



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Greater Providence Chapter

Volume 30, Issue 2

March - April, 2008

Greater Providence Chapter

10 Dail Drive
North Providence, RI 02911
(401) 231-9229 or 272-6267

Next Meeting

May 12
June 9
July 14

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Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders	Lucille Valliere Sheila Capasso
Facilitators	Mike Carroll Cindy Parker
Secretary	Linda Chase
Treasurer	Paul Valliere
Publicity	Phyllis Sacchetine Christine Norwood
Outreach	Doris Desmet Marianne Brown
Newsletter Editor	Liz Carroll
Fundraising	Steve and Christine Norwood
Librarians	Margie Whitehead Maria Crudale

Our Mission

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.

National Headquarters:

P O Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Tel. (877) 969-0010
www.thecompassionatefriends.org

From our Chapter Leaders:

Well the end of winter and those dark days are at an end. Even though during our grief we still feel bitter cold like the wintry days, there are times when we think our bodies will never be warm again. The pain of losing our children is like a blanket of numbness and sorrow. When or how could we ever feel warm again?

Spring is here; will it add warmth to our life? I know my spring is always a reminder of the anniversary of my son Chris. It is also a time when the calendar of that day called Mothers Day is upon us. That can be the toughest day of the year along with Fathers Day. That marks a specific day that became ours when we had our children. A special day when our children would remind us with home made cards, hand picked flowers and those great big hugs. I can remember how proud they were to show us their love on that day. Now the commercials and advertising reminds us the one thing we treasured and now we have mix feelings for May 11th. For some of us we still have children but for others their only child is not with them. Does this mean we are not parents anymore? We will always be Moms and Dads, our children gave meaning to our lives, something no one can take away from us.

Will there be a time in our life to like spring again? We need to find special things to do in the spring. Maybe plant a memorial garden or just a special place for a butterfly or rose bush, maybe wind chimes, just a special place where we can feel good and maybe it will bring a smile to us.

Our grief is slow and sometimes seems unbearable, but the longing for our child will never leave us. We don't need Mother's day or Father's Day to miss our children... we miss them every day of the year. Be patient maybe this spring will be a little different and our memories of those springs before our child died will help us through our journey.

Lucille

Ann Hood, one of our own TCF Members, writes "Since you enjoyed *The Knitting Circle*, I want to let you know that my memoir *Comfort: A Journey Through Grief* is coming out on May 12 and is currently available for pre-order on Amazon.com. I hope to keep you as one of my readers!

Maybe someone would like to donate a copy in memory of their child to our growing Library.

Check it out: LAMENTATIONS ~ Joining in Memory

A Website devoted to parents who have lost their children
<http://www.ucumberlands.edu/lamentations/>

It's a Boy!!

Our Congratulations go out to Steve and Christine Norwood who welcomed their son, Andrew Patrick on March 4, 2008



Grief Support After the Death of a Child

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal. *The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.*

Meetings:

Chapter meetings are held the second Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at Central Congregational Church.

Directions: From I-95, take I-195 East to Exit 3 (Gano Street). Go right off the ramp. At the third light, go left on Angell Street (one way). Central Congregational Church is 0.2 miles down Angell on the right. Enter the church through the side entrance which is on Diman Place. Parking is allowed on Angell Street, Diman Place and Stimson Avenue, which is behind the church. If you have any questions, please call our Chapter Co-Leader Lucille at (401) 231-9229.

We have been asked by the church to keep the doors locked during our meetings. If you arrive after 8 PM, please go around to the door next to our meeting room and knock... we'll let you in!

To Our Members Who are Further Down the 'Grief Road'

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK—what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

**YOU NEED NOT WALK ALONE
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**


To Our New Members

If you are receiving your first Compassionate Friends newsletter, we wish to welcome you. We are sorry that you are eligible for membership in The Compassionate Friends. We are here if you need help, and we hope you find some measure of comfort from reading our newsletters, printed material, or by attending one of our meetings or activities. We know that it takes courage to attend a first meeting, but those who do often find an atmosphere of acceptance and caring among parents who have had or are having the same kinds of experiences or feelings. We come in different ages, shapes and sizes, but we share in the devastation associated with losing a child and struggle to find a way to "pick up the pieces". We realize that putting our lives back together and making sense of our loss is not easy, but it is easier on the mind to know we do not travel alone. You are not alone and you can survive. If you are hesitant to come to your first meeting, feel free to bring a friend or family member along with you.

