

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

www.compassionatefriends.org
email: 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

Issue 79 November/December 2024

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 12th @ 7 pm

December 8th @ 6:45 Worldwide Candle Lighting

December 10th @ 7 pm

You need not walk alone!

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

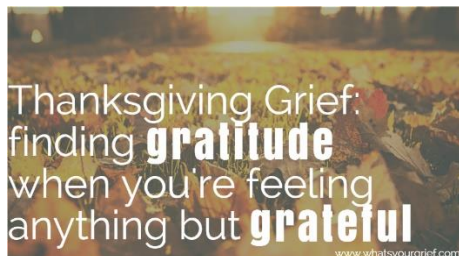
Mail: TCF-Oscoda Chapter
4087 Forest Rd., Oscoda, MI 48750
Phone: 989-254-5888
Email: tcfoscoda@gmail.com
Web: www.tcf-oscoda.org



The Compassionate Friends Oscoda Area

Co-Leaders: Fran Ommani
Charlie Negro
Secretary: Charlie Negro
Treasurer: Jane Negro
Outreach: Tracey Toppa
Director: Vicky Stadler

REGIONAL COORDINATORS



Gail Lafferty
734-306-3930

Kathy Rambo
734-748-2514

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

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



A Forgiving Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see missing a plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say no one else, I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure that they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents, and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays. If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery.

I hope I have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

~Jim Hobbs
Bereaved Parents, A Journey Together, Fall 2003
www.bereavedparentsusa.org



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

But I recall your faces still,
The songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times, 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



*"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.
It turns what we have into enough, and more.
It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order,
confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast,
a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.
Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for
today and creates a vision for tomorrow"*

~Melody Beady



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 parent’s 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





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. I think she would 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 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
TCF Atlanta Online 12/8/04

"Forever In Our Hearts"
Our Children/Siblings Remembered

Birthdays		Remembrances	
November Michael Wright 	November Steve Valentine 	November Aaron Dean 	November Donald J. Sheppard II
November Armani Kelly 	November Matthew Rheume 	December John Pavlat 	December Blake VanSnepton
YOU DON'T GET OVER GRIEF BY <i>forgetting</i> YOU MOVE THROUGH GRIEF BY <i>remembering</i>			<p style="font-family: cursive;">This Thanksgiving: Ask me about my greatest blessing and my deepest sorrow-- ask me about my child. - Angela Miller</p>

Keep Child's Memory Alive

Four years ago, I lost my beautiful 23-year-old daughter, Keren. Therefore, I know firsthand how painful it is to lose a child. At first, I really didn't think I would survive, and almost didn't. I knew I needed help and reached out through the internet to find other grieving parents, who would understand my pain and grief. I needed to know that I was not alone.

At that time, I couldn't bring myself to attend a grief group, or even leave my house. I felt that I could barely stand up because I was so weighed down by grief. So for me, the computer was the only avenue to reach out for help. I found the help I was seeking, and I wanted to give back by reaching out to aid other grieving parents. So, I started an online grief support message board, <http://griefsupport.proboards.com/> with my friend and fellow bereaved mother, Gladis Alcorta.

I felt so alone till I started bonding with other bereaved parents. Even though I was surrounded by family and friends, I did not personally know another parent who had lost a child. I was beginning to feel bitter and rejected by life, everything I believed in or thought I knew didn't seem to make sense anymore. I was withdrawing into myself and even questioning if life was still worth living after the loss of my beloved daughter.

Sharing My Child's Memory Helps

But then as I started sharing and talking about my child online with other grieving parents, I didn't feel so isolated in my pain anymore. There were other wonderful moms and dads out there who were feeling just as I was. As we shared our fears, uncertainties, heartaches, sorrows and even our hopes, a little light started to come back into our lives. Very faint at first, but the more we shared, wrote, and talked about our grief and our beloved children; slowly the light began to brighten.

A single thread is easily broken, but when many are gathered together, they become stronger and cannot be torn. Our sorrow has brought us together, and our website has become a tapestry of love for us and others who have lost their beautiful children. We know they are still with us and that we will see them again one day. Through this capacity to love, we still live and our love will go on. We are survivors.

This is for all the parents new on this grief journey. We all grieve differently and there is no timetable on grief,

but for me, at first I could not feel any joy or happiness. All I felt were small moments of comfort.

Simple Steps

So, I did little, simple things to bring myself comfort. Here are some things I did, and you can do as well to bring yourself moments of comfort:

- Bond with a new pet
- Spoil yourself a little
- Take a vacation
- Take a class on something you have always found interesting
- Take long hot baths
- Take up walking or a sport
- Read a book
- Work in the garden
- Writing/poetry

It really helps to keep your child's memory alive and share with others. Some ways you can do this are:

- Doing something in your child's name
- Create a memorial (Online or elsewhere)
- Share your memories of your beloved child with others who want to listen

There are a few things I learned the hard way after my loss. It is **very important** to know:

- The first two years after losing a child are hell on earth.
- What you are feeling is **perfectly normal**.
- Sharing and bonding with other parents along the grief path helps.

