

Volume 19, Issue 2

The Compassionate Friends Fayetteville Area Chapter





Bread Crumbs—Finding Our Way Back



Bread crumbs are all we have.

They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says *"Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep."* We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice-a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas

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and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest—to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest—but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

Spe

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently—and I believe better—than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around—from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?"

Continued on page 2

Our Quarterly News

At our last meeting we discussed getting together to make a memory item. There was much interest in this project. This would take place at a different time and place than our meeting. We will continue to make plans for this project. One idea was to make a pillow of fabric yo-yos using an article of our children's clothing. All ideas are welcome.

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is coming up in July. For complete details go to www.compassionatefriends.org.

Jennifer German

Our Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, With understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at All ages and from many different Causes, but our love for them 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, creeds and relationships.

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;

While some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, Filled with guilt or in deep depression; While 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 the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling To build a future for ourselves, But we are committed to Building that future together We reach out to each other in love to 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.

We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love. We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to died, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But, Honey," the mother said. "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come *from* the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "there is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come *after* the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in State Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

> Rich Edler In Memory of my son, Mark

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Sibling Walking Together

(Formerly The Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the death of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us. But have patience with us. Sometimes we need the support of

our friends. At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we feel we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet, we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.



Do I Have To?

Mom, do I have to stop loving my brother because he is not here? Will I forget all about him because he's not near? I remember all the things we did together, even though we were very young. I laugh and feel warm each time I think of a particularly funny one. Sometimes I get so angry that he's no longer here to share, But I know he knows it's only because of how much I still care.

I miss him, so even though at times we didn't agree, Just knowing he was there made things feel safe for me. He always felt he had to be my strong, protective big brother, And that's a bond we'll always share forever with each other.

He tried to protect me even when he, too, was just scared. No, I won't stop loving that big brother of mine, Not now, not ever, not till the end of time. He will always be a part of what makes me be me. And that's the part of our love that will live eternally.

> Jackie Rosen TCF N.Dade/S. Broward, FL

A Tribute to my Sister Lori Lee Smith

I Saw You

I saw you today in the morning dew As brilliant as a sea of shimmering diamonds I shared the most amazing sunrise with you today A million shades of red so random in their perfection I heard you today in the laugh of my children An enchanting melody a thousand angels strong I walked with you today and we talked about everything . . . and nothing all at once I saw you today in the changing of the leaves The colors of your life, the close of one season And the ushering in of another I sat beside a stream with you today The peaceful flow, steady and constant I saw you today . . . and you were perfect And rest assured . . . I shall see you again

> Avery Smith TCF Ada Area Chapter

THE ANNIVERSARY

Let me be sad today, Give me this day to mourn. It's the date my little son died, And also the date he was born.

Let me think back to his birth The fear of viewing him, dead. Memories of holding him close, And cradling his little head.

Allow me to visit his grave, To let a few balloons go, To place flowers lovingly, And trim the grass that does grow.

Allow me tears to cry, Love fills my heart to the brim Spilling it on those close by. While always longing for him

Elizabeth Dent TCF McMinnville, OR

Second Sunday of May

Many happy memories Linger in our hearts this day As we each remember our child Who has left this earthly plane. The day is bittersweet for us, The mothers who have lost so much, For to remove all pain could well Erase the precious life we touched. Tears will trace the memories of Other, happier Mother's Days, As we dwell in a quiet reverie This Second Sunday of May

> Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

MEETINGS

First Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm February through May meetings will be held in room 210 of the General Class Building at Fayetteville Technical Community College. 2817 Ft. Bragg Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303 (across the street from the Barbeque Hut). Meeting location and information will always be posted on our website www.tcffayetteville.org

Contact Jennifer German at (910) 245-3177 or jojegerman@outlook.com if you have any questions.

SPRING'S TEARS

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent blue A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew. Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.

It is this vow of nature's of resurgence in the spring That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my suffering. For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.

For nature has no power over death that holds you still, And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil. Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face! To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.

Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are done?

Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new dawn

and feel the warmth of sunshine relish in the greening earth... to open arms, embracing life why can't it be YOUR birth?

You were so young, your life so new when death crept in the door, And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes 'round each year Yet in your grave you're silent still, and I condemned

am here.

Sally Migliaccio TCF Babylon, NY In Memory of Tracey

SOMETIMES...

