

NATIONAL OFFICE  
The Compassionate Friends  
48660 Pontiac #930808  
Wixom, MI 48393  
Toll Free  
1/877-969-0010

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)



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

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
4087 Forest Rd.  
Oscoda, MI 48750  
989-254-5888  
Email: [tcfoscoda@gmail.com](mailto:tcfoscoda@gmail.com)

## Issue 66 July/August 2022

### 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.**

**July 12<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm**  
**August 9<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm**

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

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### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Mail: TCF-Oscoda Chapter  
4087 Forest Rd., Oscoda, MI 48750  
Phone: 989-254-5888  
Email: [tcfoscoda@gmail.com](mailto:tcfoscoda@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.tcf-oscoda.org](http://www.tcf-oscoda.org)



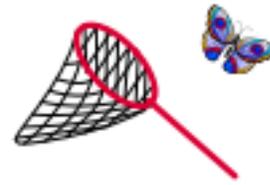
The Compassionate Friends Oscoda Area

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



## Catching Butterflies

It often hurt to come upon reminders of my son  
Tho' often since I lost him I would search  
around for one  
Which always brought on sadness and the tears  
that I would shed  
Were cause by names or faces,  
all things that I would dread.

But then one day I came upon a man who'd lost his son  
I found that things I ran from,  
He wouldn't even shun.  
But rather he would treasure and I said I wondered why  
He told me that he called them "Catching Butterflies"

This view of his intrigued me; I wanted to hear more  
And learned that he took all of them  
and carefully would store  
All of the reminders that I chose to push away  
He would tuck deep down inside his heart  
each and every day.

Now a name or likeness when catching me off guard  
Does not upset me as it did and I don't find it hard  
For now instead I see these times as opportunities  
To see my son awakened I these new fresh memories.

-Dottie Williams  
TCF Pittsburgh, PA



## Summer Time Memories



Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country; vacations, holidays, family reunions, relaxed days at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mowed grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him.

The summer solstice on June 21 was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year. As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST) I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year. Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light...the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience. We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width, or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship.

Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night. We light candles, take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions. Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.

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



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We had a beautiful Butterfly Release on Sunday June 26<sup>th</sup>. We had a great turnout and celebrated our loved ones taken too soon. You can see pictures at <https://www.tcf-oscoda.org/community-events>. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who made a donation to help us continue this event.



“Forever In Our Hearts”  
*Our Children/Siblings Remembered*


<b>Birthdays</b> 		<b>Remembrances</b> 	
<b>July</b> Antonio B. Raona  	<b>July</b> Andrew Carroll  	<b>July</b> Bradley Hilberg  	<b>August</b> Calvin Vallette  
<b>July</b> Casey May Whitney  	<b>August</b> Kyra Janell Goodman Swiatek  	<b>August</b> Elise Schenk  	<b>August</b> Christian Gonzales  
<b>August</b> Angelo Edward Stell  		<b>August</b> Antonio B. Raona  	<b>August</b> Drew Alan Peterson  
		<b>August</b> Amanda Grace Wilkinson  	

*“As we journey through these painful experiences of living, we must never forget that we have an amazing resilience and capacity to survive. Just as whole forests burn to the ground and eventually grow anew, just as spring follows winter, so it is nature’s way through it all, whatever we suffer, we can keep on growing. It takes courage to believe we can survive, that we will grow. It takes courage, too, to live now and not postpone living until some vague tomorrow.”*

*~Judy Tatelbaum,  
The Courage to Grieve*

### ***Baseball and life***

*Richard Carlson—TCF St Paul MN*

*Posted on March 12th, 2020*

After the beautiful candlelight ceremony last night, I found myself tossing and turning until 2:00 in the morning. I decided to get up and not fight it anymore. I was remembering Brandon and all the pictures of the lost loved ones we had honored. Then my overactive, stimulated mind thought of baseball. You might ask why, in the middle of winter, I was thinking of baseball and not hockey or football.

It might be that I’m already looking forward to spring, but I think baseball was on my mind because I feel there can be some similarities to how it mirrors life. Let me explain.

