

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS INC. International Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parents MIAMI COUNTY CHAPTER NO. 1870 SEPTEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER Vol. 26 No. 8

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Facebook page "The Compassionate Friends of Miami County Ohio Chapter 1870".

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## My Road to Healing – Now a Chance for YOU

By Cathy Duff, newsletter editor

I lost my son, Shaun, January 11, 2009. Thankfully, through The Compassionate Friends newsletter, I joined the local chapter. I depended on the monthly newsletters and the meetings to help me with the difficulty of this terrible grief journey that we all understand too well.

Barbara Lawrence was the newsletter editor and I told her just how much her newsletters meant to me. Well, I needed a way to remember Shaun and also help others in our chapter. So, when Barb asked for someone to help with the newsletter, I knew this was a wonderful way to do both. I published my first newsletter for our chapter January 2012. I loved reaching out to my Compassionate Friends family each month with articles and poems that I hoped would help each one to find comfort and ideas that they could use to move through their grief.

Each newsletter helped me heal a little more and has been a tribute to my Shaun. As I come into my sixth year of publishing the newsletter, I now need to offer up a chance for one of you to move into the position of newsletter editor in memory of your child and continue to help our Compassionate Friends family.

## September Meeting—September 28, 2017 7:00 P.M.

Nashville United Church of Christ 4540 W. St. Rt. 571, West Milton, Ohio

Meetings are held in the basement of the church. Please park in the lot on the west side of the building. Enter the building Through the door facing the west parking lot.

#### **Topic:** Secondary Losses

What are secondary losses? A discussion of other losses that we experience from the loss of our child.

#### September Refreshments:

Sarah Murphey (Memory of Molly) Carolyn Pearson (Memory of Sam)

#### Thank you for August Refreshments:

Kathy & Rod Barker (Memory of Nicole) Dawn Duff (Memory of Cassie & Tonia)

One of you needs this chance and our chapter and other families that recently have lost children need you, too.

#### My last newsletter will be December 2017-January 2018.

I will be happy to assist you to assume this special role in our chapter. Call me, 937-473-5533. Leave a message and I will get back to you promptly. I hope that you won't delay, because the members rely on the newsletter just as you and I have.

We need not walk alone!

Our children are remembered!

#### Lariat of Love

By John French

Grief is often compared to a journey. But, more accurately, it is a monumental climb from the pit of despair. It is an absolutely exhausting venture that drains you physically and weighs constantly on your mind. As I look back on the months following my son's death, I've come to realize that I haven't moved at all. Even though others may perceive me to be progressing, my movement is lateral at best.

As the span of time increases, it becomes more and more difficult to lift myself up. The days slip by, but the moments never escape me. The more I struggle to hold on, the more twisted and frayed my thoughts become. There is a fear attached to moving forward, as if continuing on diminishes the importance of where I have been. Exceeding that is a heightened awareness that there is no going back. It is in these moments that I feel completely stranded. I wander back and forth on contemplation's narrow shelf. On one hand, nothing exceeds the sheer agony of death. On the other, absence creates a tremendous depression. That is when it occurred to me that there is some stability in the place in which I stand. An outcropping of complacency between the height of anguish and the depths of sorrow. Space to linger; to contemplate, commiserate, and catch my breath. It allows me to sort through my feelings, discard unnecessary thoughts, and reflect on the little things that always make me smile. Every flicker from the past ignites a memory that produces a warm inner glow. And even though the future is unfolding, within this space it does not obstruct my view. I think there are instances when it's best to stay focused on where you are because the enormity of what lies ahead can be too overwhelming, and looking back will only bring you down. Considering how much we have already suffered, a break is certainly something we are due. Pausing doesn't restore my motivation to pursue life's summit, but it keeps me from going over the edge.

To avoid the appearance that I'm overlooking the point of my sadness, I offer a line that is purposely crafted to be uplifting. Not only to reach out to others, but so I might feel secure within the space I've found to rest:

The lariat of love is so immeasurable

That it easily extends from earth into heaven.

So unbreakable that it binds them together.

If we gather the strength to draw ourselves a little closer,

We will see those on the other side are pulling for us too.

