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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
989-254-5888
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Issue 83 November/December 2025

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 11 @ 7 pm

December 9 @ 7 -m

Worldwide Candle Lighting December 14 @ 6:45 pm

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 & PR
Outreach: Tracey Toppa
Director: Vicky Stadler

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Gail Lafferty
734-306-3930

Kathy Rambo
734-748-2514



Just Flow with the Season And Take Care of Yourself

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions." You are reevaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do know. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before the year ends.

*~Elizabeth B Estes
TCF Augusta, GA
In Memory of Tricia*

*Tears are the jewels
Of remembrance,
Sad but glistening with the
Beauty of the past.
~James C. Peterson*



Shared Thoughts on Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the beginning of our holiday season. This once joyous time can become a horrendous anticipation for us. This is the season we like all our children and siblings gathered around us. We enjoy the togetherness, for it is a time to be thankful for each of our family members. We find it difficult for such a large piece to be missing from our family circle.

We suggest you try to discuss your plans with your immediate family, your spouse and children. It not only makes them feel part of the family, but also removes the tremendous burden of making all the decisions from your shoulders. This also sends the message you know they are hurting; by acknowledging their pain, you open up the door of communication.

You must decide what is best for your family. You may choose to keep it traditional or make changes. These changes can be temporary or permanent. It may help to talk about what things you were doing just for the sake of tradition. If they aren't meaningful, and are painful, you may choose to drop them. Some find it helpful to go away; others want to be home. Some have found it very peaceful to devote time to helping others. There are many organizations who need help to serve a meal to others who have no one to spend the holiday with. It is a way of bringing the love for your child or sibling to life. For some, it is impossible to give thanks when your grief is very fresh; this is normal for many. Allow yourself to cry, and grieve, if that is all you are capable of this year. In time you will be able to think beyond your pain; don't feel guilty about something you cannot do. Remember it helps others to feel good when they can do small physical chores for us; if you are in need of their help, ask for it.

We can't avoid Thanksgiving, and sometimes we even feel a little guilty for not being thankful for what we have left. Our overwhelming grief crowds out our appreciation of what we have. We are human, and it is normal to lament our loss. Perhaps this is the season to enumerate, and be thankful, for friends and family who have helped us through these devastating times. We all wanted more time, but we must remember our pain is so great because we were given someone very special to share a segment

of our life with. For this we are thankful. We also are very thankful for all the friends and support we have in The Compassionate Friends. Your sharing with us has got us through many holidays and given us strength and healing from having passed through another painful event. Each passing event tells us we can survive, and doing our grief work softens our pain. We wish you peace of mind and love, as you remember your child or sibling this Thanksgiving.

~Marie Hofmockel
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

When darkness
seems
overwhelming,
light a candle in
someone's life and
see how it makes
the darkness in
your own and
the other person's
life flee.

~Harold Kushn



Siblings Grief and Holidays

This article is excerpts from two separate blogs

<http://adultsiblinggrief.com/category/uncategorized/> November 2008 blog

Hope for the Thanksgiving Holiday by Patricia Cox November 2010 www.Hellogrief.org

It is a loss feeling, this grief. My family, like everyone's family, is a unique island and with each loss, I feel like I am in a rowboat that drifts slowly away from the island. I look back and can still see the beauty of it, but it changes the further I drift away from it, and I know the day will come when I will hardly recognize it at all.

For surviving siblings—or any other grieving person—the holidays present unique challenges. We often stand on the sidelines, watching the rush of shoppers spending money they do not have on gifts that people do not need with the knowledge that our beloved sibling's name will never again be part of our holiday shopping list. We switch off the radio as Burl Ives enjoins us to have a "holly Jolly Christmas" because for us, there will be little of either. We can't bear to watch the seasonal favorite film "It's a Wonderful Life" when life for us seems less than wonderful.

Cherished family traditions can seem out of place without our brother or sister as we struggle to find some sort of way to commemorate the day and still honor our sibling's memory. But quite often, we are at a loss at just what to do, especially if the death is a recent one. Despite the challenges surviving siblings face during the holidays, there are a few things that can make navigating them less painful. Because we all grieve in our own way, some of the following may be helpful to some surviving siblings, but not helpful to others. Even if none of the suggestions seem right for you, I am hoping they might at least inspire you to think of other ways to cope.

