



The Compassionate Friends of the Sandhills

1st Quarter 2009

Pinehurst, North Carolina

Vol. 6 No. 1

The Compassionate Friends is an international nonprofit, self-help support organization which offers friendship and understanding to families who are grieving the death of a child. The Mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

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The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

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Phone friends

Will lend a listening ear—

Cindy Shepherd (910)695-8629

Cindy Floyd (910)295-3011

Pam Phillips (910)295-3774

Chapter Meetings

Third Monday of the month:

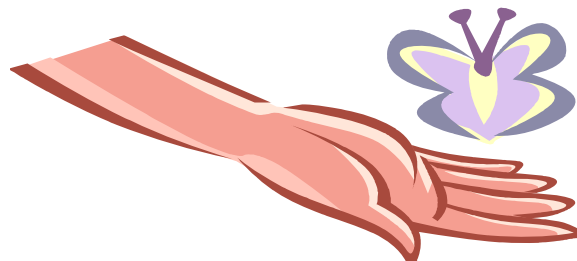
February: February 16, 2009, 7:00 PM

March: March 16, 2009, 7:00 PM

***Monthly Meetings @ Longleaf Golf Club in
private meeting room***

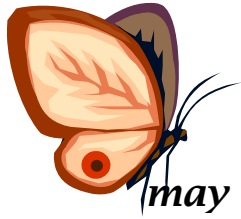
2001 Midland Road, Southern Pines.

Longleaf is located on Midland Road (NC Route 2) about 2 Miles from the town of Southern Pines and about 2 Miles from the village of Pinehurst.



Dear Friends,

If you are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we hope that you will find it helpful. To be removed from our mailing list at any time call (910) 695-8629. We cordially invite you to attend any of our meetings, which are held in Southern Pines on the third Monday of each month, currently at Longleaf Golf course in a private meeting room, 7:00 PM until 8:30 PM. Nothing is required of you; there are no dues or fees. You need not speak one word. We know that it takes courage to attend your first meeting, but we hope that you will come and find the comfort and support of those who have "been there". FirstHealth of the Carolinas also offers individual grief support for young children and teens who have experienced the death of a loved one as well as for survivors of suicide loss, pregnancy and infant.



Our Children, Loved and Remembered

***In the days ahead,
may we lovingly remember these children and their families,***

January, February, March Birthdays

Connie Lou Duncan - January 15, 1988

January, February, March Anniversaries

Connie Lou Duncan - March 23, 2007
Matthew Laurent Bishop - February 17, 2005
Cody Phillips - March 17, 1997

Love Gifts

**We express our sincere appreciation for LOVE GIFTS.
These gifts are fully tax deductible and help the local chapter continue in its efforts to
assist families suffering the loss of a child.**



Through your love Gifts, Sandhills Chapter is able to fulfill our mission “to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others to be supportive”. Thank you to Longleaf for providing us a pleasant environment in which to meet, and to Mike Floyd for providing the coffee and beverages.



A FATHERS' LAMENT

It has been exactly a week now and the unrelenting pain and anguish yet continue not for a moment or two, but endlessly. The inevitable self doubting questions are relentless. Is this punishment for "my sins"? Was the car she was driving, that I bought, safe enough? Was the personality I helped shape self destructive either in an aggressive manner or simple melancholy? Why not me instead? Why would God take such a vibrant, motivated life? They go on and on. A world, a life, so filled with hope and anticipation shattered irreversibly in an instant. To be able to mourn a child, much less an only child, is needless to say catastrophic at best. A parents worst nightmare by anyone's standards.

