



**Our Mission & Purpose** is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age by any cause and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Newsletter Editor: Dorothea Dunham – Please contact Dorothea if you would like to contribute articles to the newsletter.

## Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

Summer is upon us and hopefully everyone survived the tragic storms in April with nothing more than the inconvenience of losing power and perishable food. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to all those who lost loved ones, suffered injuries or lost their home and belongings.

In April 2011, the TCF Huntsville Chapter had a change in leadership. We welcome Roger and Gaylene Eidsaune as our new co-leaders and pledge continued support and assistance. We also thank Herb, Ray and Jane for their leadership and hard work during the past four years.

We warmly invite you to come and join us at next month's meeting at 2:00 pm on June 19 when we will discuss the topic "Am I Making Progress or Am I Struck in My Grief"?

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### REMINDER:

**Join Us At Our Next TCF Meeting:  
June 19, 2-4 pm, Renasant Bank  
Topic: "Am I Making Progress or  
Am I Stuck In My Grief?"**

**Our Vision** is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

**Our Meetings:** Monthly, every third Sunday, 2-4 pm  
Renasant Bank, Balmoral Drive, Huntsville, AL  
Information 256-883-0997 or 256-325-8296

## 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..... Gaylene  
(256) 325-8296 [illness@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:illness@tcfhuntsville.org)

Accident ..... Pam  
(256) 534-1873 [accident@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:accident@tcfhuntsville.org)

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb  
(256) 883-0997 [substance\\_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org)

Suicide ..... Ray  
(256) 650-0381 [suicide@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:suicide@tcfhuntsville.org)

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>  
Email ..... [tcf@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:tcf@tcfhuntsville.org)

### Additional Resources:

Hospice Family Care HOPE..... Huntsville  
(256) 650-1212  
TCF National Office ... (877) 969-0010  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

**REMINDER:** TCF National Conference to be held in **Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 15-17, 2011.** Information is available on the TCF National website and the TCF e-Newsletter and early registration will continue until June 10. I encourage anyone who is interested to plan to attend this very helpful time of learning, friendship and hope with others who truly understand the heartache and pain each of us shares. There are always wonderful and beneficial workshops, speakers, programs and sharing sessions. If you have never attended, it is a richly rewarding experience which provides invaluable help on this journey called grief.



Order the TCF Conference Memento “Star of Hope” shown below on-line at “The Compassionate Friends” national website.



## Poetry and Prose

### The Gift For Grieving Fathers on Fathers Day

Here I sit and stare...  
Out the window of our home...  
On this Fathers day...  
Feeling so very alone.

Oh, how I wish...  
My child was still here...  
Bringing me a Fathers day gift...  
Even an ugly tie would be so nice this year.

But...my child has gone on to Heaven...  
And is playing on streets of gold...  
Listening to Jesus tell stories...  
of so many years ago.

And today I find myself thinking...  
about the meaning of a gift...  
For a gift is something given to you...  
That makes you smile and gives you a lift.

But...many times we receive a gift...  
And then lose it or misplace it someday...  
But we never forget the gift...  
For the memories remain tucked away.

I think I have concluded...  
On this Fathers day...  
That since a gift is yours once given...  
It can never be taken away.

And the most precious gift...that I was given...  
To me...so many years ago...  
Was the day my child entered this world...  
And touched my life, heart, and soul.

So on this Fathers day...  
I thank the Lord for the most precious gift of mine...  
My child in Heaven...treasured times and memories...  
That will remain with me...my entire lifetime.

For a Gift is a gift...  
And my most precious gift...remains in my heart...  
And just then...a rainbow appears out my window...  
Reminding me...that my gift and heaven are not so far.

**Author Unknown**

***Happy Fathers Day.....May your day be filled with memories of your beloved child.***

## ...From the Heart



...a compassionate friend speaks

“...*From the Heart*”, is 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.

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### A LEAP OF FAITH .....

