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

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The Compassionate Friends of
Oscoda Area
4087 Forest Rd.
Oscoda, MI 48750
989-254-5888
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For That, I Am Thankful by Darcie Sims

It doesn't seem to get any better, but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken, but there are memories to be cherished.
For that, I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table, but the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller, but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter, but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there, but it lasts only moments.
For that, I am thankful.

The calendar still turns, the holidays still appear and they still cost too much.
And I am still here.
For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty, the soul still aches, but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come, the dishes pile up, but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing, the words still unspoken, but the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

The snow still falls, the sled still waits and the spirit still wants to.
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains, but the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.

The moment is gone, but the love is forever.

For that, I am **blessed**.
For that, I am **grateful**...
Love was once (and still is) a part of my being...
For that, I am **living**.
And for that, I am thankful.

MONTHLY MEETING

*2nd Tuesday of the Month
Sacred Heart Church Family Center
5300 N US 23
Oscoda, MI 48750*

Meeting time: 7:00 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 13:

*Make Candles for WWC Lighting
Tangled Lights and the Holidays*

December 9, 2018

*Worldwide Candle Lighting
6:45 Light Candles at 7:00 pm
Sacred Heart Family Center*

December 11:

Topic Cards

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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The Compassionate Friends Oscoda



Area

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“You Need Not Walk Alone”

THE SIBLING CORNER

This corner is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief through encouragement & sharing

The Gift of Family

“Thanksgiving Eve” is the kickoff to the holiday season. In years past, I have found myself at the local watering hole enjoying a beer (fine, a few beers) while visiting and reconnecting with people of my past. This year, I’m sprawled out on my parents couch after spending the evening catching up with my siblings and playing with my nephews. Although it may not have been as vivacious as being shoulder-to-shoulder at the bar, it was just as fulfilling; and it won’t leave me with a hangover tomorrow.

Tonight it hit me – what am I thankful for? My family. Sure, this may sound a bit cliché, but I assure you mine is truly one-of-a-kind. Although we are far from flawless, our support and love for one another is undeniable. My mother and father are the glue that hold my siblings and me together. Growing up the youngest of four children, we have had our fair share of quarrels. But it wasn’t until the passing of my older brother when our relationships were truly tested. We could have easily drifted apart for several reasons, but to this day I know my big sister and big brother will always be there for their baby sister.

Over the past eight years, we could have easily focused on the loss of my brother, but instead, we continue to celebrate the life he shared with us! There is no holiday, birthday, wedding, or May 21st where we don’t bring up his name. More frequently, we share stories of his youth which typically end with us all roaring with laughter.

Although talking about the deceased with such ease may make some newcomers to our family feel uncomfortable, it keeps him in our daily lives; my nephews, and hopefully my children, will grow up knowing their uncle, and our fondest memories will stay fresh in our minds. God knows our family is not picture perfect, but we can make it through anything as long as we are together.

For this, I am thankful.

Margaret Negro, Sibling

November 2015

THE KEEPERS OF MEMORIES

You make friends because you have things in common.

We are friends because of our children.

The older ones, the younger ones,
the ones who never even had a chance to breathe.

They are our reason for being.

Our heartbeat, our life’s blood.

Whether we have lots of memories or only a few,

we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember
and carry the torch for those we remember so lovingly.

We are there for ourselves and each other.

Because we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those
who unfortunately join our ranks.

Because we are the parents of lost children,

the bruised hearts,

the keepers of memories.

~Cheryl Pelletier TCF, Concord, NH 10/19/2018

Did you know your purchases can make a difference? AmazonSmile donates to The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area 2440 when you do your holiday shopping at smile.amazon.com/ch/35-2493920

This holiday, make a difference while you shop

Shop for holiday gifts and supplies at smile.amazon.com and Amazon donates

You shop. Amazon donates.




**“Twas the Night Before Christmas—
For Bereaved Parents**

“Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing—the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.

As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking—I couldn’t understand.
I had lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday had in store.

When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was looking around.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn’t by chance.

The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift,
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.

As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it—as if it knew-
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
To help me get through the holiday scene.

In the days that followed I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart-
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us—they’re really not dead.

Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears,
A message of hope—a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,
To All Bereaved Parents--“We love you tonight!”

