



Salem Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

November / December 2011



"A Nonprofit Self-Help Organization for Families Who Have Experienced the Death of a Child"

Annual Holiday Potluck Dinner

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6 – Arrival time for dinner 6:30 pm

– Program begins at 7:15 pm –

Salem Fire Department Training Center—2740 25th Street SE—Salem, Oregon

We invite all families and friends to join us for an evening of sharing and remembering our children at this tender time of year.



Main entrée, beverages and dessert will be provided. Please feel free to attend whether or not you bring a dish to share — there's always plenty of food.

The evening will include music, poem readings, a special candle lighting; plus the understanding and support of others who know your journey all too well.

A SPECIAL "MEMORY TABLE" WILL BE AVAILABLE TO DISPLAY PICTURES, MEMORY BOXES, SCRAPBOOKS, ETC.



*A thousand words can't bring you back
I know because I tried
And neither can a million tears
I know because I cried*

~ Sarah Ratliff

A SPECIAL MOMENTO OF YOUR CHILD

We hope that you are planning to attend our holiday potluck dinner. We think of it as a kick-off to the holiday season where we come together in a safe environment to sort of test how we'll weather what can often be difficult — those holiday gatherings.

Salem's TCF chapter usually gives a small memento at the potluck to remember the holiday season. This year, we want to provide each of you with a picture button of your TCF child. If this is something you would like, please bring a picture of your child (on regular weight paper, not stiff photographic paper). To appear properly encased within the 2-inch button, the picture should measure approximately 2 ¼ inches in diameter. You may use an actual photograph or a photocopy. Should you wish more than one button, they will be available for a \$2 donation; simply bring pictures for any additional buttons you would like.

If you have any questions, you may call us at 503-743-3930.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

Salem Chapter Monthly Meetings

Salem Hospital Birthing Center, 1st floor meeting room

939 Oak Street, SE ♦ Salem

1st & 3rd Tuesday every month

All meetings are from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Nov/Dec general meetings: Nov. 1 and Dec. 6 — meetings includes two separate break-out sharing times; one for sibling loss and one for baby loss. (Dec. 6 meeting will be the annual Holiday Potluck in place of the usual meeting format.)

Nov/Dec 3rd Tuesday meetings: Nov. 15 and Dec. 20, especially focused on adult child loss

Please call if you have any questions regarding attending these meetings. 503-743-3930 or 503-931-1748
Salem Compassionate Friends ♦ PO Box 13639 ♦ Salem, OR 97309 ♦ (503) 743-3930



“Lebanon General Meeting”

**Lebanon Hospital - 2nd Tuesday every month -
6:30pm to 8:30pm**

525 N. Santiam Hwy in meeting room #3

Go to the back entrance

Nov. 8 and Dec. 13

Please contact Linda Moore at (541) 367-7916 or Janie Erickson at 503-931-1748 if you have questions or need directions.

CHILDREN'S PHOTOS

We invite you to bring photos of your child to share at meetings. It always warms the heart to share stories and pictures of our loved ones. We will have a table available to set photo frames, memory books, or other special mementos for sharing at each meeting.



Join Us on December 11, 2011, for The Compassionate Friends

Worldwide Candle Lighting – on the Capitol Steps

Sign-in 6:00-6:15 pm; Program 6:30 pm; Candles lit from 7:00-8:00 pm

The death of a child is devastating and it is important to the family that the child always be remembered. That is why members of the Salem Chapter of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) will participate in an annual worldwide event designed to honor the memories of all children, regardless of age, who have died. The chapter is joining Sunday, December 11, with hundreds of organized memorial services around the world for The Compassionate Friends 14th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, an event now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting in the world. Candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, creating a virtual wave of light; hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries. Please arrive by 6:45 pm as the event will start promptly at 7:00 pm Hand-held candles will be provided for the candle lighting, and luminaria bags with votive candles will be available for you to write your child's name and a short message or thought. There will be hot chocolate and coffee to warm your hands; and music, poems, and a special time of candlelight remembrance to warm your heart .



The National TCF website at www.compassionatefriends.org will also feature a Remembrance Book on December 11 which, in a 24-hour period , normally receives thousands of tributes from family members and other caring individuals. You are welcome to honor your child in this way on the website.