Our Children are Still with Us

The **worst thing** you can do is listen to the advice of people who have not experienced the loss of a child. Unfortunately, there are people out there that think they are right and something is wrong with you. Many of them do not understand and will tell you things such as, "You need to get over this and move on" or "You shouldn't celebrate your child's life."

To celebrate, talk and write about our children keeps them alive to us. You need not feel so alone and that is why groups like ours can be so helpful. We are here for you, we understand, we know. For our pain is yours and after a bit of time you will see a little light come back into your life. We are survivors and I truly believe with all my heart that our children want us to heal and always remember the good times. Our children are still with us and watching over us.

~Louise Lagerman

<https://www.opentohope.com/keep-childs-memory-alive-through-words-and-celebrations/>

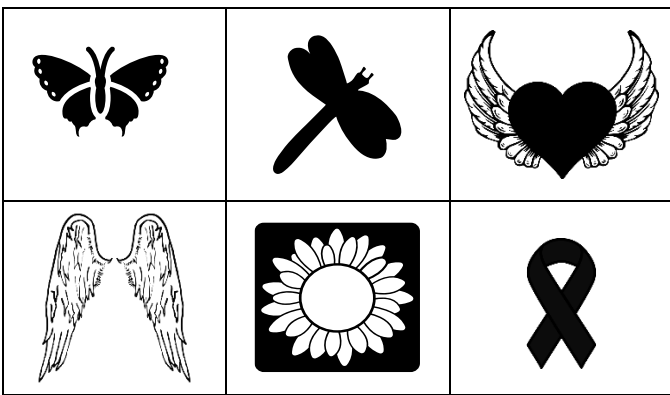
Holiday Suggestion

One of our favorite suggestions for bringing our child's presence into holidays, is instead of signing your loved one's name on your holiday cards or letters, add a symbol that represents your loved one.

Be it a butterfly, an angel, a bird, a star or sun, or perhaps a flower, choose whichever symbol has a special meaning to you as a family. Some families purchase a special stamp and pad with the logo on it and use it often.

~TCF Minneapolis Chapter

These are just a few, yours might be more unique and more a symbol of your child, sibling or grandchild.



Wintersong

Season of lights, season of love and peace
Season of shadow, season of memories
Season of warmth and joy, season of secret tears:
Give us the courage to laugh again
Give us the vision to hope again
Give us the power to love again
For all our new seasons
And all our new years.

~Sascha Wagner
"Wintersun"

T'was the Night Before Christmas

- for bereaved parents

adapted from Faye McCord TCF (UK)

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 my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a flock of cardinals 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 cardinals left in my heart -

That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.

Yes, the message of the cardinals 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!"



The Compassionate Friends of the Oscoda Area

*10th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting
Sunday December 8, 2024 @ 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 of all children who have died.

RSVP & Questions: tcfoscod@gmail.com

Christmas Without You

This is an excerpt from this article by Angela Miller
abedformyheart.com/christmas-without-you/



Being honest about it—this thing called grief—is really all I can do. I can't pretend it's not this way. I can't pretend I'm "ok", that I'm "over" you or "healed", or that I miss you any less now that it's been seven years. None of that is true. I can't pretend I like being a bereaved mom, or that I don't miss my old self, my old life, my precious, one and only you. I can't pretend I'm wiser, more enlightened, or more of anything, really. I can't pretend that any of this is easy. I can't pretend I even know how to do this.

What I can say is—I'm better for knowing you, loving you, and missing you. You make me the best me. Our love does that. Your love sustains me. When I think I can't do it anymore, our love reminds me I can do anything. I've already done the hardest thing there is. And no matter how much my heart aches for you—during the holidays, or any day of the year—I am thankful for you, eternally grateful, that out of all the moms in the sea, You chose me.

Holiday Thoughts

*For those who think that
Christmas and Chanukah
Are just nice days
To give and get presents
Bereaved parents have another
message.*



*Mixed with joy
Is the knowledge of sadness.
With the hope of birth comes the treat of death.
We should not try to cover up our sadness in
front of people,
For we have a lesson to teach them.*

*But the holidays have a lesson for us, too.
Yes, there is death.
Yes, there is great bitterness in life.
There is darkness.
But there is hope.
There is birth.
There is light.*

*In a society which works so hard
to deny death,
Perhaps only bereaved parents
and a few others
Can truly understand the depths
of these holidays.*

*~Dennis Klass
TCF St. Louis, MO*