"Sometimes, I still don't believe it," My husband said to me. We had gone to bed, said our goodnights And were resting comfortably. My reply was short and to the point. I simply said, "I know," Though it's been eight years since you have died Chip, we miss you so. The memories of our life with you Are treasures that we share. For nineteen years we loved you well While you were in our care. So once again we said goodnight. But before this we did pray. This was a very poignant night. This night was Father's Day. Nancy McKeaney In Memory

of my son, Chip TCF North Penn Chapter, PA

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Love Gifts

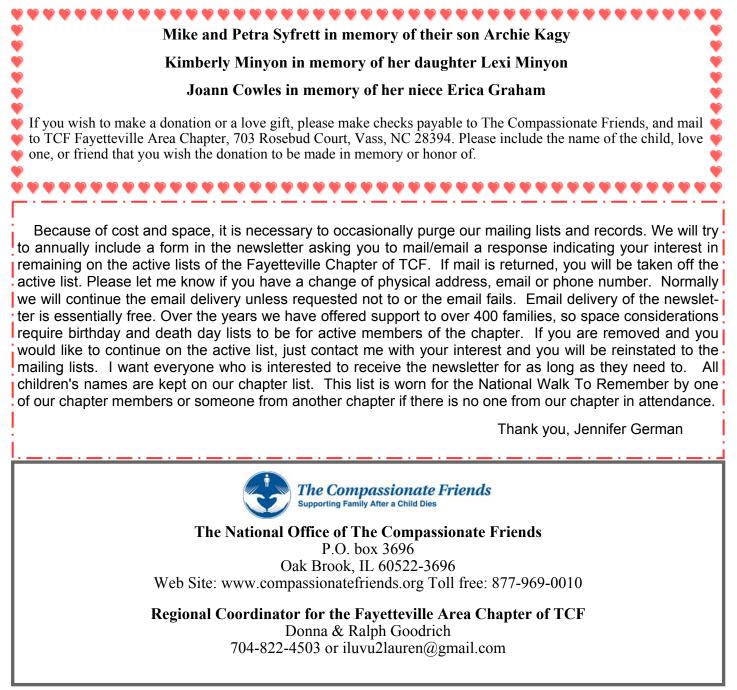
A Love Gift is a donation to honor a child who has died, or as a memorial for a relative or friend.

The Compassionate Friends depends entirely on voluntary

contributions from individuals and organizations to meet chapter expenses. TCF is a 504(c)(3) non-profit organization: all donations are tax deductible.

100% of every dollar donated goes toward chapter expenses.

We thank the following for their kind generosity, love and sharing. There are no dues. We have already paid the ultimate price to be a member.



Memories Surround Me

I have learned that there is a comfort in keeping my son here, beside me, sharing my life's journey as he once did. No, he is not here in a physical sense. He is here in my memories and in my daily life. I keep his presence alive on the earthly plane.

In my home are pictures that remind me of my child's life. A picture in an announcement....a beautiful, sleeping baby boy who is just one day old. Next to that is one of my son standing beside his GTO. Now I can relive any year of my son's 35 years of life. Whether it is high school graduation or graduation from Texas A&M, there is Todd...smiling, happy, radiating the joy of his accomplishments. He's in the pool as a teenager and then on another shelf, he's holding his daughters, one in each arm, as he stands in that same pool. Smiling, always smiling. Todd loved life. He looked forward to each new adventure. This is portrayed in all the pictures displayed and those that are yet to be brought out from their hiding places.

In my bedroom is a wood shop project that Todd made for me when he was in eighth grade. It is an alpaca, which rests on a wall stand. Todd made these treasures with his hands; his name is forever etched into both pieces. Each week I lovingly dust that alpaca and its shelf and remember how proud my son was of his first woodshop accomplishment.

And then there are the projects from the "macramé summer." Todd made a lovely plant holder for me and then he boldly went to a large wall design that is something akin to a dream catcher. It has always been displayed in the atrium of my home. Each time I walk past it, I reach out and touch it and feel the love that went into this creation. Ironically, I now have another dream catcher attached to the one that Todd made. This is the dream catcher with his picture and my words of remembrance that were written for the National Compassionate Friends Conference in Oklahoma City. I touch them both now....remembering my beautiful child.