The why's and what for's are moot now. My new, enlightened mission is that of "moving on", whether I like it or not. To do that is a mystery. It is possibly a lifelong challenge I do not look forward to. Or do I? Nowhere has God promised anyone, even his children, immunity from sorrow, suffering, and pain. If suffering is the crucible in which our faith is tested, I'm in the middle of final exams at medical school. I have lost my bearings, my joy, my security. You wonder who you are, what your life is about, and are no longer able to trust. You want to apply as fast as you can for a handicap sticker. You ask yourself, Is there ever an end to the excruciating sorrow, sadness and pain?..... I think there may be. If I can look at this loss in my life a little differently, if I can change my perspective just slightly, I may see that within this horrid experience lie the seeds of a new beginning, of a new life, of a deeper experience of love and fulfillment than I ever imagined possible. I quite frankly noticed that when my heart was broken, it was also wide open. Loss like this is an inevitable part of being human, and my choice is either to remain in pain and bitterness or to learn how to use this ungodly experience to grow into a richer, more fulfilling life. I feel that in that sense, loss is a gift, a gift that will open my heart if I let it, a gift that can help me uncover the extraordinary love I always hoped, but never dared imagine, is within me. I feel that everything our culture has told me and taught me about grief has exacerbated the problem rather than relieve it. In order to "heal" through this experience, I must unlearn much of what I learned about dealing with grief. Rather than pushing it away, pretending it's not present, or keeping a stiff upper lip, I need to have the courage to cry, to sob, to open my heart and allow myself to experience the pain, the rage, the frustration, the anger, the profound sadness. I need to know I won't drown in it all. I may go under for a while, but I won't drown if I stay connected to my heart. I feel my heart is my lifeline. If I react in fear and close that lifeline, I lose the healing potential and solace it offers. I believe the miracle is that our hearts offer us the opportunity for growth, for completeness, for forgiveness, for nurturing, and for the realization of infinite opportunities. Real fulfillment is found inside ourselves. It isn't dependent on the presence of, or actions of anyone else. It isn't dependent on the acquisition of material possessions and wealth. Each loss, each place of emptiness, each unresolved grief, each resentment, and each failure can be healed in the infinite mercy of our own hearts. The Bible puts it succinctly: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials and losses, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing". (James 1: 2-4) I have promised myself to obtain a plaque I will proudly and reverently display in my home that reads, "Suffer before you smile". It is not my intention to preach upon a soapbox, but to simply help in anyway I can to try and make sense of the insensible for anyone else suffering the same carnage I have this last week of my life.

I wish you could have known my daughter, as any proud father would, but find myself with the heartbreaking responsibility of describing a life so prematurely shortened only seven days after her 18th birthday, but so cherished and loved by so many. To celebrate such a life is elementary. To ignore it, near criminal. With such vibrancy for life and a never ending caring for those she came in contact with, she knew there were no limitations on love and most certainly practiced this keen skill daily, always with heart in hand. If you knew her well, or not, her kindness, generosity and compassionate heart was a constant monogram of this extraordinary human being. She was and will always be the shining light of my life, and will be missed only temporarily until I can be with her, happy and at peace, next to our heavenly father. Celebrate this beautiful girl's life with me by honoring her short time on this earth with limitless, unconditional love to all you come in contact with as this precious angel did here, her entire life.

Dr.Robert L.Halterman, in memory of his beloved daughter Kelli Christine, 11/10/90-11/17/08
Any comments or dialogue are welcome at rlh37wks@hotmail.com

TCF of the Sandhills

Grief Resources-Online

The following national nonprofit organizations have missions which are similar to that of The Compassionate Friends

Listing of sites does not imply an endorsement by TCF and is included to provide sources of useful information for bereaved families.

AFSP- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention— www.afsp.org is dedicated to advancing knowledge of suicide and the ability to prevent it.

Alive Alone- www.alivealone.org Designed to benefit bereaved parents whose only child or all children have died by providing a self-help network and newsletter to promote communication and healing.

BabySteps — www.babysteps.com named after the baby steps that form the long and difficult road to recovery from the loss of a child.

Parents of Murdered Children— www.pomc.com provides support and assistance to all survivors of homicide victims while working to create a world free of murder.

The Compassionate Friends Online Support Community— www.compassionatefriends.org
TCF offers support following the death of a child. TCF welcomes bereaved parents, grandparents, and stepparents and siblings into the Online Support Community.

The Centering [Corporation-www.centeringcorp.com](http://www.centeringcorp.com) is a recommended source for grief related material for children and adults. Mention The Compassionate Friends and receive free shipping on your order.



