



OCTOBER—NOVEMBER—DECEMBER 2026



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

"A Nonprofit Self-Help Organization for Families Who Have Experienced the Death of a Child"
6705 SW 15th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97219 ~ (503) 307-8450 ~ www.portlandtcf.org

PORTLAND TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY 2025

Please join us to celebrate our children at the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting; a 24 hour virtual light around the world. Family & friends are welcome.

Sunday, December 13th - 7 pm.

**Please arrive by 6:45 to be sure you have your candle & are seated by the 7 pm. lighting.*



Sunnyside Seventh Day Adventist Church
(former Tuesday meeting location)
10501 SE Market St., Portland, OR 97216

- ♥ Battery-operated candles will be provided.
- ♥ If you are interested in an origami butterfly please refer to page 9 for the order form.
- ♥ Social time will follow in the fellowship hall. Dessert & beverages will be provided.
- ♥ There will be a slideshow of our loved ones during the ceremony. Due to unexpected circumstances we cannot add additional photos at this time.

"LIGHT A CANDLE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON AND KEEP RENEWING IT IN LOVING MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD, SIBLINGS OR GRANDCHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED. THINK OF THEM AS HAVING GONE JUST STEPS AHEAD OF YOU AND SOMETIMES RETURNING—IN THOUGHT ... IN SPIRIT ... IN A LOVING UNSEEN EMBRACE—WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST."

~ Charmaine Stickel, TCF, Pittsburgh, PA



PLEASE JOIN US ON THE 1ST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH @ 10:30 AM

First United Methodist Church, 1838 SW Jefferson, Rm. #134, Portland, OR 97205

FOR MORE INFORMATION: (503) 307-8450

Chapter Leader

Carolyn Harrington
(503) 307-8450
linerharrington@gmail.com

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

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization composed of bereaved parents/grandparents & siblings. We offer friendship and understanding. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child/sibling and about the feelings they experience through the grieving process.

There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child/sibling, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings & issues that evolve around the death of a child.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

THE MUSIC BOX

**Will Dempsey—Beat You There
(Official Video)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGmDu5iDB34>

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Email your address change to Jenna Moon,
Member Database at jennarmoon84@gmail.com



~ CALENDAR ~

Oct. 3rd—Portland TCF in-person mtg.

Oct. 12th—Indigenous People's Day

Oct. 31st—Halloween

Nov. 3—Election Day

Nov. 7th—Portland TCF in-person mtg.

Nov. 11th—Veteran's Day

Nov. 26th—Thanksgiving

Dec. 4th—Hanukkah

Dec. 5th—Portland TCF in-person mtg.

Dec. 13th—Worldwide Candle Lighting

Dec. 25th—Christmas Day



Future TCF meetings:

January 2nd—February 6th—March 6th

Please visit our website: portlandtcf.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN THE AREA

CLACKAMAS COUNTY CHAPTER #2047

4th Tuesday of the month 7:00 pm.

NAMI, 10202 SE 32nd Ave., Suite 501, Milwaukie, OR 97222

Phone contact Ellen White (503) 502-7767

EUGENE/SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER #2571

Willamette Christian Center
2500 W. 18th Ave. Eugene, OR 97402

*Contact Chapter co-facilitators Rachael at 541-221-5792
or Ben at 541-704-5938 or eugspfdtcf@gmail.com
for meeting dates & times

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAPTER #1901

2nd Tuesday of the month 6:30—8:30 pm.

Reeds Crossing Health Center Building—Conference Room
7305 SE Circuit Dr., Hillsboro, OR

Phone contact: Phyllis H. (503) 310-2504

We Need Not Walk Alone magazine shares poems, articles, and expressions that touch the hearts of bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. Items in the magazine offer different perspectives and experiences of grief from those who have been bereaved for varying lengths of time. We hope that you find the magazine relatable, supportive and filled with hope.

*You can find this e-mag at
www.compassionatefriends.org



Please support Portland TCF!

Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card!! Through their Community Rewards Program they donate to local community organizations/nonprofits of your choice. You just link your Rewards Card and scan it every time you shop at Freddy's.

*Whenever you use your Rewards Card you will be helping Portland TCF earn a donation from Fred Meyer.

*You will still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points & Rebates, just as you do today.

Please see page 12 for more information.



