

Huntsville Area Chapter Receives Charter

Steering Committee conducts initial local meetings

Ray Woodson
Newsletter Editor

The Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends received their charter on April 2nd. The steering committee, in anticipation of the imminent charter, had already prepared for their initial meeting on April 10th. The meeting enjoyed an attendance of 16, some of whom were present at their first Compassionate Friends meeting. A video provided by TCF national was shown and the group broke into to discussion and sharing groups.

The second meeting was held on May 8th with a special emphasis on Mother's Day. A history of Mother's Day was presented by the Larners. A tradition was established with the lighting of a candle to remember our children as well as those of our community and country.

By the time this inaugural newsletter goes to press, the chapter will have held our June and July meetings.

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Personal Contacts

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to hear from you. If you can't reach a particular person, please call another and make contact.

We Need Not Walk Alone

Illness..... Sharon & Jerry Campbell
(256) 882-0642
illness@tcfhuntsville.org

Accident Pam Riddle
(256) 534-1873
accident@tcfhuntsville.org

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb Larnerd
(256) 883-0997
substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org

Suicide Ray Woodson
(256) 650-0381
suicide@tcfhuntsville.org

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>
Email tcf@tcfhuntsville.org

Additional Huntsville Area Resources:

Hospice HOPE
(256) 650-1212



TCF National Office
(877) 969-0010

Thank You

Herb Larnerd

Co-Leader

I would like to thank the TCF Steering Committee members for the hard work, the dedication, and the love that has gone into organizing our chapter here in Huntsville. Special appreciation goes to Ray Woodson, our webmaster and newsletter editor, who has gone to great lengths to put together two great products. We intend to publish the newsletter once per quarter and then to gradually increase frequency to once per month.

...From the Heart

...a compassionate friend speaks

Hopefully, “...**From the Heart**”, will be a regular feature that will give a local member the opportunity to share a tip, suggestion, or experience of what has helped or hurt in his personal grief journey. As always, remember that we all grieve differently and it’s OK to accept what makes sense and reject the rest.

Herb Larnerd

Co-leader TCF Huntsville Area

I want to share two ideas that have helped me since the death of my 24 year old son Ben, three years ago in April 2004. The first is writing; writing about your fears, your anger, your faith, your dreams, your questions, your loss, your hope, your emotions, and your feelings. Most of the things I put down on paper or (computer e-paper) I never share. But I have found that the steps (recording, revising, thinking, and remembering) take a lot of thought and tears to get it right. Although it does not change the outcome, for me, writing helps me “organize” a little corner of the chaos that seems to fill our minds and our world after our child dies. By going through the pain instead of around it, I think more clearly and I feel less out of control.

My personal grief journey has also led me to the skies. I love looking at the stars on a dark clear night and love looking at pictures of real stars, galaxies, and other heavenly bodies. When I see the stars, I think of a verse that gives me hope about the future; “maybe they are not stars, but holes in the floor of heaven

where the love of our children shines down to us.” It gives me comfort to think of so much love still existing that heaven can’t hold it all, yet it makes me sad thinking about how many of our children are waiting for us. I use the constellation Orion as one of the places I look for “Ben’s star” to represent his love shining down. Pick a star, see the light, feel the love.

Why Don't You Call Me Anymore?

She calls to talk and asks how I am
And so I tell her: gut-wrenching days,
Questions of “why”?
Longing to hold my son again.

Quickly, she lets me know how she is
Parties and vacations,
New friends and clubs and hanging up,
I miss what I had and loathe what I am.

I read the books,
I meet others like me
Who yearn to kiss their cherub’s face
Who exist in this horrendous,
bottomless pit.

And I learn life is: cruel, unfair, senseless
But through it all I become more real.
Holding a deeper faith
That works even in this pit.

After time, I call her
To see how she is and want to tell her
About Death and Living
But life is still an extended picnic.

So, we have a pseudo conversation,
I cannot explain
For she is not able to understand the
beauty of who I am
And now I accept why my phone
doesn’t ring.

From We Need Not Walk Alone:

Spring, 1998



The Myth of Closure

Ashley Davis Prend, ACSW

Hospice of North Idaho

“When will I begin to feel better? When will I return to normal? When will I achieve some closure?” grievors often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievors hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleared out their loved one’s room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual. Or perhaps after the first anniversary comes and goes—“surely then, we will have closure,” we think. We pray.

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all of the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us.

Closure. What an odd concept really, as if we could truly close the door on pain—turn the lock and throw away the key. The truth is far more complex, of course.

Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Closure is not for feelings or for people we love.

Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past as if it didn’t exist because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, completely. It would mean losing our memories, our connections to those we love. If we really found closure, it would ironically hurt even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us—the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out.

Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can process our pain and move to deeper and deeper levels of healing. Yes, we can find ways to

move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again and laugh again and love again.