We Have A Lending Library of Reading Material For Grieving Families. Please ask about it as these are excellent resources to help in your grief journey. (Contact our Library Custodian, Pam Phillips, if you would like to borrow any library resources) or if you would like to contribute material to the library.

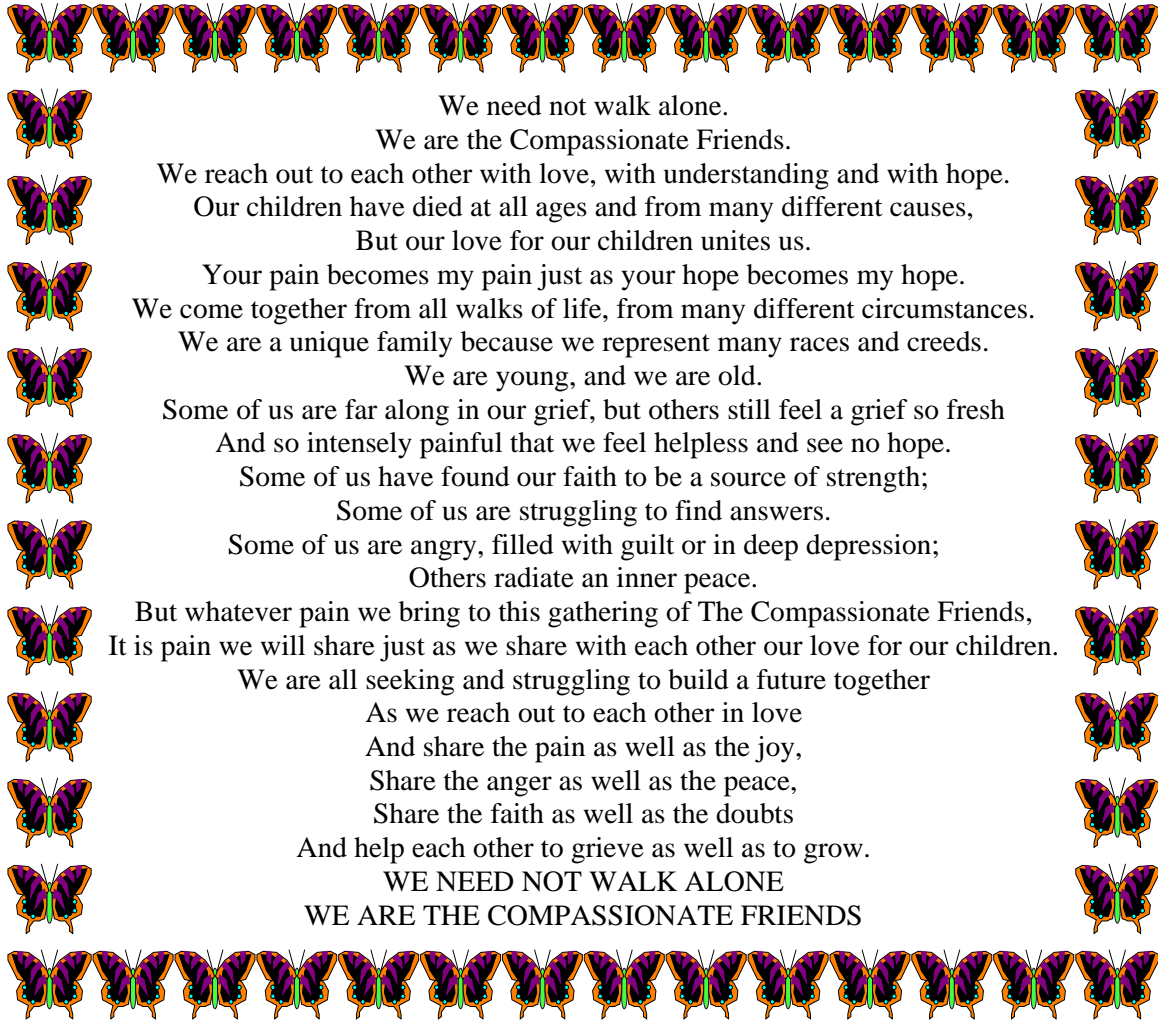
Thank you.