NEW FOR YOU - To keep up to date or for reference, we have our own website

WWW.TCFPROVIDENCE.COM

Telephone Friends:

The following have volunteered to be Telephone Friends. We are available to talk or just listen. when you need someone. You need not  alone...

If you would like to become a Telephone Friend, please contact Lucille or Sheila to let them know you would be willing to take calls.

Ann	401.946.3684	Bacterial Meningitis: son 23
Kathleen	401.764.5905	Cardiac Arrest: daughter only child
Madeline	401.434.1825 in PM	Suicide: son 19
Simone	401.724.8877	Accidental: son 11
Dawn	401.245.5241	Birth Injury: twin son 19 months
Geraldine	401.766.4492	Accidental: daughter 25
Carol	401.539.2547	Accidental: son 15
Jackie	401.831.6613	Accidental: son 22
Gladys	401.781.5042	Cancer: daughter 39
Anita & Bill	401.732.0360 in PM	Sudden Illness: daughter 11
Dick	508.252.6223	AIDS: son 29
Linda	508.993.8333	Drug Overdose: son 26
Lorraine	401.737.5968	Drug Overdose: son 30
Bob	401.354.4077	Auto Accident: daughter 19
Lorne	401.273.6577	Sudden Illness: daughter 5
Joyce	401.232.3721	Accident (AEA): son 31
Mary	401.921.1088	SIDS: son 2 months
Mike & Liz	401.293-0424 in PM	Murder RAV: son 18



May we lovingly remember these children and send our thoughts and prayers to their parents and families...

Jeremy Wilde	3/13/1998	Allan & Heidi Wilde
Jennifer Leigh Lesperance	3/17/2001	Brian & Susan Lesperance
Corrina A. Cole	3/17/2007	Tom & Lori Cole
Tiffany DeSisto	3/30/2007	Jonathan & Elaine DeSisto
Tanya Lynn Morris	3/5/2007	James & Nancy Morris
Brendan Matthew O'Connell Roberti	3/9/2003	Maureen O'Connell
David Vota	3/8/2007	Linda Fleury
Jennie Collen	3/17/2006	Barry Collen
Melissa E. Allin	3/21/1998	Charles & Mary Allin
Natalie Joy Amado	3/18/2007	Beth Amado
Kevin Woodbine Gaudreau	3/12/1982	Carol A. Gaudreau
Bradford L. DeWolf, Jr.	3/14/2002	Bradford & Wendy DeWolf
Paula Sheahan Karlson	3/22/1997	Paul & Michelle Sheahan
Andrew Greene	3/9/2007	William & Kim Greene
Sandi Igliazzi	3/22/2002	Patricia Igliazzi
Todd Geoffrey Parker	3/31/2005	Cindy Parker
Alfred "A.D." Silvia, III	3/11/2002	Alfred D. Silvia
John David Barthlomew Cinquegrana	3/18/1997	Patricia Cinquegrana
Christopher J. Meehan	3/18/2000	John & Dorothy Meehan
Robert G. Anderson	3/24/2004	Thomas Anderson
Christopher Alan Jackson	3/29/1994	Al & Lois Jackson
Robert Maggiacomo	3/19/2002	Lois Maggiacomo
Beau Wennermark	3/2/2007	Kim & Sue Wennermark
Michael David Turillo, Jr.	3/22/2006	Laura Turillo
Gary E. DeMoura	4/21/1991	Helen Arsenault
Matthew Arsenault	4/21/1991	Helen Arsenault
Patricia Lynn Salera	4/30/2002	Raymond & June Vincent
Samantha Lynnea Lafond	4/28/1990	Lynne Lafond
Justin T. Marron	4/11/1996	Susan Marron
Steven P. Neary	4/16/2006	Karen Neary
John Paul "JP" Medeiros, Jr.	4/19/2002	Maryem Medeiros
Melissa Lynn Watson	4/22/2004	Skip & Jane Watson
Paul Joseph Battey	4/18/1994	Rita Battey
Max R. Smith	4/14/1978	Fay Harden
Brian R. St. Germain	4/2/2006	Lynn St. Germain
Matthew K. Serio	4/5/2004	Anthony & Sharon Serio
Dylan Paul Lapham	4/29/2001	Susan Lapham
Christopher Mark Leahey	4/26/1992	Rosalind Leahey
Larissa Grullon	4/11/2004	Ana Peguero
Justin Scully	4/29/2004	Shirley Scully
Grace Adrain-Hood	4/18/2002	Lorne Adrain-Hood
David D. DeMoura	4/21/1991	Helen Arsenault
Traci L. DeMoura	4/21/1991	Helen Arsenault
Jason Arcaro	4/8/2004	Rich & Kym Gaisl
Timothy M. Gileau	4/1/2006	Valerie Gileau
Marissa Salabert	4/2/2007	Tessie Salabert
Thomas B. Storey	4/5/1997	Harold & Joan Storey
Alison Bowman	4/9/1991	Richard & Ann Bowman

