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**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies  
*Oscoda Area Chapter*

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
4087 Forest Rd.  
Oscoda, MI 48750  
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## Issue 75 January/February 2024

### Monthly Meetings

*2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the Month*

*Sacred Heart Church Family Center*

*5300 N US 23*

*Oscoda, MI 48750*

*Meeting time 7:00 pm*

**If Oscoda Area Schools is closed due to weather our meeting is canceled.**

**January 9<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm**

**February 13<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm**

***You need not walk alone!***

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### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Mail: TCF-Oscoda Chapter  
4087 Forest Rd., Oscoda, MI 48750  
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Email: [tcfoscoda@gmail.com](mailto:tcfoscoda@gmail.com)  
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The Compassionate Friends Oscoda Area

Co-Leaders: Fran Ommani  
Charlie Negro  
Secretary: Charlie Negro  
Treasurer: Jane Negro  
Outreach: Tracey Toppa  
Director: Vicky Weichel

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### REGIONAL COORDINATORS



Gail Lafferty  
734-748-2514

Kathy Rambo  
734-306-3930

Hoping for a Peaceful 2024

### New Year Goals

The holidays are over, and I bet you're glad about that. You did make it through, though, and by now maybe some of the stress of that powerful time has left you. Next year you will find you learned from this year, no matter how many years it has been, and I hope it will be easier for you, too, in the years ahead. If you made New Year's resolutions, I hope they included:

- Try to take one day at a time.
- Try to forgive yourself for whatever it is you feel you did wrong.
- Try to figure out ways to resolve your anger so you can let go of it.
- Try to concentrate on and value what you have left as much as what you have lost.
- Try to risk reinvestment in life.
- Try to let those you value, know how important they are to you.

These are important steps forward. Try to be good to yourself in the New Year.

*~Mary Cleckly  
BP/USA*

*A Journey Together  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)*



## Taking Stock

Happy New Year!!! “How can it ever be again?” “How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?”

When we are hurting and so terribly depressed it is hard to see any good in our New Year, but we must try.

FIRST, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable. That we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe but even when we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true, BECAUSE IT IS! Many parents whose children have died some years in the past will attest to this. Remember also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering right now.

SECOND, we must face the New Year with the knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE. Whether we will be on our way to healing by this time next year, or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to be on the way to healing by the following year we must work to get there. And that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief, to cry, to be angry, to talk about our feelings of guilt, and do whatever is necessary to move toward healing.

THIRD, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be live. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life.

LET US NOT WASTE NEW YEAR!

*~Margaret Gerner, Bereaved Mother and  
Bereaved Grandmother, St. Louis, MO  
A Journey Together  
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*



## A NEW YEAR

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.

The 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.

*~Shirley Ottman  
Bereaved Mother Denton, TX  
A Journey Together  
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting

On Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup>  
we held our 9<sup>th</sup> annual  
candle lighting program.



About 50 people gathered together in friendship and love to celebrate and remember our children, grandchildren, siblings and loved ones. We had a memory table with pictures of our loved ones and a candle lit for each one next to them. We then lit candles for outside to burn for an hour in their memory. Whether they lived three score and ten or never tasted the earth's air, they are ours, now and forever. No longer being with us the way we want does not lessen our love for them in our hearts.

For more information and pictures from the evening you can go to <https://www.tcf-oscoda.org/community-events>.



*"Forever In Our Hearts"  
Our Children/Siblings Remembered*



**Birthdays**



**Remembrances**



**January**  
Derek Toppa



**January**  
Jake Katzenberger



**January**  
Tommy Draper



**January**  
Audree Ball



**February**  
Ashley Scott



**February**  
Jerry Bunk



**January**  
Tony Calabrese



**January**  
Katie Kirkpatrick



*Like the snowflake tht  
hearld the season, each  
child is unique.  
If their time with us is  
brief, the memory of  
their beauty lasts  
forever...*

*Author Unknown*

**January**  
Armani N. Kelly



**January**  
Daniel Cleary



*Time does not really  
heal a broken heart,  
It only teaches a person  
how to live with it.*

*Unknown*

*Like Snowflakes,  
Your workds fall silent.  
But my heart still  
hears your voice.*

*Angie Weiland-Crosby*

**February**  
Casey May Whitney



### A Valentine to All My Compassionate Friends

We who have had our hearts so badly broken know each other.  
We have lost a child, grandchild, a sister or a brother.  
It matters not if we've seen each other's faces.  
We share mending hearts full of achy places.  
At first our hearts feel shredded and torn.  
We might even wish that we'd never been born.  
We don't understand how our lives went so wrong.  
Everyone tells us they're so glad that we're strong.  
All we know is that we hurt to the core.  
Because a child dearly loved is with us no more.  
With time, patience, and understanding we begin to heal.  
We begin to accept what is, and life starts to seem real.  
Each time we tell our tale,  
each hug we receive puts a band-aid  
on the hurting spots - and gives - us reason to believe.  
That we will feel joy again, that life does go on.  
Though we're never quite the same, since our child is gone.  
Compassionate Friends teach us ways we cope.  
Until we can live again and face life with hope.  
So to TCF members, whether we've met or not,  
Thank you for the band-aids on that bruised, healing spot.