Four years ago, our oldest son, Brian, died unexpectedly following a routine day-surgery when he developed an infection that spread so quickly through his bloodstream that the medical staff was unable to save him before it shut down his organs. It was a shocking and unbelievable night. He was 31 years old and in excellent health and this was his very first time to have any surgery and it shouldn't have happened, but it did. You feel so helpless and you start questioning everything you did or didn't do, should or shouldn't have seen or noticed, could we have done anything differently? Questions I know many, many bereaved parents have asked themselves.

Needless to say, after that experience we will never again look upon any surgery as “routine”. There will always be that “fear” and nothing will be taken for granted. A couple of weeks ago, our youngest son found out that he needed to have his gallbladder removed. The fact that he is almost exactly the same age as our Brian was ironic and didn't go unnoticed. My logical mind knows that every day many people have this “routine” surgery performed with no complications. But I must tell you that when our son told us he needed to have his first ever surgery, my heart was in my throat and it was a terrifying feeling that brought back memories of a time that was agonizing and so very painful.

I think that anyone who has lost a child knows that protective cloak we want to throw over our children to keep them safe. One of the things I have learned on this grief journey is that there are many times when we are not in control and we have to have faith that we are making the right decisions and that people we put our trust in know what they are doing. Faith is what has gotten me through all of life's journeys, good and bad and without it, I don't think I could have coped with all the trials that life has thrown at us in the past few years.

On May 5, 2011 we took our son to the hospital and watched as they took him back for his “routine surgery” and prayed that the doctor knew what he was

doing and that God would watch over and keep him safe. From start to finish the surgery only took three hours and everything went well. As his parents, we held our breath for the next couple of days watching for any signs of infection or illness and I'm happy to report that our leap of faith turned out well and for that we are so very thankful.

We will never understand why it happened to our Brian. We have acknowledged his death but I don't think we have accepted it. Our family has been broken and will never be the same but we are learning to live our new “normal”. Our youngest son is wonderful and we love him dearly but even he sometimes doesn't understand the emptiness and longing that we feel. One of the most difficult things to deal with is other family members and friends never wanting to talk about him and acting as though he didn't exist. It is hard to have memories and not being able to share them. I intend to continue to bring those memories up and hope that someone wants to listen. If not, it's their loss.

Life goes on and as one of the living I am sure there will be many more leaps of faith that will have to be taken.

**Dorothea Dunham, TCF Huntsville**



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### SUMMER

Summer is here, with its warm healing sun, sweet green grass, growing gardens, and all the birds singing. Why is it I am not feeling the usual singing heart summer always brought? I know the answer – my child isn't here to bask in the sun, smell the grass, raid the garden, or listen to the birds.

He was always the first to go barefoot, first to find a carrot big enough to eat, first to find where the oriole had nested. It is bittersweet to hear the oriole now – singing as beautifully as ever but my son can no longer hear the song. Still, I hear the song and a part of my son comes to touch me, to sit on the step and try to spot the flash of orange in a tree top.

I find the orange and hear my son, “There he is! In the tall spruce next to the elm! See him?” He loved the birds, and with the birds' return, a part of him lives again in my heart. As long as the birds sing, Donny will be a part of my summers.

-a parent, TCF Great Bangor, ME

## **The Mourning Pin**

**By Darcie Sims, Ph.D., CGC, CHT**

Grief doesn't end at the funeral or the cemetery, although the rest of the world would like to think that the bereaved have achieved "closure" at the funeral and are now ready to "move on". Grief doesn't end at the funeral. In fact, it's just the beginning. You don't stop loving someone just because they died. So why should the bereaved try to hide their sorry just because the rest of the world can't stand to "see" them hurt? The bereaved have long ago learned of the importance and necessity for masks.

Why won't anyone let the bereaved simply be bereaved? Why can't we sometimes wallow in the hurt or wander in the emptiness of our heart? Are we all afraid to recognize pain? Are we afraid to speak of hurt in such honest terms or are we simply unaware of the length of time that healing requires? Have we truly become the "Fast Food, Fast Forward" society where microwaves and email have replaced homemade brownies and handwritten notes? Even when someone does ask, "How are you?", their footsteps carry them quickly away before I can even think of an "appropriate" response. Does anyone care anymore or have we run out of time for caring?

