



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

THIS MONTH: OCTOBER 2016 ISSUE



This Month: *Handling the Holidays*

MUSINGS ON HALLOWEEN, PAST AND PRESENT

As I type this, the nip in the October air is a reminder that the major holidays are just around the corner. Halloween paraphernalia has been in the stores since July with Christmas decorations right behind them. For those of us who are bereaved parents, this means the sooner the décor is on the store shelves, the longer we have the constant reminders that we will be facing the holidays without our child present. Whether this is your first Halloween following their death or years down the road, such as in my situation, the holiday season stirs the emotions. For example, with Halloween, there could be the sorrow of no longer having to find that perfect costume or witnessing the delight in your child's eyes as they head out the door to trick-or-treat. If your child was an adult when they died, perhaps it is your old memories of Halloweens when they were youngsters. And there are those whose children died before they ever had the opportunity to create memories, the sadness that they were never able to experience even one holiday with that child.



Halloween can be particularly hard to get through. In the past, I always thought of it as innocuous enough; costume parties, children excitedly dashing door-to-door looking for treats, pumpkin carving, and the occasional harmless prank. However, after my daughter Nina died, I became acutely aware of things that I had never given a second thought. For instance, my neighbor made their whole front yard into a graveyard scene of fake headstones with scary or silly epitaphs on them, and terrifying creatures coming out of the earth. Before Nina died, I also found cemeteries "creepy", but now look at them differently, even with a sort of reverence. I no longer have a problem going out to my daughter's grave-site, even in the middle of the night. I find the

solitude of the historic countryside graveyard where she lays peaceful, dignified and worthy of respect. I was hurt by what I felt was ridicule and disdain for the final resting place of our loved ones' physical bodies. In addition, some of the masks portrayed faces of death in a way that I found highly offensive, especially since I knew many who lost their children to some of the means depicted. I perceived it as a mockery of the tragedies that these families suffered.

Though I still don't pretend to understand the allure of the above-mentioned Halloween depictions, they aren't as painful to me as they were the first few years after Nina died. Especially in the early grief years, we become hypersensitive to our surroundings and more keenly aware of anything related to death. It is pretty hard to look past the non-bereaved populations seeming nonchalance about something we take so personally. Though we wish there was more understanding, we also know all too well that they cannot truly

(continued on page 3)

Steering Committee

CHAPTER CONTACTS

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Steve Roberts (682) 583-0125
sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

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Newsletter

Position Open

Librarian

Position Open

Welcome Bags

Janet DuPertuis

Committee Members

Jeff & Marty Martin

Jerry & Sharon Austry

Charles & Genie Dean

Lydia Moore

Mark Deegear

Jaye Sanford

Today

The future depends
on what we do in the
present.

Mahatma Gandhi

Need to Talk?

Listed below are parents, grandparents and siblings who have walked where you are today.

If you are having a difficult day and just want to talk, please call.

Addiction

Helen (817) 431-6964

Auto

Jeff & Marty
(817) 475-9141

Grandchild/

Multiple Loss

Lydia (817) 829-3801

Drowning

Debi (817) 270-3275

Drowning (Young Child)

Stacy (817) 656-7540
or (817) 845-3433

Long Term Illness

Marty (817) 636-5645

Homicide (Only Child)

Steve (682) 583-0125
sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

Suicide (Only Child)

Joy (817) 453-2227

Siblings

Jaye (817) 624-7043

Premature Infant(s)

Amy (817) 944-1710
amytori12@hotmail.com



Middle of the night calls

Liz (817) 726-3999

HOLIDAY MEMORIAL

The Fort Worth Chapter Memorial will be a time to take a break from the world and

come together as kindred spirits during the Holiday season and remember that our children, our grandchildren, our brothers and our sisters are no longer physically here on earth, but they are ALL still with us in spirit and always will be. We remind ourselves that we are richer because they LIVED and there is a vast measure of love, of tenderness, of fulfillment and a sense of purpose that we could not have enjoyed had it not been for them. They opened a new dimension of love to us. How grateful we are for that gift!

The memorial will begin promptly at 6:30pm at Arborlawn United Methodist Church, 5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth. Dinner will be served immediately following the memorial event and this memorial is for the entire family of all ages, so feel free to bring guests to share this evening with.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Bring One Picture to Display:

Please bring an 8 x 10 or smaller picture of your loved one to place a candle in front of at least 20 minutes prior to the event. Each family will receive a copy of the program with each loved one's picture, as well as a rose and seed paper ornament to place.

