

## Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

*Reflections on our first six months*

### Ray Woodson

Newsletter Editor

It has now been six months since the Huntsville Area Chapter received its charter from the National organization of The Compassionate Friends. Since our first meeting in April, the monthly meetings have been attended by between 12 and 16 people. In May we celebrated Mother's Day with a presentation and sharing of just what that means today. In June we had a balloon launch as part of our meeting entitled "How to say goodbye, how to say hello". In July, our program "Ask-it Basket" gave attendees an opportunity to ask any questions on their minds with the group sharing their experiences in reply.

Also, in July, six members of the Huntsville Area Chapter attended the TCF National Convention in Oklahoma City. For some, it was their second or third conference. For this writer, it was his first. The variety of workshops and sharing sessions offered is too numerous to list, but the total number of choices easily exceeded 100. The keynote speakers were fantastic and several of our members brought back audio CD's of some of these speeches; copies can be made

*continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Huntsville Area Chapter - Update
- 1** Personal Contacts
- 2** ...From the Heart
- 2-4** Articles / Poems
- 3** A Sibling Perspective
- 5** Calendar of Events

## 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](mailto:illness@tcfhuntsville.org)

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

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

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

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

### Additional Area Resources:

Hospice HOPE ..... Huntsville  
(256) 650-1212

TCF National Office  
(877) 969-0010



available for anyone interested.

Additionally, four of us participated in the Walk to Remember. Herb and I carried the names of our chapter's children, grandchildren and siblings. One of the highlights for me was walking past the memorial at the former Murrah Federal Building. This was the building that was bombed over 10 years ago. Many of the walkers stopped to view the memorial, reflect on the past and to grieve for all those lost; I was no exception. The impact was very compelling. Several took many pictures and again I was no exception. The experience is one that I would recommend to all who can possibly attend a national conference. Next year the conference will be held in Nashville, which should make participation easier for many of us.

Our August program focused on the highlights from the conference. I made a slide presentation and Herb played some audio clips which was followed by a short sharing session. The Chapter website is currently being updated to include some of these pictures in a newly created Gallery page of various chapter activities. Check out the website at <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org> and watch for this addition.

We have begun to reach out to the community with our newsletter and web site and have established a close relationship with Hospice. Our initial efforts have resulted in several new contacts interested in TCF. Our Walk to Remember sponsorship donations on behalf of our chapter netted \$700, eighty percent of which will go toward financing the various activities of the Huntsville Area Chapter.

### **...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. As always, remember that we all grieve differently and it's OK to accept what makes sense and reject the rest.

#### **Sharon Campbell**

Co-leader TCF Huntsville Area

On July 7, 2005, our son Ian, died of a brain tumor.

Two years later, the pain of that loss is so intense that I think we shall never heal and yet quite unaware, I have discovered a place of peace.

This Spring, I had an urge to start a vegetable garden.

I have never before had a garden, but with Hope we started a community Garden. On May 5th we planted and by the second week in June we were harvesting vegetables. We continue to provide squash, zucchini, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans and carrots to five families.

Whenever I go to the garden either to water, weed, harvest or sometimes just to be, I am struck with an intense sense of serenity. Ian joins me in the garden.

I have marveled at this feeling only to realize that in tending a garden, I am in some small way honoring all the things that were the best of Ian. His love for life, his caring nature, his generosity - all things that made him who he was.

His sons frequently go with me to care for the garden. They often ask to go. They too feel his presence and we can laugh and remember and enjoy life with their Dad.

I trust you will find your garden.

## **The Broken Chain**

We little knew that day  
That God was going to call your name.  
In life we loved you dearly.  
In death we do the same.

It broke our hearts to lose you.  
You did not go alone.  
For part of us went with you,  
The day God called you home.

You left us beautiful memories.  
Your love is still our guide.  
And though we cannot see you,  
You are always at our side.

Our family chain is broken  
And nothing seems the same.  
But as God calls us one by one  
The chain will link again.

*Ed. This poem was submitted by Pam Riddle, a local TCF Huntsville member, who received a Christmas ornament after her son Evan died. The ornament did not acknowledge the author and the author is unknown.*

## Excerpts from Dichotomies of Grieving:

*The following paragraphs have been reprinted from the article, Dichotomies of Grieving by Diana deRegnier, Spirit Links, June 18, 2007. © copyright 2007 by Diana deRegnier. Reprinted here with permission.*

"...parents often belabor which words to use in reference to our losses. There is no right or wrong, just decisions we each need to make for what is best of the worst for us. I usually say I have a son who has died. Some prefer euphemisms like departed, lost or passed. Others insist on no softening to the blow.

I "have" a son who has died. Some say "had." Some are tormented by how to answer the question "How many children do you have?" Adrian is still my son; I am still his mother. Whether there is an afterlife, that remains true".

