



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Door County Chapter

P.O. Box 193, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
1-800-589-2669 (Voice Mail) www.doorcountytcf.org

Volume 14, Issue 5

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER 2009

TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting is an annual event where persons around the globe, united in the loss of a child, light candles for one hour the second Sunday in December.

Candles are first lit in New Zealand at 7pm, local time. As candles burn down in one time zone, they are then lit in the next. This creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as the observance continues around the world.

With the theme "...that their light may always shine", the event is now in its 13th year, with each observance larger than the last.



WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM December 13, 2009

Please Join Us for a Time of Fellowship and Remembrance

6:30pm - Remembrance Program
7:00pm - Worldwide Candle Lighting

United Methodist Church
836 Michigan Street, Sturgeon Bay

Extended Family Members are Welcome
Candles will be provided.

Holiday Ornaments from our chapter will be available for purchase.

RSVP TO CAROL @743-3476

If you would like us to light a candle in memory of your child, grandchild, or sibling, but are unable to attend, please fill out the form below and return to:

The Compassionate Friends
PO Box 193
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

"so that their light may always shine"

Please light a candle in memory of _____

(Son of, Daughter of) _____

Date of Birth _____

Date of Death _____

Love Donation Enclosed (Optional) \$ _____

The Compassionate Friends is a not-for-profit self-help organization composed of bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We offer friendship and understanding to those what have experienced the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. The purpose of this support group is to assist each other in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support our efforts to achieve physical and emotional health

DOOR COUNTY CHAPTER LEADER: DAWN SANDUSKY-854-9801

TREASURER: BOB MOELLENBERNDT - 743-3476

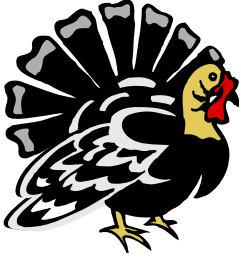
COLUMNIST AND LIBRARIAN: KAREN DUTIL -837-7133

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: SANDY GREENWOOD -746-9313

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PUBLICITY COORDINATOR: CAROL MOELLENBERNDT - 743-3476

COORDINATORS FOR THE NEWLY BEREAVED: KAREN DUTIL AND LESLIE CROSS

FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR: GARY KIRACOFÉ



Giving Thanks

I can not hold your hands today,
I can not see your smile.
I can not hear your voices now,
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
From *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*



The Eighth Year of Chanukah

The first year of Chanukah was extremely difficult. Linda died on February 1st, so by the time Chanukah arrived, the shock and numbness had disappeared. We could no longer pretend that she was on a business trip or visiting friends. We knew she was not coming back.

Chanukah had been an important part of our family life. In addition to the lighting of the candles, we had created our own traditions and rituals. Chanukah is mostly a children's holiday, but my family continued these observances even when my daughters became adults. The tears streamed down my face as I lit the ritual candles that first year. We decided to discontinue the parties, singing, special foods, and all of our other observances. They were too painful.

We've become snowbirds and spend Chanukah in Florida. I still light the candles - usually by myself - but otherwise keep the holiday very low key and skip the rest of the festivities. Since I don't have young children or grandchildren to think about, this doesn't create any problems. There's always a pang, but it has softened over the years. As a veteran bereaved parent, I am resigned to the fact that I will never celebrate with my entire family again.

Therefore, I didn't expect the eighth year of Chanukah to be unusual. I thought I had come to terms with the holiday. So why was the eighth year so difficult? Was it the fact that the eighth anniversary was approaching? Was it the symbolism of eight nights of candles and eight years? Or was it just a coincidence or the blind-siding that sometimes occurs without warning to those who have grieved a long time? I probably will never know the answer and have decided that, as with many other things, it's just the way grief is. I'm just glad that, after eight years, the grief and pain usually are softer than they were in the early years.

Stephanie Hesse, TCF Rockland County, NY
North Palm Beach, FL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the annual Candle Lighting Service on December 13, 2009, we are again having a DVD presentation of our children. If you wish to have your child included in this presentation, please submit a photo with birth and anniversary dates to Dawn Sandusky at P.O. Box 268, Ephraim, WI 54211, or email digital photo and dates to scrimshaw@charter.net. If your child was included in last year's presentation and you do not want like them included again this year, please notify Dawn Sandusky at the above address. For further information, call Dawn at 920-854-9801.