John French owns and operates a small remodeling company in Highland, Michigan. He and his wife, Michelle, are the parents of two amazing children: Veronica, who is 21, and Brandon, who was 17 when he passed away in August, 2009 from an undiagnosed heart condition. They are members of the Lakes Area chapter of TCF, and are actively seeking ways to benefit their community, honor their son, and work through the tremendous amount of emptiness and grief that Brandon's death generates on a daily basis.

#### My Perspective On Coping With Suicide

Corky Davis' fiance died by suicide in 1988. At that lonely, startling moment, her life was forever altered. She writes: In the years since that tragic event, I'm still implementing and acquiring coping skills. I'd like to share some of what I've learned with the hope that something I write will be helpful to those who may be struggling with suicide's aftermath. Every emotion and feeling is normal = grief, anger, guilt, sadness, confusion= The decision to end your loved one's life was not yours. It was not your fault. You could not have prevented the death. You can't stay by someone's side twenty-four hours a day= every day = to prevent him from taking his life.

Most of my friends and family did not want to talk with me about Will's suicide, I have two theories about this:

- 1) They know this is a painful subject for me.
- 2) It reminds them of their own mortality. I was able to express my feelings and talk about it at survivor support groups and with my therapists. Post-traumatic stress experienced after the suicide must be dealt with. It is unhealthy to deny or rationalize it's effect on your life. If living one day at a time is too overwhelming, take one hour at a time. At times I focused on getting through five minute periods. Be patient. .. healing is a life long process.

The road to recovery is rough and steep, not smooth and steady. Expect to take steps forward and then slide backwards. Some days will be easier than others. I try to channel my emotional upset into constructive activities. My healthy outlets are aerobic dancing, riding a merry-go-round and going to the beach where I obtain spiritual rejuvenation of my soul. When I'm at the ocean, I meditate and communicate with my Higher Power.

I try to go somewhere other than my hometown on the weekend anniversary of Will's death. I don't like Sundays!

By accepting the fact that I could not bring Will back, and I would have to live with partial answers to my questions, I've finally made peace with the woulds, coulds, shoulds, whys and if onlys that constantly tormented my life. Suicides are not wrapped up in neat packages. They leave many loose ends, I believe one's only salvation is acceptance. Time can be an ally. For me, the more time that elapsed, the more the emotional intensity of the trauma diminished. I discovered that pain and loss are inevitable in life, but misery is an option. In working through the healing process after the tragedy of suicide, I have emerged as an infinitely more under



Our Chapter's Thanks to all who helped with the picnic and butterfly release. We are truly grateful to those who came early to help set up for our outdoor gathering in July and to those who stayed to help clean up when it was over.

Our Special Thanks to Bob & Fran Karl for donating the chicken for our meal, to Marilyn Miller for the soda, and to Randy and Debbie Turner for the bottled water. Kim Bundy ordered the butterflies for us and "babysat them" until the time for their release. Thank you-all so much! It was a truly wonderful event!

There were no Love Gifts this month.

#### Love Gifts should be made out to:

The Compassionate Friends and mailed to Barb Lawrence, 403l Wolcott Place, Englewood, OH 45322. Please send your donation by the 15th of the month prior to the month you want your child remembered in the newsletter.

(Perspective on Suicide: continued)

standing, empathetic and compassionate person. When I'm the most depressed, I offer my help to someone who needs it, or I do something nice for somebody. The kindness I give to another nourishes me and lifts my spirits. That's a gift that I really give to myself.

Joan Rivers once said, "You have to let grief break your heart so that the light can get through". There is light at the end of that long tunnel. Reaching that light is worth every painful step. You are understood and, in my heart, loved

Corky David, Sylmar, California Bereavement Magazine September/October, 1996, (adapted)

#### CHAPTER NEWS

**Upcoming Topics:** 

September - Secondary Losses Experiences

October - TBA

#### **HELP NEEDED**:

Our Chapter is important to so many on this hard and difficult journey of grief. Remember when you began the journey, how you couldn't think, function, or even breath at times. Much of the healing comes to us through the sharing and the reaching out to others that feel our same pain. We survived together through the support of our Compassionate Friends. We are not walking this path alone.