I Love You All,

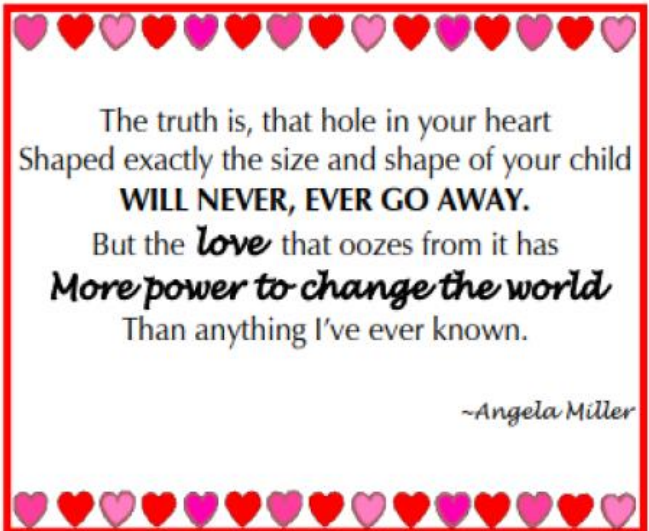
~Kathy Hahn, TCF Lower Bucks, PA



### Love and Hope

On a cold winter day the sun went out  
Grief walked in to stay  
I turned away from the unwanted guest  
And bid him be on his way

Grief was merciless, he brought his friends...  
Loneliness, Fear, and Despair.  
They walk these rooms unceasingly  
In the somber cloaks they wear.



The truth is, that hole in your heart  
Shaped exactly the size and shape of your child  
**WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY.**  
But the *love* that oozes from it has  
***More power to change the world***  
Than anything I've ever known.

~Angela Miller

*"Grieving is a journey that teaches us  
how to love in a new way now that  
our loved one is no longer with us.  
Consciously remembering those who  
have died is the key that opens the  
heart that allows us to love them in  
new ways."*

~Tom Attig

*From The Heart of Grief*

Every so often now  
Love pays a call  
She always has Hope by her side  
I welcome Love as well as Hope  
For I thought surely they had died.

Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way  
Bids him be still for a while  
Then Love walks with me through memory's hall  
And for a time...I can smile.

~Kerry Marston  
TCF Grand Junction, CO

## Connect with Other Bereaved Parents, Grandparents, and Siblings Every Day on TCF's Online Support Community

The Compassionate Friends offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. These rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends, friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

They adhere to the principles of The Compassionate Friends, see [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) to learn more. The intent of our Online Support Community is to provide mutual comfort, hope, and support through conversation. They are NOT professional grief counselors.

If you are interested please go to

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support/>



### SNOWFLAKES

Posted on January 7th, 2021

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org)

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again—even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike.

Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always.



At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

~Denise Falzone

## Full Circle

The year has gone again  
From spring to winter—  
And in this year;  
Your memories may have found  
A breath of calm between them,  
Quiet respite—sometimes.

Then why must there be  
Twice as many now—  
These feelings, songs and voices,  
From Halloween to New Year's:

Twice the memories and smiles  
Twice the memories and tears...  
You know the answer,  
Even while you cry;  
Your tears are  
(like your smiles)  
The season's face of love.

~Sascha

## The Paths to Peace

As bereaved parents, we look to others for answers about our grief journey. For eight years I have listened as so many parents spoke about the combination of factors which brought peace to their hearts and allowed them to move forward into a different, less painful, life. I have read books, watched movies, attended seminars and retreats. I have gone to 93 Compassionate Friends meetings. And I have discovered one key factor in finding peace and resolution on this terrible grief journey: there is no single element or singular combination of elements that answers the needs of more than one parent. Each parent must patiently seek those elements that will enhance the individual and a unique personal journey: there is no magic map to finding the path to peace.

There is one common denominator in this quest for the peace on our long journey, and that is patience. Patience with ourselves is mandatory, because the grief journey after the death of our precious child is so horrible, so painful, and so isolating that our psyches and our bodies take so very much time to begin the healing process. There are setbacks. There is progress. Each of these comes in spurts. Each is partially reversed and the process begins anew.

Friends and family do not thoroughly understand our perspective on our unique journey. We must make allowances for them. But we must ask that allowances be made for us. For we are finding ourselves while on a path that we did not choose. We are lost. We are weakened. We are heartbroken. Each of us in our own way is seeking the formula that is uniquely our own.

Some parents find a kind of peace in their religion. Some parents are angry with their God. Many parents seek private counseling. Other parents read prolifically about the grief journey, seeking some element which resonates with them. Many parents come to Compassionate Friends meetings and actively participate. Others attend meetings and say little. Some parents slip into denial and proceed on the old path of their lives.

We each make choices. We are different people with different experiences, backgrounds, cultures, genetic hard wiring, education and combination of abilities. The path to peace is found by searching, by reaching out to every resource available. We will reject much of what we find; but if we search, we will find what we need. For many of us, finding other bereaved parents presents an opportunity to listen to the stories of their child and their journey and, within those stories, we find many threads that fit our unique journey. Many stories, many journeys, many new threads are shared in group discussion and in private discussions. We find “seasoned” grievors who provide perspective on our feelings and listen to our story. We find newly bereaved parents who touch our hearts and remind us how we have built our path to peace brick by brick. Their pain brings reflection and new revelations about our own grief journey.

I found kindred souls at Compassionate Friends. These kindred souls have allowed me to explore the various aspects of my being and gradually create a path of peace for myself. But the journey does not suddenly end. We walk this path for the rest of our lives. And if we do the hard work and face our demons early on, we accept the unacceptable and face life on our own terms. And that is as it should be.

Grief never ends....but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith...It is the price of Love.

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