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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 74 November/December 2023

Monthly Meetings

2nd 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.

November 14th @ 7 pm
Worldwide Candle Lighting Dec. 10 @ 6:45
December 12th @ 7pm

You need not walk alone!

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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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

REGIONAL COORDINATORS



Gail Lafferty
734-748-2514

Kathy Rambo
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I Never Believed...

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness. I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears. I never expected to laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face. I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die. I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise. I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return. But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you, too will come to understand that life goes on...that it can still have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

~Dan Hackett
TCF, Hingham, MA

Fall is halfway through...
winter will be here soon.
The Holidays are upon us.



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



Another Thanksgiving

Another Thanksgiving is upon us... the 3rd without Steven. I still find myself just wanting the Holidays to be over in a hurry, so many memories come rushing into just overwhelmed. A time that should be filled with Happy moments spent with family and friends, has become a day to just somehow to get through. And I embrace each and every one of you out there that knows what I am speaking of. So, what do I find to be thankful for?

I am thankful for a sound mind to be able to recall all those wonderful memories.

I am thankful for the past, which gave me these memories.

I am thankful I live in a country where

I am able to express my right to be thankful.

I am thankful for each and everyone of you out there who help strengthen me and help me to go on.

And I am thankful for the pain...

for you see without the pain there would have been no love...

and for that love I am eternally Thankful.

I wish for all a warm peace filled holiday, as the tears fall and mingle with the smiles,

know that as long as we have each other we will make it.

~Sheila Simmons

In Memory of her son Steven



Thanksgiving serves as an entry point to the holiday season which can be so hard during times of grief. Although there is much to be thankful for, it is hard to express thanks when our worlds are not as they should be and when we are missing a part of our heart.



*I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see your smile,
My children are gone.*

*But I recall your faces still,
The songs, the talks, the sighs,
And story ties, and winter walks,
And sharing secret things.*

*I know you helped my mind to live
Beyond your time with me.*

*You gave me clearer eyes to see—
You gave me finer ears to hear—
What living means, what dying means,
My children who are gone.*

*So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
And you are not with me.
And while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gift you were,
And all the gifts you gave to me,
My children, who are gone.*

~Sascha Wagner

Wintersun

*Gifts our loved ones have given us
can't be measured by the years
they lived.*

*These gifts are measured by the
love we shared with them.*

~Pat Loder





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



Birthdays



Remembrances



November
Michael Wright



November
Steve Valentin



November
Aaron Dean



November
Blake VanSnepton



November
Armani Kelly



November
Matthew Rheaume



December
John Pavlat



The Light Within

Each of us carries a light within, though often it seems shrouded in darkness. But it is there - that spark causes us to respond to love, care, beauty and need in the world. Even when we are sad. Perhaps, indeed, when we are sad we react with even more intensity to the gifts and opportunities life offers.

But can we mobilize ourselves to walk, made courageous by the light within? Sometimes, especially when we are grieving, we stand back, fearful. Feeling immobilized, we want someone else to take the initiative.

We have more power than we give ourselves credit for. We will learn the extent of that power only by claiming it and stepping forth. Are we afraid of failure? What have we to fear that can compare with what we have already lost?

So let's take a deep breath and let the sense of that light within burn steady. Then let's move on into our lives imagining that the one we have lost is helping fan that flame and is cheering us on. Conscious of my own light and power, I move on into my life.

*~Daily message from Healing After Loss
By Martha Whitmore Hickman*

THE SIBING CORNER

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

Hanging Up the Holiday Blues

By-Scott Mastley

posted November 24, 2009 *Open to Hope*

I believe, maybe because it helps me heal, that my brother would want me to enjoy the holidays. His car accident was in December almost 15 years ago, and that December date catches up with me each year. I start to hide from the world around mid-November. I want to sleep more. I blink back tears watching sappy commercials. I don't feel like working or working out at the gym.