When we start our lives, we go into what is the equivalent of spring training. We learn about the different positions life can offer. We learn how to hit, to throw, and about the rules of the game. As a baseball player learns from the old pros on the team, we in life (if we are smart) learn from our parents and grandparents. I realize that most of us come away from this process saying, “No way am I going to make the same mistakes that they did,” but I think this is part of the exuberance of youth, and once spring training is over and we get into the game, these thoughts begin to change.

The length of spring training is different for all of us. For most, it ends when we graduate from high school, go off to college, or get married. Eventually, we join the big game, and we find that the learning continues. We learn about our teammates, opposing players, and where the game is going to be played. Most of the time we find that the position we trained for is not the one we end up playing. In fact, we find out that as we go through the game of life, we may play many different positions. Sometimes we find ourselves sitting on the bench because of injuries and wondering, “What am I doing here?” We don’t even know how many hits, errors, or runs we’ve had, or how long the game is going to be.

In my case, I started the first inning and got well into the game just being fat, dumb, and happy. I had some hits, scored a few runs, and definitely made some errors. Then four years ago, or somewhere in the middle inning of the game, it all changed. It was at that time that I was faced with nine pitches and three strikeouts; the last due to a curveball. The death of my son Brandon changed the whole makeup of the game. The rules changed, and I found myself going back into training.

I woke up and found that the inning was over and a new one was about to begin. I found that I had to re-lace my spikes even tighter, and that pounding my glove may have formed a new pocket, but it hurt my hand. I could have chosen to get a new glove or new shoes, and for some people, that is the way to stay in the game. But I found comfort in a glove and shoes that were well worn. I found that I may have been knocked out of that inning, but the game was still going on and I had to learn the new rules, I had to try to get more hits and score more runs. The errors are another issue.

Although the game is still going on, I do not know what the score is or what inning I'm in. Like when I was hit by a foul ball in high school, I now know that I'm better at keeping the scorebook than backing away from a sweeping curve. So now in the later innings of life, I keep the bench warm, my laces tight, my glove next to me, and my pencil sharp. As a scorekeeper, I've tried to use the eraser to wipe out that one really horrible inning, but the home plate umpire keeps reminding me that he is the one who controls the game. He reminds me that he will decide when the game is over, who's out, or if we play extra innings. In the meantime, I'm ready to go in to pinch-hit, to be the pro. I know that my other children have already said that they are not going to make the mistakes that Dad did. They have had the same bad inning in their game that I have had with Brandon's death, but that is where the similarities in our games end. My hope is that I will be able to be there for my grandchildren and give them the opportunity to say, "I'm not going to make the same mistakes that Grandpa did."

Baseball is a great game, while the game of life leaves a lot to be desired.

In baseball, there are very few perfect games, very few no-hitters. The same thing is true for life. We know that our perfect game was spoiled by the death of a loved one. We have had one bad inning, but the game still goes on to give us many more opportunities to score in future innings.



## 5 TIPS FOR CONTINUING BONDS WITH PEOPLE WE'VE LOST

FEBRUARY 18, 2022 [BLOG](#)



[HTTPS://GOOD-GRIEF.ORG/BLOG/](https://good-grief.org/blog/)

### WHY STAYING CONNECTED WITH A LOST LOVED ONE IS A HEALTHY WAY TO GRIEVE

In the acclaimed Netflix comedy series *After Life*, Ricky Gervais plays Tony, a widower consumed by his grief following the death of his wife. Tony makes it his mission to alienate his friends and family but strikes up an unlikely friendship with Anne, a woman he meets at his wife's graveside. Anne visits the grave of her late husband Stan where she talks regularly with him about anything that's on her mind. Anne's ongoing connection with Stan is one example of a continuing bond with a person who has died.

The idea of maintaining continuing bonds with a loved one who has died is relatively new. It was first explored in a 1996 book *Continuing Bonds: New Understanding of Grief* which proposed that, instead of detaching from the deceased, healthy grief can be found by creating a new relationship with the deceased. When a loved one dies, you slowly find ways to adjust and redefine your relationship with that person, creating a continuing bond that can endure throughout your lifetime.