But let’s not ever think that we’ll close the door completely on what this loss means, for if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

Ed. – The above article is copied from archives of TCF.

A Sibling Perspective

Brothers and sisters speak

“Dead” He Can’t Be!

by Sandra Woodson

Age 11 (1990)

I woke up one morning. I was cold and there was a sticky taste in my mouth. I heard yelling and thought my mom and dad were fighting. It turned out that what I had heard was my step dad yelling. It was an awful scream, I couldn’t bear it. I asked what was wrong and everyone started crying. My mom came over to me and told me that Cory had died. Died! How could Cory have died? I started to cry. I couldn’t hold back the tears. Everything seemed to turn gray.

Later that day, Ray and my mother told me the whole story. They told me that Cory had been drunk and hung himself. I couldn’t believe my ears. My own brother had hung himself!

“It’s getting late and we ought to get some sleep.” Ray said.

“Wait!” My sister exclaimed. “I don’t want to go.”

“Me neither!” My brother shouted.

It was hard for me to sleep. I felt like Cory’s death was just a nightmare, but finally I did get to sleep.

In the morning I still had that yucky taste in my mouth. This time I wasn’t just cold, I was

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freezing. Then I remembered Cory. I got up, ate breakfast and then packed my bags. We were going to stay there all week. My grandmother came down from Tennessee to take care of Mark and Robyn. Then we got in the car and left. After about two hours I went to sleep. It took us two days to get there and of course we had to stop and eat on the way. Finally we crossed the Kansas border line and looked for a "suitable" hotel.

After we checked into the hotel we didn't even wait to unpack. We got back into the car and went to Rosemary's. It was a medium size house with lots of weird people lurking around. Rosemary hugged Ray and I thought, hey Mom why are you letting her hug Ray, he's your husband. Then I thought, oh yeah Cory died that's why she's hugging him. But then she came over and hugged me. I didn't even know her that well. I got a weird feeling and everyone kept asking me if I wanted a sandwich. I said no each time. While we waited for the day of the funeral we picked out music and other things for the funeral. Well, actually I didn't, but the grownups did and some of Cory's friends too.

The day of the funeral came and all I could do was cry. When we were all sitting down the minister started talking. When he stopped music came on. While I listened, I leaned over on my Mom's shoulder. I started thinking back when me and Cory used to fight with each other. That made me feel bad and uncomfortable. I wanted to go home. I couldn't stand the feeling. Finally, it was all over and Darren and some other men carried him to his grave and buried him.

Friday afternoon we started home for another long, boring trip. Now it's been almost two years since Cory died and every time I hear the songs that were played at the funeral I think of Cory.

Ed. Sandra was 9 when her brother died... she was 11 when she wrote this perspective.

Grief Quotes

Thoughts about groups:

"It takes TWO to speak the truth...one to talk and the other to listen...."

Henry David Thoreau

"Talking with others who have experienced similar loss and are at varying stages can act as a bridge between the past and the future."

Gandhi

"The highest privilege there is, is the privilege of being allowed to share another's pain. You talk about your pleasures to your acquaintances; you talk about your troubles to your friends."

Fr. Andrew SDC - Seven Words from the Cross

"We are both of us angels with but one wing and we can only fly embracing each other."

Liciano de Crezzenzo

"Who, then, can so softly bind up the wound of another as he, who has felt the same wound himself?"

Thomas Jefferson

The following are taken from Understanding Your Grief by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D, published by Companion Press, copyright 2003.

"A catalyst for healing, however can only be created when you develop the courage to mourn publicly, in the presence of understanding, compassionate people who will not judge you."

"Perhaps the most compassionate thing you can do for yourself at this difficult time is to reach out for help from others."

"Life's greatest challenges – getting through school, raising children, pursuing a career – are in many ways team efforts. So it should be in mourning."

"When you are surrounded by people who can distinguish the misconceptions of grief from realities, you can and will experience the healing you deserve."

Note: Our Huntsville newsletters are available online at <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org/Newsletters.html>

Calendar of Events

2007

July	July 10 – Monthly meeting: "Ask-it" Basket July 19-22 - National Conference – Oklahoma City
August	August 14 – Monthly meeting: Notes on the National Conference
September	September 11 – Monthly meeting:
October	October 9 – Monthly meeting:
November	November 13 – Monthly meeting:
December	National candle light ceremony:

"maybe they are not stars, but holes in the floor of heaven where the love of our children shines down to us."



The meetings of the Huntsville Area Chapter are held at 6:30PM on the second Tuesday of each month at:

Hope Presbyterian Church
10001 Bailey Cove Rd. (Bailey Cove & Weatherly)
Huntsville, AL 35803

TCF Huntsville Area
C/O Herb Larnerd
7801 Chadwell Dr. SW
Huntsville, AL 35802

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This Newsletter is published by the Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org.