It happens right on cue every year, but it took me several years to realize it. I just thought it was holiday stress. Now I recognize it right away and know that I'm subconsciously dreading the December 5th angel date. The depression rolls in as if on cue.

When I didn't realize the cause of the depression, I let it roll over me and tried to keep it to myself. I didn't want to be a complainer. I thought about Chris every day, so I didn't see how this time of year was different.

Now I know it's going to happen, know why it's happening, and I've told my family about it. My wife knows that December can be a little crazy. It took me years to get excited about Christmas again after Chris's accident, but now I love it like I did before. It's the only time of year that I actually enjoy going to the mall. Believing that Chris would want me to enjoy the holidays helped tremendously. I'm still going to cry when I see a sappy commercial, because the emotions are running high this time of year, but I'm also going to appreciate the holiday atmosphere.

In the early years I tried distraction (go to the movies), escape (travel to another town), and denial (pretend everything is OK). Distraction and escape were helpful at the time, but denial never worked.

Now I focus on my family. When I see the hole that is Chris's absence, I look at other families. That's why I enjoy the mall at Christmas. It's packed with families, panicked parents and excited kids. I love to think that they are not burdened by anything as heavy as a lost sibling or child. They're just getting ready for another great Christmas. It helps me get ready for my own.



For that, I Am Thankful

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 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 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 grateful

Love was once (and still is) a part of my being....

For that I am living

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

*Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS
Bereaved Parent*



#GIVING TUESDAY

TUESDAY
NOV. 28, 2023

What is Giving Tuesday?

Since its beginning in 2012, people from all over the world have joined together on Giving Tuesday in support of deserving charities everywhere. We hope you will consider joining them by showing your commitment to The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area and the families we serve each year and make a gift to TCF.

By giving to The Compassionate Friends this holiday season, you'll be helping families who are dealing with the life-changing tragedy of losing a child, grandchild or sibling. Please share this important date with friends and family to spread the word.

By working together, we can accomplish a great deal and further the mission of the mission of Compassionate Friends. Our thanks to all of you within the TCF family.



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 wherever and buy a gift for a needy child in her memory. I put the angel note in her stocking. 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 done 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

"T'was the Night Before Christmas— For Bereaved Parents



"T'was 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

Give Yourself A G.I.F.T. This Holiday Season

The holidays are a time of togetherness and family traditions. It's even been dubbed the "most wonderful time of the year." But for many in the grief community, it can be filled with grief, loneliness, and reminders of our loss. Once solid relationships with family and friends may have frayed throughout the year because our grief was too much for them to handle.

If you're fortunate enough to have been invited – and accepted – to spend the holidays with loved ones, it's important to reflect on the acronym **G.I.F.T.**:

G is for Grief

While it's perfectly normal to feel down, even as early as the holidays approach, you have to do a gut-check to be sure you aren't spiraling down a grief abyss. If your anxiety/stress is through the roof as the date of the family gathering inches closer, it's okay to check in with a mental health therapist for coping techniques.

The thought of seeing happy relatives may also cause you to question why that wasn't your reality and trigger a grief wave. It's important to acknowledge your grief and feelings. If you need to escape to the bathroom or a quiet area to regroup, that's okay. Grief doesn't take a day off.

Don't feel as though talking about your loved one will bring others down. Often, they may not mention him or her out of fear that it will upset you. Encourage them to share their favorite memories and good times together. Grieving doesn't always look like tears, heartache, and sadness. Sometimes it's belly laughs and feel-good stories, recalling fond times with a loved one.

I is for Indomitable

It's almost the end of the year. What better time to pat yourself on the back and celebrate all you've accomplished. There were days you probably couldn't see getting through the next 24 hours, let alone making it to the holidays. Every morning, you get up to face each day, unsure of what's ahead. And, like a badass, you continue to get through all the things that life throws at you. That's an indomitable spirit.

Regardless of what arises during the holiday season, know that you will be okay. You'll survive the tears, the pain, and frustrations about why your person isn't here to celebrate it. Keep in mind there is no shame in reaching out for help to get through the final months of the year. Seeking out help when needed is yet another sign of your resiliency and determination to get through the darkest parts of your grief. Give yourself the credit you so rightly deserve!

