

NATIONAL OFFICE  
The Compassionate Friends, Inc.  
PO Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696



## The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Oscoda Area Chapter

ISSUE 29 MARCH/APRIL 2017

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
4087 Forest Rd.  
Oscoda, MI 48750  
989-254-5888

Email: [tcfoscoda@gmail.com](mailto:tcfoscoda@gmail.com)  
[www.tcf-oscoda.org](http://www.tcf-oscoda.org)

Toll Free  
1-877-969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### THE ANTICIPATION OF SPRING

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . *IT* happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed. My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Well's time machine had existed; I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

*Pat Loder, TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI*

*In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder*

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of TCF

#### MONTHLY MEETING

*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*

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

March 14:

*Our Outreach Program*  
What we can offer our  
community.

April 11:

*Remembering Bag*

May 9:

*Parent Potluck*

May 20:

*5K Run/Walk*  
Supporting Oscoda  
Education Opportunity  
Foundation and The  
Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda

#### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Mail: TCF-Oscoda Area 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

#### REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Nena Herrick	734-765-8401
Gail Lafferty	734-748-2514
Kathy Rambo	734-306-3930

#### NATIONAL COORDINATORS

*The Compassionate Friends*



*PO Box 3696*  
*Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696*  
*(877) 969-0010*  
[nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

# THE SIBING CORNER

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

## **The Loss of a Lifetime: When an Adult Brother or Sister Dies**

*By Lynn Shattuck*

*April 28, 2014*

When I was 24, my younger brother, who was my only sibling, died. The day the phone rang and I heard my mom say dark, foreign words like *coroner, needle, heroin, autopsy*, was the most impactful day of my life. In the thickness of shock, I didn't realize that the rest of my life would be measured in *before* and *after*. Before, when my family was intact. After, when I would somehow learn to live without the person I was supposed to get a lifetime with.

"Be strong for your parents," said blurs of people at Will's memorial service. I nodded, but inside me, something twisted. I stood in a daze as people streamed by, offering their awkward words and hugs. *Be strong for your parents?* I thought. I was barely breathing. I was barely standing here. Strong was the last thing I felt.

In the early months after Will's death at 21, I existed in a heavy fog. Nothing was as I knew it. I'd abandoned the little life I'd started in Maine and landed back in Alaska where my parents were, where my brother and I had grown up. My friends were living their lives — going to college, working, falling in and out of love and lust. Meanwhile, my life had stopped.

My childhood home was filled with the cloying scent of flowers just starting to die. It struck me then how terrible it was that we send flowers to the grieving — *here you go, another reminder that nothing is permanent, that everything lovely will be lost*. My brother's absence was heavy in the house. Though he had died in Seattle, his room was scattered with relics: the bed he had slept in for so many years, his big flannel shirts hanging like shadows in the closets, a handful of videos and books. Memories pinned to each corner.

Having always taken comfort in words, I scoured the internet for a book for someone like me — an adult whose (barely) adult brother had died. What I found was unimpressive: ***There were more books on losing a pet than losing a brother or sister***. A few books existed for surviving children after a death in the family, but they were for small children. One memoir documented a sister's grief following her brother's death, but it was out of print. What did it mean that there were no handbooks for me? That people asked me to be strong in the face of the biggest loss I'd ever experienced or imagined? At times I felt like I didn't deserve to feel so shattered, especially in the shadow of my parents' immense loss.

A few months later, I started attending a local grief group. I sat in a circle with a few widows and widowers, a woman whose daughter had died, and a woman whose mother had died. I was younger than any of them by at least 30 years, but I could relate to their shares: "I feel like I'm going crazy." "I'm so damned angry right now." "I can't sleep at night." Though the losses were different, the feelings were the same.

So much was lost:

My parents, who would never be the same. Their pain was almost visible, as if a piece of their bodies had been cut out. I had lost myself, too, or at least the version of me that was unscathed by tragedy: an innocent version, who walked around in some parallel universe where her brother was still alive, ignorant to the incredible fortune of an entirely alive family.