- **Story Telling:** As friends and families gather for the holidays, it is common to reminisce about the past—the people and events that made previous holidays so memorable. Recalling stories from the past is like thumbing through a scrapbook in time. Each "verbal snapshot" of turkey carvings, tree-trimmings, menorah lightings, or parties from New Years past is linked to those near and dear to us. While such memories can sometimes cause a new wave of grief, telling stories and sharing memories remind us that our brothers and sisters are still a part of our family; they live on though us and in us. After all, our brothers and sisters serve as sacred witnesses to our lives, the only people who truly know what it was like to grow up in our family. We honor the vital role they played in our lives when we share the scrapbook with others.
- **Step Up:** Sometimes, stepping up to help others in need can help to mediate your sense of loss. Volunteering your time in a soup kitchen, animal shelter, or any other organization that benefits the needy can offer you the opportunity to do something good for someone else. You will see, firsthand, that you are not the only person who is struggling—and that loss comes in many guises. If you are not up for volunteer work, consider donating to some worthy organization or cause in your sibling's name. Remember that when we give, we receive.
- **New Tradition:** A new tradition is to cover the table with a plain tablecloth, provide permanent markers for family members and guests to write what they're "thankful" for on the tablecloth, a favorite memory or message to your sibling, and children can have fun drawing pictures. Bring the tablecloth out at each holiday until it's full and then start a new one!

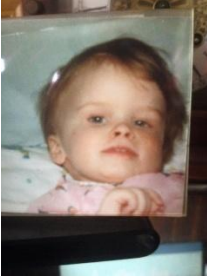
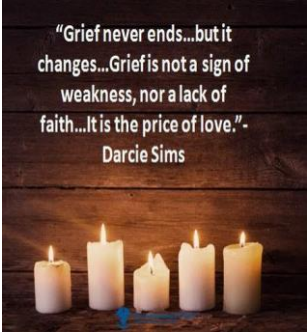
Remember to give "thanks" for what you had and what you still have.... memories, love and feelings in our hearts can never be taken from us unless we let them. This year give thanks that the grief you feel is based on the enormous love you've shared!





"Forever In Our Hearts" Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings *Loved and Missed*



 Birthday		Remembered 	
November Michael Wright 	November Steve Valentine 	December Blake VanSneppson 	December Jon Pavlot 
November Armani N. Kelly 	November Matthew Rheaume 	December Donald Sheppard II 	When the time comes for Lighting festive candles, Let them remind you not of what you lost, but also, of what you had. ~Sascha Wagner
December Aaron Dean 	When someone you love becomes a memory, The memory becomes a treasure. ~Unknown	Tears are the jewels of remembrance, Sad but glistening with the Beauty of the past. ~James A Peterson	"Grief never ends...but it changes...Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith...It is the price of love." Darcie Sims 

Memories Are Golden

They say memories are golden
well maybe that is true.
I never wanted memories,
I only wanted you.

A million times I needed you,
a million times I cried.
If love alone could have saved you,
you never would have died.

In life I loved you dearly,
in death I love you still.
In my heart you hold a place
no one could ever fill.

If tears could build a stairway
and heartache make a lane,
I'd walk the path to heaven
And bring you back again.

Our family chain is broken,
and nothing seems the same.
But as God calls us one by one,
the chain will link again.

~Author Unknown



The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area 11th



Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Sunday December 14, 2025 @ 6:45pm

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 for all the children who have died. Please bring a picture of your child, sibling or grandchild to set on our table of our loved ones.

RSVP & Questions: tcfoscodagmail.com

Empty Stocking



Each Christmas we had stocking stuffers. Our son, Tyler, died at age 17 after a riding accident. I broke down that first Christmas when I put his up and realized I didn't need to put stocking stuffers in it. I started writing a letter to him, about a page long, and sticking it in there. I just tell him in the letter how much I love him. This tradition continues today.

~Vicki Blount, Enid Oklahoma



Handling The Holidays



Christmas and Chanuka, two holidays rich in tradition and intimately connected with children, are often especially difficult for bereaved families. What you do, or don't do, may depend on whether or not you have young children or grandchildren who should not be deprived of the joy the holidays can bring.

Try to finish shopping well in advance so that you are not inundated by holiday displays and music which the stores seem to initiate earlier and earlier each year. You might want to shop by catalog or the internet. Take advantage of the people who said to let them know how they can help and ask them to shop or do holiday chores for you.

