



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**Miami
Valley
Chapter
Newsletter**

TCF Chapter No. 1732, P.O. Box 292112, Kettering, OH 45429 (937) 640-2621

Nov-Dec 2015

Website: <http://www.miamivalleytcf.com>

E-mail: miamivalleytcf@gmail.com

Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony
Sunday, December 13, 2015
Information and Request for Photos
by November 18th, please ...

Each year on the second Sunday in December, The Compassionate Friends holds a Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony. At 7pm local time *around the globe*, TCF chapters meet and light candles, one for each child, so that for 24 hours there is constant candlelight in our children's memories. As one time zone extinguishes candles, another lights theirs. Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, this year's 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from TCF, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. In the US, this event started in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

We hope you will join us at the Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church for this beautiful evening of candlelight, readings and music, beginning at 6:30pm with music as you are gathering to sit and then starting our program promptly at 6:59pm.

Please Note: Our Miami Valley Chapter creates a lovely slide presentation of our children's photos for the program!

Please submit a photo of your child (JPEG format, please) to our chapter e-mail at miamivalleytcf@gmail.com.
OR send an actual photo to us:
TCF Chapter 1732
PO Box 292112
Kettering, OH 45429

Deadline for photos is November 18th!!

Please include his/her full name as you would like it read. If your child's photo has been included in previous Candle Lightings, no need to resubmit — unless you would like to replace the photo we have with another.

THANK YOU!

**Chapter meetings are on the
third Wednesday of the month
at Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church
Corner of Bigger Road & Wilmington Pike
Kettering, Ohio**

Directions: from Rt 35, exit at Woodman Drive,
go south approximately 4 miles to Wilmington Pike,
turn left, church is about 1/2 mile on right

OR

from I-675, exit onto Wilmington Pike (Exit 7),
go north 2 miles. Church is on left, just after David
Road

Upcoming Meeting Schedule and Topics

Wednesday, November 18th, 7pm
How To SURVIVE The Holidays

Wednesday, December 16th, 7pm
Christmas Is Near—How Are YOU Doing?

I dropped a tear into the ocean.
The day you find it
is the day I will stop missing you.

~author unknown

It's not about denying the dark
It's about making space for the light
Alongside the dark.

~Tom Zuba
Permission to Mourn, A New Way To Do Grief

Thoughts have energy, so even if you just send compassionate thoughts to the other person, you are doing something to help.

~LOVE by Tiny Buddha

*The Compassionate Friends— A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding,
and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.*

Thank You for your "Love Gifts"
in remembrance of these loved ones . . .

- ♥ *Tammie Spence in memory of her son, Shannon Mason's 40th birthday on November 18th*
- ♥ *Ruth Davis in memory of her son, Jim and her husband, James*
- ♥ *Don Bernard in memory of his son, Jeff*
- ♥ *Karen Brown in memory of her son, David Allbery*
- ♥ *Ruth Ann Williams in memory of her son, Reggie's birthday on September 19th*

*(Please contact us if we accidentally omitted
any love gift)*

- 
- As we approach the end of the year**, please consider showing your support of The Compassionate Friends. Every donation we receive is greatly needed and equally appreciated and is used to further our vision, "That everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped."
- We know that during this busy time, requests for your financial assistance are many, and there are only a few organizations, or maybe just one, that will benefit from your support. TCF needs your assistance to help continue to keep our beloved organization helping those who are coming behind us. Do it in the name of your child, sibling, grandchild, niece, nephew, friend or colleague ... or for all children gone too soon!
- Please send your "Love Gifts" (tax deductible)**
to
***The Compassionate Friends,
Chapter # 1732
Karen Brown, Treasurer
P. O. Box 292112
Kettering, Ohio 45429***
- Chapter financial reports are available at the
planning meetings.***
- If you'd like to designate your gift for a particular use, such as a
new library book or a newsletter mailing, or towards an event such as the
Candle Lighting, please let us know!***
- Did you know that your United Way contributions can be designated to
our local Miami Valley TCF Chapter #1732?***



As we approach the end of the year, please consider showing your support of The Compassionate Friends. Every donation we receive is greatly needed and equally appreciated and is used to further our vision, "That everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped."