Upcoming meetings of Door County TCF:

January 8th - Ask It Basket

February 12th - Video - "Remember Me"

March 12th - Guest Speaker



As we go through this Holiday Season, may we always remember the JOY our children have given us!

Twelve Ways to Face the Twelve Days of Christmas and Other Festive Occasions



By Paul Alexander

1. **Set Boundaries on Your Own and Other's Expectations.**

Planning for the holidays and deciding on practical matters may be overwhelming. Set priorities and limits on what you do and don't do. If it's too much, to cook or decorate, ask others to help or delegate chores including shopping and decorating.

2. **Change a Tradition if Just for this Year.**

Have dinner somewhere else, make it a buffet instead of a sit down. Go to a different place of worship. Change the location of the tree or other holiday decorations or leave them out completely. Go with the flow of your heart.

3. **Be Flexible...Nothing is Written in Stone.**

The wonderful thing about a mind is that you can always change it. Grief can cause unpredictable mood swings. If you make a plan always communicate your need for an open door policy. This is not the time to worry about what others think of you.

4. **Have a Family Meeting or Phone Conference.**

Before making decisions it might be helpful to share your feelings, needs and suggestions. One way to do this is to just give everyone a time to speak without interruption and without judgment. Listen to each other and try to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

5. **Listen to the Children.**

If there are children in the family circle listen to their ideas and suggestions. Include them in the problem solving and in the planning. Out of the mouths of babes often come wisdom that can be useful for planning the day as well as acknowledging their grief feelings and importance to the family.

6. **Remember That Gifts Come in Many Shapes and Sizes...and They're not Always Wrapped.**

What is the gift your loved one gave you? If you give gifts, share something that in some way connects the gift to your loved one, their hobby or favorite color. If shopping malls are too stressful, use catalogues, gift certificates or even special items that belonged to your loved one.

(continued on page 4)

Twelve Ways to Face...

(from page 3)

7. Take Time for Rest and Create a Day of Self-Care.

The stress of grief and the holiday madness can create undue anxiety and tension. Take time for relaxation, whether it be a massage, exercise, or a day in the country. Do something for yourself!

8. Honor Your Emotional Life.

To thine own self be true. Take time to talk about your feelings and thoughts with a friend or loved one. Sometimes attempting to be strong is just not necessary. Make time for rituals and healing moments that permit access to your heart and spirit.

9. Don't be Afraid to Mention Your Loved One and Share Memories.

Honor the life of your loved one by saying their name, displaying photo albums, talking about favorite memories, lighting a candle in their honor. Letting others know your comfort in talking about your loved one will help them open up as well.

10. Do Something Totally Different.

If you need to get away to a new location or completely delete the holiday experience, do so and let go of the guilt. Although we know we cannot run away from the grief, sometimes we need a space and place far removed from the everyday reminders. If that is so, give yourself permission and go.

11. Connect to the Spiritual.

Some find it walking on the beach, some in church, some in meditation, music and prayer. Do whatever it is for you that somehow brings you to the quiet place within.

12. Make Some Kind of Plan.

Remembering that anything can be changed at the last minute, have some tentative plan for some time in the day. Be gentle with yourself. This will not be a perfect day...Listen to your heart and to an inner wisdom.



FROM KAREN:



A Holiday Wish

During my seventy-two years my holiday experiences have varied from wretched to glorious, from the sublime to the ridiculous. In spite of my fragility in 1984, I ventured to the mall two months after my son, David's, death in part because it was the first Christmas of my oldest grandchild. It was overwhelming, a trip through the looking glass in which the stores were filled with laughing teenagers who reminded me of my loss. Three years later I celebrated my fiftieth birthday on Thanksgiving, without my husband who had died three months before. Six weeks after the death of my daughter, Susan, we celebrated a small unadorned Christmas cobbled together for my grandson Max.

When I review my memorable holidays, I also think of the wonder of 1958 when I learned I was pregnant with our oldest and Christmas Day 1960 when we welcomed our oldest son. I remember baking cookies with my then three, five and seven year olds and another year in which my Cub Scout den baked bread—my kitchen was never the same after that. Christmas for the past fifteen years has meant traveling, either flying or driving to Maryland or Chicago, and while I am always welcome, I long to spend a holiday at home.