CALL for Workshop Proposals for the 50th Annual Conference



The Compassionate Friends is calling for Workshop Proposals for our *50th National Conference in Phoenix being held July 15-18, 2027*. Is there a topic that resonates with you and your experience that could help others in their grief? Each year, TCF selects a combination of workshops that have been presented in the past and are highly attended along with workshops on new topics or that may offer new perspectives.

We are looking for a variety of topics that speak to bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents, and others who attend our national conferences. Participants may be very newly bereaved or more long-term seasoned grievers. Attendees are most often bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents, but they may also be other family members or friends as well as professionals who serve bereaved families. The workshop that you present may just be the one that makes a difference in the lives of some of our attendees.

Workshop Proposals Especially Needed:

- Loss from Homicide, Suicide, and Substance-Related Causes
- Loss to Cancer
- Loss of a Grandchild
- Loss of an Only Child or All Children
- Seasoned Grievers

Please remember the following when filling out your workshop proposal:

- Workshop Title and Description - Written in third person and no more than 125 words
- Your Biography - Written in third person and no more than 75 words
- Photo - Taken from the shoulders up (you should be in the photo alone)

If you have ever thought about presenting a workshop at a TCF national conference previously, this may just be the perfect time to do so. Careful attention is given to each proposal submitted. We are truly grateful for the time and thought that you put into each proposal.

The deadline to complete your workshop proposal is **October 5, 2026**.



With the changing of the seasons the holidays come once more; busy shoppers, joyous laughter, pretty wreaths hung on the door.

Though I pause in the twilight hour & hear the children play, my joy is forever silenced by that dreadful day in May.

The Holidays

My love of the holiday season now lives in another time, memories of past Christmases when all in my life was fine.

The tree lights no longer sparkle, my heart is cold inside, my holiday joy ended the day my only child died.

I stand outside now looking in to a world I no longer know. My tears flow like a river and melt the falling snow.

I turn now to the meaning of what Christmas really is, my pain softened by believing.

In spirit, he will always live.

~ Vicki Tushingham,
Los Angeles, CA

TRICK OR TREAT

The night is dim and pumpkins grin at children on the porch.

The doorbell rings,
"Trick or Treat" they sing.
My heart burns like a torch.



The Dracula's face and a Princess in lace, are peering in at me.

How I'd love to ask,
"May I lift your mask?"
And hiding there you'd be.
You'd get such a kick
from that silly trick.
But disguised you must stay.

In the wind that blows, my heart still knows, you're playing October charades.

~ Kathie Slief, TCF, Tulsa, OK



FACEBOOK PAGE

Please join us at "[TCF PORTLAND](#)"



This a private Facebook group for the Portland chapter members only.

- ♥ Since this is a private page, you will be asked a couple questions from the administrators when you request to join.

Administrators – Debra Moon, Bev Waterworth

Our children lovingly remembered...

CONFIDENTIAL

Our children lovingly remembered...

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CONFIDENTIAL

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Love Notes

A Love Gift is a special note to your child that is printed in the newsletter. It is a wonderful way to remember and honor their memory! Families often submit these either on their birthday or anniversary date of their child, but it can be done at any time! There is no charge for printing a Love Gift, but many families choose to donate a tax deductible contribution to help support TCF expenses such as rent, brochures, outreach, special events, etc.

Please complete the form on the back page with your love note & submit with your favorite photo. To include a picture with your Love Gift, please email your special photo to debsmoon@gmail.com

DEADLINE to submit for the next newsletter is DECEMBER 10, 2026.

In Loving Memory of

CONFIDENTIAL

In Loving Memory of

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

In Loving Memory of

CONFIDENTIAL

As the last of the leaves fall and the honey colored sunlight of autumn vanishes behind the grey sheath that covers the blues of the sky in such a final way, my breath quickens, my shoulders tense, my stomach drops.

I dread the winter. The dead trees once so full of green and birdsong. The icy air, rain, wind, sleet and snow—it all feels so uninhabitable—suffocating & oppressive ...like grief. Mother Nature is no longer the counter balance to my own despair, but steps alongside me, to walk with me in deep grief.

But what if it's also an invitation? An invitation to hibernate, to gather the things that sustain me, to make a cozy nest to retreat to, to rest, to reflect, and to draw nourishment from? What if winter isn't something to dread, but to welcome in as a companion, to me, to my grief.

~ Julie Markham, Tyler's Mom, TCF, Central OR

In Loving Memory of

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Grieving the loss of a child starts the day we lose our child, and ends the day we join them.