Send One Picture to be in the Program:

Please notify Mike Bills by **October 15th** if you want your loved one's picture to be included in the program, **even if you just**

want to use the same picture as last year.

E-mail a picture to mbills@locallyowned.org. Please list the "NOVEMBER MEMORIAL" in the subject line of your e-mail. Mike will reply to all e-mails that he receives, so if you do not receive a return e-mail from him within 24 hours,



please e-mail the picture again or call or text Mike at (817) 371-5120. If you do not have e-mail, you may also mail a picture to Jim Ortner at 2301 N. Sylvania Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76111. Mailed pictures will be returned.

Please bring a favorite dessert to share.

SNOW

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again—even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

Denise Falzon
TCF Lake Area, MI

TCF National Office — The Compassionate Friends . P. O. Box 3696 . Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Fax: (630) 990-0246 Call toll-free: (877) 969-0010 9 A.M. - 5 P.M., CST, Monday-Friday.

Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org Website: www.compassionatefriends.org The website contains links to TCF's national and regional conferences, brochures, e-newsletter, online support community, *We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine, "Healing the Grieving Heart" and "The Open to Hope Show" radio program archives, webinars, chapter websites, and other resources. **Regional Coordinator:** Bill Campbell 972-935-0673 jobill@sbcglobal.net

Facebook: The Compassionate Friends/USA **In Spanish:** Los Amigos Compasivos/USA **Twitter:** Text follow TCFofUSA to 40404

HALLOWEEN (CONTINUED)

empathize unless they have walked in our shoes. It is easy to forget that, before our children's deaths, we too may have shown the same indifference. We'd like to think that we would not have been so callous because we now know firsthand how much this hurts those affected. However, before we lost our "innocence", truth be told, we probably didn't give any of it much thought.

On this 10th Halloween without Nina, I do my best to ignore all the ghouliness surrounding this time of year. If I do find I am having difficulty, I try very hard to focus on positive memories of Halloween's past, such as her grade-school costume party where our basement became a makeshift haunted house where blindfolded "witches" and "fairy princesses" shrieked and giggled as they plunged their hands into bowls full of peeled grape "eyeballs" and wet macaroni "brains". Or the photos I have of her in different costumes over the years, from Care Bear to Punk Rocker. Then there is the photo taken of Nina on her last Halloween. No longer of trick-or-treat age, she stayed home to pass out the candy and carved her own Jack-O-Lantern that she is pictured proudly alongside, with her ever-present smile and that wonderful twinkle in her brown eyes; such precious memories...

For those with a missing trick-or-treater this Halloween, the first holidays are the most difficult. Though I find they are easier to bear as time marches on, there will always be the awareness that someone so loved is absent from the family gatherings. Remember that this roller-coaster grief-ride brings different feelings with each passing year. It is important to allow those feelings—whatever they may be—and let them happen. Try not to be waylaid by other's expectations of you. Trust your instincts. Truly, only you know what is best for you.

Cathy L. Sehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

AUTUMN TEARS

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.



and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss—the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have—the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

Penny Young
TCF Powell River, British Columbia

LOVE GIFTS



Love Gifts are a thoughtful way to remember our precious children and can be made **ONLINE** on our website or by sending your donation to:

Steve Roberts
P.O. Box 734
Euless, TX 76039

AUTUMN

In the fall
When amber
leaves are
shed,
Softly—
silently
Like tears that
wait to flow,
I watch and
grieve.
My heart beats
sadly in the
fall;
'Tis then I miss
you most of
all.

Lily de Lauder
TCF Van Nuys, CA

Visit our website for
more Online Grief
Resources





**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Fort Worth Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

2301 N. Sylvania Ave.

Fort Worth, TX 76111

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

WWW.THECOMPASSIONATEFRIENDSFW.COM



October 2016

Fort Worth Chapter Meeting

**We meet the 2nd Tuesday
of every month.**

Meeting Time: 7 P.M.—9 P.M.

This Month's Program

Handling the Holidays

Refreshments

Please feel free to bring refreshments to share.

~ *Paper Goods and Drinks are provided* ~

ARBORLAWN UNITED METHODIST

CHURCH - ROOM 271

5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth

A Special Message

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering.

Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special feeling at meetings of **The Compassionate Friends.**