I'm bereaved and there are days when I want to share that and days when I don't. But no one can tell the difference because I have learned to wear THE MASK and to always look the same, regardless of what is dwelling just beneath my surface smile. I have learned, as we all do, to smile quickly and to turn away slightly when the tears threaten to spill down my cheek. The MASK is in place. I don't want to wear a mask any more. I have run out of energy to pretend that I am "FINE" when I'm not and to smile even when my heart is breaking inside. Maybe bereaved people should LIMP a bit on those days when we feel scattered or shattered or hurt or empty inside. Maybe we should recognize the depths of the wounds that grief inflicts instead of trying to soothe the rest of the world. I have noticed that people are nicer to those who limp a bit. We hold doors open for them. We offer them a seat on the bus. People who limp a little seem to get more sympathy and understanding than I do in my grief. I'm not asking for a LOT of sympathy, in fact, maybe none. But I would like some comprehension that grief isn't something you "get over" quickly (or ever).

I'd like to let people know that I still am capable of moments of extreme pain, even years after a loved one has died and that when I experience that pain, I don't want to wear a mask. I want the freedom to hurt and to heal, both publicly and privately. I don't want to limp in order to have a kinder, gentler world at my door. I just want to BE, whatever I am. No more masks...just me trying to hang on one more day. I want a sign, an outward symbol of my bereavement so others will know that I am bereaved, not crazy or sick. I want something to wear that will tell everyone I am working my way through a terrible hurt.

In the "Old days" black armbands were worn to acknowledge one's bereavement. Some cultures still wear a piece of torn cloth to symbolize the tear in the family fabric. Some communities still place a black wreath on the door of a grieving family so others may know of their hurt and offer their support. I want a sign that says "I'M BEREAVED" and I want a hug. At least I'd like your understanding that I am not ill or mentally incapacitated. I just hurt today and I could use some support. Since signs and masks are too cumbersome, I've found the perfect symbol. You've seen it on lapels everywhere, in many different colors, each carrying a special message. I've found a MOURNING PIN that is a simple and dignified way of saying, "I'm bereaved". It is a simple black enamel ribbon pin, similar to the ones you've seen in red (for AIDS awareness), pink (for breast cancer), green (for organ donation). This one is black for bereavement and can be worn anywhere, anytime you want to recognize your bereavement. The awareness ribbon has become a universal symbol of support and compassion and those who wear them become members of a universal family of understanding. What a terrific way to create a community of support! No longer will grieving people have to limp a little in order to receive some small amount of care and support. Entire communities have worn this ribbon to show support for those caught in the web of pain and sorrow that bereavement brings. Individuals can wear the MOURNING PIN whenever they wish to acknowledge their grief: anniversaries, special days, or every day. By wearing this outward symbol of grief, we can start to push back the clouds of misunderstanding surrounding grief and bereavement and help strengthen the universal awareness of grief.

Let's create an openness and a tolerance and an understanding of the universality of grief and a willingness to be present for each other. Whenever you see someone wearing a black MOURNING PIN, you will know that a life has been lived and loved and that sorrow isn't a weak or negative face. No more masks, please. Let grief have its place among the living as a symbol of how much you loved.

We are all fellow strugglers on the path, but grief is a journey that does not have to be traveled alone. Wear the black ribbon pin to support those who grieve or to acknowledge your own bereavement. You will not be alone. We are a universal family, broken By death, but mended by love. (You can order the MOURNING PIN from Grief Inc., \$2 plus shipping and handling).

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

## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

*Birthdays and anniversaries are difficult for bereaved parents, but as long as we live, our children shall also live for they are a part of us in our memories. The children listed below are lovingly remembered and we send our love and support to their families:*

May		June		July		August	
William J.	Gibbons	David C	Bach	Dylan	Newman	David C.	Bach
Dylan	Newman	Evan	Davis	Jason M.	McKinney	Bryan J.	Eidsaune
Julius	Torres	Adam E.	Loggins	Jason M.	McKinney	Jenny	Owens
		Anastasia	Stefadouros	Jenny	Owens	April A	Warren Page
				Evan G	Riddle	Cory	Woodson
				Dennis	Springer		

When a child dies, an angel comes down from heaven, takes the child in its arms and spreading out its large white wings visits all the places that had been particularly dear to the child. From the best loved place the angel gathers a handful of flowers, flying up again to heaven with them. Here they bloom more beautiful than on earth, but the flower which is most loved receives a voice so that it can join the song of the chorus of bliss.



