



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July-August 2023

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Dandelions and Grass

Dandelions and grass
Clasped in a chubby hand,
Starry-eyed, so pleased with himself,
Never a bouquet so grand;
Slightly wilted, with drooping leaves,
Received as the rarest of blooms.
In my best vase on a cloth of lace
They proudly graced my rooms.

In the years to come, that same hand
Wrote a lovely poem,
Built a model airplane
And played the saxophone,
But ever in this mother's heart
In all the years that passed,
The loveliest thing that David gave
Was dandelions and grass.

--Joy C. Worland

It Might Have Been

I saw a red scooter go up the street,
And I rushed to the window,
tripping over my feet.
Neat, blonde hair blowing in the wind,
Then I knew it wasn't you, but...

It might have been.

Bicycles are parked in the yard below,
Not a one of them is yours, I know.
Still, I look to be sure again & again,
All the while my heart says,

It might have been.

I passed a car cruising, out in the sun.
It looked like yours,

they were all having fun.

But the driver I can see;
my thoughts must end,
But for a few moments...

It might have been.

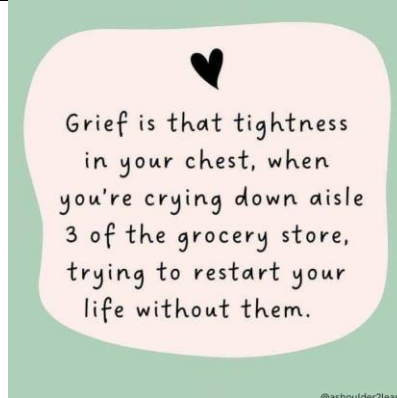
The footsteps on the porch,
the knock on the door
Sound just like yours, but not anymore.
Still I run through the hall & into the den,
Looking out through the window...

It might have been.

All plans for the future,
all dreams in the past,
Are gone now forever,
they just couldn't last.

Fate came to visit, then death walked in,
Now all that can be said is...

It might have been.



Summer Thoughts

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, a time when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it.

Seeing children, babies, and teenagers is not easy for us, & we see them everywhere from shopping centers to beaches. Everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children, and we want to scream, "It's not fair!"

I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk recently listening to the shouts of children playing, and I was crying as I remembered the sounds that my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought what a long summer this was going to be. In my reverie, I remembered a recent comment that I had heard at a TCF meeting: "My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter."

I also remembered a good friend telling me to "count my blessings" and naming all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at the time. Nothing I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead.

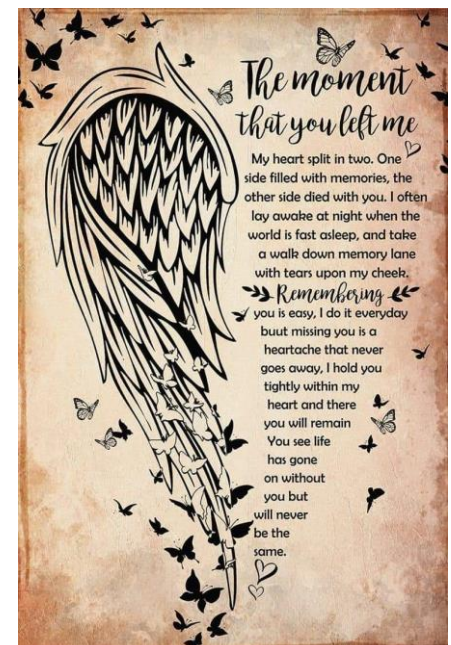
Now, sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I determined that this summer would not be an eternity: I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple

things that used to give me so much pleasure, like flowers, and working in my garden. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessings that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, friends, etc.

It has been almost five years for me, and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course, I still have times of sadness; I know I always will. But I have decided that in the process of grieving we close so many doors, the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child, but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn & grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel that way, and I know I still have a long way to go. But in the meantime, I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as he would have done.

--Libby Gonzalez, TCF, Huntsville, AL



Whenever I think of Lisa,
 I remember sun and sand and sea.
 The beach, her favorite place by far,
 She is there with me.
 I remember her gently now.
 The crippling pain is gone.
 I've come to enjoy the beach again.
 She lingers there in the sun.