Spring is Coming

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first" spring, you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring - the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first" year, I expected that spring would cheer me up, and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits."

When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?" I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day --that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually, I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed.

The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's process will continue, and that can offer us hope.

I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, and forsythia, the daffodils and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

-Evelyn Billings
TCF Springfield, MA



Mother's Day

Our last Mother's Day together
You bought me a hammock
I remember your excitement
As I opened it and my
Anticipation as you
Gleefully put it together
We all tried it out of course
Each of us one at a time,
Gently swinging in the breeze
Under the warmth of the sun
Later we both got in together
Your sister snapped our picture.
A year passed and another
Mother's Day arrived.
The hammock still sat in the yard
The photograph of the
Two of us swinging together
Still hanging on our fridge.
This year and every year after
I climb in the hammock alone
Sometimes...
I feel you next to me.

By Deb Kosmer, TCF Redlands, CA
in memory of her son Shawn Jeremy
Schmitz



Awkward Silence

a poem by Richard Dew, M.D.,
TCF, Knoxville, TN

I wish that someone would say his name.
I know my feelings they're trying to spare,
And so we go through the charade, the game,
Of dancing around the ghost that is there,
Trying to avoid evoking a tear,
Or stirring emotions too painful to bear.
That he be forgotten is what I fear,
That no one will even his presence miss,
As if there were no trace that he was here.
Be referring to him, my purpose is
Not to stir pity or keep things the same,
But my heart will simply break if his
Memory will die like a flickering flame.
I just wish someone would say his name

Lovingly lifted from the March 2008 TCF Arlington,
DC, Leesburg, Prince William, and Burke-
Springfield-Fairfax Virginia Chapters Newsletter

The Significance of Mother's Day

I don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same and the death of my child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have the intense feeling of love for my child, a love greater than any I had known before. So as Mother's Day approached, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood, I too, want to be remembered as a mother.

By Ginny Smith, TCF Charlottesville, VA

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. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children 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 and creeds. 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 we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; 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 our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and 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.



Memorial Day is Monday, May 26th

Chapter Information

They Don't Wear Purple Hearts in Heaven

I lost my brother to a foreign land;
I was too young to even understand

There was a knock at the front door,
Then Momma wasn't smiling anymore.
The man at the door was a Marine;
The first I've ever seen.

Momma told me to go out and play,
Then the preacher came and they started to pray.

Tears ran down Momma's eyes, and
I heard her say, "Why, Lord, Why?"
Father stood there seemingly mindless, all he said was,
"We've lost another of America's finest."
The Marine handed Momma a small velvet case,
Inside was a Purple Ribbon, attached to
a gold heart with Washington's face.

I asked Momma if it were mine,
But she said "It's your brother's, Sunshine."
"Momma can we send it to Kevin?"
She answered, "They don't wear Purple Hearts in Heaven."

Author unknown

Somewhere between
depression and recovery
lies the beginning of
HOPE.

Darcie Sims
"Footsteps through the Valley"



The Providence Chapter has a **Birthday Table** every month, set up with our birthday cake candle and birthday poem and there is plenty of room for pictures. If your child, grandchild or sibling's birthday falls in that meeting month, you will have the opportunity to share some of your special memories with us. Please bring your favorite pictures and/or mementos for our Birthday Table and also, please feel free to bring your child's favorite snacks and/or drinks for our snack table.

We have an extensive collection of bereavement books & materials, some purchased by TCF Providence and some donated by parents in our **Lending Library**. You are more than welcome to check out books for as long as you need; there is no due date & there are no late fees. If you have grief books that you would like to donate, we welcome new additions for our library. We will place a label inside the book that it has been donated by the parent (s) or sibling of the child's name.