Phone Friends

If you are having a difficult day, or need someone to talk with, call a friend below:

Cindy Shepherd (910)695-8629
Cindy Floyd (910)295-3011
Pam Phillips (910)295-3774





We need not walk alone.
We are the Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.
Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes,
But our love for our children unites us.
Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.
We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
And so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.
Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength;
Some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression;
Others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
It is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children.
We are all seeking and struggling to build a future together
As we reach out to each other in love
And share the pain as well as the joy,
Share the anger as well as the peace,
Share the faith as well as the doubts
And help each other to grieve as well as to grow.
WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

What Grieving People Want You to Know

- **I am not strong.** I'm just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don't see me.
 - **I will not recover.** This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.
 - **I don't have to accept the death.** Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.
 - **Please don't avoid me.** You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."
 - **Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything."** I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have.
- So, in advance, let me give you some ideas: *Bring food. *Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself. *Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure to mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day. *Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say no at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

--Virginia A. Simpson, news@beyondindigo.com

Dear Compassionate Friends,

*I wrote this letter for my co-workers and posted it in the office where everyone would see it because I found that although everybody had been extremely kind and generous during Laurie's last brief illness, some of them didn't seem to know how to deal with me or what to say after she died. The idea for the letter and some of its contents are from a book on grief work by Bob Deits. (Editor's note: the book referred to is *Life After Loss: A Personal Guide Dealing With Death, Divorce, Job Change and Relocation*. It is in our chapter library.)*

Marcia Davis, TCF

Contra Costa County, California

Dear friends and co-workers:

I want to thank all of you for your kindness and support during the last few months. I have experienced a loss that is devastating to me. It will take time, perhaps years, for me to work through the grief I am having because of the loss of my daughter, Laurie. Although Laurie was our oldest child, she was the child of my third pregnancy, so she was very much wanted by the time I gave birth to her. She was also the child who was most like me, both in appearance and personality. Perhaps because of this, I actually feel I have lost a part of myself. I would gladly have given my life in exchange for hers, had I had that option.

I will cry more than usual for some time. My tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of hope or faith. They are symbols of the depth of my loss and, I am told, a sign that I am recovering. I find that I become angry without there seeming to be a reason for it. My emotions are all heightened by the stress of grief. Please be forgiving if I seem irrational or unfriendly at times. I need your understanding and your friendship more than anything else. If you don't know what to say, just touch me or give me a hug to let me know you care. Do not be afraid to mention Laurie's name - she is gone from this life but she will never be gone from my memory or my heart. And please don't hesitate to call me - it is reassuring to hear from supportive friends.

If you, by chance, have had an experience of loss that seems anything like mine, please share it with me. You will not make me feel worse. And if I get emotional or tear up - you are not making me cry - I am crying inside all the time anyway!

This loss is the worst thing that could happen to me. But, I will get through it somehow and I will live again. I will not always feel as I do now - I will laugh again. Thank you all for caring about me. Your concern is a gift I will always treasure.

Sincerely,

Marcia

Why We Still Go to TCF

***“Are you still involved with that group?
Aren't you over it yet? Why do you go?”***

These are questions I often hear now that it has been more than seven years since Mark died. I suspect you near them too. There are easy answers. But not everyone understands, unless you have been there. Here are ten I can think of:

1. Because we never want the world to forget our child, so what we do we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help someone else, we also help ourselves.
3. Because someone was there for us when we needed it most; now the best way to say “thank you” is to pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do that can bring something positive out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF better friends and closer bonds than we ever thought possible. Here we can cry and hug people even if we don't know their last name or what they do for a living. And it doesn't matter.
6. Because few people are qualified to walk up to a newly bereaved family and say, “I know how you feel.” And because we can, we must.
7. Because sometimes we need to talk, too, and to remember and share. We are further along than many around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that one day we will meet our child or brother or sister again, and he or she will ask, “So what did you do with your life after I left?” And we will have an answer.
9. Because our presence might help newly bereaved families understand that they will survive and even laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cookies, and hard metal chairs.