--Gina Calvert, TCF, Louisville KY

Sometimes

Sometimes
 Memories are like rain showers
 Sparkling down upon you
 Catching you unaware
 And then they are gone
 Leaving you warm and refreshed

Sometimes
 Memories are like thunderstorms
 Beating down upon you
 Relentless in their downpour
 Leaving you tired and bruised

Sometimes
 Memories are like shadows
 Sneaking up behind you
 Following you around
 Then they disappear
 Leaving you sad and confused

Sometimes
 Memories are like comforters
 Surrounding you with warmth
 Luxuriously abundant
 And sometimes they stay
 Wrapping you in contentment

-- Marcia Updyke

Summer Breezes

There's a hint of girlish laughter
 Wafting past the porch.
 For a moment I pause to listen.
 In the warmth of summer sun
 Memories are to bask in.
 Trees you climbed, kites you flew,
 Bikes you raced,
 Waves you splashed in.
 At night we wrapped time around us
 As we blanketed the grass
 And gazed toward heaven.
 The stars were full of wonder then,
 And lazy days seemed endless.
 Life spread before you,
 Laughter filling the wind with
 happiness.
 Just now I thought I heard you
 once again.
 How pleasant this breath of summer?
 The breezes hold such memories
 Of life, of you.

--Karen Nelson, Box Elder County, UT

The Last Cry

When you were taken, it became so dark. I could not believe it happened to us. I loved watching you grow, and you never knew why I was watching you. It was a father's love. There is no force greater in my soul. I tried to protect you from harm as best I could, but I could not protect you from another. It was not in your hands or mine.

As I live each day, I can't understand how life could have allowed us to be separated. If there is a God in the air, I wish to breathe fully. I think about you often—not daily, but hourly, sometimes by minutes or seconds. Sometimes I cry, missing your presence. I love your wit, your smile, and most of all, being your Dad.

I told you so many times to be careful and you were. But on that November night your actions were directed by others, and the outcome has caused so much sadness and pain. I wish I could just change one second of your life, and that is all it would take to save this LAST CRY.

I am not saying as I write this letter and cry that this will be the last cry. When my time comes, you will have gotten the LAST CRY. I will always save it for you. Someone said that tears flush out the toxins and poisons from the body, so I should live a long time. Rest assured when the last hour comes, you will have THE LAST CRY.

I love you so much, Dad

--By Mark Warren Sr., in memory of his son, Mark Jr. (5/1/85-11/2/08).

When It Is Dark Enough, You Can See the Stars

Often it is easiest to see the stars in the long, cold nights of winter. People who have come through any kind of life-threatening event—a crash, a tornado, a severe illness, the loss of a loved one—speak of how it has changed their perspective, how it's easier to see what's important.

Several years after our daughter died, we experienced a burglary. All of our wedding silver was stolen, as well as antique pieces that had been handed down through many generations. Of course, we were upset. But right away the words came to me: "It's only things." I have no way of knowing whether or not I'd have been this calm if the theft occurred before her death, but I suspect not.

The stars are not only clearer, but more beautiful. Ancient navigators found their way through the seas by looking at

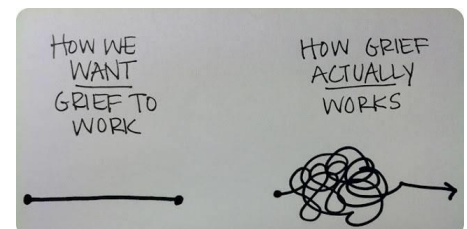
the stars. So maybe the experience of loss not only helps clarify what is important to us, but also helps us know where we are and the direction in which we want to go.