My brother, my past. Will's big blue eyes. His loud laugh. He was the co-keeper of my childhood. The person who was supposed to walk with me longer than anyone else in this life. The only other person who knew what it was like to grow up with our particular parents, in our particular home.

The future. I cried for the nephews and nieces I would never have. I cried for my own faceless potential children who would never know my brother. How would I explain him? How would I ensure that his essence wasn't lost, that he wasn't just a figure in old photographs, a handful of stories? And I had to have children someday, right? I was the only person who could make my parents the grandparents they always assumed they'd be.

And all the hard times ahead when my brother wouldn't be by my side. When my parents began to age. When my grandparents died. There would be no one to share these dark milestones.

And so I had to stay alive. Burden of needing to stay healthy, to stay safe, to stay close. I felt like our family had been a four-legged table, and one leg had suddenly been torn off. The remaining three of us wobbled and teetered. We felt the missing leg like an amputee, each morning waking to the horrible fact that Will was gone.

I wrote letters to my brother in those early months and years. At first, memories blazed through my head and I used the letters to capture them before they flitted away, gone forever: my brother walking towards me when he visited me in Maine, the sun splattering his cheeks, turning him golden. The time I taught him to make snow angels in the front yard of our childhood home, our bulkily clad limbs sliding in synchronicity under icy stars. My tiny hand on my mom's belly, feeling my brother kick. Later, I wrote the letters when I needed to cry — when the grief sat coiled and waiting in my chest, needing to be let out, released. I couldn't find the words of other bereaved sisters or brothers to bring me comfort, so I created my own.

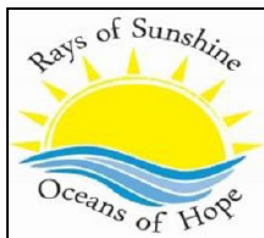
One day, when I was lost in my sadness, my mom said, "You won't always feel like this. You'll have a family of your own. You'll move on." This seemed impossible in my 24-year-old skin. I couldn't imagine this potential future my mom spoke of, this predicted family.

But very, very slowly, I began putting my life back together. I finished college. I made the difficult decision to leave home again and move back to Maine. I met my husband and after several years, we had two children. Our son has my brother's big blue eyes and his love of music. Our daughter possesses the lighthearted spirit my brother had at the same age. The sibling love between them is palpable; they spat and giggle, they dance and huddle. Though sometimes adult siblings aren't able to close the distance between them, all those shared experiences and time and space and relationships matter. They tether us, they twine our stories together. I pray that my children remain close as they grow, and that they enjoy a long lifetime together.

After nearly 15 years, the sharp shock and grief I felt in those early months and years are gone. It took years for the pain to fade, for the words "your brother is dead" to stop pounding in my head — but they did. Will's absence is mostly a dull hurt, the ghost of an old broken bone that aches when it rains. I feel it more on holidays and anniversaries, when someone else close to me dies. I'll always wish he was still here. I'll always wonder what he would look like and what he'd be doing if he was still alive — at 36. At 50. At 75.

I move on and through. Perhaps I am even strong, like those well-meaning mourners at my brother's memorial asked me to be. But my brother's loss will remain with me for my whole life — just like he was supposed to.

This essay originally appeared on the elephant journal. Visit Lynn at her blog at <http://thelightwillfindyou.com> or on [Facebook](#)



## Registration is Now Open

2017 TCF National Conference  
July 28-30, 2017  
Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek  
Orlando, Florida

Conference Registration and Hotel Reservations are now open for the TCF 40th Annual National Conference. Please visit the national website, [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) as well as [www.facebook.com/TCFUSA](http://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA) for further information.



## THE STORM OF GRIEF

**Grief Seuss Style**  
by *Debbie Rambis, TCF*

Grief of a child is a whoa,  
No one should ever have bestowed.  
It's no laughing matter  
As there is nothing sadder!

Your life's upside down.  
Seems you are crazy bound.  
You begin to have rushes,  
Oh those heart beat gushes!

You try but can't sleep  
Even counting sheep.  
You toss and you turn  
Beginning to sleep yearn.