—Unknown—



ORIGAMI BUTTERFLY ORNAMENTS

BUTTERFLIES can be ordered now through December

Fluttering origami butterflies decorate the evergreen tree at our candle lighting ceremony each year; *Our Children Lovingly Remembered* with their names & special dates on each one. Many families have made it a tradition to collect and save them each year. What a wonderful way to remember your child and your enduring love for them! After the ceremony—don't forget to find your butterfly & take it home with you! If you can't make it to the event, they will be mailed to you.

**Please place a butterfly on the
"Our Children Lovingly Remembered Tree"
to honor the life of**

Child's Name (please print) _____
 Child's Birth Date: ____/____/____
 Child's Anniversary Date: ____/____/____
 Your Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone _____

To request a butterfly and/or make a tax-deductible donation please visit
<https://portlandtcf.org/fundraising>
 and follow the prompts OR mail this form to
 TCF Portland, 6705 SW 15th Ave, Portland, OR 97219
 (\$5—\$10 is the suggested contribution for each butterfly.)

The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you're faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow, the world keeps turning, the seconds keep ticking.

~ James Patterson



To lose a loved one is to be wounded deep within that soul. The wound will heal, but the scar will remain. The scar is not upon the body, but upon the heart. To touch the scar is to recall the image of the loved one. To touch the scar is to experience the love that still remains in him, and is eternally sheltered in yours.

~ Jim Rosemary, TCF, Huntington, WV

OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS

SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

www.sbsnw.org
 Facebook—SBSNW
 (503) 200-0382

*Groups are being held several times per month on virtual Zoom meetings & in-person meetings. Please visit website for meeting dates/times/locations in the Portland metro area.
 NE Portland * SW Portland * Milwaukee * Gresham * Hillsboro

HELPING PARENTS HEAL

Annie & Marc Adams
 hphportlandoregon@gmail.com
 Annie (503)752-8024
 Marc (503) 880-4467
 www.helpingparentsheal.org

Support groups of grieving parents to connect with each other and with Spirit

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Ph. 503-699-8006
 Spanish (503) 972-3376
 Peace House, 2116 NE 18th St.
Portland ...2nd Mon 7 pm
Beaverton ...4th Thu 7 pm
Vancouver ...2nd Thu 7 pm
 www.briefencounters.org

Support groups for parents who have experienced infant or pregnancy loss or who are considering or experiencing a subsequent pregnancy/adoption.

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

Ph. 503-761-1304 or 503-656-8039
 Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave
Portland... 1st Mon @ 7 pm
 www.pomc.com/portland

SIDS RESOURCES OF OREGON

4035 NE Sandy Blvd Suite 209
Portland
 Ph. 503-287-8265

IN THIS TOGETHER

(formerly Me too, & Company)
 Contact: Meg McCauley
 Ph. 503-890-7027
 www.oregonhospice.org

Supports children & families who have experienced the death of a family member or friend.

THE DOUGY CENTER



Ph. 503-775-5683, www.dougy.org
 3909 SE 52nd Ave., Portland, OR 97206

Provides safe place for children, teens, young adults & their families who are grieving a death.

STEPPING STONES

Ph. 360-696-5120

SW Washington Medical Center, Vancouver, WA
 Support groups specialize in helping children with their grief.



STEPPING STONES

Come, take my hand, the road is long.
We must travel by stepping stones.
No, you're not alone. I've been there.
Don't fear the darkness. I'll be with you.
We must take one step at a time.
But remember, we may have to stop awhile.
It's a long way to the other side
And there are many obstacles.

We have many stones to cross.
Some are bigger than others.
Shock, denial, and anger to start.
Then comes guilt, despair and loneliness.
It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.
It's the only way to reach the other side.

Come, slip your hand in mine.
What? Oh, yes, it's strong.
I've held so many hands like yours.
Yes, mine was once small and weak like yours.
Once, you see, I had to take someone's hand
In order to take the first step.
Oops! You've stumbled. Go ahead and cry.
Don't be ashamed. I understand.
Let's wait here awhile so that you can
get your breath.
When you're stronger, we'll go on,
one step at a time.
There's no need to hurry.

Say, it's nice to hear you laugh.
Yes, I agree, the memories you shared are good.
Look, we're halfway there now.
I can see the other side.
It looks so warm and sunny.
Oh, have you noticed?
We're nearing the last stone
and you're standing alone.
And look, your hand, you've let go of mine.
We've reached the other side.