Even in the depth of my grief, winter and snow and the warmth of a fireplace and candles, and sending cards remained the threads that held the fabric of my life together. As we face another holiday season without those who are among our dearest people, let us remember them and all the joy and sorrow they brought to our lives.

May their light still shine in your hearts--

One Small Star by John McDermott
(from Karen Dutil)

*When I need to feel you near me
I stand in this quiet place
Where the silver light of countless stars
Falling on my face
Though they all shine so brightly
Somehow it comforts me to know
That some that burn the brightest
Died an eternity ago*

*I'm learning how to live without you
And I never thought I could
And even how to smile again
I never thought I would
And I cherish your heart's memories
Cause they bring you back to life
Some caress me gently
And some cut me like a knife*

*Can your soul be out there somewhere
Beyond the infinity of time
I guess you've found some answers now
I'll have to wait for mine
When my light joins with yours one day
We'll shine through time and space
And one day fall on a distant age
Upon some stranger's face*

*But your light still shines
It's one small star to guide me
And it helps me to hold back the dark
Your light's still shining in my heart
Your light's still shining in my heart*



'Tis the Season

It is trying to be
A warm and loving time,
With kindness and light,
And a feeling hopeful renewal.

Find what blessings you can.
Help your heart to remember
That the children who died
Are about us, everywhere,
Trying to make this,
Even for you,
A warm and loving time.

~Sascha



For Siblings - A Holiday To do List:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.
6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go--the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!
7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
8. Be together with your family and cry (and LAUGH -- it's okay to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.
10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

~Amy Baker Ferry
TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter

**THE DOOR COUNTY CHAPTER THE
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS PRESENTS . . .**

"In Loving Memory" Holiday Ornament

The "In Loving Memory" holiday ornament can be a touching gift for yourself, friends, or family members. Gary Kiracofe - artist, scrimshander, and bereaved parent - designed and created this ornament in memory of his youngest daughter, Victoria.

The ornament is a beautiful ivory color with a brass back and red ribbon. Each ornament comes boxed with an informational sticker inside and costs \$19 each. The ornament may be engraved locally at Draeb Jewelers who can add your child's name, or the name of another loved one.

These ornaments will be available at our meetings, including the Holiday Candle Lighting on December 13th, or you can purchase these ornaments at the following retail establishment:

Scrimshanders....Ephraim

*"Loving Memories of You Have Given
Me the Strength to Set You Free"*



If you need your order shipped, please call 1-800-504-5205.

*All profits benefit the Door
County Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends.*



New customized Compassionate Friends awareness wristbands have the phrase "Forever in My Heart" framed by two butterflies. The wristbands are high quality long lasting silicone and are swirled blue and white. Wristbands come individually packaged with a card explaining the mission of The Compassionate Friends and includes contact information. These are available from our chapter for \$2.00 each at our meetings, or call and leave a message at 1-800-589-2669.

This is a letter you can reproduce to send to family and friends if they are looking for something to do in memory of your child for the holidays



November 2009

Dear

The holidays can be very difficult for those of us whose loss keeps us from connecting with the festivities of the season. Our holidays have changed forever. Our beloved person is no longer there, leaving a hole in our hearts and lives, an empty chair at the holiday table, and a Christmas stocking filled only with memories.

An organization, The Compassionate Friends, has helped us to begin to heal by sharing our memories, our sorrows and our joys with one another. Your past generosity has helped us to provide community education on grief, to establish a support group for children, to sponsor workshops for families in grief, and to support a new program for families who grieve pregnancy and infant loss.

We hope that during the holiday season you will think of us and remember our children and their legacy of memories and love. Your donation to Compassionate Friends will help bereaved families in Door County and across the nation.

On Sunday, December 13, please light a candle at 7PM and let it burn until 8. Millions of candles will be lighted around the world at 7PM local time to honor our children's lives reminding us that their light will always shine in our hearts.

I wish to make a (tax deductible) donation to The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____

Please send acknowledgement to _____
(name)

(address)

name of sender

Please make checks payable to: TCF
Send to:
TCF
P.O. Box 193
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