Our Chapter needs more members on our steering committee, helping with our special events, and continuing the newsletter and facebook functions, and sending cards to members during those difficult months of birthdays and angel-versaries.

Our Chapter Leader, Kim Bundy, has been doing a wonderful and dedicated job of keeping our Chapter strong and here for the new and old members alike for support in the pain that so many outside our Chapter think should just go away. Kim could use a Co-leader to share some of the responsibilities of this leadership position.

The Steering Committee is reaching out to all of you that know The Compassionate Friends Chapter is needed and ask you to join us and help our Chapter remain strong and keep growing to support other families in their loss of a child.

Call Kim at 573-9877 and let her know that you are willing to keep us strong together.

#### **NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?**

A listening ear is sometimes the best medicine.

Kim Bundy (suicide)	573-9877
Lori Clark (organ donation)	233-1924
Pam Fortener (cancer death)	254-1222
Sheryll Hedger (siblings)	997-5171
Lora Rudy (infant death)	339-0456
Cathy Duff (auto accident)	473-5533

#### Loss of an Adult Child

~By Alice Watts

I think every parent can remember the best time and the worst time in their life. It is no different now for me. The cold month of January is one of the happiest times in my husband Jay's, and my life. Our first baby girl was born, and we thought our life was complete. Five years later we had another baby girl, and both girls were beautiful and healthy. What more could a parent ask for?

Then, thirty-one years later, another cold day in January was the worst day of our lives. We got that terrible phone call (every parent's worst nightmare) telling us our daughter Debbie had been killed in a car accident. I was hysterical. I felt my life was over. I had no desire to live. My life was no longer complete. Our world now had been turned upside down. All I could think about was that my child had been killed. This was my baby girl, and I was her mother, even though she was a 31-year-old. Not only did I lose my child, I felt I had lost my best friend.

I realized when we lost Debbie I had never looked at her as an adult. She was our youngest and I still saw her as still our little girl. I was not prepared for, nor expecting her to live only 31 years. As parents, we expect our children to bury us; we do not expect to bury them. But the death of a child, regardless of age, is overwhelming, and the worst thing you will ever experience in your life. And, yes, we are grateful to have had our child to live to be an adult.

When people tell you, "I know how you feel," no, they do not. They don't have a clue ...

I had talked with Debbie earlier that day, telling her we had put our house up for sale. We were going to start building our new home on our lake property. She was so excited for us and told me how happy we were going to be living on the lake. She knew that had been our retirement plans for some time.

Debbie loved the water. She was great at waterskiing. She learned to ski when she was 12 years old. She got up on her first try, and she was so proud of herself. We now live on the same lake where she learned to ski. I miss her so much; not being here, not being able to watch her ski. All we have left are memories and dreams of what could have been. Everything else is gone.

She called me the night before she was killed and made plans to come over the next evening to see us. That never happened. I never got to see her again or make any more plans with her. Our lives and dreams had been shattered. We will never be the same. I thought about the song, "Gone Too Soon." My little girl was gone to soon. All we could do now was make plans for her funeral.

Her birthday was in October. As Jay and I were having coffee one morning and reminiscing about Debbie-we were talking about how old she would be now-I turned to him and said, "What do you think she would be like now?" We smiled at each other and he said, "The same ole Debbie," (happy-go-lucky). I often wonder how long it is before you stop missing your child. I have not reached that point in my life yet.

In my family there were six girls. Three of us have lost an adult child. First, one of my nephews was killed on his job and it happened to be on his 22nd birthday. He had been married only eight months. When we got the call about this accident, it broke my heart for my sister, and I thought, *I know how you feel*. Well, a year and a half later when we got that call about Debbie, I realized I didn't have any idea how my sister had felt! Three years after Debbie was killed, another one of my nephews had a heart attack at 42. I think the support we shared as sisters helped all of us with our grieving. We each had someone we could call and talk to who completely understood what we were feeling.

Through my experience and listening to other parents who have lost an adult child, I have learned that one of the hardest things for a parent to face after their child's death is seeing their child's previous spouse start dating again, or someone else driving their child's vehicle. I remember it just broke my sister's heart when her daughter-in-law remarried and let her new husband drive the pickup truck my sister had given her deceased son for his 16th birthday. At the time of Debbie's death she was divorced and didn't have any children, so we did not encounter a lot of other problems that most parents have when their adult child is married and has children.

