



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

CARSON CITY CHAPTER

Carson City, NV

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

Chapter Leader's Message

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new leader of The Compassionate Friends of Carson City. As Delores has said many times, we are in a club no one wants to be a part of. I first joined The Compassionate Friends in the Glendale chapter near Los Angeles about two and half years ago after the loss of my son William. My wife and I moved to Carson City in November 2013 and I attended my first meeting that same month here. This past April I lost my daughter Elizabeth and I can say that without the support and friendship I have found in this group I don't know if I would have made it.

Please feel free to call or email me with any questions, ideas and/or suggestions. This group is for all of us and we hope to make it better whenever possible. I will end this by saying how much I am indebted to Delores and Amber-Rose for their help and guidance. I know I will be relying on them in the future. Peace for all of us in 2016.

*Our children and siblings, loved and remembered,
Thomas*

Newsletter Editor's Message

Happy New Year everyone! I was hoping to get back in the groove of things and get this edition out in time, but such is life.

This message is specifically for the Spanish Speakers. Next edition, I will try to translate a paragraph to Spanish for our Spanish speaking members (if any). I will be using the application that I use to make this newsletter, so not quite sure how it will turn out. Keep an eye out for the paragraph and I would love feedback from anyone who might think it's not working correctly.

~Amber-Rose

SPECIAL DATES

January 9th

Member Breakfast

(subject to change)

9:00a.m. - 10:00a.m.

Peg's Glorified Ham & Eggs

3697 S. Carson St.

Contact: Tom (626) 863-3645

January 26th

Carson City Meeting

7:00-8:30p.m.

Carson Tahoe Cancer

Resource Center

1535 Medical Parkway

Contact: Tom (626) 863-3645

February 13th

Member Breakfast

(subject to change)

9:00am - 10:00am

Peg's Glorified Ham & Eggs

3697 S. Carson St.

Contact: Tom (626) 863-3645

February 23th

Carson City Meeting

7:00p.m.—8:30p.m.

Carson Tahoe Cancer

Resource Center

1535 Medical Parkway

Contact: Tom (626) 863-3645

March 13th

Member Breakfast

(subject to change)

9:00am - 10:00am

Peg's Glorified Ham & Eggs

3697 S. Carson St.

Contact: Tom (626) 863-3645

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chapter Leader

Thomas Schwartz

(626) 863-3645
twsmalt@charter.net

Treasurer/Mailing List/Memorial Page

Kathy Shultz

(775) 883-3132
kathy@tcfcarsoncity.org

Newsletter Editor

Amber-Rose Aparicio

(775) 315-3332
editor@tcfcarsoncity.org

Reginoal Coordinator

Gene Caligari

(780) 703-2963

Members

Betty Kalicki

Jo Saulisberry

Cathy Silva, Delegate

Sonja Strom

Hawthorne contact: Petra Wilson

Fallon contact: Judy Dunning

Chapter Website

Facebook Page
Facebook en Español

www.tcfcarsoncity.org
www.facebook.com/tcfcarsoncity
www.facebook.com/LACUSA

The National Office

PO Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

(877) 969-0110

www.compassionatefriends.org

Phone Friends

Cathy

(775) 883-5388

(youth, illness)

Delores

(775) 883-4415

(teenage, car accident)

Kathy & Norris

(775) 883-3132

(teenage, illness)

Sonja

(775) 783-8020

(multiple death)

Judy

(775) 423-7286

(car accident, daughter & grandson)

Our Children Loved, Missed & Remembered

Our dear children, though gone from our sight, are forever loved and will always be remembered. We remember, with compassion, the parents and families of these precious children on the birthdays and anniversary days listed here.

January Birthdays

Melinda Brown *Parents: Darryl & Rita Brown*
Brandon Bryant *Mother: Sunny Bryant*
Carl Butler *Mother: Karen Butler*
Chris *Sister: Camile Strauch*
Steven David *Mother: Debbie David*
Chad Jason Hull *Mother: Marilyn Braninburg*
John Luna *Mother: Pauline Luna*
Kurt Meunch *Parents: Patrick & Patti Williams*
Devon Lane Mondragon *Father: Dan Mondragon*
Eric Nageotte *Parents: Ron & Carol Nageotte*
Brandon Painter *Mother: Mary Painter*
Catherine Ann Pintar *Mother: Ruth Painter*
Nicole Michelle Snyder *Parents: John & Patti Snyder*
Tim Stephens *Parents: John & Connie Currier*
Mark Vicich *Mother: Elaine Vicich*