In my bedroom is a Queen Ann desk. This was purchased and refinished by my son during his "wood working summer" in high school. He painstakingly sanded and worked the wood to a smooth finish. Then he used fine sand paper and later steel wool to finish the staining and glossing process. It is a beautiful desk with a fold out writing area, tiny drawers and hidden compartments. I keep much in this desk. Every night as I am getting ready for bed, I touch Todd's desk.

In 1994 Todd and I went out for Mother's Day dinner and later we stopped and picked out a new washing machine. Todd recommended the Amana. I trusted his judgment. I bought the Amana. Each week when I do laundry, I wipe off the washing machine and remember that shopping trip, his words of "keep it simple, Mom, and you won't have to worry about repairs" and consider that he gave me some good advice and a wonderful memory that day.

Other items come to mind each day. In my home office is plant pot made by the eight year old hands of my son. Small pieces of fabric were lovingly glued to the pot to create an interesting look. I have kept that pot all these years. He was so proud of it; that's a Mother's Day present I'll not forget. Each time I look at it, I think of Todd.

Next to my kitchen phone is a pencil holder that Todd made in second grade. It has been in use since then. It's simply part of who I am and will always be. Each week I clean out the inside and replace the pens and pencils. One of the pencils, never used, contains the words "It's a Boy!" on it. That is the pencil that Todd gave me when his son was born. He was so proud of his baby boy. What a great father he was. Memories are everywhere in my home and my office, in my car and even in places that I go. Todd was here, we did this there....I remember when we all met at Ritter's Ice Cream every Saturday night to look at the other collector cars. When I drive by there, I can see Todd, GTO gleaming, hood up, talking with other aficionados, holding a child in one arm, gesturing with the other hand to demonstrate one thing or another.

At night, after I touch the desk that was so lovingly restored, I look at the wall next to my bed. Two reproductions of German paintings brighten this wall. These are pictures that Todd bought for me when he was in Germany on an exchange program with Texas A&M. I always look at them as I begin my reading, and then, before I turn out the light, I look at them and think about my son and tomorrow. I remember Todd's glorious European adventure, smile at the joy that is his life and turn out the light. These pictures are the last things I see before I sleep. Good night, Todd. I'm so glad you gave me so much of yourself to treasure, but I wish you were here. Your mom misses you.

> Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX





Quiet Courage

I have seen much courage in my life. Many types of bravery have inspired me. I am astonished by the courage of the elderly widow who buries her husband, quietly sells most of her personal belongings, furnishings and home and moves into a tiny apartment so that she can survive until death takes her, too.

I am distressed by the youthful courage demonstrated every day by soldiers who were high school kids heading for homecoming last year but who now serve in dangerous, hostile places fighting an enemy who is invisible in the crowd. The law enforcement memorial in Washington, D.C., speaks of the many brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to keep anarchy at bay. The EMS and fire fighting people who hold strong to tradition and put themselves in harm's way each day to save others amaze me with their dedication and devotion to duty.

The single mother who works two jobs, raises her children, cares for them in times of illness, keeps a home, cooks, cleans and still finds time to bake cookies for the PTA fundraiser is a heroine who is doomed to remain faceless and unknown. Yet the courage to start each new day in the hope of making a better life for her children drives her forward.

There are all types of courage in this life. All are impressive, all are worthy of praise and all set standards for us to emulate.

But the deepest, most compelling courage I have seen in my life is that of the parent who has lost a child to death. Each has experienced total helplessness and real physical pain in their loss. Raw in their grief, they join our Compassionate Friends group. I am struck by how weakened in spirit these parents are, how tenuous their hold on sanity must surely be. Yet these parents quietly enter our meeting room and face the unknown with tears in their eyes and tremendous weight in their hearts. Their world is upside down, their children have died and the pain and loss seem insurmountable. They have been snatched out of their former reality and slammed into the depths of hell by a cosmic force more intense than a tsunami. These moms and dads who have lost their beautiful child listen quietly as others talk of children who have lived for years in their parents' hearts. Each parent tells a story, each voice breaks, each heart breaks as a lost child's name echoes in the quiet room. The courage to acknowledge and face this new reality and look for hope in the midst of this infinite despair is a pure wonderment.