Then there is the issue when children are involved. The possibility that the deceased child's spouse might keep the grandchild from seeing their grandparents is a painful potential. It's like taking the rest of their life away. These children are their memories and all they have left of their child.

Since serving as chapter leader for the last five years for The Compassionate Friends, (the greatest self-help organization in the world), I have learned a lot about parents' losing an adult child. Death of an adult child is often overlooked. Some people think losing an adult child might not be as painful as losing a younger child. I cannot see that there could be any difference, regardless of a child's age. You have lost a part of you.

Another difference in the loss of an adult child is that some people tend to forget that the parents are older and often do not receive the support they need.

In losing an adult child, you have also lost someone you thought would be there to take care of you later in life. And if this was your only child, you now face the additional identity challenges in that your parental responsibilities have ended.

Finally, in some cases the adult child could still be living with the parents due to physical, financial, or emotional reasons. Their son or daughter may have become the focus of their lives and there is now a huge void.

Everyone grieves differently. There is no wrong way, and no time limit, whether that child is stillborn, young, or an adult.

As you mourn the loss of your child, you treasure the meaning of that child's life .\*:.

Alice Watts and her husband, Jay, are retired and live on Santa Fe Lake in Melrose, Florida. They are parents to Debbie, her older sister, Mary, and a grandson, Mitch. Alice is the chapter leader for the Lake Area Keystone Heights Chapter of TCF and also holds the position of regional coordinator for Northeast Florida.

### Dear John

by Camille Anne Balla Lisle. Illinois

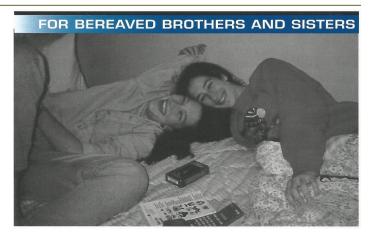
As I awakened this morning, I knew that you were near. I was once again surprised As your spirit hovered here.

> It's been awhile since I talked to you, Although I remember you in prayer. But at times like this, I know

This warm and loving feeling
Brings the tears again once more.
I keep thinking that's behind me ...
This won't happen anymore.

And so I'm reminded once again That of me you're still a part, And I speak to you beyond the veil In the language of the heart.

So thank you for the moment, And for gently dropping by. Oh, life it is a mystery -There is love beyond the sky!



#### Feed Me

#### By Kim Hammer

When my sister died in 1995, I didn't eat for three days. I was 20, Emily was 16. She was my best friend, my only sibling, my confidant, and comedic partner. She died in a stupid spring break car accident, and my entire world collapsed. Suddenly, everything was irrelevant. My parents were zombies going through the motions: Make the phone calls. Buy the coffin. Buy the plot. Pick out the clothes. Have the wake. Have the funeral. Cry and cry some more. There was no pleasure left, no happiness or rest. Sleep did not matter. Food did not exist.

Things I learned about death: People talk a lot about God to you. People don't know what to say and they say the wrong things. People bring you a lot of food. By the time my plane touched down my parents' house was full of food: spiral-cut ham, turkey, deviled eggs, baked ziti, pasta salad, bagels and rolls, boatloads of lunchmeat, mountains of potato salad, and enough casseroles to feed a football team. There were desserts: pound cake, angel food cake, apple pie, cherry pie, cheesecake, and doughnuts. We had food from the deli, food from the Crock-Pot, and food from the nearby Italian restaurant. We had more food than we could fit on counter surfaces or in the fridge. And even though I have about ten times the normal amount of relatives, we had more food than we could ever eat.

I wanted none of it.

I couldn't look at food. Every time I even thought of food, I was nauseated. I avoided the kitchen and dining room, mostly because of the food, but also because that's where people were hanging out. Instead I would slip away, down to the basement, past my sister's bedroom and out the back door. I would stand, with the wooden deck tall above me, smoking and casually eavesdropping on conversations. So

many people above, eating food and talking, about their children or jobs or the weather, while far below, I consumed cigarettes like potato chips- I couldn't smoke just one. I wondered how they could think or talk about anything other than Emily's death.