We know that during this busy time, requests for your financial assistance are many, and there are only a few organizations, or maybe just one, that will benefit from your support. TCF needs your assistance to help continue to keep our beloved organization helping those who are coming behind us. Do it in the name of your child, sibling, grandchild, niece, nephew, friend or colleague ... or for all children gone too soon!

Please send your "Love Gifts" (tax deductible)
to

***The Compassionate Friends,
Chapter # 1732***

Karen Brown, Treasurer
P. O. Box 292112
Kettering, Ohio 45429

Chapter financial reports are available at the planning meetings.

If you'd like to designate your gift for a particular use, such as a new library book or a newsletter mailing, or towards an event such as the Candle Lighting, please let us know!

Did you know that your United Way contributions can be designated to our local Miami Valley TCF Chapter #1732?

Chapter Support Meetings
3rd Wednesdays, 7pm, Sugarcreek Church

Planning Team Meetings
(all are welcome!)
2nd Thursdays, 7pm, LaRosa's
2801 Wilmington Pike near Dorothy Lane

Other Nearby TCF Chapter
Miami County TCF, West Milton, OH
Contact Barb Lawrence 937-836-5939

Other Local Dayton Area Support

*Miami Valley Hospital Perinatal Loss Hot Line, Pregnancy Loss/I Infant Death 937-208-6363
 *Oak Tree Corner, Grief Support for Children 937-285-0199
 *Survivors of Suicide 937-226-0818
 www.suicidepreventioncenter.tk
 *Hospice of Dayton Grief Support 937-256-4490
 800-653-4490
 *Crossroads Hospice Grief Recovery 937-312-3170
 800-603-6673
 *HEALing Together, Franklin, OH Miscarriage, Infant & Toddler Loss, Parent/Grandparent Support 513-705-4056

Other Resources

*Alive Alone, Support for Death of Only Child or All Children
Kay Bevington, VanWert, OH: alivalon@bright.net
419-238-1091, www.alivealone.org
*American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

Websites to check out:

www.thegrieftoolbox.com
 Tom Zuba www.TomZuba.com
 Paula Stephens www.crazygoodgrief.com
 Paul S Boynton www.beginwithyes.com

The Compassionate Friends national magazine "We Need Not Walk Alone" is available free through an online subscription at www.compassionatefriends.org - click on "sign up for national publications". If you do not wish to subscribe, you can still view the magazine in the archive once the next issue has been published.

Hope for the Thanksgiving Holiday

By Patti Cox, www.hellogrief.org, originally published November, 2010



The holidays can be an especially difficult time of year for those who are grieving. When everyone around you seems happy and full of cheer, you may want to just skip the holidays all together! The sights, sounds and smells of the season can be overwhelming and the period of time leading up can actually be worse than the day itself.

Before Thanksgiving Day, think about what might be tough and try to plan ahead. For example, the “empty chair” — should you keep it in plain sight or move it from the table? Should you set a place in honor of your loved one? Should you light a candle? There’s no right or wrong answer! Do what seems best for you and your family.

Be realistic... Don’t over-schedule. You know yourself better than anyone. Set what seem like achievable goals and if you can, try to have more than one plan. This way, you can quickly move to another pre-thought-out plan if the previous one isn’t working or becomes too difficult.

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 ones, you can always go back to them or incorporate them again when you are ready. Just because you’ve always put on a huge feast doesn’t mean you have to do that this year. Have everyone bring a dish, have another family member host, 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 or toasting 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 and perhaps even help each of you heal a little bit.

A wonderful new tradition may be to cover the table with a plain table cloth, provide permanent markers for family members and guests to write what they’re thankful for on the cloth, or a favorite memory or message to your loved one. Children can have fun by drawing a picture of what they’re thankful for. Bring the table cloth out each holiday until it’s full and then start a new one!

Remember to give thanks for what you had and for what you still have... memories, love and feelings in our hearts can never be taken away unless we let go of them.

This season I am thankful for the
Hands
That hold mine
Hearts
That hurt with me
Ears
That always listen
Arms
Always ready to hug
Friends
Who always support
Family
Who always remember

www.thegrieftoolbox.com

I am Thankful

Today I am thankful for tears, though an ocean I have cried
They speak of our connection, reminding me that love has not died

Today I am thankful for the memories, they brighten the road of grief
They remind me of love shared and provide a small relief

Today I am thankful for love felt strongly in my soul
Love continues living forever keeping us together and whole

Today I am thankful for friends, those who didn’t walk away
They saw my broken heart and chose to sit and stay

Today I am thankful for time, for the moments that were too few
Through the tears that are shed today, I am thankful for you

~Tanya Lord

Christmas is the Hardest Holiday!