~ Faye McCord, 12/24/2017



How Many Stockings Do We Hang?

I began a tradition after that first dreadful Christmas blur of hanging my daughter’s stocking up along with the rest of the family. Then each year I would do something special in her memory...like take a name from an “Angel Tree” at the mall or where ever and buy a gift for a needy child in her memory. I put the angel note in her stocking. Think like that. As the years are passing, her stocking is filling up with good deeds done in her memory and things I know she would appreciate knowing were don in her name, my beloved “Carissa.”

It helps refocus the heartbreak of missing her into something positive and helpful. The pain eases over the years but Christmas is always so hard to get through no matter what. God comfort you all as you face another Christmas without your precious children.
Peace and Hugs.

*~Debby, mom to angel Carissa
10/1994-10/1995*

Lovingly lifted from the TCF Atlanta Online 12/8/04 issue



May your holidays be filled
with reasons to be
thankful. Having loved and
having been loved is
perhaps the most wondrous
reason of all.



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



Birthdays



November
Michael Wright



Remembrances



November
Aaron Dean



The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



*The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area
4th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting
Sunday December 9, 2018 6:45*

Location: Sacred Heart Family Center
5300 North US 23
Oscoda, MI 48750

We hope to see all of you at our Candle Lighting Program. This very touching evening includes music, reading of poems and lighting of candles both inside and outside, which will be provided to all who attend.

We know that the holiday season is an extremely difficult time of year for families grieving. This candle lighting ceremony is a symbolic way of showing the love we continue to carry for our children, even though they are no longer with us. Please invite your friends, neighbors and family to come and share with you this celebration of all children who have died.

RSVP & Questions: tcfoscoda@gmail.com

DON'T JUST SURVIVE THE HOLIDAYS -- SUCCEED

By Deirdre Belton



Like clockwork, right about now the specter of the holidays begins to loom large, and if, in your sorrow, you are someone who is filled with apprehension at the thought, take heart. You are not alone, and gloom is not the only thing being served up on the menu this year. On the contrary, not only can you survive the holidays, you can actually find ways to make the most of them.

You would have to live like a mole in this country to avoid the holiday hoopla that begins during the summer months and continues on until the bills arrive in January. In August the catalogs arrive advertising the pre-Christmas sales. Newspapers and magazines are well into their fall and winter collection campaigns. We in the Northeast have already pre-bought our heating oil, and we still have time at the beach to think about how we are going to cope with those seemingly never-ending weeks through Thanksgiving and Hanukkah, Christmas and on into the New Year.

Well, I'm here to tell you that this is do-able. If Madison Avenue can plan ahead, so can you. It takes careful thought, some imagination and no small amount of fortitude, but it is not impossible. Holidays do not come as a surprise; they roll around the same time every year. As you read this there is still time to make these next weeks work in your favor. The things you might want to be thinking about as you plan are: time, money, tradition, needs vs. wants and obligation vs. desires.

Time: How much of this precious commodity is at your disposal? Do you work outside the home? What are your responsibilities inside the home? Are you the primary wage earner as well as caregiver? Assess how much time you can devote to holiday preparations and make that stick. If you send out holiday greeting cards, perhaps you can decide that you will write out two or three each evening starting now and have them ready to mail on the day of your choosing. If you are going to shop for gifts that must be mailed, you might want to consider catalog companies that will do the gift wrapping and mailing for you. If there are special foods that you make for the holidays, think about cooking ahead and freezing dishes while you still have the energy to do it.

Money: In our grief, we sometimes go overboard at this time of the year, thinking that spending inordinate amounts of cash on others will assuage our sorrow and add to the happiness of others. That might sound like a plan, but happiness cannot be bought, and those bills will show up right on schedule long after the wrapping paper has been discarded. Think about drawing up a list of those who bring a smile to your lips and a light to your eyes. Do you realize what a wonderful gift might be? Sit down and handwrite a personal letter to each one on your list and tell them just why they are so important to you and what it has meant to have them in your life--especially at this time of year. You can do this even for the little one, whose parents will save it for them to read when they can appreciate it. Such a letter can always be accompanied by a small remembrance, particularly for the children. Consider giving a donation to your favorite charity in honor of your friends and loved ones. They won't have a box to open, but they will know that someone's life is a little bit better that it was done in their name.

