves as well as our bereaved child, we may consider changing some of our holiday traditions this year. Have a buffet instead of a sit-down dinner. Put the tree

in the living room instead of the family room this year. A number of changes are possible. As in my case, my bereaved child lost her only child. I have asked her to come later, after my son's three little ones have opened their presents, so that she won't have to see the joy in their eyes that she will never again see in Emily's.

Even as parents of grown and married children, we never stop being teachers to them. We can take this opportunity to teach our non-bereaved children empathy and concern for others. This too can be a special lesson for our surviving grandchildren that they can learn from us. We can enlist our non-bereaved children's aid in helping the bereaved child get through the holiday with a little less pain. We can remind them that while it may be somewhat uncomfortable for them to acknowledge or talk about a child who is dead, how much more uncomfortable it is to the parent of a child who is dead. We may suggest some special ways to remember the dead child in our family celebration. Each person may make some statement about how they miss that child or a certain thing they remember about him/her. Or, we might light a special candle on the dining room table or hand a special ornament. This serves two purposes. It is helpful to the bereaved child because it lets him/her know his/her child has not been forgotten and is still, in a special way, a part of the family. And, it helps the non-bereaved children because it clears the air of unspoken thoughts and feelings.

From Bereaved Parents USA Newsletter

www.bereavedparentsusa.org



A NEW YEAR

By: Shirley Ottman

Bereaved Mother

Denton, TX

*A time for looking ahead
and not behind.*

*A time for faith
and not despair.*

*A time for long great gulps of
hopeful expectation.*

*Drink deeply friend so that
fortified with the promises it
brings,*

*This New Year will keep you
near fresh springs of healing
love,*

*Where you may come to weave
old and loving memories
with new understandings and
acceptance... And find peace.*

Christmas Eve

Silent

Night, Holy

Night ~

"It's about time"

He said quietly.

Deliberately, wordlessly
they gather the materials
carefully put away last year,
the matches, candle, candle jar
to fend off the harsh winter wind.

Tis the season to be jolly ~

Slowly they drive toward the town's edge,
past homes with bright, blinking bulbs.
Cars of far away relatives fill their drives.
Happy, laughing families, children home from school
pass on the way to midnight Mass.

It's the most wonderful time of the year ~

At last, town lights left far behind, they sit mute,
each wrapped in private cocoons of memories of
Christmas past, excited whispers from their room
silly giggles, fervent good-night kisses,
anticipation of morning.

On a cold winters night that was so deep ~

Through the gate, down the drive, engine killed,
frozen grass crunching underfoot, hand-in-hand
they walk up the hill to the familiar moonlit stone. With
practiced hands they brush it clean,
then prepare their votive Noel.

The world in solemn stillness lay ~

Lump in throat, arm-in-arm, candle lit, they stand and weep,
But not so bitter as in years past.
The pain's as deep but not so long,
as once again they dream of things
that should have been but never were.

The stars in the sky look down where he lay ~

"Let's go," he says. She nods assent.

They leave, though turn back once to see
the lonely flame of their lost child
gleaming peacefully through the dark.

He whispers softly, his visit done – "Merry Christmas
and good night, my child."

Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace" ~

by Richard Dew, MD/TCF/Knoxville, TN

But Love... Love is Immortal

It is a new year. As bereaved parents it can be happy for us, or not, depending upon our own state of mind and our particular juncture on the road of healing. Many of us will resent the lengthening of time between our child's life and our own present. Others may welcome the increasing distance in the hope that time itself will be a balm to pain. Yet all of us perceive, beyond all the hype and expectations, that new years and seasons are merely calendar events.

Whatever problems we have had in the past will follow us into the present. There is no inner demarcation with hurting behind and joy ahead.

Each of us has the same opportunities now as we had before. We can permit time to simply pass, or we can work to mold its passage into constructive growth.

In the deaths of our children we have discovered with certainty that we lack the means to control the most cherished elements of our lives. But we also know that within each of us is the potential to rise above the debilitating anguish we have experienced. Time continues to move forward and most of us have been too damaged to even play the games of New Year's resolutions. We are beyond the futility of such exercises. But let us confront this moment and time with an inward commitment to recovery, to living the hours which comprise our existence with all the fullness and love of which we are capable.

Hurting will ultimately lessen. Pain will slowly become more bearable. Fears and guilt will gradually pass away. But love, that inner dance of the heart which leaps to our child's name or the memory of an especially close experience that bears only the mantle of endless joy, will not pass away. All else, fame and fortune, distress and dismay, wealth and power, even ourselves, will at the last be done. But love ...love is immortal.

At the dawn of this new year, may the immortality of love grow secure and healthy again within each of us.

— ***Dan Hackett***

From the Anne Arundel BP January
Newsletter, <http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org/HTML/Home.htm>

GAINESVILLE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center has started a grief support group for parents. Meetings are held the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month from 3 – 4 pm. Meeting will be held at 2150 Limestone Parkway, Suite 222, Gainesville. Contact Jennifer Sorrells at 770-219-8528 or jennifer.sorrells@nghs.com for more information.

Gifts of Love

A love gift is a financial donation to The Compassionate Friends Gwinnett Chapter. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but it can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. Love gifts are acknowledged in each quarterly issue.