January Anniversaries

Kelly Barr *Mother: Linda Barr*
Nate Clark *Mother: Kitty Clark*
Erin Hackman *Parents: Rick & Cecilia Hackman*
Eugene E. Newby *Parents: Ron & Esther Newby*
Jake Owens *Mother: Rita Owens*
Sister: Stacie Owens
Catherine Ann Pintar *Mother: Ruth Pintar*
April Schultz *Parents: Norris & Kathy Schultz*
Susanna Celeste LaFleur Siegel *Mother: Sharon Steele Kientz*
Tim Stephens *Parents: John & Connie Currier*
Justin Royce Talley *Parents: Teresa & Larry Alexander*
Albert Troy Winkler *Mother: Nancy Winkler*
Father: Albert Winkler
Heather Youngblood *Parents: Donna & Jim Schumacher*

February Birthdays

Jeffrey Berning *Mother: Mary Clark*
Bryan Harding *Mother: Sandra Harding*
Randy Motley *Mother: Linda Burkett*
Christopher Dale Northam *Parents: Teresa & Michael Northam*
Jake Owens *Mother: Rita Owens*
Sister: Stacie Owens
Scott Strom *Mother: Sonja Strom*
Ricky Woodring *Parents: Ron & Vicki Woodring*
Shane Woods *Parents: Jay & Bonnie Woods*

February Anniversaries

Ian Thomm Campbell *Father: Donald Campbell*
Sabrina Jane Davies *Mother: Vanessa Walker*
Kelsey Foley *Parents: Richard & Jody Foley*
Andrea Matlack Hooper *Parents: David & Barbara Neddenriep*
Brad E. Lauderbaugh *Mother: Myra Lauderbaugh*
Alaina Lester *Parents: Shawn & Kristine Lester*
Grandmother: Pauline Mackenzie
John Luna *Mother: Pauline Luna*
Jeff Martin *Mother: Suzanne Fox*
Kyle McAfee *Parents: John & Susan McAfee*
Ronda Doretta O'Neill *Mother: Paula Kos*
Maddyson Palmer *Mother: Mandi Palmer*
James Reilly *Parents: Shane & Pam Reilly*
Danica Marie Silva *Parents: Dan & Cathy Silva*
Dean M. Stout *Parents: Millie & Earl Stout*
Paul W. Watkins *Parents: Nancy & Bob Watkins*
Charles Louis Webb *Parents: Paul & Eva Webb*
Johnathan Lucas Wendling *Parents: Michael & Karen Wendling*



February Anniversaries, cont'd.

<i>Tomoah Khalif Jon Anderson</i>	<i>Mother: Tansey Smith</i>
<i>Jeffrey Berning</i>	<i>Mother: Mary Clark</i>
<i>Chris</i>	<i>Sister: Camile Strauch</i>
<i>James (Jimmy) Davis</i>	<i>Mother: Gayla Davis McDonald</i>
<i>Eric D. Eisele</i>	<i>Parents: Don & Darlene Eisele</i>
	<i>Brother: Steve & Marianne Eisele</i>
<i>Monique Evans</i>	<i>Mother: Jacki Bennett</i>
<i>Joshua Raymond Farler</i>	<i>Parents: Jim & Brenda Farler</i>
<i>Bryan Harding</i>	<i>Mother: Sandra Harding</i>
<i>Ethan Harmon</i>	<i>Parents: Ken & Duana Harding</i>
	<i>Grandparents: Chuck & Shirley Evans</i>
<i>Chad Jason Hull</i>	<i>Mother: Marilyn Braninburg</i>
<i>Knox Justin Johnson Kolbe</i>	<i>Mother: Helen Johnson</i>
<i>Michael Kronowitz</i>	<i>Mother: Muriel Kronowitz</i>
<i>Tim Lane</i>	<i>Father: Don Lane</i>
<i>Brent A. Lauderbaugh</i>	<i>Mother: Mary Lauderbaugh</i>
<i>JonPaul M.</i>	<i>Mother: Amber-Rose Aparicio</i>
<i>Frank Eugene Medina</i>	<i>Mother: Ethel Medina</i>
<i>Shelly Mott</i>	<i>Mother: Stephanie Mott</i>
<i>Jeff Poy</i>	<i>Parents: Myrna & Robert Poy</i>
<i>Julie Rodriguez</i>	<i>Mother: Sonja Strom</i>
<i>Leoma N. Vaughan</i>	<i>Mother: Judy Dunning</i>
<i>K. Manley Vaughan</i>	<i>Grandmother: Judy Dunning</i>
<i>Adam Lee Yamron</i>	<i>Father: Mark Yamron</i>
<i>Richard Young</i>	<i>Mother: Karen Young</i>



Love Gifts

*Norris & Kathy Schultz in memory of daughter
April Schultz*

*Michael & Karen Wendling in memory of son
Johnathan Lucas Wendling
"We lost him 14 years ago. We still miss him so.
Love Mom & Dad"*

*Betty Kalicki in memory of daughter
Kara Lee Kalicki*

*Amber-Rose Aparicio in memory of her friend
Dino*

*"...in memory of the children we love, miss and remember
every day."*

Thank You

The Northern Nevada-Carson City chapter of The Compassionate Friends is funded solely by contributions. There are no dues or membership fee. A LOVE GIFT is a donation to honor a child who has died, or sometimes as a memorial to a relative or a friend. Your gifts allow us to continue to reach out to other bereaved families through our books, programs, and newsletter. Please address Love Gifts to 1111 Liberty Ct. Carson City, NV 89703. Thanks to each of you for your generous gifts and support.