F is for Forgiveness

The truth is, unless you've lost a child, grandchild or sibling you won't "get it." Even when well-intentioned loved ones offer words of comfort and sympathy, we may feel it comes across as trite and ingenuous. Remember that it's unfair to expect them to have learned from battles they've never fought.

The reality is that we were once in their shoes. We might have said the person who came before us was "strong," not realizing it was their only choice. We tried to offer hope and encouragement with sayings like, "She's looking down at you" or "Everything happens for a reason." Unless you've loved and lost a child, grandchild or sibling you don't realize the impact those words may have on the receiver.

Your family and friends mean well. Assume positive intent. Educate them on more acceptable ways to shower those who are grieving with love. Forgive their ignorance. We wouldn't wish this on anyone.

T is for Thankful

Death takes so much from us. Over time, it steals memories of our past and robs us of the future we mapped out.

Regardless of what we've been through and who we've lost, there is always, always a reason to be thankful. By training our brain to see the good in each day, we're able to live beyond our grief. We can spend the rest of our lives focused on our loss, or we can pay tribute to a loved one by living our best life.

Your "grieving card" won't be revoked for living post-loss. It's okay to have an attitude of gratitude despite the crappy hand you were dealt. It's okay to move forward, love, and laugh. It's okay to be more than your grief. It's okay to define yourself as more than a grieving parent, grandparent, or sibling. None of this means that you didn't love....that you don't still love. It doesn't mean forgetting. It doesn't mean you're "over it."

The loss will impact our lives for years and decades to come, especially if there are children involved. Yet, that life still has space to let in contentment, friendship, joy, dreams, goals, and more.

Always choose gratitude.

~Kerry Phillips Posted 10/31/2019 *Open to Hope*

Christmas Thoughts

Beyond the twinkling lights, the red and green candles, the poignant aroma of evergreen...

Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels and stars and beloved carols...

Beyond the presents, the shopping, the baking and cooking...

Beyond all of these sights and sounds of Christmas...

Beyond all of these...there is HOPE.

HOPE...It is hope that sustains us through the days of grief and anger and frustration and loneliness.

It is the HOPE that someday we can remember our children with a tenderness merely tinged with sorrow and no overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you I would wish hope, peace, compassion, love, sympathy, understanding, sharing and listening.

In the sharing of our grief with one another and in the emotional support we give to one another, we receive and learn all of these gifts.

~TCF, Wabash Valley Chapter

*In your gathering of memories,
invite your courage to remember everything.*

~Sascha Wagner



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us on December 10, 2023



We are very happy to that we will once again be holding our 9th annual Candle Lighting program. It will be held here at Sacred Heart Church in Oscoda on Sunday December 10, 2023, beginning at 6:45.

This very touching evening includes sharing pictures of our children, grandchildren or siblings, some poems and the lighting of candles. Feel free to share pictures of any loved one taken too soon. The 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 physically. Please mark your calendar and invite your family and friends to come and share this with you.

If you cannot be with us, be sure to light a candle at home so that.....

"their light may always shine"





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

The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area 9th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting



Sunday December 10, 2023

6:45 pm

Sacred Heart Church Family Center

5300 North US 23, Oscoda, MI

The holiday season can be a difficult time of the year for families grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. 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 physically. Please mark your calendar and invite your friends, neighbors and relatives to come and share with you this very moving celebration of all children who have gone too soon. If you can't be with us, be sure to light a candle at home so that ... their light may always shine."

Please come and join us in this celebration of life!

RSVP to tcfoscoda@gmail.com.

Please bring a framed photo or memento to display next to your loved one's candle.

We will have a list of names of our loved ones on our program. To be sure your loved one is listed please email their name(s) to tcfoscoda@gmail.com by December 6th.

Candles are provided for you.

For more information check our website www.tcf-oscoda.org or our Facebook page.