If you would like to give of your time, and **volunteer** in any way to our chapter, we warmly welcome new volunteers. This is your chance 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 our Providence Chapter was created. Volunteer opportunities range from helping to set up a meeting, becoming a facilitator, and making phone calls.

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 Lucille Valliere, 401-231-9229, LCGVALL49@hotmail.com, or Sheila Capasso, 401-272-6267, sheilac252@cox.net, if you have questions or if you'd like to volunteer.

Our May meeting we will have two **guest speakers**. Men's Night with Sam Smith and Ladies Night with Sue Marron. Try not to miss this meeting.

Bereaved Parents USA Spring Newsletter 2008

The Spring Issue is now online. You may access it on the Bereaved Parents web site Newsletter page:
http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm ~ Click on Current Issue to view.

If you have any trouble, please email me at: newsletters@bereavedparentsusa.org

We hope this Newsletter will be of help to you.

Betty Ewart, Editor



Special HAPPY BIRTHDAY remem-
brances for the following children:



Jullianne Smith	March 12, 1960
Thomas P. Kenney	March 10, 1966
Ronald A. Russell, II	March 29, 1968
Kim Richards (Theurer)	March 9, 1970
Patricia Lynn Salera	March 18, 1970
Jamie Dale Ebert	March 3, 1971
Eric N. Bessette	March 12, 1975
Tanya Lynn Morris	March 10, 1976
James Manzolilo	March 12, 1978
Rebecca Greene	March 5, 1980
Carrie Mattheus	March 12, 1980
Brendan Matthew O. Roberti	March 13, 1980
Rebecca Eisen	March 14, 1981
Jeffrey Stephen Shank	March 1, 1984
Jeffrey S. Monica	March 18, 1984
Angela R. Sbardella	March 17, 1986
Tiffany DeSisto	March 27, 1987
Brian Gagliastre	March 20, 1989
Corrina A. Cole	March 22, 1989
Lauren Rose Norwood	March 2, 2005
Izabella Hampton	March 5, 2007
Richard W. Buteau	April 30, 1947
Jennifer Anne Cook	April 27, 1956
Anthony Stephen Casale	April 10, 1962
Christopher Jacob Costello	April 27, 1970
David Vota	April 3, 1971
Randy R. Oros	April 7, 1973
Jason David Bates	April 24, 1973
Domenic Folco	April 5, 1974
Gregory "Josh" Montigny	April 13, 1976
Jayson W. Hall	April 30, 1978
Alexander Fasanya	April 4, 1986
Ali Dunn Packer	April 6, 1986
Jenna Turcotte	April 6, 1986
Dylan Joseph Matto	April 14, 1986
Chad Thomas O'Brien	April 1, 1988
Samantha Lynnea Lafond	April 26, 1990

Tasks Left Undone

What seems like a hundred years ago we lived half way around the world – we were Army and money was always tight. One year for Christmas I made crocheted snakes for my 3 children.

They varied in size and color so we could tell them apart and they became cherished possessions.

A lot of moves and a lot of years later – one was missing, one was unraveling and one was ready to be condemned. So – I decided to make new snakes.

I finished John's and was working on Joseph's when "that" day happened. Needless to say – the snake was put aside and forgotten – until now.

I was recently sorting out a bookshelf and saw a brightly colored tin – square – perfect for storing something – so I opened it.

Inside was Joseph's unfinished snake.....

Last year I borrowed a line from a poem called "I'm Free" for the angelservary cards that said – in part..."Tasks left undone must stay that way....." I had taken this to mean the tasks our children left undone – they all left some, for some children it was coming home from the hospital, for others marrying or having children of their own.

The snake made me realize that when our children were taken – we too were left with tasks undone.

We had birthdays left to celebrate, weddings left to dance at, grandchildren left to love and snakes left to finish.

As bereaved parents there are other tasks left, tasks we all have in common – being our child's parent, remembering our child and, most of all, loving our child.

Not all tasks left undone must stay that way.

By Nancy Long, Joseph's mom – a task I'm glad I'll never be done with.....

Lovingly lifted from TCF Gwinnett Spring 2008 Newsletter



Gifts of Love

A love gift is a gift of money to The Greater Providence Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. 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, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapters. The following donations are in support of the our ongoing newsletter, material distribution and other outreach.