In consultation with your immediate family, decide which traditions you wish to keep and which you want to change. As you progress in your journey through grief, you may find you are able to reinstate some traditions you could not handle in the beginning.

Do things at different times or in different places if that works for your family. You may want to observe the holidays by yourselves, rather than take part in large gatherings. If you do take part in family or other gatherings, feel free to mention your child if you want to. If others are uncomfortable, it's their problem. Do not let them make you feel guilty for talking about your child or crying. You might want to explain in advance that this is a difficult time for you and that talking about your child and even shedding some tears are necessary for healing.

Memorialize your child in some way. Light special candles; have a special Chanukah menorah; fill his or her stocking with messages of love; have a special tree or decorate the tree with special ornaments; buy presents for a needy child of the same age; make charitable donations; volunteer in a hospital or homeless shelter.

Try attending a special memorial service. While difficult, this may allow you to express your feelings in a caring and comfortable atmosphere.

Savor any moments of happiness as a special holiday gift. Your children would not want you to be miserable. Honor them by remembering them with love.

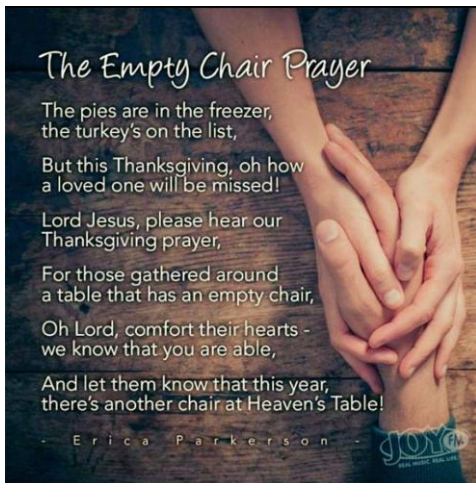
~Stephanie Hesse
TCF Rockland County,

Hope for the Holiday Dinner

November 2010 excerpt Hellogrief.org

Before a holiday dinner, think about what might be tough and plan, for example the “empty chair,” should you keep it in place or remove it from the table all together? Should the oldest child or another family member sit there now? Should you set a place in honor of your loved one? There’s no right or wrong answer, do what’s best for you and your family.

It’s important to remember that you don’t have to do things the way you’ve always done them. It may be a good time to start some new traditions; this doesn’t mean you’re going to lose the old traditions; you can always go back to them or incorporate them again when you’re ready. Just because you’ve always put on a huge feast doesn’t mean you have to this year, have everyone bring a dish, have another family member host a dinner, or go out to a restaurant this year. Address the “elephant in the room,” by acknowledging your loved one and including him or her in your gathering by lighting a candle, making a toast in his or her honor, or sharing favorite memories and funny stories about them. It may be difficult to start these conversations, but it will benefit everyone around you and help each of you heal a little bit at a time.



A wonderful new tradition is to cover the table with a plain tablecloth, provide permanent markers for family members and guests to write what they’re “thankful” for on the tablecloth, a favorite memory or message to your loved one, and children can have fun by drawing pictures. Bring the tablecloth out at each holiday until it’s full and then start a new one!

Remember to give “thanks” for what you had and what you still have... memories, love and feelings in our hearts can never be taken from us unless we let them. This year give thanks that the grief you feel is based on the enormous love you’ve shared!
~Patricia Cox



Holiday Card With A Purpose



The first Christmas after my son, Ian, died, we made up our own holiday cards with a Special purpose. In each card, we enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The front of the card said:

*“Holidays are for sharing special moments with those we love---
Here are some of our favorite memories.”*

The inside listed moments we remembered with our children such as:

“Sleeping in his new shoes Christmas night.”

“Singing baby sister to sleep in the dark.”

“The roaring sound of the VW engine that told us Ian was on his way home.”

“I don’t know how that beer can got there.” (Yeah, right!)

and more. . .

and we asked the recipient to : *“Please take a few moments and share some memories of Ian with us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.”*

Many did respond. . . and it’s amazing what treasure those little scraps of paper are to us. I would not have those “stories” if I had not asked for them. I’m glad I did. ~Becky Sharpe (Ian’s Mom), TCF, Gainesville, GA



The Compassionate Friends
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The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area 11th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting



Sunday December 14, 2025

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 tcfoscodagmail.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 tcfoscodagmail.com by December 10th.

Candles are provided for you both inside and outside. For more information check our website www.tcf-oscoda.org or our Facebook page.

