



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
LEXINGTON - BLUEGRASS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER
207 RINEY B WAY
NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356

NOVEMBER, & DECEMBER
2007 / JANUARY 2008

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS:

JIM S. & STEPHANIE M.

Treasurer and Newsletter Mailings:
Newsletter Editor:
Hospitality:

David & Janie F.
Brandi K.
Karla S.



WELCOME

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health. The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, and co-workers and professionals, to be supportive.

MEETING INFORMATION

3rd Monday of Every Month—6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
HOSPICE OF THE BLUEGRASS ▪ 2321 Alexandria Drive ▪ Lexington, Kentucky

MEETING FORMAT

6:00 p.m.—Doors Open. This is a good time to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Be sure to check out the library.

6:30 p.m.—Meeting Begins. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.

Meeting Topics

October—Guest Speaker Linda Clark from Kentucky Organ Donor Association

November—Janie F.: *Handling the Holidays*

December: Candle Lighting Ceremony / Potluck

Telephone Friends—sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort:

JIM SIMS: (859) 858-8288 / (859) 797-2168
MONIQUE PODGORSKI: (859) 381-8256

ANNE AND BOB McDONNELL: (859) 278-8965
CONNIE KOTZBAUER: (859) 273-3645

Note—if you would like to submit original poems or articles to be included in the newsletter please email them to brandikoenig@gmail.com and put SUBMISSION in the subject line. Thanks!

Bluegrass Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Regional Coordinator: Karen Cantrell — (502) 320-6438
The Compassionate Friends National Office ▪ P.O. Box 3696 ▪ Oak Brook, IL 60522 ▪ (877) 969-0010



RAMBLINGS FROM A CLUTTERED MIND

It's that time of year again.....the holidays! Most people light up and get all excited about the holidays, but for bereaved parents "holidays" is like a four-letter word. Sure, we want to be happy, celebrate, and fellowship with family and friends. However, each year we are reminded of the child or children that we can't do all those things with.

Question: What should I do for the holidays?

Answer: Do what you want.

I have been coming to TCF meeting for the last three years, and I have learned that we all do different things. The range of ideas is wide and far-reaching. Some of us leave the city and hide out during the holidays, some of us don't decorate or put up a tree, some of us decorate trees with all the butterfly ornaments we can find, while other proceed as if it just another day. So, you see, we do what we want. And sometimes we find that what we think we want is not truly what we want and that is OK, too. If this is your first holiday without your child, play it by ear. Come up with a plan and if it works...great. If it doesn't, try something else. If you feel like crying, do that. If you feel like throwing eggs, do that too. But whatever you do, do it for you and your child because that is what you want to do.

I want to also take this opportunity to invite each of you and your family to our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony on December 9, 2007 at South Elkhorn Christian Church (Harrodsburg Road) at 6:30 pm. Please join all the bereaved parents across the world as we remember our children. I hope to see you there!

Stephanie

WE WELCOME YOU WITH COMPASSION, LOVE, & HOPE

It is always difficult to say "welcome" to people coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially if they are newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.

We mourn the loss of our children, but rejoice in their lives.



To love is to receive a glimpse of heaven. — Karen Sunde





NATIONAL NEWS AND NOTES



When a child has died, it seems like the world has stopped. Small tasks become like giant mountains. Purchasing those items necessary to go on with life is raised from an inconvenience to nearly insurmountable obstacles.

Now you can relieve some of that burden to yourself and support TCF's efforts to help bereaved families throughout the United States by making your purchases through TCF's new online shopping mall partner, **iGive.com**. where **up to 26%** of the price of your purchase is donated back to The Compassionate Friends to help it fund its many national programs.

All you have to do is sign up at www.iGive.com/TheCompassionateFriends, designating The Compassionate Friends as your charity of choice. If you then make a purchase within 45 days from any of the participating iGive.com stores, TCF will receive a \$5 donation from iGive.com. in addition to the normal percentage from the purchase from that store. You can enter anytime through the link toward the bottom of The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org.