What pain is in this room? What deep, agonizing loss is systemic within this group? What will I say? How can I relate when I cannot even remember what day it is? How can I go on for one more day? These are the agonizing feelings of the newly bereaved parent. The Compassionate Friends meeting is the place they have chosen to begin their journey into what they perceive as a hideous, horrible, dark and unknown future. Yet their courage to face this, the greatest loss any human could possibly endure, is extraordinary. The power of the mind to begin to see reason, to begin to seek hope, to climb this mountain of trauma and travail cannot be overstated. This power is pure courage, raw courage, desperate courage, but courage in its purest form.

Each meeting brings the dread of facing the reality of their child's death. Yet the parents who have lost so much return to talk, to listen, to understand, to move into the light of hope. Gradually an understanding develops. Slowly each parent learns we must continue to live and honor our child. They light candles, visit cemeteries, fund scholarships, write poetry, raise funds to help others....all in memory of their precious children. They reach out to other parents who are newly bereaved, listening, talking and listening again with their hearts. Occasionally they smile. Then one day they laugh. The journey is long, the grief work is difficult, the pain is forever, yet they keep on moving forward into the light.

There are no medals, no press releases, no television appearances, no accolades, no parades. The deepest, soul-permeating, life changing and amazing courage is found here. As I look at my Compassion-ate Friends I am awe-struck by the rare and quiet courage that fills this room.

Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Birthday's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:

<u>April</u>

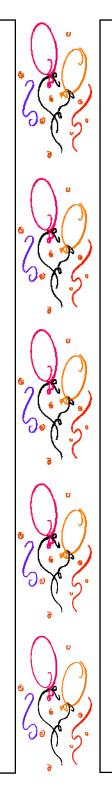
Joey Jackson April 1 Christine Gable Powell April 8 Anthony "Brian" Smith April 10 Ralph Lanier April 14 Amy Zinsser April 21 Izhia Kraut April 23 Scott Tyree April 26

May

Thomas Payne Hollers May 22 Michael Cline May 28

<u>June</u>

Michael Pizzarella June 5 Amy Elizabeth German June 8 Christopher Hrvoj June 8 Melissa Thornton June 16 Christopher Ortega June 20 James "Randy" Smith June 25



Bereaved Birthdays

Birthdays are a time for celebration Not a time for tears But what happens when the birthdays No longer mark the years?

A birthday marks the moment A spirit enters earthly life To share it's special love and joy And learn from earthly strife.

Before a spirit comes to us It knows when and how it must depart It chose it's path carefully We are honored from the start.

The sadness we now feel On such a joyous day Is longing for our loved one's touch It's natural to feel this way.

For even though the birthdays No longer mark a spirit's stay Love continues on forever To touch us everyday.

So hug your precious memories Closer to your heart And honor your beloved spirit child Who chose you from the start.

Unknown author



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS APRIL 2015



Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Angel Date's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:



<u>April</u>

Christine Gable Powell April 5 Michael Cline April 9 Manzonian Hall April 9 Glenda Hudson April 16 Ian Redshaw April 18 Christopher "Chris" Hondros April 20 Izhia Kraut April 23 Lamont Saffore April 24 <u>May</u> Derrell Lee Dean May 17 Thomas Payne Hollers May 22

Lexi Minyon May 25

Christine Bailey May 25

Amber Marie Hall May 26

Robert Stevens May 28

<u>June</u>

Querokee Vélez June 4 Randy Lee Dalton June 22 Keith Parker June 22 Joey Jackson June 29



ANNIVERSARY DATE IN HEAVEN

Your Anniversary date in Heaven is growing near, And I miss you so much with each passing year. I think of you and my heart constricts in pain, And I question whether I'll ever be whole again. I wonder if you count the time as I do. Since you left us for Heaven - is it still new to vou? Or does time count in Heaven like it does for us here? Do we seem far away to you? - or do we feel near? So many questions arise in my mind. Questions like: "Do you miss us since you left us behind? Is it possible for you to be sad? - for you to feel pain? Do you question why this happened? Do you feel the same? The answers to my questions will be mine someday, As I cross to where you are through Heaven's pearly gates. Then I will know the joy that you experience there. And we will be together, forever in Heaven so fair Oh, how I wished God had made a plan, Where loved ones in Heaven could reach down to man. Just one simple word - just one gentle touch -But who am I fooling? Once would never be enough! There are no words to describe the unspeakable pain. Of losing a child - Our loss is God's gain! So, Happy anniversary in Heaven, my precious child, so dear. I'm so glad you're there with God ---if I can't have you here. -By Faye McCord

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