But wait, look back, someone is standing there.
They are alone and want to cross the stepping
stones.
I'd better go. They need my help.
What? Are you sure?
Why, yes, go ahead. I'll wait.
You know the way.
You've been there.
Yes, I agree. It's your turn, my friend ...
To help someone else cross the stepping stones.

~ Barbara Williams Copyright © Barbara Williams

STEPPING STONES TO VOLUNTEER

Your First Few TCF Meetings

- Were you surprised to meet others who were also grappling with the terrifying trauma and shock of losing a child, grandchild or sibling? Did this help you feel less isolated, more understood?
- Were you encouraged to talk about your loved one and say their name? Was there a genuine interest in your child?
- Did you notice that crying and tears are perfectly acceptable, and in fact, normal?

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

As Time Goes On

Grief has no timeline, it is different with each individual. Talking about our child, sharing memories we hold dear, celebrating their birthday, honoring the day they died, are all helpful steps in the healing process. In time, the sharpest pain of grief softens, the sadness of loss always remains. **OUR CHILDREN ALWAYS REMEMBERED, ALWAYS LOVED.**

The Idea of Hope

Hope is a powerful and universal human experience. After the death of a child, hope for a normal life again may feel elusive. If you have reached out to welcome a new member, shared a hug of support, or just a gentle touch on the shoulder of another grieving person, you have extended **HOPE**. These small gestures help not only the deeply bereaved, but also help strengthen and heal yourself.

The Portland TCF Chapter is always seeking volunteers; to assure we have a presence in the community for newly bereaved families now and in the future. If you feel TCF has played a positive part in your healing journey and would like to help our chapter remain strong, we urge you to take a step forward and become a volunteer!

**HELPING OTHERS ALWAYS HELPS OUR OWN HEART
GROW STRONGER.**

Questions? Please contact Jeff Littman jlittman@comcast.net or Carolyn Harrington linerrharrington@gmail.com

WHAT IS GRIEF LIKE?

Grief is like a large bruise that does not heal.

Grief is like a bucket in my heart that keeps filling with tears day after day.

Grief means an empty crib that I should give away but am having trouble doing so.

Grief is like having my arm or leg amputated. I am still alive. But I am in shock and I don't function very well.

Grief means I've lost my little girl. I search for her in my dreams at night but I can't find her anywhere.

Grief hurts.

~ Anna Olson, TCF, Winnipeg, MB

Our children lovingly remembered...

CONFIDENTIAL

A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving, unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving that just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from overeating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say no one else I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents, and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must exhibit tolerance, forgiveness and understanding. On a day which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder of recovery. I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

~ Jim Hobbs, BP/USA of Northern TX

*You gave them the gift of life and they gave you the gift of love in return.
Nothing can deny that gift exchange.*

~ TCF, Portland, OR

Birthdays

If it's your child's birthday month, we invite you to join our monthly meeting and share their story!



Birthdays hold treasured memories & are especially difficult for surviving parents and siblings; TCF offers a wonderful venue to honor and celebrate the precious life-story of your loved one. Taking a few minutes to share a picture, memento, award or even their favorite toy is a gentle reminder to all that *love continues and grows* with each passing year.



Please Support Portland TCF . . .

Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card!! Fred Meyer donates to local community organizations/nonprofits of your choice through their *Community Rewards Program*. Just link your Rewards Card and scan it every time you shop at Freddy's.

~ Whenever you use your Rewards Card you will be helping Portland TCF earn a donation from Fred Meyer.

~ You will still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points and Rebates, just as you do today.

Great Way for Families & Friends to Support TCF!

- Go to www.fredmeyer.com/community-rewards
- Sign up online (even if you already have a card, you must create an online account)
- You will immediately receive an email to confirm your account (check your Spam or Junk Mail!)
- Sign up using your email address and password
- From the top menu select: Reward —> Community Rewards
- Click **"LINK YOUR CARD HERE"**
- Enter # FT805
- Be sure to click the bubble!
The Compassionate Friends, P.O. Box 3065
Portland OR 97208

TCF Portland earned **\$60.30** during the 2nd quarter!

2026 YTD = **\$110.75**

2025 YTD = **\$171.37**

~ Thank you for participating
& enjoy shopping! ~

The Necessary Magic of Christmas

Halloween is long gone. Thanksgiving swept up in a slurry of turkey wings, and Christmas is just around the corner. It's that time of year when bereaved parents begin a collective shudder at the thought of enduring another holiday season.