In memory of Jon Nelson - Forever in my heart, Mom

In memory of Beau Wennermark - For Beau, In the glory of God's Care - Mom and Dad

In memory of Sandra Lee Labonte - Love and Miss you, Mom

In memory of Cheryl Rebello, Lee Rebello and Christopher Jackson - Love, Al & Lois Jackson

In memory of Matthew J. Viveiros - Love, Mom & Dad

A Birthday Remembrance - Angela Rose Sbardella - Love, Aunt Lynette, Uncle Paul & Grandfather Al

In memory of Dennis M. Dyer - Love from Mom

In memory of Barton J. Carroll - With love from Uncle Matt, Aunt Laura, Devon & Ian

In loving memory of "JP" Medeiros, Jr. - With love, Mom & Dad

All chapters within TCF are totally dependent on funds from our families. We DO NOT receive funds from our National Office. Everything we need to operate our local chapters are paid directly from our local resources and our local family contributions. Thank you to all who contribute and support your local chapters. Some people contribute to the Memory of Other Children.....this is a wonderful way for others to say "I am Remembering your child" other "Gifts of Love" are evident by all the compassionate and giving volunteers we have within our own TCF organization.

TCF Atlanta Daily E-Newsletter and Online Sharing

TCF Atlanta Daily E-Newsletter and Online Sharing is an online sharing group available to anyone with internet access. The Online Daily Sharing is a wonderful daily resource to remind everyone "They Need Not Walk Alone". We share articles, poems and messages from other bereaved families.

Currently, online sharing has 1250 active members and are growing at a rate of 2 per day. To join go to the following link:

www.tcfatlanta.org/SharingList.html

Many thanks to Wayne and Jayne Newton in reaching out to bereaved families worldwide as editors of the TCF Atlanta online sharing site and TCF Atlanta website.

Death Talk ~ Global Grief Network

In order to wholly understand and live life, we must first wholly understand and embrace death. Indeed, there are some human experiences that change us forever.

Join Dr. Joanne Cacciatore and Katie Dean in a journey through death and traumatic loss.

Already, more than 400 people have downloaded Death Talk podcasts. This week the topics are "Bereavement Support Etiquette" and "All Things Children"

<http://www.globalgriefnetwork.com>



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10 Dail Drive
North Providence, RI 02911

Return Service Requested



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Greater Providence Chapter

The Compassionate Friends is a Self-Help Organization supported solely from contributions by caring people and businesses.

We need your help so we can continue to help those who are grieving.

PLEASE SEND DONATIONS TO:

Co-Leader
Lucille Valliere
10 Dail Drive
N. Providence, RI
02911

Greater Providence Chapter TCF LOVE GIFT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

In Loving Memory Of: _____

Birth Date: _____ **Death Date:** _____

Your tax-deductible donations help defray the costs for the newsletter, postage, and other chapter expenses, and help for others who are grieving. Your donations are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in the newsletter.

Love Gift \$ _____ **Message:** _____



Thank you!!





Am I Still A Parent?