Hans Christian Anderson

### **Freedom for Bereaved Parents?**

July 4<sup>th</sup>... Independence Day. A day most Americans celebrate their freedom. For bereaved parents, unfortunately, freedom of the body is far different than freedom of the mind. Before our children died, we know that we had freedom to: watch them take their first step; listen for their first word; watch them step onto the school bus for the first time; watch them go on their first date; watch them graduate; watch them walk down the aisle to be married; see our grandchildren be born. **For bereaved parents these freedoms are gone forever.** Why did we have to lose these freedoms? Sometimes we lose these freedoms because the world has the wrong priorities. Sometimes we lose them because people abuse their freedoms. What freedoms must be changed?

- The freedom of cancer to strike our children; The freedom of a drunk driver to be put back on the road with a slap on the wrist; The freedom of AIDS to run rampant; The freedom of criminals to have ready access to guns; The freedom of drivers to ignore the speed limits; and on and on and on.

When these freedoms are exercised and we are unable to stop them, the deaths of our children cause us to lose our freedom to pursue happiness in our lives. The country must wake up to the fact that freedom is a fragile commodity. For us as bereaved parents, we have become a living testimony to this fact.

Wayne Loder, TCF Lakes Area MI

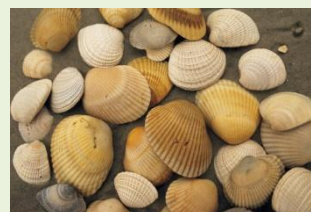
### **Gifts of Love and Remembrance**

The following donations will help the Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>Ben Larnerd</b>                  Herb and Jane - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>Cory Woodson</b>                  Ray - Parent</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>April Warren Page</b>                  Murray and Iris – Parents</p>
<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>Ben Larnerd</b>  <b>Cory Woodson</b>                  Bob and Nancy - Grandparents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>Keith McAlister</b>                  Tom and Janet McAlister -                  Grandparents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b>  <b>Anonymous</b></p>

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

<b>June</b>	June 19 – “Am I Making Progress – or Am I Stuck in My Grief?”
<b>July</b>	July 17 – Report on TCF National Conference
<b>August</b>	Aug 21 – “Our Story, Small Groups”
<b>September</b>	Sep 18 – Balloon Launch

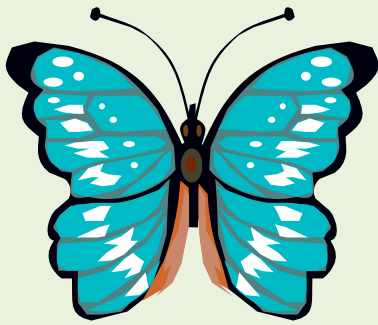


Shells, Microsoft Clip Art

***OUR SAND DOLLAR***

Its shape is that of a circle,  
 A circle of Love,  
 Its center is in the shape of a star,  
 Quite prominent from above,  
 The few but varied holes are delicately  
 shaped,  
 Like teardrops that have fallen from a very  
 longing face,  
 The star is surrounded in a circle etched so  
 fine,  
 It represents a memory that will last a  
 lifetime,  
 It symbolizes a gift more precious than gold,  
 For it is a child who lives forever  
 In a parent’s heart and soul,  
 So when you see this “Sand Dollar”  
 anywhere,  
 Remember the love is holds is far beyond  
 compare.

**TCF Huntsville meetings are held at 2:00PM on the  
 third Sunday of each month except December at:  
 Renasant Bank (Community Room)  
 4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)  
 Huntsville, AL 35801**



Microsoft Clip Art

**TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:**

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We do understand.

**TO OUR OLD MEMBERS:**

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick.

TCF is here to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you.

**Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address**

TCF Huntsville Area  
C/O G. Eidsaune  
207 Silverado Drive  
Madison, AL 35758

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address

Street Number and Name

City, State 98765-4321

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](mailto:newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org).