Many will be thinking: Christmas. Who needs it? Who needs the hassles of shopping for just the right gift which will be returned anyway? Who needs fighting the crowds, and baking endless batches of cookies with all the unwanted calories?

Who really needs the Christmas carols that only bring more pain instead of joy? It's enough to make you want to run away and hide until January, and let the rest of the world frolic with Frosty.

And yet...there is something to be said about the first snowfall on Christmas Eve, or hearing your grandmother's favorite Christmas song being played at the mall.

There is something about Christmas that can comfort a soul in pain, and it can be little things, such as a surprise phone call from your friend of twenty five years, calling all the way from Australia just to say hello.

Or perhaps it is a loaf of banana bread from a shivering neighbor over the back fence that says "I care, and I'm thinking of you."

When all is said and done, maybe we bereaved parents really do need the necessary magic of Christmas. We need to let some of the wonder creep into our lives and soothe our battered hearts and look at the holiday for what it truly is—a time of love, remembering, and yes, even weeping.

It is a time to think about possibly starting new traditions. Instead of writing Christmas cards, create a family newsletter. Decorate a special ornament and paint your child's name on it. Attend a concert, and take a friend. Rent a cabin in the woods and take the time to enjoy nature and let your thoughts and tears flow freely.

Christmas can be a time to honor our child by embracing what we have, and by celebrating their lives instead of living their deaths.

Most of all, we can remember that nearly 2,000 years ago, two parents in Bethlehem were celebrating the birth of their own precious Son, only to become bereaved parents themselves 33 years later.

From our house to yours, may you find peace and blessings this holy, holiday season.

~ Sandra S. VanOrman, TCF, Tacoma/Pierce County, WA



We Honor Them



For each grave
where a soldier lies at his rest
For each prayer
that is said today out of love
For each sign of remembering
someone who died

Let us also give thought to
the mothers and fathers
the brothers and sisters
the friends and the lovers
whom death left behind.

~ Sascha Wagner

HAPPY CHANUKAH

There are various ways that we include Johnny in our Chanukah celebrations. Some are subtle and others are overt. When we light the menorah, we use a blue taper as the extra candle. The color blue represents Johnny to us. Just as the extra candle gives of itself to light each of the eight other candles without giving up its own light, we give Johnny and each other our love without diminishing ourselves.

After the meal and before we exchange gifts and play games, we say the Kadish (mourners prayer) This prayer demonstrates our faith in God despite our loss. It insists that we focus on hope rather than despair and our determination to pass on loving memories of Johnny from generation to generation. Shalom.

~ Tom Wyatt (Johnny's Dad)



Having just gone through fire season, I was reminded of how devastating fire can be. The totality of destruction is similar to the destruction in one's life after losing a child. Sure the flames are eventually put out, but the wreckage is an ongoing part of the path forward. And like in loss, things are permanently altered. A common fear for those who have experienced the tragic loss of a child, is experiencing loss again. It is said to be a normal grief response. (If anything is "normal"). It can persist for most of our lives. Once upon a time we lived in the assumption that we would grow old and pass away, leaving our children behind. And then the unimaginable happens, and your minds can no longer dismiss the possibility. We now live with the crushing

evidence of death. We worry when our text isn't quickly responded to, when they don't answer phone, or when they are late coming home. It's not that we want to believe something bad has happened, it's in part our brain attempting to protect us from ever being blindsided or utterly shocked again. Additionally there's the fact that we now know, all too well, the cost. We don't say "I don't know what I'd do". That luxury is gone. In this place we find ourselves, we do our best to navigate, with courage, the very real and painful aspects we must deal with. My middle son (I suppose he is now the oldest, but to me he remains the middle son) is both military and a firefighter.

Because he's been on multiple fire deployments, I found myself following the status

and details of the fires, as well as learning more about fire behavior. (I know, I know). In the midst of all the scariness I learned something I never knew. Both the lodgepole pine and the eucalyptus bear fruit that is completely sealed with resin. Only fire will release the seeds! Fire also clears thick overgrowth and allows the sun to bring forth the native plants once again. It can also eradicate diseases and destructive insects. Young trees that would not have had a chance can now experience growth, as the sun can once again reach them. Is it the same after? No. It is permanently changed but it is alive and can thrive. This discovery was a reminder to me that we can hope for new beauty, and new life. This is my hope and prayer for us all.