### CATHARTIC WAYS TO RECONNECT WITH LOST LOVED ONES

There are numerous ways to continue bonds with your loved one who has died. The following tip sheet touches on five ways to maintain a connection and find a new and different relationship with your loved one in the process.

## 5 TIPS FOR CONTINUING BONDS WITH PEOPLE WE'VE LOST:

There are so many creative, yet simple ways to keep the memory of your lost loved ones alive. Continue reading for five expert tips on how to do so.

### TIP 1: WRITE TO THE PERSON YOU LOST.

Writing personal messages or letters can help you stay connected with your loved one in the present. Write as often or as you like – weekly, monthly, annually, or whenever the mood strikes you.

### TIP 2: KEEP PHOTOS AROUND.

Keeping photos around keeps us connected with our loved ones and helps us remember the times, places, and events that touched our lives. Photos can bring back warm memories and make us smile.

### TIP 3: TALK ABOUT THEM WITH PEOPLE WHO NEVER GOT TO KNOW THEM.

There will be new people who come into your life who didn't have the opportunity to meet your loved ones while they were alive. Find ways to tell new people about your loved ones and keep their memory alive.

### TIP 4: FINISH A PROJECT THEY WERE WORKING ON.

Take on a project around the house, finish a piece of artwork they started, or volunteer for a nonprofit they served in the community. Consider picking up where your loved one left off to continue your connection with the person.

### TIP 5: TAKE A TRIP THEY ALWAYS WANTED TO TAKE.

Many grievors find comfort in taking a trip or visiting a destination that was special to the person who died. A trip like this can bring us closer to the deceased and remind us of what is important and meaningful to those that are gone.

## CONTINUING BONDS – CONNECTING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

While many grievors can feel self-conscious about maintaining ties with deceased loved ones, the practice has become widely accepted as a normal and healthy way of honoring the person and connecting their memory into the life we live today.

Holidays, events, and special days all present opportunities to remember our loved ones who have died. On these occasions, people often feel a wave of grief wash over them, or a desire to be close to the person who has died. These are times when we can intentionally incorporate our person who died into the event.

At Good Grief, we believe that maintaining continuing bonds is an essential part of the grieving process for children and families. Each year, one of our signature community events is a 5K Run & Walk where individuals, families, and teams come together to walk or run in memory of a loved one or someone significant in their lives.



We now have a QR code that can be made to make donations or to purchase Memory Bricks.

It will take you to the Donate page on our website.





## Remembering Dakota: Sibling Loss and Its Impacts

<https://www.opentohope.com/>

### **MY BROTHER DIED BEFORE I WAS BORN**

When was the first time I learned about death? I don't remember a time when I didn't know about it.

Hi, I'm Skye, and I was born two years after my oldest brother, Dakota, died from medulloblastoma, a brain tumor. That's right, my brother died before I was born. So it's true when I say I was born understanding death. Most young people don't have to deal with so much loss in their family. It's had a huge impact on my life, causing pain but also giving me strength and understanding in the realm of grief and bereavement.

The truth is, my parents wanted me and my second-oldest brother, Dylan, to know and remember as much about Dakota as possible. Dylan was two when Dakota died, so his memories are minimal, but that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt just as much.

### **SIBLING LOSS AFFECTS WHOLE FAMILY**

As for me, my brother died before I was born, but his spirit and his story has stayed with me for as long as I can remember. Sibling loss is a real thing. You hear about parents and their losses and coping skills, and sometimes you hear of siblings who speak out about the loss of their loved one. It is very rare you hear from those who never even met their sibling, but boy did that loss have a huge impact on my life.

Growing up, we would make things for children at the hospital — funny masks with googly eyes, for example — with hopes it would bring a smile to someone's face.

Dakota loved things like that. Anything weird or ugly was right up his aisle. We had a Relay for Life team every summer, lit a luminary, and walked for my brother. As years passed, we had luminaries for other loved ones, like my grandparents and my aunt. It seemed like death was ever-present in my life, and it was never strange to me until I was older and realized just how many people have never had to deal with so much loss.

