

November and
December 2005



The Compassionate Friends

From Bern's Desk:

****EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION TO OUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS****

It is with a heavy heart that I write, for there is not an easy way to share this startling information. ***SIMPLY STATED, YOUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CHAPTER WILL CEASE TO EXIST UNLESS YOU COME FORWARD RIGHT AWAY!*** Attendance at the annual Candle Lighting Ceremony illustrates that there are hundreds of bereaved parents and families in our TCF community. At the same time, however, only a handful of devoted members are working to keep your chapter afloat.

My return to New England resulted in a plea for a new chapter facilitator and nearly a year has passed without response. As a result, I continue to serve as the Naples community contact while in Maine. Pam Arsenault Craig, the backbone of TCF, has worked diligently to hold this chapter together, often traveling to Naples from her home in North Carolina. Anne Kithcart, a full-time nurse and mother of a young son, has been facing the overwhelming task of running meetings, editing the newsletter and overseeing plans for the annual ceremony. Anne, who continues to give her heart to our organization, will be unavailable after the end of 2005.

Please ask yourself if you have been helped by your Compassionate Friends. Isn't it time to pass along the gift of hopefulness and comfort that you received? Everyone reading this can relate to that powerful spirit of support and the realization that you are among those who truly understand the devastation of losing a child. Your willingness to help others may begin to fill that hole in your own heart. My work with TCF has been a personal salvation in the truest sense. Each time I reach out to a grieving parent, I silently dedicate my efforts in honor of my son. In that sense, I find another way to stay connected to the generous and joyful spirit of Matthew's life.

Did you know that TCF is not a large time commitment? Are you willing to oversee a meeting once a month for a few hours or less? Please don't be intimidated at the prospect, for we will prepare you in advance. Also, two or more people may join together to share or divide the meeting schedule. The only qualifications are that you be a bereaved parent of at least three years with the desire to help others. Would you like to write for or edit the newsletter? There are many small roles that are available to share among several caring persons. Perhaps this is the special project for which you have been searching. Retirees and seasonal residents are strongly encouraged to volunteer.

Will the Southwest Florida Chapter of The Compassionate Friends close due to a lack of interest among it's own members? Only your immediate actions can prevent this heartbreaking loss to the community and to all of us who have benefited throughout more than 20 years. Sadly, the end of your chapter is no longer just a possibility but a sobering fact. I implore you to seriously consider this call to action.

IF NOT YOU, THEN WHO?

Sincerely yours,

Bernadette Burks

Please call Pam Arsenault at 262-0554 or Anne Kithcart at 775-5640. We will arrange a meeting for everyone who is interested in keeping the Naples Chapter of TCF functioning.

December Anniversaries *cont.*

Jack Lebien 12/11/2001
 Son of Jeff & Pam Lebien
Heidi Schmidt 12/10/2002
 Daughter of Dick & Elda Schmidt
Ryan Smith 12/23/2000
 Son of Jennifer & Curtis Smith
Jason E. Smith 12/22/2003
 Son of Merry Smith
Chelsea Rose Stevenson 12/28/2001
 Daughter of Debbie Stevenson
Todd Swaine 12/10/1999
 Son of Margaret Swaine

Loving Listeners:

For those times when you need to speak to someone who will listen with understanding and who can offer hope and support from their own process of healing in grief please call us:

Bernadette Burks 596-4546
 Pam Arsenault 262-0554
 Teresa Walker 353-3215
 Anne Kithcart 775-5640



An email From Jeannie Hart, after attending the TCF National Convention in Boston, July 2005.

“I have been intending to write ever since I returned from Boston. Both my daughters joined me for the TCF Convention. Sunday, when the conference ended we took a trolley ride and even rode the swan boats at Boston gardens. That night we sat on the Esplanade and heard Keith Lockhart conduct the Boston Pops beside the Charles River. We walked back to our hotel, meandering through Beacon Hill. It was magical.

A lot of tears were shed, by ALL of us, and I was astonished to learn that most of the parents, who had lost their children many years ago, thought my grief (at 2 and one half years) was just the beginning of my grief journey. But again, it was a consolation, because I had hit a plateau where I thought I was a lot better and then some days it feels like yesterday, but as usual, everyone understood. So despite the emotional rollercoaster, love surrounded us and we came home hugely hugged and headed for healing.

I learned SO MUCH. We met some fantastic people, and the presenters were just outstanding. One thing for sure; these ARE compassionate friends, and I will remember this experience for years to come. My best to everyone...and my love, Jeannie (Hart) Andy's (Edds) MOM”

The Compassionate Friends National Convention will be held in Dearborn, Michigan for 2006.

Please make plans for this summer's convention. Let us help you, if cost is a concern, through the Naples Chapter of TCF.

Pam Arsenault 262 0554 or Anne Kithcart 775-5640

Thank you for your Gifts of Love

Karen Beatty, in memory of her son, Clint Beatty
 Catherine and Joseph Madigan in memory of their son, Jeffery C. Basso
 Leah Stirrat, in memory of her son, Lee Roberts
 Janet Chapman, in memory of her daughter Nicole Chapman
 Edith and Tom King in memory of their daughter Kalin King and Richard Waltermire, her brother.
 Josephine & William Shea in memory of their sons, Billy and Kevin Shea
 Christine & Bill Barnett, in memory of their daughter, Stephanie Barnett
 Mary Ann & Don Johnson in memory of her son Kevin E. Branning

The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends Newsletter
Naples Chapter
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Compassionate Friends Web Address:
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends Resources



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Phone (877) 969-0010 Fax: (630)990-0246.
Email: national.office@compassionatefriends.org
Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org

Siblings chat: Wednesdays, 9 p.m. EST: www.compassionatefriends.org/Chat/chat_entrance.shtml
The Compassionate Friends National Chapter has just introduced the National E-Newsletter. To sign up for the Newsletter by email use the e-newsletter@compassionatefriends.org website.

Our Mission

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age, and to provide information to help others to be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal. Please come, bring your hope and energy, and be a Compassionate Friend to another.