Or sleeping all the time?  
This does put you in a bind.  
But you ask, "Who is this I've become!"

To the fridge you do run  
Always eating quite a sum  
You have eaten so well  
That you begin to "swell!"

Now the Doctor says, "Diet!  
And pretend to row a kayak!"  
And take these two pills,  
As they'll make you not ill.

You take this new script  
It makes you feel adrift.  
You walk with a hop,  
But this world must stop!

Your friends express glee!  
You flail, "It's not really me!"  
But they want the old you  
You put on "the mask" and play too.

But then you'll find "The Compassionate  
Friends"  
Who show you they care  
For you without airs.



*Like a bird  
Singing in the rain,  
Let grateful memories  
Survive in time of sorrow.*  
~Robert Lewis Stevenson

It comes like a huge thunderbolt – shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope.



The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and your body is torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it - and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones - the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable.

Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow— a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will blossom to be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever end, but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer; we will see more rainbows; and the flowers will bloom more and more.

Perhaps it's even good to have a shower now and then—to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

~Mary Jo Pierce  
TCF Tuscaloosa, Alabama

*The rain falls because the cloud  
can no longer handle  
the weight.  
The tears fall because the heart  
can no longer handle the pain.*

~author unknown







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



**Birthdays**



**Remembrances**



*Spring is in the air and as a bereaved parent, sibling or grandparent, you may experience a "bittersweet" emotion. The changing of the seasons after a child dies can bring with it hopes and dreams that are unfulfilled or memories of what was and should have been.*  
~Karen, Kentucky

**March**

Tony Calabrese



**March**

Aaron Gonzales



**March**

Ashley Scott



**March**

Nathan Kirkpatrick



**March**

Nathan Kirkpatrick



**April**

Aaron Dean



**April**

Derek Toppa



**April**

Michael Wright



**SPRING CHALLENGES BEREAVED MOM TO FIND HOPE**

Springtime is upon us, along with all the excitement of new growth, new life, and new beginnings. But spring doesn't hold such new hope and life for everyone. Those who have endured the death of a loved one don't always welcome the new seasons.

My son died in mid-winter, so when spring came around, I scoffed at all of the new beginnings around me. It's easy to get caught up in feelings of anger, resentment, and isolation. But it's much harder to embrace change, learn from it, grow from it, and make a new normal.

For me, it took time, understanding, time, patience, time, and more time to enjoy spring again (do you see a pattern here?). Time doesn't necessarily "heal" all wounds, but it does lessen their sting. It leaves behind scars that remind us of the battles we have fought and won. It lets us know that we can be stronger than we ever thought possible. I wear my scars proudly, knowing that I have come out of my experiences a changed—but better—person than I was before.

This spring, I challenge you to try and see the new life transpiring around you in a new light. Find one thing—a budding flower, a new baby animal, a leaf growing on a bare tree—and focus on the beauty. Focus on and see that new life as a sign that your loved one is thriving on the other side.

In every new life, I see my precious angel, Connor. Yet, it wasn't always that way. I used to turn away from nature and new beginnings, but now I focus on the positive influence my son's life had on all those around him. I try to focus on the constructive instead of the harmful.

We all have good days and bad days, but I find that as I embrace the changes around me, my good days outnumber the bad. You, too, can get to this point. Know that you are stronger than you realize, and that you can rise above the calamities that befall you—rising up a better person than you ever thought possible.

Amy C. Maddocks March 21, 2011—Open to Hope

*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.*

### Lending Library

We have many great books in our library and are always on the lookout for new material. If you have any suggestions, please let Charlie or Fran know as we are always adding to our collection. If you have a book from our library and are finished, please return it so it can be circulated again to another family.

If you would like to keep the book, please let us know the title of the book, so we can order a replacement.

Donations for new books are always appreciated and are a great way to honor our loved one on a birthday or anniversary.

To check out our books just click on the link...