By Darcie Sims

(from our Miami Valley TCF Newsletter, December 1993)

Why is Christmas the hardest holiday? Is it because of all those traditions that mean so much but NOW lie broken and empty in my heart? Is it especially hard NOW... because every time I try to roll out the cookie dough, tears drop into little salt pools on the counter? Is Christmas so hard NOW because of all the tinsel and tissue? Because of all the crowds dashing madly into and out of stores, buying something wonderful for someone wonderful? Is Christmas hard NOW because I don't need to shop or bake or decorate anymore? Is Christmas so hard because I don't have someone wonderful anymore?

It's been a long time since I endured my first bereaved holiday season. But even NOW, my heart sometimes still echoes with emptiness as I roll out the cookie dough or hang his special ornament on our treasure tree. I think that hurt will always be with me, but now I know it only as a momentary ache — not like the first year when grief washed over me in waves, each new wave hurling me deeper and deeper into despair.

And it's not like the second year's hurt when I found myself both surprised and angry that IT hadn't gone away YET. I grew anxious about my sanity in the third year when my hands shook as I unwrapped the precious ornaments. When was I going to get better?!! When was the grief going to end?!! Was I doomed to suffer miserably at every holiday for the rest of my life?!!

The year the little satin balls wouldn't stay on the tree, I gave up. Even the Christmas tree died! As my daughter and I dragged the brittle (and shedding) mess out into the snow drift on Christmas morning, I knew we had reached the bottom. He had died, but WE were alive. Had our grief so permeated our house, our lives, that even a Christmas tree could not survive? His death was more than enough... had we lost love too?

That was the year we began to understand. And that was the year we decided to keep Christmas anyway. So what if our now completely bare tree was stuck in the snowdrift, already waiting for the garbagemen? So what if the cookies were still a bit too salty with tears?

So, in the middle of that Christmas day, we returned to that forlorn, frozen stick of a tree. And carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and suetballs (not quite the same as satin!). I'm sure we were a strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began to let the hurt out and make room for the healing to begin.

With each kernel strung, we found ourselves remembering. Some memories came with pain. Others began to grow within us — warming heart-places we thought had frozen long ago. By the time we were finished, we were exhausted. Memories take a lot of work! At last WE had a tree, although it was not the one we were expecting. But we had one, decorated with tears and memories, sadness and remembered laughter.

And now we've grown older (and maybe a little wiser) and we've learned that love isn't something that you toss out, bury, pack away or forget. Love isn't something that ends with death. Life can become good and whole and complete once again... not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within a hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

We saved a tiny twig from that frozen tree... to remind us of what we almost lost. That was the year we chose to let Christmas come back. Now we don't have to wait for joy to return. For now we know it lives within us — where Christmas is EVERY DAY.

Darcie Sims, who passed away last year, was a mother, wife, grandmother, educator, leader, rose colored glasses wearer, smile on a stick carrier and friend. She was an internationally recognized public speaker on the topic of Grief and Bereavement. Darcie taught thousands of people all over the world how to cope with their grief. She was awarded a lifetime achievement award, "The Voice of The Compassionate Friends" for her tireless efforts supporting families who cope with the death of a child.



Hope

Last month the first holiday catalog was deposited in my mailbox, "So early," I thought, with tired resignation and more than a little resentment. The catalog unmistakably heralded the approach of the season of good cheer, and somehow I would have to get through it. It meant weeks of feeling like a despondent bystander as the world cloaked itself with bright trappings of love, joy, and goodwill toward men.

I was a bereaved parent, and I would spend yet another holiday caught up in the anguish of remembering...

With the catalog indifferently grasped in my hand I sat down in the kitchen, my heart heavy. My thoughts drifted back to last year's holiday, and I again saw my husband's melancholy face as he plaintively asked if we could put up just a small tree. I agreed only because it seemed important to him. It would be the first time since the death of our daughter that holiday decorations would grace our home. I had felt no joy, no solace when I looked at that tiny, glowing tree, but it was a huge relief not to feel the overwhelming pain I expected.