"...too often, loved ones who have died become forever identified by their exit rather than by their life: "Oh, she was the one who drowned; he died of cancer at 10; oh, he was driving drunk at 18," ...

I want my son remembered as the little boy who offered to share his bottle with me when he was just an infant; ...Adrian was a talented artist, musician and writer, adored by teachers and school administrators as well as by peers..."

"Individuals in grief are forced to make choices about how they will incorporate their loss into their lives. Though they may never speak of their grief with you, they carry it until their death.

.... Each person's experience is unique, even in the same family; and each day changes."

"If you desire the confidence of a bereaved person, the best thing you can say is, 'I am here to listen if you care to talk.'

But with that, you will do yourself and them a disservice if you cannot listen and let go. If you need for their thoughts to be as you think they should be, both of you may feel uncomfortable, or worse, with the disclosure. Their experience may be completely different than what you expect. Their feelings may not be what you think yours would be. And then, tomorrow, they may feel very different, and so may you."

"I don't want to be better, wiser, kinder for knowing this pain. I am not grateful for these lessons. I flunk gratitude. Bring back ignorance, I beg."

"Though joy bores deep in my soul, opening my senses opens them all. To feel music lets in pain. Receiving my soul back into my body to dance and sing unleashes anguish I'd bound in numbness. And I am stuck in years of healing."

**Ed Notes:** The full article was featured on [www.unitedpressinternational.com](http://www.unitedpressinternational.com) and on UPI [www.religionandspirituality.com](http://www.religionandspirituality.com) and was one of 10 most viewed for the week of its posting. It was also syndicated to [www.arcamax.com](http://www.arcamax.com) and, the local site [www.spiritlinksnewsletter.org](http://www.spiritlinksnewsletter.org). Diana is a free-lance writer and editor and webmaster for the non-profit program Spirit Links Newsletter. Most importantly, she is a bereaved mother.

### A Sibling Perspective

*Brothers and sisters speak*

### AS I REMEMBER HIM

**by Daniel Yoffee**

August 4, 2002

Whenever I answer an email from a newly bereaved sibling I say "My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25th 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him."

The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40. As the ninth anniversary approached last year I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August, our birthday month, but last year was worse.

As my birthday neared I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me it would be easier than being with all of the family, all except Alan. I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan but they could see his picture button while speaking to me. Thoughts of Alan were never far and as I walked the last friend to his car I realized that it was an enjoyable day but each milestone would be an adjustment.

*continued on page 4*

continued from page 3

As I approach my 41st birthday, the tenth without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car's license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal; each new state I visit I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, created an AIDS quilt, web page and a backyard garden. I devoted a room, "Alan's room", with posters and articles by and about him. I donate items for AIDS & TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan's memory. As long as I live I will continue to find ways to honor his memory as I remember him.

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

### **A Bereavement Blessing And Wish!**

**May their love cascade  
From Heaven,  
May their hearts beat one with ours.  
May their smiles light the night  
May their presence replace the stars.**

**May your night skies  
be clear,  
May your memories  
never fade.**

**Herb Larnerd – October 2005**



Chairs at the Murrah Memorial – Oklahoma City

## **Grief Quotes**

*What is this thing called Grief:*

“Grief is a choppy ‘two steps forward, one step backward’ experience”.

*Theresa Rando: How to Go on Living When Someone you Loves Dies*

“In grief, nothing ‘stays put’. One keeps emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I’m on a spiral? But if a spiral, am I going up or down”?

*C.S. Lewis: A Grief Observed*

“Grief is like a journey one must take on a winding mountainside, often seeing the same scenery many times, a road which eventually leads to somewhere we’ve never been before.”

*Gladys M. Hunt*

“There is a light in the world, a healing spirit, more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force, when there is so much suffering and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who care and answer in extraordinary ways.

*Mother Theresa*

“Pray as you can and don’t try to pray as you can’t”.

*J.I. Packer: A grief Sanctified*

“Certain thoughts are prayers. There are certain moments when, whatever the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.”

*Victor Hugo*

“What wound did ever heal but by degrees?”

*William Shakespeare: Othello*

“Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship.”

*Dennis Klass*

“What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”

*Helen Keller*

“The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time.”

*Abraham Lincoln*

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

## Calendar of Events

2007

<b>September</b>	September 11 – Monthly meeting: "My New Normal"  September 14-16; National leadership conference, Omaha
<b>October</b>	October 9 – Monthly meeting: "The Quiet Within"
<b>November</b>	November 13 – Monthly meeting: "Handling the Holidays"
<b>December</b>	December 9 – National candle light ceremony

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*"Though joy bores deep in my soul, opening  
my senses opens them all. To feel music  
lets in pain. Receiving my soul back into my  
body to dance and sing unleashes anguish  
I'd bound in numbness..."*

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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](mailto:newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org).