To volunteer to help with this event, call Salem TCF at 503-743-3930

— Sibling Perspectives —

LITTLE BOY LEFT BEHIND

(Written by Sarah A. Kunz for her brother, John Paul Greni, TCF, Billings, MT)

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Where did you go,
When you could no longer play?
How did things end for you
At the close of the day...

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
What did you want to say,
When no one would listen
And everyone walked away...
No words were spoken
At the close of the day...

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Why did your smile leave you so soon,
Taking all your laughter away...
All you had were tears
At the end of the day...

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Why, Oh, Why,
Were you taken away?

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Why did you turn away,
When things didn't go your way
Why didn't you stay?

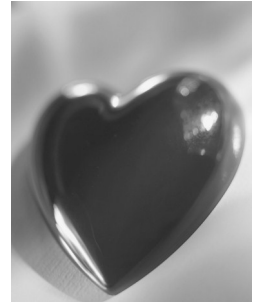
Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Where are you now
On this lonely day?
Did you now find your way?

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
How do you fare,
Since you've gone Up There?
Have you learned to fly
With your new Wings?
Can you hear the Angels Sing?

Oh, Little Boy Left Behind,
Did you not know,
WE LOVED YOU SO...

SAYING GOODBYE

One of the hardest things I ever had to do was to say goodbye to a very special person. This person was special to me in so many ways that, when he died, it was like a part of me was leaving, too! I never thought a relationship between a brother and sister could be so strong.



He seemed more than just a brother. He was also my best friend. We shared a lot of happiness throughout the years we grew up together. Although he was three years older than I, we never really argued or fought. He took me to parties and shared secrets with me. My brother always treated me like a best friend.

When Tony was a senior in high school, he was diagnosed with cancer. I couldn't believe it! I never gave up hope . . . But after two painful years, I finally had to say goodbye to the best friend I've ever had. It was like a bad dream, but I just couldn't wake up. I didn't want to accept the fact that he was gone forever. I would cry myself to sleep every night and again wake up crying. I just couldn't understand why God had taken away my big brother.

After months of mourning, I finally learned to accept his death. I know now that he is finally out of pain. Seeing him sick like that is what hurt me most. It was very hard to say goodbye to my brother, but I will never forget all our good times and our memories. He will remain in my heart and mind forever.

By Kelly Conley, TCF, Cincinnati, OH

You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes; You heal because of what you do with the time.

~ Carol Crandall



Christmas is the Hardest Holiday!

By Darcie Sims

Why is Christmas the hardest holiday? Is it because of all those traditions that mean so much but NOW lie broken and empty in my heart? Is it especially hard NOW . . . because of all the tinsel and tissue? Because of all the crowds dashing madly in and out of stores, buying something wonderful for someone wonderful? Is Christmas hard NOW because I don't need to shop or bake or decorate anymore?

It's been a long time since I endured my first bereaved holiday season. But even NOW, my heart sometimes still echoes with emptiness as I roll out the cookie dough or hang his special ornament on our treasure tree. I think that hurt will always be with me, but now I know it only as a momentary ache . . . not like the first year when grief washed over me in waves, each new wave hurling me deeper and deeper into despair.

And it's not like the second year's hurt when I found myself both surprised and angry that IT hadn't gone away YET. I grew anxious about my sanity in the third year when my hands shook as I unwrapped the precious ornaments. When was I going to get better?!! When was the grief going to end?!! Was I doomed to suffer miserably at every holiday for the rest of my life?!!

The year the little satin balls wouldn't stay on the tree, I gave up. Even the Christmas tree died! As my daughter and I dragged the brittle (and shedding) mess out into the snow drift on Christmas morning, I knew we had reached the bottom. He had died, but we were alive. Had our grief so permeated our house, our lives that even a Christmas tree could not survive? His death was more than enough . . . had we lost love, too?

That was the year we began to understand. And that was the year we decided to keep Christmas anyway. So what if our new completely bare tree was stuck in the snowdrift, already waiting for the garbage men? So what if the cookies were still a bit too salty with tears?

So, in the middle of that Christmas day, we returned to that forlorn, frozen stick of a tree. Carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and suet balls (not quite the same as satin!). I'm sure we were a strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began to let the hurt out and make room for the healing to begin.

With each kernel strung, we found ourselves remembering. Some memories came with pain. Others began to grow with us . . . warming heart — places we thought had frozen long ago. By the time we were finished, we were exhausted. Memories take a lot of work! At last WE had a tree, although it was not the one we were expecting. But we had one, decorated with tears and memories, sadness and remembered laughter.