--Charles Beard



July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
 Brilliant colors in the sky.
 Their splendor ends in seconds
 On this evening in July.
 "Her birthday is this Saturday,"
 I whisper with a sigh.
 She was born this month,
 She loved this month,
 And she chose this month to die.
 Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
 Glowing briefly in the dark
 They are gone too soon, and so was she—
 Having been, and left her mark,
 A glorious, incandescent life.
 A catalyst, a spark...
 Her being gently lit my path
 And softened all things stark.
 The July birth, the July death
 Of my happy summer child
 Marked a life too brief that ended
 Without rancor, without guile.
 Like the fireworks that leave images
 On unprotected eyes...
 Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
 With love that never dies.
 --Sally Migliaccio, Long Island, NY



The Sun Will Shine

I sat in the darkness in the living room, for dawn was only just arriving. Through the picture window I watched the trees slowly outline the opposite shore of our little lake. Then magically, a warm shaft of light appeared behind the trees, flooding the horizon with gold. "It will be a beautiful day for our picnic," I thought.

But as the daylight grew stronger, I saw that a thick, gray fog blanketed the lake and the lawn between it and the house. "Oh, no," I moaned, "I was so hoping for good weather." Then a ball of fire peeked over the horizon and rose majestically into full view. Within an hour it had burned off the mist, and the picnic day emerged bright and clear under the cloudless sky.

Life is like this, I thought, when grief ... darkens our days. It is then we must keep hope burning in our hearts. We must believe that if the sun is not shining at the moment, it will shine again, and we will have a richer appreciation of the bright days for having experienced the darkness.

--Madeline Robinson, Twin Lakes WI

From Sascha Wagner:

Summer Soon...

Sunlight dancing on the branches
Of the birch tree at my door.
Meadow stretching smug and lazy,
Darker, greener than before.

Wind as warm as hugging children,
Clouds so round and very close--
And on one small grave there trembles
Lovingly an early rose.

Summerwind

*The one who owns this summer is not here,
not here to know the tender summerwind,
not here to share the glowing and the song.
The one who owns this summer did not live
to touch the richness of this day,
this day in summer when you are alone.
Weep to the summer wind,
weep and love again
the one you remember.*

August

This summer runs to harvest—Do
you ask
How could a harvest be without my
child?
Friend, some day soon
the harvest in your life
will bring you home and wealth,
from love remembered.

When you walk through a storm,
keep your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark,
At the end of the storm is a golden
sky

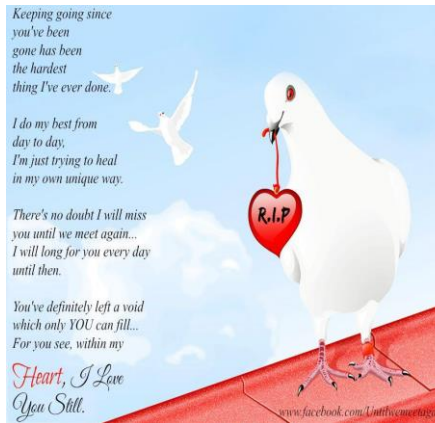
And the sweet silver song of a
lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and
blown.

Walk on, walk on,
with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone...
You'll never walk alone.
--"You'll Never Walk Alone"
by Oscar Hammerstein II

Beach Havens

As the tide of grief goes down,
New beaches are revealed.
Their sand, it's true, is wet,
And barnacles protrude.
But wear your rubber shoes
(hot pink would be preferred).
Step dainty on the shore:
A storm-thrown log will give you
rest.
Now sit and sun yourself,
And dream of those you love.

--Cathy Sosnowsky, TCF
North Shore, North Vancouver BC



Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.
Eva Lager
TCF/Western Australia

(Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager
died by suicide on 4 March 1990.)



FIREWORKS ARE LIKE THE LOVE IN
OUR HEARTS

July brings Central Oregonians lingering blue skies, lazy afternoons and the Fourth of July celebration, complete with the grand fireworks finale bolting from the top of Pilot Butte. This was one of my son's favorite holidays. When he was six I asked him why fireworks were so special to him. He said, "The lights explode in the dark and make the whole sky light up!" That was obvious. I said "Hum?" He gave me one of his "Oh mom" looks, then went on to say "The fireworks are like the love in our hearts, we should always try to spread our love out to others". I knew then and I still am aware today that profound wisdom comes from the lips of our children. From the summer on, in my mind, fireworks have been a triumphant testament of love's enduring power and wonder. I miss my son, Joshua terribly. I comfort myself knowing that his wisdom and kindness were precious gifts in my life.