I was offered food a hundred times, What can I get you? What do you want? You need to eat something. There's pasta salad here. Can I fix you a sandwich? A million

## Our Children Lovingly Remembered

## September Birthdays

#### Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Douglas Ray Lavy - Robert E. & Sharon Lavy
Heather Denise Bailey - Joe & Wanda Bailey
Samuel Pearson - Randi & Carolyn Pearson
Kathryn Trushaw - Tim & Julia Trushaw
Mark Kurtis O'Dell - Tim & Sandy O'Dell
Mark Nordquist - Peggy & Tom Nordquist
Matthew "Matt" Schaaf - Marlene Schaaf
Michael Guerra - Terry Guerra
Patrick O'Neill - Betsy O'Neill
Silas Carver - Mary Anne Evans
Terry A. Baker, Jr. - Candy Ullery
Molly Murphy - Kerry & Sarah Murphy

## September Angel-versaries

#### Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Cameron Forror - Chad & Tonya Forror
Lindsay Rose Donadio - Rick & Janell Claudy
Matthew Cameron Forror - Ken & Louise Forror
Michael Bundy - Tony & Vesta Bundy
Michael Daniel Mitchell - James & Marilyn Mitchell
Michael James McGuffey - Kathy McGuffey
Chad Fisherback - Tammy Sackett

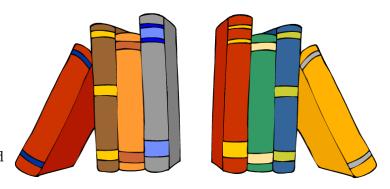


## **BOOK REVIEW** by Jackie Glawe (Jordan's mom)

"Sometimes I Cry in the Shower:A Grieving Father's Journey to Wholeness and Healing"

By R.Glenn Kelly

Men grieve and hurt as deeply as a woman, yet men and women are programmed through both Nature and Nurture to do so in a different manner.



"As a grieving father, R. Glenn Kelly exposes the inner thoughts of a man who has lost the most precious of gifts; his child. Written with the powerful and honest emotion that only someone who has walked in his shoes can truly understand, R. Glenn provides encouragement, insight, and hope to men who are "in the club no one wants to belong to." He allows us to walk with him on his path from hidden despair to emerging hope as he discovers his way towards living a life that is fulfilling and honoring to the legacy left behind by his son. Although intended for grieving fathers, Sometimes I Cry in the Shower benefits anyone who has lost a loved one, or loves someone who has. With compassion, humor, and sincerity, Mr. Kelly shows us that love never dies and hope is truly eternal."

This book is available to check out from our Chapters library.

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plates were put in front of me. They were placed on coffee tables, fireplace mantels, bars, and bedroom floors, begging to be eaten.

But even cheesecake and garlic bread had no appeal. Cigarettes became my only form of nutrition. Cigarettes and a bit of vodka. I spent the first nights after her death on the phone in my childhood bedroom, smoking and talking to the few friends I could stand, until it was late and they needed sleep. Then I walked around the house, absorbing the quiet and feeling the ghosts of all the people and voices there just hours before. At times I could hear my parents talking in their room, deep in the middle of the night, and I would escape outside to the sound of crickets and my own breath dragging in and out. I watched TV; I fell asleep for twenty minutes here and there. I avoided the kitchen.

By day four I had lost fifteen pounds and was working on a nice stomach ulcer. I looked gaunt and frail, but somehow this made perfect sense to me. How else should I look after my little sister died? Funny, though, this was the first day that anyone noticed I hadn't been eating, at all. My parents were locked deep in their own grief, unaware of much else. My aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends continued to fill the house like some morbid afterparty, some cleaning up, but mostly just milling about, looking for something to do. So when I decided to come up from the basement and sit in the living room, my skeletal frame was clearly something new to focus on. Everyone immediately started trying to guilt me into eating. Come on, you've got to eat something; your parents are worried sick. You don't want to give your folks something else to worry about, do you? Emily wouldn't want you to act this way; have a little something to eat. Your sister would want you to eat.

This talk made me furious. I didn't want to be noticed or stared at or be the topic of conversation. I just wanted to fade into the wallpaper with my cigarettes and bad midnight TV.