Participating stores include such well-known names as Apple iTunes, Barnes & Noble, Best Buy, Dell, Drugstore.com., Eddie Bauer, e-bay, Enterprise, GAP, Home Depot, Hilton Hotels, Hotels.com., Hotwire, JCPenney, Kohl's, Land's End, L.L. Bean, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Office Depot, Office Max, Priceline, QVC, Radio Shack, Saks Fifth Ave, Thrifty Car Rental, and United Airlines. There are **hundreds** of additional large and small specialty and general merchandise stores. For a complete list, visit www.igive.com/html/mall.cfm.

Thank you for supporting The Compassionate Friends!

LOCAL NEWS AND NOTES



...that their
light may
always shine.

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY AND POTLUCK DINNER—Sunday, December 9, we will hold our annual National Candle Lighting Ceremony at 6:00 p.m. at South Elkhorn Christian Church. In addition, we will hold another ceremony at our December meeting on December 17. This meeting will be a potluck dinner, so everyone bring a favorite dish. This is a great way to commemorate your child by bringing their favorite food.



RECENT FUNDRAISERS—The TCF Yard Sale and the Gas Card Giveaway were successes!! Congratulations to Annette Beagle, the winner of the gas card. Her ticket was bought in memory of Jamie Flynt. We want to say thanks to those who contributed items and came by to shop. We also want to say a very special thanks to Suzy M. and Debbie P. for organizing this fundraiser, as well as to South Elkhorn Christian Church for the use of their facilities.

RECOMMENDED READING—We're trying to compile a **recommended reading list** for interested people. We'd love your input. If you have **suggestions**, send your recommended book to **Jim** at **KyWildcat1@alltel.net** or call him at **858-8288** or **797-2168**.

LOVE GIFTS

LOVE GIFTS—There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Some parents remember a birthday or anniversary date of their child, or a holiday with a love gift. The “Love Gifts” help with the mailing of the newsletter, maintaining and updating our library and meeting costs.

Please send **love gifts** to **David Fields, 207 Riney B Way, Nicholasville, KY 40356**. Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include his/her full name. If the love gift is in memory of a special date, take into consideration that this is a quarterly newsletter, so send it early.



A **very special Thank You** to those that contribute love gifts to the basket during our monthly meetings. We greatly appreciate your support.

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears. If you are really my friend, please don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music. It soothes my broken heart and fills my soul with love.

Written by a bereaved parent

Dear loved ones,

With the approaching (encroaching?) holiday season, my grief counselor suggested I write a list of things that might help (or hurt) as I contend with this "first" without my precious Jesse. Often, she said, people are uncertain what to do or say, to not do or not say and in this way I can not only protect myself somewhat but also do a little "edumacation" (as Jesse called it) on loss, bereavement and the coping strategies I have been forced to learn but struggling with.

Like most, Jesse loved Christmas. The gifts and all the wrappings and especially warm homemade cookies delivered to his room on chilly weekend mornings while he madly tapped at the computer keys still dressed in his pajama's. The simple thought of celebrating without him sends me to my knees. I would never want any of you to imagine how it feels to wear these awful, heavy boots on your own feet.

My wish list to my friends and family:

1) I wish you won't send me Holiday cards, Christmas emails or Seasons Greetings Facebook messages.

2) I wish you won't wish me "Merry" anything.

3) I wish you will still remember to call or write, I am and will be feeling especially lonely and sometimes the simplest thing - knowing you care about me - helps.

4) I wish you would forget that I am "strong and independent and capable". I have been all of those things my entire life but now I am

just badly wounded and very needy even if it doesn't look that way on the surface.

5) I wish you would understand that it's still hard for me to pick up the phone and make calls. I speak for the many sad moms I have met over these past months - when you say "call me if you need anything" we appreciate the thought but it's almost impossible for us to do.

6) I wish you might invite me out for coffee or a walk or just a nice chat. Any distraction that doesn't include chestnuts and open fires.

7) I wish you will be patient with me - that I may not be able to listen to conversations that involve your own holiday plans and what you are buying or making for your loved ones. Sometimes the simple fact that you still HAVE your loved ones near is very, very difficult for me to consider - add the holiday festivities and I am crushed.

8) I wish you will remember Jesse. All of his quirks and habits and silliness. I wish you will light a candle for him or say a prayer/mantra or just take a moment to close your eyes and see him laughing and being Jesse.