Wherever you are on the Fourth of July, I hope that the splendor of sparkling fireworks might comfort as you acknowledge that the love you hold dear for your child is the light that is able to shine through you. We all have known grief well, yet as compassionate friends we need not walk alone in the darkness. We can lighten the path for others.

Grief can cripple and destroy us, but as we gather to share each other's burden, we are able to gain strength. Love for our children is our common flame; sharing and caring keep the flames afire.

By JANE OJA



SUMMER DELIGHT

Where is the child who skipped through the sprays of summer rain and laughed his way into my heart? Where is the boy who climbed my trees and spied on me from behind the leaves? Where is the child with the suntanned legs who ran Fourth-of-July races in green parks? Where is the sleepy child who wrapped his arms around my neck and said, "When I grow up, I gonna marry you, Mom?" He's here.

He twines around our past, around my future, and takes me back home, and makes me young again as sure as summer comes. A suntanned spirit with an impish grin still whispers in my ear that stars are not stars at all but lightening bugs he's captured in a jar. In his youth he's my summer's glow, the sunshine in my garden, my comfort on long, hot, summer nights of remembering.

Where is the child that once played among my summer flowers? He darts and runs away as I idly dream of yesterday, at once elusive yet so near. Oh, I'm sure he's here. I'm sure I saw him just a minute ago. Or was it just a touch of summer madness that made me think I'd greeted him?

Oh, where is that child of summer gladness? His laughter slides down summer rainbows and captures me with unbound glee. His summer brownness runs barefoot on my heart. With sun-bleached hair, he smiles at me from photos from summers past, and as long as I LIVE you will be loved.

-FAY HARDEN

Grief: A Lifelong Process

When my son was killed I was certain that I would die. My life went on autopilot, my heart was broken, my will to live was gone and I could see no meaning in the world.

Six months later I was still in a bad place. I could not vary from a routine, I became angry very easily, I rarely laughed and I didn't communicate with many people.

On the first anniversary of my son's death I was a zombie. I dreaded the day. I remembered the last conversation; I went over his death in my mind a thousand times. I started asking myself what if I had done this or that....would my child still be alive? I felt a misplaced guilt that was sadistically hammered home by the wrongful death lawsuit of my former daughter in law and her accompanying attitude that can only be described as purely malevolent. My husband, who was driving the vehicle when my son was killed, spent hours in self-recrimination, hours with attorneys doing depositions, hours quietly sobbing and my response was that we had to buck up. We had no choice. I hardened on the exterior, but inside I was broken into pieces.

I continued to go to Compassionate Friends meetings, became active in our chapter and read books on grief, death, dying and coping strategies. I leaned heavily on my Compassionate Friends as I endured the pain of losing my son and any possibility of a normal relationship with his children. I know the excruciating pain of intentional cruelty and the radiant warmth of compassion.

18 months after my son was killed, I decided that I had to quantify my progress. I began to soften, to give positive reinforcement to those around me. I reached out to others. I stopped thinking of the negatives within myself and began searching for the positives. I began taking down my emotional wall and allowed some people inside.

It has been 3 years and 3 months since Todd was killed and, in hindsight, I can see the progress I have made. Initially each step was difficult. Now I move forward much like an amputee, progress is steady, but it is slow. I will never be the same again. A part of me has been confiscated by death. This is my reality.

I can laugh now, I can enjoy other people, I can see the beauty in each child I meet, each sunrise and each day. But I can also see and acknowledge the ugly side of this world. There is much cruelty in our world. There is much

sadness. Some days I focus on the beauty and joy and some days I look at the cruelty and ugliness.

But the choice is mine to make. If I have a day that is good, it is because I have willed it to be so. If I have a bad day, I have also chosen this.

For I have discovered that grief is a lifelong journey. Our children are with us forever. I close my eyes and see my son. I dream of him at night; our conversations are very interesting, very reassuring. He is with me. And because I always told him that the world is what you make of it, then I must also tell myself the same thing. My world is what I make of it.

