



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## Door County Chapter



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

Volume 16, Issue 5

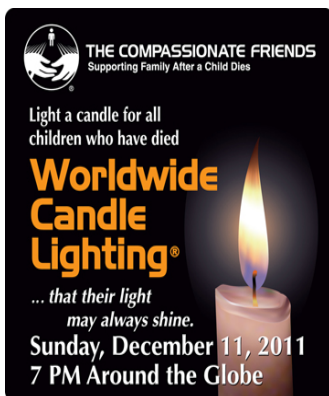
HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER 2011

### 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 14<sup>th</sup> year, with each observance larger than the last.



### WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM December 11, 2011

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 who 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

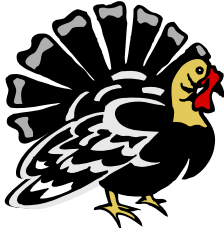
COLUMNIST AND LIBRARIAN: KAREN DUTIL -837-7133

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

COORDINATORS FOR THE NEWLY BEREAVED: KAREN DUTIL AND LESLIE CROSS

FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR: GARY KIRACOFÉ



## How Can We Celebrate Thanksgiving?

One family, trying to avoid Thanksgiving which was the deceased child's birthday as well, decided that family gatherings were no longer for them. They would travel or simply ignore the festivities. One day the mother came upon her ten year old daughter crying and asked what was wrong. She was sobbing, reported the mother, "All the children in school had told of their plans and made table decorations for the holiday and Lynn felt completely removed from her classmates. She cried that she was not only deprived of her brother who had died, but she couldn't even have Thanksgiving dinner and a turkey!" I listened and held her in my arms and cried. They also mattered. That night I talked to my husband and we decided that no matter how bleak and empty it would be, we would have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

The family sat around the table, very quietly at first. The father said grace and thanked the Lord for a bountiful meal. When he was through, their ten year old said she had something to add. "I want to thank Mommy and Daddy for making this very special dinner for our family. And most of all I want to thank you God for having let us have my brother Eric for six years."

The mother, who will never forget what her daughter said, told me there was not a dry eye at the table for a few minutes. But gradually, as the meal progressed, they made an effort to discuss why the holiday was celebrated. From there, the parents told of amusing experiences at Thanksgiving dinners in their younger years. The mother said she planned to tell the stories to lighten the atmosphere just as carefully as she planned the menu. By the time the meal was over, the parents discovered what had built up in their minds as un-survivable had become just another turning point.

There may be many such turning points as you work your way forward. You have already survived what you were certain you could not live through—the death of your child. Turning points, plateaus, are merely steps in coping and nothing more. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy/sad occasion, you will gain strength from having passed beyond another painful event.

Harriet Schiff, The Bereaved Parent

## FROM KAREN:



*The first holidays after the death of my children were hard, impossible, painful, empty, cheerless... Somehow it seemed "better" that the first winter holidays were experienced during my numb period. Feelings of detachment from the world emphasized what I saw as the difference between me and everyone else. And though it is true that no one else had experienced my individual loss, there were multitudes across the world who reached out to say, "We know, we understand, we care."*

*If you are newly bereaved, know that many of us once walked in your shoes. We are here to listen and to remind you that love never dies. Share the memories of your children with us for we are not intimidated by your pain. We will light candles and remember them as the old year winds down. We will share our stories of survival as we stumbled toward an unknown future.*

*One of my "forever" friends lost her husband last month. She speaks of how her heroes inspire her to keep going. Her heroes are those of us whose children have died. Whether you know it or not, you, too, are a hero. Carrying on in spite of pain and loss takes courage.*

*As we face the challenges of tomorrow let us support one another knowing that we face the future burdened by sorrow, supported by love, in the company of heroes.*



*friends  
despair  
the sun's desertion  
not comforted  
by the pale moon  
hanging on night's icicle  
holiday decorations mandate  
cheer while music  
repeats the assault on fragile memories  
lonely hungry ones have no energy  
to search for the meaning  
lost inside  
i huddle safely wrapped in winter's embrace  
sated by snowflakes on my tongue  
and the dark rage of the lake  
pen in hand  
reporting  
the gifts  
of grief*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the annual TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting on December 11, 2011, 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

Elizabeth Kiracofe  
5705 Lake Edge Road  
McFarland, WI 53558

or email digital photo and dates to [Elizabeth@kiracofedesigns.com](mailto:Elizabeth@kiracofedesigns.com) by **NOVEMBER 30**. If your child was included in last year's presentation and you wish to submit a different photo, please get that to Elizabeth also by November 30. If your child was included in last year's presentation and you do not want them included again this year, please notify Elizabeth Kiracofe at the above address.