Richard Edler

TCF, South Bay/L.A., California, Chapter

TCF National President



ANOTHER YEAR

This Is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.

Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there.

With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain.

We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death.

We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

Alice Weening

TCF, Cincinnati, Ohio



PLEASE LET ME MOURN

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling. Will you try to understand and help me?

Please let me mourn.

I may act and appear together, but I am not. Oftentimes it hurts so much I can hardly bear it.

Please let me mourn.

Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle. Sometimes I am not always sure.

Please let me mourn.

Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are all I have now. They are very precious to me.

Please let me mourn.

Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it is all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't fear my tears.

Please let me mourn.

What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and your understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

Please let me mourn.

God gives me strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

Please let me mourn.

Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

*Lonnie Forland
TCF, Northwood, IA*

Resolutions

by Pat Akery, *TCF, Medford, OR*

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them.

We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions.

Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like.

Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones
taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place
clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers
inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish
their hearts desiring
what they cannot have--
to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held--
to all the fathers who leave a part
of their hearts at the stones
may breezes underneath trees of time
ease their pain
as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

---Alice J. Wisler

For David, in memory of our son Daniel
(August 25, 1992--February 2, 1997)

Save the Date!

The Compassionate Friends

2009 National Conference

August 7-9, 2009 ~ Portland Oregon

See below for current speakers-

2009 National Conference Information Announced

Two speakers have been announced for the 2009 TCF National Conference in Portland August 7-9, 2009. Plus, early reservation for those wishing to stay at the Doubletree Hotel Portland, site of the 32nd national TCF conference, is now open.

Speaking at the conference will be Reg and Maggie Green and Michele Longo Eder. Reg and Maggie are the parents of Nicholas Green, the seven-year-old American boy who was shot by highway bandits in Italy in 1994. Their decision to donate his organs to seven Italians became a major news story around the world, spawning thousands of organ donations in Italy (a country where organ donations were virtually unheard of before Nicholas' death) and around the world. This remarkable story was made into a CBS movie of the week called *The Nicholas Effect*.

Michele Longo Eder is author of *Salt in our Blood—The memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*. Michele, an accomplished lawyer, started journaling what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Never did she dream that her journaling would include the account of a personal tragedy that struck just before Christmas 2001.

Reservations for those attending TCF's national conference are now being accepted by the Doubletree Hotel Portland where the conference will be held. TCF has negotiated for a large block of rooms at a special price for those attending the conference. Rate is \$129 per room per night in several different configurations.

As always, we suggest that you make reservations early to avoid disappointment. They may be reserved online at the national conference page at www.compassionatefriends.org. You may also call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-503-281-6111 and receive the negotiated price, but you must identify yourself as attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The rooms are available at this special rate for those staying the nights of August 5-August 9. Last day for reservations, if rooms are still available, will be July 4.

Also, there will be Chapter Leader training available during the National Meeting on 4th of August. Even if you aren't sure you want to help with being a leader for this program, it is very good training.

Those who would like to attend, share a room etc., please contact Cindy Shepherd.

Assistance with airfare/lodging is available!!!

With a Little Help From My Friends

Feelings and emotions.....our lives are now about feelings and emotions. Our children have died under different circumstances and at different ages, but the reality of our child's death is the same for each of us.

Science now tells us that people can die of a broken heart. The heart is not damaged, there has been no heart attack, but the emotions are so great that the heart malfunctions and people die. Each of us was convinced when our child died that we, too, would die and the cause would be our broken heart.

But we didn't die. Initially, we lived in a state of shock. Then as time progresses we live in a state of suspension, depression, anxiety, grief, anger, resentment, overwhelming emotions and deep, deep sadness. We ask ourselves how anyone can move forward after this terrible loss. A parent's worst fear is now our reality each morning, each night, each day for the rest of our lives.