Tradition: Think about your religious or cultural traditions. Do they bring you structure, meaning, comfort and stability? If you can say yes to any or all of those questions, it's probably a good idea to stick with what you know. All else may be in chaos around you, but if the same decorations go up, the same food is served off those special, once-a-year plates, and certain religious ceremonies are observed, you just might find an oasis in the emotional sea that has been wracked by storm and tempest. But perhaps you have always done all the cooking and inviting. As one friend of mine put it when her adult daughter asked what she would be making for the holiday dinner this year (her second since the death of her husband) she never hesitated. "Reservations," she replied.

New circumstances can call for new strategies. Go to a restaurant, travel to a new place, let folks know that you would be delighted to share their holiday with them and you'll bring your famous pie as an offering for dessert. Volunteer at a hospital or nursing home on that difficult day. The bottom line is don't be afraid to try new things, people and places if it works for you. Stay with what you know or reach out into uncharted territory. Whatever you decide to do, ask yourself if it meets your needs.

Needs vs. Wants: This area of reflection seems to be more emotional for many of us at this time of year. We may want all kinds of things for our loved ones and ourselves: the perfect meals, decorations, enough time together, no sadness -- the

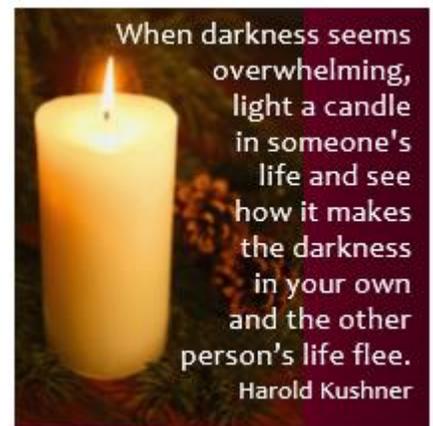
list is long. But what is it that we really need? Arrangements may not be perfect this year, but we're together. The gifts may not be as lavish, the meal might be takeout, but love is still expressed. Our sadness and sense of loss may be overpowering, but we will take a moment to be grateful for those still in our lives, for possibilities yet to come and for the chance to make a difference in ways large and small, known and unknown. So many of us feel that we have failed if our efforts don't rival the stuff of dreams or magazine covers. There is enough stress in our lives without such unrealistic pressure. Most of it self-generated anyway.

Obligation vs. Desire: This is usually the discussion that produces the most angst. It's not that we don't know what we want or what we need. It's the sense that we have to do things in a certain way or see certain people because it is expected of us. Let's be clear. When children are involved, every effort should be made to see that their holidays are as meaningful as possible. There is nothing worse for a child than to get the message that because the adults in the house are suffering, we are all going to suffer. That's not grieving together, that's selfish. But if you don't have the energy to pull it off, what do you do?

Remember all of those nice people at the funeral who told you to call on them if "there is ever anything I can do?" Now is the time to call in your markers. When my mother died suddenly at the age of 42 and left behind a shattered husband and seven children ages five to sixteen, Dad took those words quite literally. Thanksgiving was six weeks after the funeral, and he called the neighbor next door and reminded her how kind she had been to offer. "We'll be eight for dinner," he said, "what time would you like us to be there?"

I have always had a vision of that dear woman picking herself up off the floor and croaking out, "How wonderful" into the phone. In the end, she made it so very lovely and while it wasn't easy for any of us, it was a sign to seven kids that life continues and that there are people out there who do care. My father knew that he couldn't do it, but that somehow it had to be done. So, he pulled himself together and asked for help. What an example to us. After that day, we knew that while our lives were dramatically and sadly different, they were not over. We could do this. And we did.

But what about those other social obligations that are so time consuming and emotionally exhausting for bereaved people? Ask yourself this question. "If I say no to so and so (thank you, but I won't be cooking, traveling, buying expensive gifts this year), what's the worst thing that can happen?" The worst has already happened, the rug has been pulled out from under you, but you are still standing, People who love you will immediately understand. Others will adjust. Some will never be happy about it, and they will have to learn to live with disappointment. The choice is yours. Exercise it or not but do is what's right for you and your family.



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