[Lending Library for TCF-Oscoda](#)

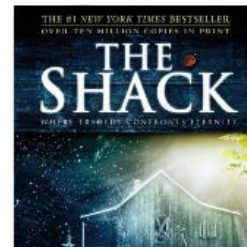
### Book Review

***The Shack*** by Wm. Paul Young 2007

Mackenzie Allen Philips' youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation and the evidence shows she may have been murdered in an abandoned shack. Four years later in the midst of his "Great Sorrow," Mack is still dealing with her death.

Against his better judgement he goes back to the shack on a winter afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare. What he finds there will change his world forever.

If you are not interested in reading the book, the movie will be released at the beginning of March.



### Support The Compassionate Friends Of Oscoda Area 2440

When you shop at smile.amazon.com

Amazon donates

Go to: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/35-2493920>

amazonsmile

Thanks to donors like you, The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area raised \$100.61 in 2016. It is an amazingly simple, no cost to you, donation platform. Check it out at [www.iGive.com/TheCompassionateFriendsofOscodaArea](http://www.iGive.com/TheCompassionateFriendsofOscodaArea)

iGive.com®  
Change online shopping for good.

### GRIEF SUPPORT WEBSITES

- <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>
- <http://www.griefwatch.com>
- <http://www.aliveinmemory.org>
- <http://angelmoms.com>
- <http://bereavedparentsusa.org>
- <http://childloss.com>
- <http://www.good-grief.org>
- <http://griefnet.org>
- <http://www.griefhealingblog.com>
- <http://www.opentohope.com>
- <http://pomc.com> —families of murder victims
- <http://survivorsofsuicide.com>
- <http://www.taps.org> – military death
- <http://webhealing.com>
- [www.griefwatch.com](http://www.griefwatch.com)

### Colby's Crusade: SIDS Fundraiser



A choice of two fun evenings raising funds for Colby's Crusade and SIDS awareness. Have fun socializing and painting. Raffles and giveaways!!!! Let's make this year, the best one yet! Tickets are \$45 per person.

The Owl: April 8 at G's Pizzeria Party Room 6:00-9:00 pm  
Includes appetizers

The Coffee Cup: April 22 at Oscoda AuSable Senior Center  
6:00-9:00 pm includes coffee, tea & deserts  
All proceeds go to SIDS Research

Contact information: [colbyscrusade@gmail.com](mailto:colbyscrusade@gmail.com)  
Phone: Stephanie Pearsall 989-906-6380



# Make the most of your dash! 5K Run/Walk

## Mark Negro Memorial Scholarship Run/Walk

Saturday May 20, 2017

9:00 A.M. at Adams & Sunset (Across from the Hilltop)

Benefits **Oscoda Education Opportunity Foundation &  
The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area**

Event: 5K Open Run/Walk  
Check -in & 8:00 AM-9:00 AM on Race Day at Adams & Sunset  
Late Registration:

Race Starts promptly at 9:00 AM

Entry Fee: Early entry received by May 12: \$25.00  
After 5/12 & Race Day Entry \$30.00

Purpose: To increase the yearly scholarship awarded, in memory of Mark, to an Oscoda Graduating Senior who plans to enroll in a vocational education related program. To date we have awarded \$5,900 in scholarships.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Entry Form:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex M F Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Early Entrant T-shirt Size: Small Medium Large XL XXL  
Youth XS Youth S Youth M Youth L

I am a voluntary participant in the event, and in good physical condition. I hereby assume full and complete responsibility for any injury or accident which may occur during my participation in this event. I hereby release and hold harmless the Negro Family, The Oscoda Education Opportunity Foundation, The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area or volunteers and affiliated individuals or any race sponsors including any said parties' agent or employees/volunteers or otherwise. If I do not follow all the rules and instructions of this event, I understand I may be removed from competition. I give permission to use any photo, videos or other recordings of me that are made during the course of this event.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent signature if under 18)

Registration form online at [www.oscodaeducationfoundation.org/make-the-most-of-your-dash](http://www.oscodaeducationfoundation.org/make-the-most-of-your-dash)

Payment online or checks payable to **Oscoda Education Opportunity Foundation and mail to:**  
OEOF "Make the Most of your Dash", PO Box 694, Oscoda, MI 48750