by Pat Akery, TCF Medford

With Mother's Day and Father's Day just around the corner, we are again facing some days that may be difficult for some of us. The reminders of these two special days are everywhere so we couldn't avoid them even if we wanted to. It may be my imagination, but it seems as well that during this time of year we are more likely to be asked questions like: "Do you have any children?" or, "How many children do you have?" What happens in the pit of your stomach when someone you have recently met asks you these questions - the same questions that gave you such feelings of pride to answer before your child died? Do you stumble over your words as most of us have (or still do from time to time)? Do you feel as if you have to say more than you want to? Or do you feel as if you aren't saying enough? If you have another child he may ask you, as he works through his own grief, "Am I still a brother?" Does this kind of question prompt you to ask, "Am I still a parent?" How do we make it through Mother's Day and Father's Day with difficult questions such as these and all the emotions we are feeling in our grief? All I can suggest are a few things that have worked for me. I think that it helps to realize that many of us have strong feelings we have attached to Mother's Day and Father's Day stemming from our past experiences - some perhaps even bittersweet - that were created well before our children died. Many of us have also established some traditions associated with these days that we may feel we must continue. Things are different now. We are doing critically important work. We are - even when it doesn't feel like it - doing the most difficult work we will ever do - grief recovery work. At times it takes all the energy we have and goes wanting for more. Pay attention to your energy levels. Make sure you get enough sleep and not too much. If you are not sleeping enough try to take naps as you need them if possible. If you are sleeping too much, try to increase your physical activity. Make changes slowly and carefully in both your amount of exercise and your diet if necessary. Many of us don't eat healthfully early in our grief recovery. We usually eat too little early on and many of us tend to eat too much later. Be sure to seek advice of a doctor regularly, especially if you have any health concerns. But even if you don't, you should still seek advice because we tend to neglect our health more than we think we do when we grieve. Even small changes in our health can make a noticeable difference in our mental state. Beyond your physical well-being you should look critically at the traditions and obligations you have established. Obviously, the ones you truly want to do you should do, but others you may want to change or eliminate. Your healing and recovery is the most important work you have to do. Do only what makes sense and don't hesitate to ask others for help when you need it. Also, ask other TCF members who may be further into their grief recovery how they handle specific situations that might be troublesome for you. Prepare ahead of time for the questions that might trip you up. Know that it is perfectly okay to give different answers to different people to the same question. Even a question as simple as "How many children do you have?" results in my answering differently depending on who asks. Frankly, some people matter more in my life than others. Those that matter more, get more complete answers, those that matter less, get less complete answers. The most important thing is that I decide ahead of time how I will answer. It makes the answering much easier. I give varying answers to these kinds of questions without any feelings of guilt, or any sense that I am not telling the truth. The important thing is that I am telling the truth. It's just that I don't feel an obligation to share with everyone I meet that my son, Bobby, has died. Even if Bobby were my only son, I would answer the question "Am I still a parent?" the same way I would answer my son Jimmy's question "Am I still a brother?" Yes, of course! I come to this answer quite easily by thinking of how I view my relationship to my father. Though my father died some years ago, I am still my father's daughter and I always will be. I will always be the parent of both my sons - Bobby and Jimmy. And Jimmy will always be Bobby's brother. Death does not, no matter what else we may think, change our precious relationship to our parents, our children, or even to any of those who we love. I am still a parent!

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned griever reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

Here Comes The Dawn

Another Mother's Day without me,
I know that you were sad,
Having lost your baby boy,
how can anyone be glad?
Then comes my birthday,
just a short time after,
A day that our family had,
to celebrate with laughter!
These days are remembered fondly,
by three women in my life,
You my darling mother, a dear sister,
and a forever loving wife!
Thank God I can be many places,
all through a busy day,
For I try to visit all of you,
in a very special way!
My thoughts are with you always,
although it's just not the same,
To think of how I'd like to be there,
when you call my name.
Following the Atlanta Braves is easier,
with truly the best view,
But nothing compares to the times,
I sat watching them with you.
I miss that furry friend of mine
and all the fun we had,
I try to make him happy,
but sometimes he looks so sad.
Another night has passed
and here comes the dawn I see,
A day filled with good wishes
and with love sent by me.

Created [In Memory of Chad Gordon](#)

May 21, 1972 – Sept 3, 1996

Son of Wayne and Jayne Newton

Brother of Lisa Gordon

-written by Dan Bryl, Atlanta TCF

Be prepared, be patient, and enjoy the moment.

A Mother's Day Gift to God

Lord today is Mother's Day,
but our hearts are split in two
Half is with the child still here,
the other with the child that is
there with you.
All the lovely presents are a
nice surprise
But the one thing we want
most is missing,
and tears fill our eyes.
We know when you sent them
Lord,
you didn't promise how long
they would stay
All you said was to love them
and treasure
each and every day.
Lord it crushed our hearts,
when you called for their
return
We feel like half a Mom,

as we ache, weep and yearn.
But Lord tell them we love
them
just as much as we did before
And could you please make a
window,
so they can see through
heaven's floor.
Let them see that they are
missed
and thought of with each
breath
And that a Mother's love
begins before life,
and does not end with death.
So on this Mother's Day
the greatest gift we give to you
For Lord we know you missed
them,
and you love them too.
Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta
Online



"I Once Was You"