### **SIBLING CREATED FAMILY MEMORIES**

As I got older, I would travel with Mom as she went to parent panels or conferences with doctors and nurses to talk about death and dying and the importance of palliative care. I remember playing an old home video, Batland, where Dakota talked about this magical place he'd created that was over the train tracks and past grandma's house.

I'd seen this video so many times that I could almost repeat it word for word. So, as it played in this conference room, I (an 8- or 9-year-old) was mouthing every word. When the meeting was over, so many people told me how much they loved that I remembered the words.

I remember thinking how odd it was that people were impressed with that. Why wouldn't I know all of the words to my dead brother's video? He's my brother, I love him, of course I watched it over and over and knew everything about the story.

### **EARLY GRIEF MADE ME STRONGER**

Now that I'm older, I understand that I was the odd one. Most people don't have the connection or understanding with death that I did at such a young age.

At another conference a few years later, I was probably 14 or 15, we were sharing our stories at a new children's hospital. Doctors-to-be wanted to learn to deal with terminal patients and their families.

I was the only sibling there. I felt so alone yet so empowered at the same time. My experience was valued, and I was so honored to do so. I was keeping Dakota's spirit alive by helping others know how to care for patients like him and families like ours.

We were also very involved with the Ronald McDonald House of Chapel Hill. Thanks to Mom being on so many parent panels, she met Nancy who worked at RMH. We helped them multiple years with their Butterfly Garden Remembrance Day.

### **LEARNED FROM PARENTS**

Years earlier, Mom and Dad had started a business. They engraved wind chimes with names or sayings about their loved ones. Mom also made bears out of clothes that people would send us so that they could have something soft to squeeze when they missed the one they'd lost.

We had windchimes all over our house, and I had a "Kota Bear" made from Dakota's clothes, my Pop's clothes, and years later, my Grandma's clothes. So, when we would go to the Remembrance Day at RMH, we always brought windchimes for them to remember their child. Mom would read a poem, Nancy would sing, and I would hand out the chimes.

The story behind the chimes began when Dakota died. Someone at his funeral shared an old saying that stated, "When a great soul dies, the winds will blow. The greater the soul, the greater the winds."

That day the winds were high and wild, and they knew Dakota was sending them so much love. And then came the chimes. We still have them all around my parents' house, and I think of Dakota every time I hear one.

The connection I made with people at RMH as a younger girl led to an internship when I was a senior in college. I had always wanted to work there, with those people and those families, and I'd finally made it. I was organizing a remembrance day for that Spring when COVID hit.

### **TALKING ABOUT BROTHER BRINGS JOY**

My plans never went through. I still hope it can happen.

Dakota's death is something that I could talk about forever. It's not uncomfortable, it's joyous. It's reviving and full of life and something that I do to keep his spirit alive. I have so many stories; of Dakota and how his death shaped me, of other losses I've experienced and how they've affected me, of the life I hope to live so that others never feel like they're alone in their grief.

Thanks for being here and reading about so many things that make me who I am today.

By Skye Page

My name is Skye Page and I am originally from rural North Carolina, but I am currently living in Norfolk, VA on our 31' sailboat. I have been writing for years, mainly for myself, but recently I've been writing about our sailing adventures on our blog, Mentally Sailing. I've also written about grief and loss in order to help me process things that will never truly be understood. I have personal experience with death and grief, having experienced the years after my oldest brother, Dakota, died from medulloblastoma, a brain tumor. His life, and death, lead to my passion for helping others who are experiencing the loss of a loved one and it led to the understanding of just how important palliative care and the difference a supportive community can make for so many people. I want nothing more than to let others know that they are not alone. I hear you, I see you, I am with

*When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,  
and you shall see that in truth you are  
weeping for that which  
has been your delight.*

*~Kahlil Gibran*

*We can't compare our grief process.  
It is our own personal journey to embrace.  
It's yours to travel, and no one can  
travel it more gracefully than you.*

*~Linsey Henke*