And now we've grown older (and maybe a little wiser) and we've learned that love isn't something that you toss out, bury, pack away or forget. Love isn't something that ends with death. Life can become good and whole and complete once again . . . not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within a hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

We saved a tiny twig from that frozen tree . . . to remind us of what we almost lost. That was the year we chose to let Christmas come back. Now we don't have to wait for joy to return. For now we know it lives with us . . . where Christmas is EVERY DAY.

Darcie Sims

Love Gifts —

A Love Gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends for the purpose of running the Salem Chapter. It is usually given in memory of a child who died; however, it may also be from individuals who want to honor a friend or relative. It may be in thanksgiving that their children are alive and well, or simply a gift of support for the work of TCF. Others in the community make contributions because they want to help us with the newsletter, meeting costs, resource information for newly bereaved families, or expenses related to special events like the Worldwide Candle Lighting on the Capitol steps each December.

The simple truth is that without your support, there would be little possibility for this group to exist.

All gifts are needed, welcome, and truly appreciated.

“In loving memory of our sweet daughter,”

Piper Joy Newell

Tom and Cece Newell (Mom and Dad)

In loving memory of

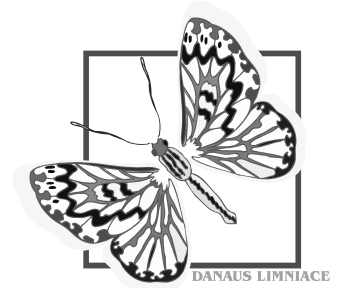
Mike Tibbets

Pauline Tibbets (Mom)

“In memory of my love,”

Jacqueline Smith Eckley

D. Annie Ford (Mom)



REMINDER:

Deadline for Love Gifts to be acknowledged in the **Jan/Feb** newsletter is **12/15/11**

If you wish to make a tax-deductible LOVE GIFT donation, fill the information below, send with a check for any amount to:
Salem TCF, PO BOX 13639 Salem, OR 97309

Month you would like it printed in newsletter: _____ Donation Amount: _____

Childs Name: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Date of Death: ____/____/____

Special Message (please include how you would like your message to read: _____

Your Name: _____ Telephone or email : _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Our Children Loved and Remembered

*November
Birthdays*



*December
Birthdays*



Confidential
Not available online

...That their light may always shine...

We know how important it is for your child's name to be included on this page. We apologize if we missed anyone. We encourage you to notify us if you notice an error or if you would like us to update information. Please email us at info@salemctf.org or write to us at: PO BOX 13639 Salem, OR 97309.

Our Children Loved and Remembered

*November
Anniversaries*



Confidential
Not available online

*December
Anniversaries*



I'll Never Be the Same

Confusion reigns within my heart, within my soul, because
I know I cannot ever be the woman I once was.
How can I be complete and whole when part of me is gone...
a special part...a precious part...the part that was my son?
Conceived in love, how gratefully I bore you...filled with pride;
a bit of my heart, a bit of my soul went with you when you died.
One cannot lose a child to death and still remain the same,
untouched by tears of emptiness, undaunted by the pain.
The cruelest nightmares come to pass, life's bitterest pill to swallow;
in light of this, I can endure all else that's left to follow.
There's nothing that can fill the empty spaces that remain,
I've tried and failed so many times, I cannot try again.
No trying to regain the past...that's all a bitter sham.
It's time that I resign myself to being who I am.
To be the woman I've become (not acting out a part)...
a mother with a shattered dream and a broken heart.

- Peggy Kociscin, Albuquerque, NM

SOMEDAY

Someday, it won't hurt so bad and I'll be able to smile again.

Someday, the tears won't flow quite as freely
whenever I think of what might have been.

Someday, the answers to "why" and "what if"
won't be quite as important.

Someday, I'll be able to use what your death has taught me
to help others with their grief.

Someday I'll be healed enough to celebrate your life
as much as I now dwell on your death.

And someday, maybe tomorrow,
I'll learn to accept the things I cannot change...
but, for today...I think I'll just be sad.

- Author unknown

November Again

November again,
almost winter.
Muted world outside,
faded red, misty yellow —
Even the hardest wind
seems kind enough,
because we know, we know
that stormy blasts
lie waiting.