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Upcoming meetings of Door County TCF:

January 12 - Holiday Debriefing  
February 9 - Taking Care of Ourselves  
When We Are Grieving



## Children, Grief, You and the Holidays



A young mother whose son was killed in a fire started by outdoor Christmas lights expressed her fear of the upcoming first Christmas following his death. She did not have the energy to carry on as usual, and she was getting messages from the family that they expected her to do just that. Through grief support, she was able to adapt her holidays to fit her and her surviving child's needs. She needed permission to change the routine because she felt the old routine would be too painful. She chose to go away for the holidays and reported a surprising success of getting through them. She also gained hope that one day she might be able to enjoy the holidays again because she felt empowered to be in control of how she celebrated, if she celebrated. Following the death of a loved one, there are many firsts. One of the most difficult firsts can be the holidays. The following are some thoughts on how to help your family cope through the holiday season.

### Caring For Grieving Children

1. Prepare children for changes in routine. It is perfectly acceptable to make changes in holiday routines, perhaps even preferable, but remember to prepare children well in advance for changes to holiday traditions.
2. Include children and teens in planning. A family meeting to decide what changes will be appropriate for celebrating the holidays can alleviate a child's feeling of being left out.
3. If a child appears to need extra reassurance during the holidays, remember they may have feelings of sadness, guilt, etc. that they are struggling with.
4. Children may "regress" (find comfort in earlier behaviors) during the stress of the holidays.
5. Children need opportunities to express their feelings and fears. Plan a ritual for remembering your loved one around the holiday season.
6. Plan some extra time to spend one to one with your children during the holidays. Don't let the world dictate your schedule.

### Caring For Yourself

1. You are the best one to know what you need for caring for yourself. Be kinder to yourself than you have ever been during the holiday season.
2. There is no right or wrong way to grieve OR to spend the holidays. Choose activities or solitude based on your needs.
3. Watch out for over commitment during the holidays. Say "no."
4. Treat yourself.
5. Give yourself credit for accomplishing the "firsts" as they come along.
6. Be with people you want to spend time with. Say "no" to those you feel would need more energy than you have to give.

(continued on page 4)

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### Remember Your Loved One

1. Buy a gift for your loved one. Give it to someone who needs it. You will receive twice the pleasure. (This may be too difficult for someone whose loss is recent.)
2. Donate money to a special cause in your loved one's name or volunteer your time and/or talents.
3. Contribute a poinsettia to your church sanctuary (or to a local nursing home or school) in your loved one's name.
4. Talk about the deceased with those you are comfortable sharing. Plan a time for remembering. Set a place for them at the table, hang a stocking, retell stories of them.

### Anniversary Dates

1. An anniversary of the death of a loved one can cause anxiety and stress, which are normal grief reactions.
2. Give yourself permission to feel your own feelings about the day and plan how you want to spend your time.
3. Remember that anticipation is sometimes worse than going through the actual day. Don't allow others to dictate the extent to which you observe the day.

[http://www.christianworks.org/griefworks/articles/grief\\_holidays.shtml](http://www.christianworks.org/griefworks/articles/grief_holidays.shtml)



### First Christmas

It can't possibly be Christmas  
without her being here.  
Yet the world is singing round me,  
joyful tidings and good cheer.  
Though I try to put on armor  
and brave the sights and sounds,  
a few moments worth of shopping,  
and the tears are spilling down.  
I pray for strength to do it,  
find a path through holidays,  
look for shortcuts, good ideas,  
some directions through the maze.  
Then I find at last the answer:  
I'll include her symbolically.  
And the giving becomes perfect;  
her love's flowing down, through me.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
From *Stars in the Deepest Night –  
After the Death of a Child*



### The Shining Light of Chanukah

Chanukah is a happy time. It is one of the many Jewish holidays that are joyous occasions. It is a time for melodious songs, potato latkes, spinning a dreidel, sharing happy times with family and friends and, of course, gift giving.