Yes, I still grieve. I still miss my child. To hear his voice would be a gift worth more than my life. But I have my memories....memories of raising a beautiful son who became an exceptional man. Our time together was the most meaningful experience of my life. I knew it then, I know it now. There is a void in my life that will never be filled.

My world was never perfect. It certainly will never be perfect. Each day I ask myself what kind of day I want this to be. Sometimes I want it to be a bad day. My sadness overwhelms me and I choose to exorcise it with a bad day. I have the right to have a bad day: my only child is dead. But these days I usually want it to be a good day....the kind of day my son would have enjoyed.

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

Not the Same

He was a very nice man, like so many others, and yet he was so different.

His quick smile and gentle ways were like those of others and yet, he was so uncommon.

He was kind and loving with unshakable faith like others, and yet he was so unique.

He was a dutiful soldier who gave his life like many others, and yet he was so special.

The same as others? No
Not to those who knew and loved him.

He was himself, and individual, and he was my brother!

*-Pam Miller Farrell
TCF Evansville, IL*

THIRTY YEARS

Thirty years ago today
On a cold snowy winter day
You came into my life, my son
And changed my life in many ways

You taught me unconditional love
And what a mom should feel
You taught me compassion in many ways
The kind only the heart reveals

You taught me how to smile
When heartprints ruled my days
You taught me so much laughter
My love was endless in so many ways

I taught you, as you taught me
The years flew by too fast
And then God's Angels called you home
All I had left, was memories of the past.....

Today's your 30th birthday, Andy
And I sit here all alone
Wondering how you're spending yours
While I spend my at home

Thinking of the ones we had,
The double birthdays we once shared
I close my eyes and remember
It makes my eyes begin to tear

I remember when you were one
And I was twenty-seven
If I'd known then, in four years
God was calling you to heaven.....

I'd held you even more tightly,
I'd have kissed you even more
And probably went to school with you
Each day you went out the door

I'd have tucked you in more tightly
I'd have read more stories at night
And had I known what life held
I'd never let you out of my sight

But none of us knows what life holds
Or what our future will be
God gave us five great years
I treasure those precious memories

Happy Birthday Andy
I love you with all my heart
One day again we will share this day
But for now, I'll share you in my heart

I'll love you forever my son.....
on air, land, and sea
and through eternity
-Sharon J. Bryant
In Memory of Andy Dunbar's 30th birthday
Reprinted by permission of author

Where Did My Sunshine Go

"In My Daughter's Eyes" is our song
Our song, for you and me
For it tells how much of a love we have
And is there for all to see

It speaks of how I see you
And how I hope that you see me
And a love that only we two shared
A love for all of eternity

We danced to this song together
At your wedding you and I
And as happy as I should have been
I couldn't help but cry

I was sad that you were all grown up
And that you would move away
But I never thought I would have lost you
On a dark September day

My sunshine was taken in September
It seems so long ago
A day I will always remember
A day that hurt me so

We did so much together
You were my true best friend
You listened, loved and comforted me
Until the very end

I am so lost without you Jessie
People truly have no clue
Each day that I am without you
My heart is a deeper blue

Someday my heart will stop beating
And you will be standing beside me
with a smile
And you will reach out your beautiful arms
And hold me for a while

Then, with your gentle hands
You will lead me to the light
Where Jesus will smile upon us
And we will never leave each other's sight

--Laurie Card
In Memory of my beloved daughter Jessie

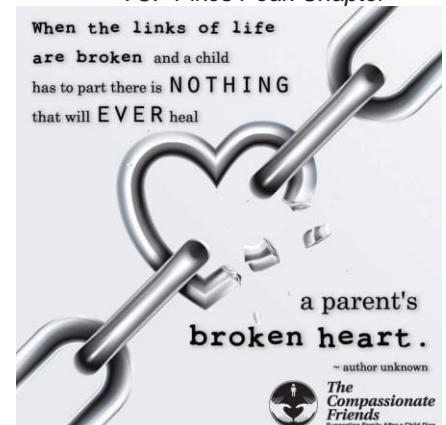


I Was Remembering You

I Felt I Was Healed

I felt I was healed, felt I was ok
Ten years had passed to make me this way.
Worked with others who were feeling the pain
So tears and the heartache would soon go away.
I make the newsletter and work on the slides
That we watch as we remember the better times.
But life has a way of throwing a curve
That rocks to the core and shatters the nerves.
My brother has died and though he was ill
A hole has re-opened once again I must fill.
I know all the steps that take me through grief
Of the traps to watch out for, oh what a relief.
Though same it is different, the hurt is still there
I miss my little brother and wish he were here.