Or is it? The answer to that question is as complex as the universe and as simplistic as a paperclip: we shape and define our reality. We take control of our perspective. We can choose to remain angry. We can choose to walk the nightmarish tightrope we have designated for our lives. We can choose not to forgive. We can choose to remember our child's death and not our child's life. We each will choose to perceive this tragedy differently throughout the process.....from the death of our child until we, ourselves, die.

For those of us in the Compassionate Friends organization, the choice is one of hope. Hope that we can laugh again, hope that we can take the edge from the pain, hope that our child's story will be remembered and told over and over again, hope that we will grow and learn to deal with the worst loss a human can endure. We each hope to learn serenity and find peace.

The process is a long one. The Compassionate Friends are important new companions on this journey because our lives are now divided into two segments: before our child died and after our child died. Many friends from before cannot understand why we don't get on with life. Some avoid us, others berate us, cajole us and generally irritate us because we can't "get over" this loss. Some people from our life before step toward us, stand by us and listen. These people will remain in the second segment of our lives.

This second segment is now thought about as the "after our child died" portion. The people we meet in Compassionate Friends understand us. They are us. They listen and speak with their hearts. They have each experienced the loss of a child. They hurt with us, and their pain is as real as ours. We learn from each other.

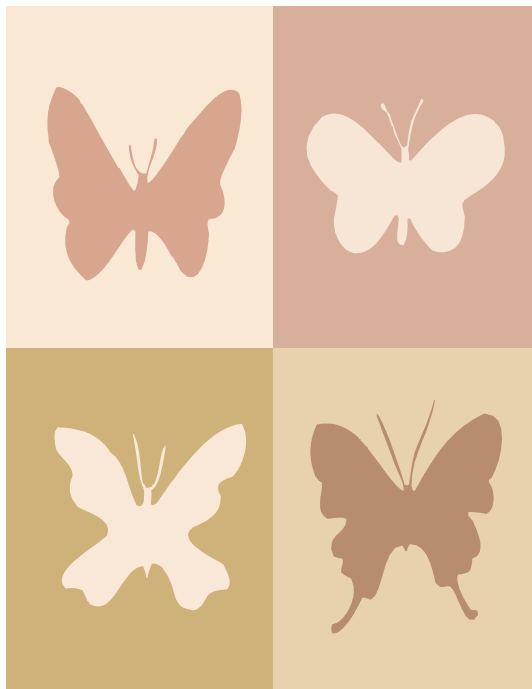
Finding where we fit into the puzzle of life is not an easy task. Our Compassionate Friends will help us on that journey. Some will be years into their grief; some will still be in shock over the recent death of their child. But each of these people chooses to be here for us. They choose to share their pain and their methods of coping and regaining a semblance of a life. They choose to visit with us each month, talk to us on the telephone, e-mail us and be there when we need them. These new friends share our burdens, our heartaches, our triumphs and our biggest tragedy. They help us to focus on the permanently altered core of our being: the loss of our child.

Speaking openly, repeating our child's name and our pain is cathartic. Getting feedback from others who share in our growth is a positive, reinforcing necessity. For if we are to become the person we want to be, we need to hear what others have to say about their journey, their child, our journey and our child. We need to tell them what we have to say as well.

With tears and broken hearts we gather to talk and listen, to share and suggest, to ask and to answer. For we are the Compassionate Friends. We are kindred souls who come from every walk of life but who are bound together by one all-encompassing loss. Our children are dead. We choose to explore our loss, our feelings and our emotions together.

One day each of us will see a new day dawning and feel at peace within ourselves and the world. We will hold our child in our hearts as we gaze upon the beauty and wonder of life on this earth. We will think about our child with joy....joy that our child lived and loved and laughed. And we will remember the continuing hope provided by our Compassionate Friends that helped us find this new place of peace.

TCF Of The Sandhills
PO Box 597
Southern Pines, NC 28388
www.tcfsandhills.org



We are in need of your help. This group belongs to you and can not survive without assistance. You can help with refreshments, during meetings, providing input, help with the newsletter, lending library, volunteering to become a leader of Chapter activities. Part of getting better, sometimes is being there to assist others too through this journey.