It is also a time to tell our children the story of Chanukah. The story tells of the Maccabees' victorious fight against the Syrians for the freedom of their people. They defended their temple and won the battle even though the odds were against them. The story then goes on to tell about the miracle of the oil. There was only enough oil to burn for one day to light the Temple, but, miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days. To celebrate this miracle, we light the Menorah. Chanukah lasts for eight days and the Menorah is lit the first night with one candle and each evening until all eight candles are lit.

Chanukah candles come in bright colors - in blues, reds, greens and yellows. Next to opening his gifts, my son, Adam, loved to pick out the different colors for the Menorah each evening. This warm glow of the candles' bright lights seemed to illuminate the smile on Adam's sweet face as he proudly lit the candles and recited the prayer.

Now, I wonder about the miracle of the oil lasting eight days. I wonder why Adam couldn't have the miracle of his cancer being cured. I wonder why my son, who died shortly before his 7th birthday, could not have a miracle of his own. I wonder why Adam couldn't have defeated the odds as the Maccabees had done. Adam was a brave and courageous boy—a true warrior. And, as I often told him, he was the bravest soldier I shall ever know.

Yet, in my heart, I know Adam truly was a miracle. I shall always be grateful for the pleasure and privilege of being Adam's mom. His spirit, his sense of humor, his courage, and the everlasting effect his brief life had on so many are all tributes to this wonderful little boy. The miracle of his being here on earth and the love and memories he left behind are what I shall always cherish. Adam will always be my shining light of Chanukah.

Bonnie Spiegler, TCF, Lower Bucks



### 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, from  
The Poems of Sascha Wagner*



### Pathway of Hope

By Iris Morganstern  
New York, New York

*The joy that surrounds the holidays  
May be difficult to face,  
But with courage and warm recollections  
You will endure.  
Remember . . .  
Precious memories  
Are like pebbles  
Along the Pathway of Hope.  
Embrace them,  
They will show you the way.*

From **Bereavement Magazine Holiday Issue**,  
1.888.604.4673, [www.BereavementResources.com](http://www.BereavementResources.com)

### Lights

By Dorothy Hanley



The holidays are a time of many lights, yet the holidays may also be the darkest days for people who are grieving. Although it may seem that everyone else is happy and light-hearted during the holiday season, we know that many people are not only grieving the death of someone they love, but many other kinds of losses as well, including the loss of hope.

I am reminded of the October fogs here in the Seattle area. The sun comes out in the afternoon and things look wonderful until the fog returns at night. We always hope that the next day will repeat the procedure - happy for whatever brief sunlight we can see. It is somewhat like the respite from grieving we begin to experience when the pain lifts for a few minutes. The grief becomes more bearable when we know that in exchange for hours of hurt, there can be moments of peace and hope.

We hope that, while the holidays may be painful for you, they will also bring the realization that you have the opportunity to exercise choices and make decisions about how you will spend this time. This may be the best gift of all - opportunity to begin to take charge and direct the course your life will take, if only by one small step at a time.

The candles can be reminders that as time passes, what began as a view of a frighteningly dark future, may finally be seen in the light of your own personal growth toward adjustment to the death of your loved one. Just as the rain passes and a single ray of sunlight at first illuminates only a tiny spot in the dark landscape, light will return to your life, bit by bit.

Take heart and try not to be too afraid of the dark. Look for the candles along the way to give you hope for a brighter new year.

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issue of **Bereavement Magazine**,  
1.888.6044673, [www.BeravementResources.com](http://www.BeravementResources.com)

**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 11<sup>th</sup>, 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 2011

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 11, 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.*

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

Please send acknowledgement to \_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

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( address)

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name of sender

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