Welcome New Members

We welcome new members to our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. We're sorry you have a need to be with us, but we hope you feel you have found a safe place to share your grief and will return. It often takes a few meetings to feel at ease in a group setting. Please try attending three meetings before deciding if TCF is for you. *Each meeting is different and the next one might be the one that really helps.*

Meetings are generally held the last Tuesday of every month, 7:00-8:30p.m., at the Carson/Tahoe Cancer Resource Center, 1535 Medical Parkway, Carson City, NV.

Hi Tim

I have been thinking about you some what alot
Lately and missing those big brown eyes and
That cute little smile and
That funny little giggle and
It's always in the back of my mind
Soon to be 27 years that you have been gone
And at times, I still wonder where has
All the time gone and other times it
Seems like time just passes us by
Way too fast and
Tim, we all want to wish you a Happy Birthday
And you and Ma will always be in our hearts
Forever and always

Love and Miss you both
Always
All of us



Connie Currier
TCF Carson City, NV

Recipes with Suzanne

Is there a special dish that you used to make for your loved one? Cookies or a casserole? A birthday cake or that special ingredient you added to vegetable to tempt a picky eater? Perhaps an easy recipe for those newly bereaved when fast food just won't cut it. Please share it with us to honor your child.
Happy New Year!

Suzanne Fox
TCF Carson City, NV

Smokey Mushroom Soup

1lb. Bacon (about 16 slices) diced into 1in.
2 med. Onions, chopped (about 1 1/2 c.)
2 med. Waxy potatoes, diced (about 2 c.)
1/2lb. Fresh mushrooms, sliced
2 Tbsp. green pepper, chopped
4 c. tomato juice, or to desired consistency
1 tsp. dried parsley, or to taste
Generous grating of pepper

In soup pot, fry bacon until crisp. Remove bacon to paper towel. Leave 6tbsp. Drippings in pot. Add onions, potatoes, mushrooms and green pepper and sauté until onions are translucent. Add tomato juice, parsley, pepper and most of bacon, reserving some for garnish. Simmer, covered, until potatoes are tender, about 1/2 hour, stirring occasionally.

Garnish with reserved bacon and serve with hot bread or rolls.



Strange Words

Welcome New Members

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: "We are so sorry you have to be here."

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to "size up" the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the

intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you

quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the "after death" world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



What is New about the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you's" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now.

Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

Dory Rooker
TCF Upper Valley, VT

A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain—
it's called "Longing."

I long for what was,
and what might have been

I long for his touch and smell of sweat;
I long to hold him one more time.

I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and heart.

I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons too.

I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.

Will they?

June Williams-Muecke
TCF Houston West, TX

Who We Are

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization which offers support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Only a person who has experienced the trauma of losing a child can fully understand the pain and suffering involved.

We gather to listen, to share and to support each other in the resolution of our grief. You need not walk alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, "It's different with me! You don't understand!" This is the "normal" response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child's death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of "Why?"

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one's spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—return not occur, although the term "recovery" is used. I prefer the term "healing," a process whereby our lives come to a new "normal." Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child's death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that's all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

Robert Gloor
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Reader's Feedback

Hi Amber-Rose,

I have been receiving the TCF Newsletter for years.

Our son, Hugh, died in 1989 and TCF was a lifeline for me in those early years. We attended the national conferences, regional conferences and attended TCF meetings and events several times in Carson City. For almost 10 years, we had a support group here in Bishop, California.

I want to thank you for the great job you are doing with the newsletter. I look forward to receiving it.

I also want to thank Jo Saulisberry, Barbara Neddenreip, Delores Sherman, Cathy Silva, Kathy Schultz for all they have done over the years for TCF and the people who need the support offered by those who understand.

Barbara Neddenreip was doing the newsletter when we began our grief journey and I can never describe how much that long-distance support meant to me. Barbara was my long-distance TCF support for five years before I actually met her!

I know many others continue to keep the Carson City TCF going - I am only listing the people with whom I am still in touch and who have meant so much to me.

Thanks from the bottom of my heart to all who keep the support group available.