--Stew Levett
TCF Pikes Peak Chapter

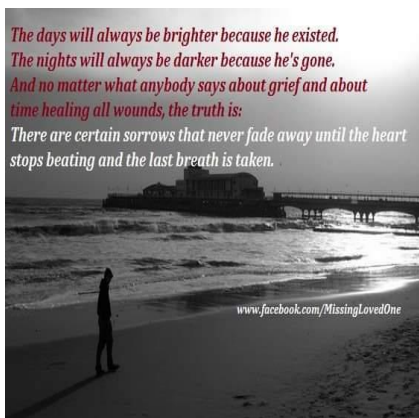




The Learning of Love

Love lives - continually gives ~
LOVE NEVER FAILS
 Love never leaves & never deceives.
 Love always remembers, Love sometimes grieves
 Love establishes, Love includes,
 Love understands, Love honors,
 Love forgives, Love waits...
 There are secret things with Love
 - mysteries, moments, memories
 The secret things belong to One
 higher, sovereign, & wiser
 But the things that inspire LOVE
 & the things that are revealed
 about LOVE;
 Belong to us - to our sons &
 daughters, to our siblings &
 grandparents, family & friends
 ~THE THINGS REVEALED
 ABOUT LOVE BELONG TO US~
 That we may observe, honor, &
 remember
ALWAYS & FOREVER

--Pamela Hagens



Hands

Little handprints
 in a frame,
 Flashback of memories
 days long gone,
 yet still so fresh in my mind
 as if only yesterday.

Tiny hand of my baby girl,
 Fingers curled around my own,
 Only a reflex to some,
 But not in my mind,
 For me only the purest
 of loving connections.

Outstretched toddler hand
 reaching out for mine.
 trusting mother's protective grasp,
 maneuvering the busy streets,
 we skipped together,
 hand-in-hand.

Slender-fingered teenage beauty,
 polished nails, smooth scented
 hands.

Seeking independence,
 Hands pushing me away,
 Sensing somehow her reluctance,
 Not really ready, not quite yet...

Hands of her adult years,
 I thought would have held mine
 as I navigated through the ageing
 years.

Hands to comfort and hold, but
 never to be,
 I am left only with my memories,
 and tiny handprints,
 in a frame...

-Cathy Seehuetter
 TCF St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Bereaved Parents

Different ages
 Different stages
 Different issues
 Same pain
 Daily strain
 Occasional tissues
 Our children have died
 Often is all we know
 A fact we fear to hide
 Despite our ever-present woe
 We live with pride
 Though broken-hearted
 To love, remember, and grow

Victor Montemurro
 TCF Medford, NY

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

Walk to Remember



September 23, 2023, registration is at 8:30, Walk will start at 9 am at Waterfall Park, Independence, MO. More details to follow.

Please help us help others. Make a LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Ave, Raytown, MO 64133

Remember when you came to your first meeting, and someone was there who was a little farther down the road and gave you a hug or shared something that made you feel like you are not crazy. Well, if you are a little bit farther down the road, please feel free to come back to our meetings and help families that are just starting their grief journey.

Please visit our website at ,
www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org
 Find us on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182>

We have several volunteers who write remembrance cards to families on birthdays and death dates. Just a reminder if you have an address change, please email phillipsplace@aol.com or mail a note to TCF, C/O Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Raytown, MO 64133 so the roster can be updated. Please remember that you can give to The Compassionate Friends through your United Way pledge at work or as a single gift, but you **MUST WRITE IT IN.**