Michelle Thomason, TCF, Portland OR

WHEN WORDS BECOME GIFTS

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation. "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm

still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik & David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing

more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

~ Nita Aasen, TCF, St. Peter, MN

This world is not conclusion.
A sequel stands beyond,
Invisible, as music,
But positive, as sound.

~ Emily Dickinson

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE NATIONAL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Please visit www.compassionatefriends.org for links to the following support groups

24/7 ONLINE SUPPORT

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. Several days & times available.

First-Time Chatter Orientation ~ Parents/Grandparents/Siblings ~ Loss to Substance Related Causes
Bereaved More Than Three Years ~ No Surviving Children ~ Pregnancy/Infant Loss ~ Suicide Loss

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. If you are waiting approval, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

Loss to COVID-19 & Other Infectious Diseases ~ Loss of a Stepchild ~ Loss of a Grandchild ~ Sibs (for bereaved siblings) ~ Bereaved LGBTQ Parents with Loss of a Child ~ Loss of a LGBTQ+ Child ~ Multiple Losses ~ Men in Grief ~ Daughterless Mothers ~ Sudden Death ~ Loss to Substance Related Causes ~ Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes ~ Loss to Suicide ~ Loss to Homicide ~ Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver ~ Loss to Cancer ~ Loss of a Child with Special Needs ~ Loss to Long-term Illness ~ Loss After Withdrawing Life Support ~ Loss to Mental Illness ~ Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth ~ Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild ~ Infant & Toddler Loss ~ Loss of a Child 4—12 Years Old ~ Loss of a Child 13—19 Years Old ~ Loss of an Adult Child ~ Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children ~ Finding Hope for Parents Through TCF SIBS ~ Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren ~ Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues ~ Inclusion and Diversity ~ Grieving with Faith and Hope ~ Secular Support ~ Reading Your Way Through Grief ~ Crafty Corner ~ Loss of a Child

- Sibling Corner -

Enjoying the Holidays in a Different Way ... Without My Brother

I was shocked and stunned when I received the news that my brother Scott had died in a car accident. I thought my brother was going to be in my life forever. We grew up together, experienced a shared history, and knew things about each other that no one else will ever know. I always assumed we'd raise kids together, grow old together, and share many more holidays together.

So how did I not only survive the holidays, but eventually learn how to enjoy them again without my brother? It was a rocky, painful journey, with pain that hit like wages, sometimes when I least expected it. The holidays brought back so many memories; every song, smell, and tradition was bittersweet.

Initially, joy made me feel guilty. I worried that if I let go of the pain, I would be letting go of my brother's memory. It felt disloyal to experience positive feelings when I missed my brother so much. Well-meaning friends told me that my brother would want me to have a happy holiday, and while I knew this on an intellectual level, my heart wasn't ready to accept it yet.

There were some relatives who tried to recreate a typical Christmas, with family traditions, as if my brother had never died. Not acknowledging my brother was the worst thing anyone could do. The pretense was that everything needed to return back to normal. However, things in my life were forever changed and I needed to figure out how to create a "new holiday normal." For me, this meant finding a way to honor the memory of my brother while at the same time reinvesting in my new life.

Here are some of the things that have helped me during the holidays. I hope they will help you as well. However, everybody who is grieving must decide what works best for them:

Holiday Survival Tips:

- ♥ Plan in advance how you are going to spend the holidays, and be able to say no if you need to.
- ♥ Take a break from holiday traditions that are too painful—create new traditions.
- ♥ Connect with others.
- ♥ Share stories of past holidays and spend time reflecting back. Keep your loved one's memory alive for those who were too young to remember the person.
- ♥ Include memories of your loved one in your celebration (e.g. light a candle, display pictures, make a toast in honor of the person).

My brother played many roles during the holidays. I can fill some of these roles but there are many more that will never be filled, and I fill those with all the memories that he left behind. Although we are poorer for having lost our loved ones, we are richer for having known them. I hope you will be able to celebrate the happiness, laughter, and memories that your brother brought into your life by enjoying this holiday in a new a different way!

~ Heidi Horsley, www.opentohope.com



A sister leaves her fingerprints on the person you become. ~ anonymous

The Compassionate Friends
Portland Oregon Chapter
6705 SW 15th Avenue
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OCTOBER—NOVEMBER—DECEMBER
2026



If you wish to make a tax-deductible LOVE GIFT donation, fill in the information below, send with a check for any amount to
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