In Loving Memory of:

Jenny Gryzinski, from her grandmother, Dolores Gryzinski

Matthew McCune, from his parents, Mike & Diane McCune

Stamps were donated by Marvin Choate, for Remembrance Cards, in loving memory of his daughter, Fara Nicole

Cards were donated by Meg Avery in loving memory of her son, James Avery

.If you make a monetary donation to TCF Gwinnett, (which is tax-deductible) you may specify whether you would like your contribution to go toward the memorial garden account, newsletter account or general account. Funds from the general account pay for remembrance cards, postage, labels, the annual picnic, expenses associated with monthly meetings and for information packets for newly bereaved parents. We do not receive funds from The Compassionate Friends National Office and we are always extremely appreciative for any contributions. Please be assured, however, that there are no financial dues to be a member of TCF.

Some Quiet Valentines

While watching an evening sunset
Fade in the western skies,
We know that when tomorrow dawns,
From the east the sun will rise.
Although it may be hidden
By veils hanging low,
We're sure it will appear again
And we'll feel its warming glow.
And so it is with life,
When seen through misty eyes,
When our world is suddenly dimmed
And we plead and ask those whys.
It is then we learn, "no man is an island",
As someone wisely said,
As we travel life's uncharted course
And by an unknown hand seem led.
To walk that path of sorrow
Enduring life's great loss,
But by chance or fate that someone's
Path we are guided to cross.
That someone through kindness
In his or her way does impart,
A warmth and a tenderness
That so lifts a sad heart.
For it's the depth of their smile
That lifts this sorrow of mine,
And by far they are best suited
To be our Valentine.
We may be someone's Valentine
And never be aware,
In these caring, still-grieving hearts,
Our children's love is there.
We've no choice but to continue
On life's uncharted way,
And be thankful for those quiet friends
Who brighten up each day.



From TCF Newsletter, Cleveland, Ohio

THANK YOU!

Many parents give back to TCF through volunteer opportunities as a means of honoring their child. Without volunteers our group would not exist. We are grateful to these volunteers: **June Cooper**, Chapter Co-Leader, in memory of her daughter, **Wendy McMMain** & in memory of her sister, **Noreen Keenan**; **Meg Avery**, Chapter Co-Leader & Newsletter Editor in memory of her son **James Avery**; **Barbara Dwyer**, Chapter Treasurer and group facilitator and **Leo Dwyer**, group facilitator and community outreach, in memory of their son **Matthew Dwyer**; **Terry Sparks**, provides newly bereaved packet info & group facilitator, in memory of his daughter, **Natalie Sparks**; **Nancy Long**, creating & mailing Remembrance Cards in memory of her son **Joseph Beatty**; **Gary Fox**, facilitator, in memory of his son, **G.W. Fox**; and **Sandy Lavender**, organizing & setting up the library in memory of her daughter **Ashley Lauren Hull**.

Compassionate Friends Gwinnett Chapter

We reach out to you with the understanding and love only another bereaved parent can offer. Attending meetings and learning from others what has helped them is one way to ease the pain of losing a child. We welcome you to join us at the Gwinnett Chapter of TCF.

Small Sharing Groups

Monthly support group meetings are the heart of The Compassionate Friends. These gatherings provide a safe and caring environment in which bereaved parents and siblings can talk freely about the emotions and experiences they are enduring. Parents receive the understanding and support of others who have "been there." *Our small sharing groups would like to focus more on the issues and topics that bereaved parents face each day, from what to do on a birthday, how to handle tough questions, how to find the will to go on, what works and what doesn't work during the grieving journey & why or why not, to ideas on how to reinvest in living, how to rediscover joy & how to carry our child's memory and legacy through our daily lives.*

We are here to provide hope and encouragement, understanding & friendship as we all travel the grief journey. Our lives have been turned inside out & upside down and we are the walking wounded who must now figure out where to go from here, how to put our lives back together to some degree, and share coping skills and survival techniques. Together we can share our ideas and emotions, the questions and trials and tribulations that we have found ourselves in the very unwelcome world of bereaved parents. The death of a child of any age, from any cause, is a shattering experience for a family. When a child dies, to

whom does a family turn for the emotional support it will need during the grief journey that lies ahead? The Compassionate Friends understands that grief for a child lasts longer and is more intense than society commonly recognizes. Other grieving parents can offer empathy and understanding of this loss, while also recognizing that each person's grief is unique. There are opportunities to give back and to help out with the "behind the scenes" efforts for our local chapter. We need new volunteers to successfully continue the efforts begun when the Gwinnett Chapter was created in 1994. Volunteer opportunities range from helping to set up a meeting, becoming a facilitator, and making phone calls. Most especially, we need a new co-leader to help out with the organization, details and paperwork involved with our chapter. This is a great way to give back in memory of your child after you have found hope, encouragement and strength from TCF to survive & thrive in spite of life's worst tragedy. Making the change from needing help & finding help to giving help & support to new parents is another healing milestone. **Please call or e-mail June Cooper, 770-995-5268, jc30044@flash.net, or Meg Avery, 770-932-5862 if you have questions or if you'd like to volunteer.**

Would you like to honor your child by making a donation to the Gwinnett TCF Chapter in his or her memory?
Please fill out the information below, clip and mail with your tax deductible donation to: Gwinnett TCF, Barbara Dwyer, 4905 Pond Ridge Lane, Cumming, GA 30041.
(Please make checks payable to TCF Gwinnett.)

Name_____

Address:_____

In Memory of:_____

Please specify if you would like your donation added to the Children's Memorial Account, Newsletter Account, or General Account.

Our 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 become 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 other 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.

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