9) I wish that if you are compelled to do something in memory of him that you will learn some new technology, run an open-source program or just spend some time with Google searching "Jesse Malthus", "Jesse Nesbitt", "Mindtriggerz". And that if you really want to honor him that you will make a donation in his name to one of his projects or favorite sites like:

<http://nonlogic.org/index.php?dona>

te
<http://www.questionablecontent.net/index.php>
<http://creativecommons.org/>
<http://archlinux.org/donate/>
<http://sourceforge.net/supporters.php>
(or just go buy a smart-ass techie t-shirt that even you don't understand from thinkgeek.com or jinx.com)

10) I wish you would remember that saying his name is music to my ears even if it might make me cry sometimes. I cannot be hurt anymore than I have been already and it's difficult when I realize the word "Jesse" is being avoided. I need to hear his name, often.

BLUEGRASS CHAPTER

page 6

Nov. & Dec. 2007 / Jan. 2008



Stepping Stone

There stood a man in the absence of space
for his son had passed in the strangest way.
He laid his head into his hands
hating this moment and
remembering their plans.
All alone, he wept and mourned
the son he bore, loved and had fought for
would never more come and knock on his door.
Crying out what could have been,
he cursed his God and left his friends.
He drove and drove and tried to find
a little hope and piece of mind.
Then at the edge of earth he stood
nowhere else to run and hide,
nothing more he could do.
He fell down on his knees

A Christmas Story

Each time I hear an unknown story (even a known one) or see a picture I've not seen of him before, I give thanks. I am grasping for and cherishing every memory anyone has of him.

11) And lastly, I wish you would remember all of us who are grieving (and there are so very many of us) during the holidays and just try to be conscious of how important words of encouragement and kind, generous actions can be.

I love you,
Jesse's Mom, Rebecca Woloch,
Bluegrass TCF

www.jessehigginbotham.com
The Jesse Higginbotham Technology
Trust, Inc.

and cried out "I'll always remember you."
Then looking up he saw a bird
and realized Spirit had drawn near.
A perfect peace came over him...
...a new journey here.
A warmth grew deep inside of him
and all was finally clear.
Standing up, the man took heed of miracles and
mystery.
How wonderful life could be if everyone could see
That life is just a stepping-stone
And not our destiny.

by Traci Stricklan
In memory of Avery Cotton's son

Sharon Bryant

When I was just a little girl
 Around the age of three
 I remember a Christmas
 When Santa came to see me
 A doll wrapped up
 In a pretty bright red bow
 Long golden hair to stroke
 Oh my, how my heart glowed
 And then came a Christmas
 Later on in time
 When I shared my first Christmas
 With a son that was all mine
 A few years later down the road
 When he was only five
 I didn't know it would be
 The last Christmas in my life
 Now on Christmas
 As many in all these years
 I spend my days at a grave
 Shedding many tears
 The Holidays come every year



That, I cannot change
 But through all my memories
 My memories I can rearrange
 I can remember all the good years
 That he and I had shared
 I can still here the giggles
 When he got that talking teddy bear
 I can remember the hugs and squeals of "OH MOM"
 As each gift he opened on that day
 I can sit back and smile remembering
 Before the angels took him away
 Now I am older than I once used to be
 But my mind drifts back
 To what once was on Christmas
 When my son was on earth with me
 I tuck my head to fight the snow
 As I wade through the fenced in graves
 I've got my gift to give to him
 On this years' Christmas Day

In Memory of Andrew Frank Dunbar 1-22-72 - 10-24-77
 Reprinted by permission of author

BLUEGRASS CHAPTER

page 7

Nov. & Dec. 2007 / Jan. 2008



A Holiday To Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bittersweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst.

At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures

of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.

5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.

6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go--the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!

7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.

8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH – it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.

9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.

BLUEGRASS CHAPTER

page 8

Nov. & Dec. 2007 / Jan. 2008



10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

Amy Baker Ferry

TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter

FIRST CHRISTMAS

It can't possibly be Christmas
without her being here.
Yet the world is singing round me,
joyful tidings and good cheer.
Though I try to put on armor
and brave the sights and sounds,
a few moments worth of shopping,
and the tears are spilling down.
I pray for strength to do it,
find a path through holidays,
look for shortcuts, good ideas,
some directions through the maze.
Then I find at last the answer:
I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect;
her love's flowing down, through me.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From *Stars in the Deepest Night -
After the Death of a Child*