It had been the fourth holiday season without Tracey.

I sat in the kitchen, slowly turning the catalog's pages. I was so lost in thought I scarcely saw what was in front of me. Last year the mailman had delivered greeting cards and best-wishes-for-the-season cards, as always. I had opened some with appreciation; others, the ones I knew would ignore our heartache, I tore open almost savagely. I had mailed my own greeting cards to many of these same people, and as had become my custom each card was sent in memory of our daughter. It was the only way to manage the pain of a task I once loved.

I found myself absently leafing through the last of the pages. Though absorbed in my reminisces I had carefully avoided looking at the many pages of toy offerings – I knew I would pay a painful emotional price if I lingered there. Children's clothing had to be desperately rushed by as well (though my well-trained eye caught the words "girl's size fourteen" and stopped despite all I could do...oh, Tracey). Housewares were fairly safe though uninteresting, and these last pages depicted a wide variety of novelty items. A pair of butterfly earrings captured my attention, turning my thoughts immediately to one of my Compassionate Friends – a truly loving friend – who adored butterflies.

"I could order these as a gift for her," I thought, and the idea startled me. With the notable exception of the painful purchase of a toy last year for my beloved daughter, I had not sought out a gift for anyone since her death. As the thought took root and began to flourish I felt my heart, so long frozen with grief, begin to warm.

Cautiously I pondered these emerging feelings. Was I ready for this? I was astonished to feel the ice encasing my heart begin to melt; emboldened by the warm feelings of caring spreading through me I looked more closely at the remaining pages of the catalog.

There! Another small item I was sure a second dear TCF friend would like. I found myself actually enjoying filling out the order form for both items.

Enjoying???? Did I really use that "Word"?

Had the pain and uncompromising grief, always intensified at holiday time, abated somewhat? Was I truly feeling lighter, more able to cope? Did this mean, could it mean, that I might one day step back into the world when it donned its festive mantle?

I knew as I sat there I would always deeply love and ferociously miss my child...and I knew that grief would forever be a part of my life. Understanding that, might it still be possible to allow a small amount of holiday spirit to trickle into my life this year?

I think just for today I'll hold onto that possibility, because today it seems I can imagine a less painful tomorrow. Today my heart contains a bit of warmth.

It feels good!

by Sally Migliaccio, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends, . Copyright 1998

"I came to a realization this year that I feel compelled to share here, for whomsoever may need it: Avoiding fear, sadness, or anger is not the same thing as being happy. I live my sadness every day, but I don't resent it anymore. Instead, I do it now so that the wonderful moments of joy I do find are not in order to forget, but to inhabit and enjoy for their own sake. It's not easy. In fact, I'd say it takes much more effort to consciously do than it does to just stay sad, but with my heart, I cannot tell you how worth it it is."

~Zelda Williams, Robin's daughter,
Instagram, September 5, 2015

Many of my friends have recently lost loved ones.
I walk beside them with a heavy heart.
Some of the best advice given to me when my Daniel died
was from an Episcopalian minister:
"Grieve boldly."
He gave me permission to mourn, question, wonder, even doubt.
Over the years I've passed along
the permission to others.
Grieve boldly.

~Alice Jay Wisler, Durham NC
Writer, Author, Carved By Heart on FB and Etsy

National TCF

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.,
P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(630) 990-0010

Toll-Free Number: 1-877-969-0010

TCF web site:

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

TCF Regional Coordinator for Ohio

Dean Turner

Email: Edean234@aol.com

or phone: 614-402-0004

Miami Valley TCF Chapter Leaders

Tom Gilhooly and Richard Miller

937-640-2621

<http://miamivalleytcf.com>

Tom and Dick honor their sons,
Ryan Gilhooly and Brad Miller,
through their service.

**Please See Inside for
Important Info!**

***Annual Candle Lighting
Ceremony***

***Sunday, December 13th,
6:59pm***

***Sugar Creek Presbyterian
Church***



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

*Miami Valley
Chapter
Newsletter*

TCF Chapter No. 1732
P.O. Box 292112
Kettering, OH 45429

The Compassionate Friends— A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child of any age, from any reason.

Nov-Dec 2015