All I could think about was Emily. Gone. Not coming back. Emily would not be at the Thanksgiving table or opening gifts at Christmas. Emily would no longer sit across the table drinking milk and making embellished swallow- noises to make me laugh. All alone I would shake my head violently in disbelief. Her death was real all around me, but in my mind it felt slippery, out of my grasp and impossible-like trying to grip rainwater. I wouldn't imagine moving forward without her. I suspect this was my problem with food. Food was meant to nourish my body and give me energy to live another day, something I doubted I wanted to do.

I was staring into space when Aunt Vikki sat down on the other side of the coffee table. She rested her arms on the table, elbows out; fingers laced together, and stared me straight in the eye.

"What do you want to eat?" she asked, serious voice, not sing-song-y sweet Southern. "Nothing, I'm not hungry," I repeated. She held fast my gaze, lowered her voice and leaned in like someone about to share a delicious secret.

"I will go and get you whatever you want," she said.

"Anything in the world you want to eat," she practically whispered. "Just tell me what it is and I will go and get it."

I looked at her and realized she was serious. I could send this woman up to New York to get me a hot dog from Papaya King, or off to Rome for authentic gelato and she would do it. I was touched. I put my head down and scrambled for an answer.

"Fried chicken," I said. "I could eat some fried chicken from Bojangles." Something about the spicy chicken and biscuits gave me slight comfort.

Vikki smiled and stood up, "I'll be right back," she promised.

Some time later she returned with the food and placed it on the coffee table in front of me. There was no amazing presentation, not even a plate. Just a yellow and red take-out box of chicken and a paper cup, dewy with condensation. No one noticed food sitting in front of me. It was clandestine, like she had slipped me a drink ... 01' more cigarettes.

"Thanks," I mumbled as I stared at the box. 1 opened it, instantly inhaling grease and cayenne pepper. The box was full of crispy chicken and fluffy biscuits. My stomach turned over and growled simultaneously. I looked up pleadingly at Vikki. How do I eat?

"I got you iced tea too," she offered, so sweetly, so generously.

I gingerly plucked a chicken wing from the box, brought it to my lips, and took a small bite. It tasted wonderful and awful at the same time-I could chew it, but swallowing would take a miracle amount of effort. I look up at Vikki again.

"Good job," she said, smiled slightly, and walked away.

I took a couple more bites of the chicken wing, grabbed half a biscuit and headed back down to the basement, cigarettes in hand.

The next day I managed to eat half a sandwich, the day after that, two slices of pizza. Food got even easier when I left my parents' house and went back to New York. I didn't see Emily everywhere-didn't have my parents constantly asking me to talk about it. My stomach began to recover. 1 smoked a little less and managed to eat three meals a day, . .most of the time, Garlic bagels, tacos, sometimes only popcorn for dinner, but at least it was something, I don't remember exactly when my love of food returned. Probably years later when I was pregnant-something about growing a baby inside me-I wanted to nurture that baby, feed that baby so it could grow and live happily. I still sit at the dinner table sometimes and think of Emily. And in my mind, there's an empty spot set for her. But it does help to look around and see the other chairs so full of life. Full of life and waiting for me to feed them, .:.

Since Emily's death in April 1995, Kim Hammer has earned a psychology degree from UNC-Chapel Hill, presented workshops, and served regularly on panels at TCF National Conferences. She also co-founded a surviving sibling group in her hometown. Kim lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with her husband. son, and daughter.





















RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

#### What is The Compassionate Friends?

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization which offers support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Only a person who has experienced the trauma of losing a child can fully understand the pain and suffering involved.

We gather to listen) to share) and to support each other in the resolution of our grief. <u>We need not walk alone</u>, we are The Compassionate Friends.

**MISSION STATEMENT** ... The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

If you are receiving our newsletter for the 1st time, it is because someone told us that you might find it helpful. To find out more about The Compassionate Friends, please call our Chapter Leader, Kim Bundy (937) 573-9877. We cordially invite you to our monthly meetings held on the fourth Thursday of each month. Nothing is ever expected of you. You don't have to speak a single word. Parents who do attend, find comfort, support, friendship and understanding from others who have also lost a child. You do not have to come alone - bring a family member or friend with you.

You need not walk alone!