It is 27 years this Christmas season since we last saw our son, Hugh. He passed away in June 1989, but the last time we were all together as a family was Christmas 1988. I know how difficult the holiday season is for those of us who miss our loved ones.

Thanks again to all my TCF friends and to all those who have supported and touched the lives of so many families over the years.

I am sending good wishes across the miles,

Hugs your way -

Arlene Pearce



Do I Have To?

Mom, do I have to stop loving my brother because he is not here?

Will I forget all about him because he's not near?

I remember all the things we did together, even though we were very young.

I laugh and feel warm each time I think of a particularly funny one.

Sometimes I get so angry that he's no longer here to share,

But I know he knows it's only because of how much I still care.

I miss him, so even though at times we didn't agree,

Just knowing he was there made things feel safe for me.

He always felt he had to be my strong, protective big brother,

And that's a bond we'll always share forever with each other.

He tried to protect me even when he, too, was just scared.

No, I won't stop loving that big brother of mine,

Not now, not ever, not till the end of time.

He will always be a part of what makes me be me.

And that's the part of our love that will live eternally.

Jackie Rosen
TCF N.Dade/S. Broward, FL

ATTENTION TRAVELERS AND ADDRESS MOVERS

If you are leaving the area for a period of time and are having your mail forwarded, the newsletter is not forwarded but rather returned to us and we are required to pay for it's return. Please notify Kathy Schultz at (775) 883-3132 or kathy@tfc Carson City.org prior to your departure and let us know the new address so we can forward the newsletter to you or stop the newsletter until your return.

Also, the newsletter is also available online on our website www.tfc Carson City.org. Send Kathy and e-mail to change to a paperless newsletter. Thank you for your help!

Waiting for Answers

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

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



Love's Lasting Touch

Don't weep for me when I'm gone,
Because I'll always be there.
My spirit will exist in all the earth,
In the water, trees, and air.

You'll hear me say, "I love you",
In the whisper of a breeze.

You'll know that I'm beside you,
With the rustling of the leaves.

You'll feel my arms caress you,
In the warmth of each sunrise.
The moon will be my goodnight kiss,
The stars my watchful eyes.

Your life will be my legacy,
Your memories my epitaph.
These ties will bind us together,
Till we meet on heaven's path.

I'll not ever desert you,
We'll never be far apart.
I'll live within you always,
Nestled deep inside your heart.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny

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The Bitter Tears of Love Lost

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."

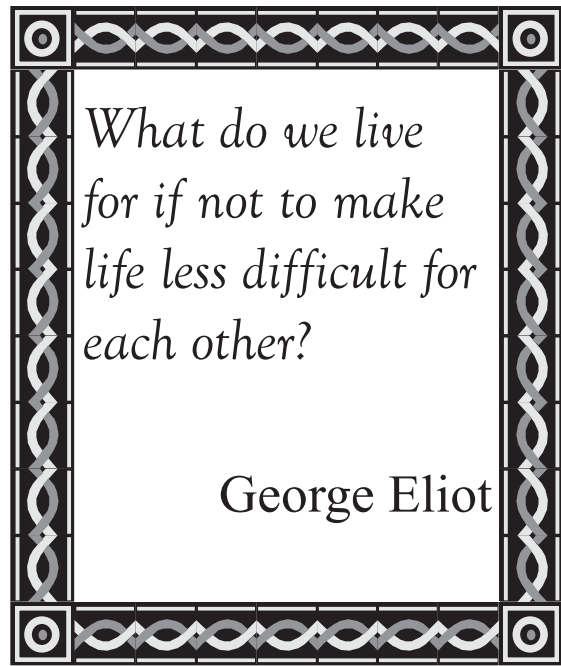
Peter Smith
In Memory of my brother, Gregory Smith

Newsletter Items

Newsletters are published bimonthly. Please submit your stories, poems and pictures for our newsletter. Newsletter items are free of charge, but donations are welcome to assist with printing and mailing costs. E-mail your newsletter items to: editor@tcfcarsoncity.org. You can also mail your items to 1111 Liberty Ct. Carson City, NV 89703.

All submissions must be received by the 20th of the month to be included in the next month's newsletter. Photos sent via e-mail must be in a jpeg format. If you have not been receiving the newsletter whether it's by e-mail or postal mail, please let Kathy know so the we can update/change postal or e-mail information.

This newsletter is now available online. Visit our website www.tcfcarsoncity.org and click on "Newsletters". You can download PDFs of previous newsletters or subscribe to receive monthly newsletters via e-mail.



A Valentine for Mom

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine.....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years....from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, handmade gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes give a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

The Compassionate Friends of Northern Nevada
2648 Kit Sierra Way
Carson City, NV 89706

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.

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