November again,
almost winter.
Gently the heart reaches
for the awareness
of things to come.
Holidays, so we call them,
gently, the heart turns
to Christmas.

Songs everywhere, and lights,
gently the heart
must remember
the things gone by,
the time gone by,
the child gone by.

November again.

sascha
again from sascha



CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT

by Annette Mennen Baldwin, Mom of Todd Mennen

As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone, along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality of holidays without our children.

This will be my fifth Christmas without my son, Todd. It will be my fourth Christmas without his children. And yet, I find that on some small level, I am looking forward to the holiday. I imagine the Christmases of the past when Todd was growing up and after he started his family. I also imagine Christmases of the future where Todd's children share in the traditions that their Dad so dearly loved. But that won't happen. I have come to accept that wives and children go on with their lives. I have come to accept that my son's children will not be a part of their father's family, his heritage or his legacy. That is the reality. But I have also found that wonderful people can help make the holiday special.

We won't be decorating this year, but we haven't decorated for five years. We have changed our traditions — traditions that Todd loved so much. It is simply too painful to do this alone. Christmas will never be what it once was, but I no longer dread the holidays as I once did.

Some of my Compassionate Friends have returned to old traditions with their surviving children and maybe even with grandchildren. Each of us learns to deal with Christmas in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. Next year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is changing.

Find what is right for you. Pressures from others mean nothing. You choose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You choose the old traditions or you choose some new ones ... maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas as well.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this, and every Christmas Holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose. May we all have serenity throughout the Holiday season and in the years ahead.

ONLY DECEMBER

By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

Feelings heavy,
tears and tears.

Will the darkness last?

Or is it —

only December?

Hadn't past months

brought peace and hope?

Where is the strength

of October —

and November?

Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,

cards from friends,

happy times in seasons past.

We remember.

We remember.

Will January bring

light at last?

Will we be stronger then,

for making it through

this December?

When people ask

how I'm doing, I say,

Well . . . You know . . .

It's December.

The Holiday Season Without My Child

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.

In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue – a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent's tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: *give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it.*

The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heartbreaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings. We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable.

We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions... perhaps not. Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible.

We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our

family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations. By "dropping out" we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer. The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures. A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to "go with the flow" of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else.

One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality.

We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
(Myrtle Beach, SC TCF Chapter Newsletter)

We need not Walk Alone, We are Compassionate Friends.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, non-sectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, siblings and extended family members.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

We are all volunteers, bereaved parents ourselves, and we offer a safe and open environment for everyone to share stories of their child and discuss the many new experiences we encounter as we learn to live out "New" life without our loved one.

Grief is a life-long journey. Not every step you take will move you forward; please accept our hands offered in kindness and caring.



We need not walk alone.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is 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 be supportive.

*There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept,
things we don't want to know but have to learn,
and people we can't live without but have to let go.*

~ Author Unknown

Circle of Friends...

Do you need to talk with someone who understands and has experienced a similar loss? The parents and siblings listed below have expressed their willingness to listen. If you have questions or need a more specific referral, please call TCF at (503) 743-3930 or email us at: help@salemctf.org

Remember, you are not alone.


Nephew, teen, homicide & Infant Son	Sue Fowler	503-378-1845 or 503-779-7711
Son, 25, suicide	Mardis Hartley	503-585-2012
Son, 20, homicide/police	Laird Case	503-428-1321
Daughter, 5, accident	Jake & Daphne Greer	503-623-5044
Son, 20, accident	Diane Gish	503-362-2970
Miscarriage	Vickie Thompson	503-507-8475
Stepson, 20, homicide	Debbie Case	503-428-1322
Son, 5, accident	Jack & Linda Standeven	541-745-3914

The Salem Chapter of The Compassionate Friends operates solely with voluntary tax-deductible donations. Monetary gifts in any amount are appreciated.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Tuesday, December 6: Holiday Potluck for the whole family (details on page 1)

Sunday, December 11: Worldwide Candle Lighting (details on page 2)




THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

Worldwide Candle Lighting®

... that their light may always shine.

Sunday, December 11, 2011



Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things — Robert Brault

**Salem Chapter
The Compassionate Friends
PO Box 13639
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(503) 743-3930**

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Salem, Oregon Chapter
P.O. Box 13639
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