I have never met Carlie Brucia's mother, Nicole-Brown Simpson's mother, Polly Klaas' mother, Princess Diana's mother, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy's mother or Laci Peterson's mother. But I know them intimately. I know what dwells in their heart and soul everyday. I live their sadness, sorrow, and pain every second of everyday. Like them, I buried my daughter. What am I now? Am I a daughterless mother? That sounds like an oxymoron, two words that contradict themselves. My eighteen year-old daughter, Amy Marie, died on May 25, 2001. My life is forever changed. Burying a daughter is a surreal experience. There are no words in Webster's Dictionary that can explain the grief, the heartache, the pain, the depression, or the anguish. Heartbroken is too small a word. The words don't exist because it is not supposed to happen. There are no plausible definitions that could accurately describe "bereaved parent." Groups of words can't be strung together on a typed page to accurately explain the grief. It is impossible to bury your child, yet it happened. Logically, the factual part of my brain processed the information. The emotional part of my brain argues with the fact everyday. Each and every morning it is still a shock to my entire being! I still peek into her bedroom and expect to find the perfectly made bed a mess of jumbled covers with my daughter snuggled deep inside of them. Parents don't bury children! Headstones read "loving mother," "cherished wife." They don't read "beloved daughter." That is not the natural order of the universe. This was not supposed to happen to me. It always happens to other people. I see reports on the evening news. Articles in the newspapers describe horrific events that resulted in the death of someone's child. It isn't supposed to be my child. How can this be changed? It can't be changed. I can't say, "Amy, want to go to the mall?" "Let's go out to lunch." She can't tell me about her "freaking bio test" that she has to study for all night long. Things I want to say to her are forever left unspoken. How will I go on? I can't go on, yet I do. My body wakes up each day. I don't ask for this to happen, it just does. My lungs take in air, it is automatic, something that I have no control over. My physical body now controls the course of events in my life. I breathe, I eat, I walk, I talk. I put one foot in front of the other. I load the washer and I shop for food. I can work, I can teach. I can think on the job about the job. My spiritual being merely exists. It cannot flourish or soar ever again. When my daughter died, my emotional self was buried with her. When she died, I also buried her future husband-to-be, my future grandchildren, my daughter's future wedding, my daughter's college graduation ceremony, my holidays, and my joys. I buried my best friend, I buried the once perfect life that I knew and lived everyday. Tucked into the corner of Amy's casket is my happy husband. My despondent, bereaved husband now lives with me. I buried my fifteen year old daughter's future matron of honor. I buried the loving aunt that Amy would be to her sister's and brother's children. I buried Renee's future nieces and nephews. There is not enough room in Amy's casket for all the things that died with her. Dreams, hopes, joys, lives, emotions, hearts and souls slipped into that casket with Amy. They occupy every square inch of that place. One day my fifteen-year old daughter will be older than her older sister. Can my brain ever understand that? Renee will have a nineteenth birthday, Amy did not. How can the impossible happen?

Bereaved parents go on. We go on because we have no other road to travel. It is just that we are not "normal" any more. We use to be you. We use to be PTO moms and girl-scout leaders. We bought lovely, frilly, fancy holiday dresses for our daughters. We stood in long lines singing along with Christmas carols while we waited to check-out the perfect holiday gifts for our daughters. We were once carpool moms and soccer moms. We sat at music recitals and listened to the first melodious squeaks and squawks of their instruments. Forgotten homework assignments were rushed to school for our children. In our heads, we planned our beautiful daughter's future weddings. Visions of the bridal gown and the reception danced in our heads. We couldn't wait to have grandchildren to babysit and to enjoy. We wanted to tell our daughters that their children were just like them! Our daughter's christening gown is carefully preserved and waiting to be worn by her own children. We wanted to hold our grandchildren's chubby little fingers in our hands and remember holding our daughter's chubby little fingers in our hands. We use to answer the telephone and hear, "Hey mom, what's up?" Now the phone doesn't ring. And it will never ring again with that sweet voice we so desperately would love to hear. Now we are set apart. We are not normal any more. People look at us differently. They might take an extra minute to look at us they quickly walk past us in the supermarket. They may choose to walk down a different aisle to ignore us. It is too painful for them to think about our lives. They might take a moment to wonder how we go on. They say "I can only imagine your pain." That is not true. No one can imagine it unless they live it. We live it and still we don't understand it. We now belong to a new group. We never wanted to be part of this group, bereaved parents. No one lines up for this membership. We wish our membership would never grow. I am glad you are not me.

Colleen M. Fledderman
Lovingly lifted from the
TCF Atlanta Daily Message

Mother's 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. Sifting 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 alongside 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 hand-made 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 so grief-numbing 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. For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories they told me about attending church on Mother's Day Sunday. 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