



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May-June 2018

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The Significance of Mother's Day

I don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my child, a love greater than any I had known before. So, on Mother's Day, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood—this year and every year—I, too, want to be remembered as a mother.

--Ginny Smith, TCF, Charlottesville, VA

Mother's Day Sadness

We survived this Mother's Day
continue moving on
We miss the children that we lost
don't always feel too strong
But we would never trade them in
for
anything at all
The love they brought to us, their
lives
are joyful to recall
So we keep moving through our
tears
our sadness and our grief
And know that we again will be
together, just believe!

--Jenny Donaldson, Chad's mom
South Kansas City TCF Chapter



"Do not judge the bereaved mother.

She comes in many forms.

She is breathing, but she is dying.

She may look young, but inside she has become ancient.

She smiles, but her heart sobs.

She walks, she talks, she cooks, she cleans, she works,
she IS, but she is not, all at once.

She is here, but part of her is elsewhere for eternity."

- Author unknown

A Mother's Journey

My daughter has been dead for 43 months—part of a long and torturous journey for me. As soon as I could think rationally at all, I began devouring books and articles about grief. Some were good, some were terrible, but if it had to do with the loss of a child, I read it.

I scoured newspapers and the internet for support groups and participated in several. Some were good; others were a complete waste of time. Then one evening, my husband and I attended a Compassionate Friends meeting, and as someone in our group told me later, "I had found a place to be!" It was exactly what we had been searching for. There was an immediate bond as I met parents who suffered the same pain as I.

It does not matter how young or old a child is at the time of death. A

child is the most precious treasure a person can be given in this life, and the death of any one of them is the most horrible tragedy that we will ever have to face.

People ask me if I have accepted Barbara's death; of course, I have, because there is no other choice. But I celebrate her life, and I think about her every day, regardless of what I am doing. I often reflect back to those dark, somber days when she was dying of cancer, and remember how courageous she was. Taking care of her in those final months was tedious, painful work, but it was a privilege for which I will always be grateful.

Every event in our lives is punctuated now by her illness and death, having occurred before or after she was diagnosed, before or after she died, and so on.

My pain and grief are still acute and surprisingly close to the surface. I find myself weeping at some tiny reminder, but I have made progress over time. When I picture her sweet face, I see her as she looked, ravaged by cancer. Therapists tell me that someday that will change, and I will be able to see her as she once was—a vibrant, beautiful, healthy young woman. My journey goes on.

--Barbara Beall "in memory of my daughter, Barbara"

*Sometimes love is for a moment,
Sometimes love is for a lifetime,
Sometimes a moment is a
lifetime.*

--Pamela S. Adams, TCF, Winnipeg, Canada

Memorial Day

*For each grave where a soldier
lies at his rest
For each prayer that is said today
out of love
For each sigh 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*

The Second Year

The Second Year, you know your heart is breaking into more pieces than you can count—again, and you are reminded that your life has been changed forever.

The Second Year, you wonder where the first year went. It passed so quickly—and yet time stood still. How did you get through another day—another morning—an hour—a minute?

The Second Year, you think you have begun to see things back in their “proper” place, only to find that nothing will ever return to the way it used to be.

Long before the “date” approaches, you begin to retreat, as if hiding might allow the painful memory to pass you by. And then you realize—the Second Year is worse than the first. The shock is gone. It’s real: no phone calls, no holiday celebrations, no birthdays, nothing—ever again. She’s gone forever.

My heart grieves—my eyes search the heavens—my soul seeks peace. I miss her... I miss her.

*--Jo Ann Goldberg, “in memory of my daughter, Vicki Lewis, who entered her peaceful journey on
Mother’s Day weekend 2006”*

No Vacation

There is no vacation from your absence.
Every morning I awake
I am a bereaved parent,
Every noon I feel the hole in my heart.
Every evening my arms are empty.
My life is busy now, but not quite full.
My heart is mended, but not quite healed.
For the rest of my life every moment
will be lived without you.
There is no vacation from your absence.

*--Kathy Boyette
TCF Mississippi Gulf Coast*

Thoughts on Mother’s Day (or Father’s Day, or Memorial Day)

I saw my friend standing, staring at a picture of my son and daughter, and I joined her. Instinctively we put our arms around each other as we stood there together.

“Loving him was worth the pain of losing him, wasn’t it?” she said. It wasn’t a question. It was a statement of fact, and we both knew the answer was “yes, yes, a thousand times yes.”

My friend is childless, but not by choice. I know how hard Mother’s Day is for me, but I can only imagine how difficult and empty it must be for her.

For me there are memories of the months I nurtured that child beneath my heart. Will I ever forget the time he actually kicked a purse off that bump I called my lap? And the times he hiccupped? Even if he had died at birth, I would still have had those memories to treasure. Then there were those wonderful toddler days when he told the world all our family secrets and amused a whole airplane full of people when he said in his loudest three-year-old voice, “Tell the maid I want a cake!”

School brought a mixed bag of memories—some good, some bad, but all a part of growing up. How we loved him as a teenager. We lost him during those years, but sometimes I’ve consoled myself with the thought that 16 would be a magical age to be forever.

“Yes, dear friend, loving him was worth all the pain of losing him, and more. Much, much more.”

--Judy Osgood, TCF, Central Oregon

The Broken Pieces

“If I am what I do, and I don’t, then I’m not.” These words have been spinning around in my head ever since I heard someone comment on how we tend to define ourselves by what we do rather than by who we are. I’ve thought about those words incessantly, almost to the point where they became nonsensical. But they aren’t.

Until the day of my son Bryan’s death, I’m afraid I was guilty of defining myself by my roles in life: Computer marketer, husband, father... and without really being aware of it, most often in that order. I was caught up with “bringing home the bacon,” “making a name for myself” and the tunnel vision that goes with all that. My sense of self-

worth was wrapped up with these things. One of my colleagues called me “Rapid Robert” because of my pace in going places... or was it a treadmill? I was a workaholic, and only too often by the time I’d gotten around to family matters, I’d run out of steam.

Then Bryan died. The superficiality of my life smashed headlong into a brick wall. For months I felt I was sitting in the middle of a field scattered with the pieces of my life: job pieces askew here, family relationships trailing off there, dreams piled akimbo here, hopes rent asunder over there.

As I listened to my son’s friends at the two remembrances for him, it dawned on me that at 19, a young man doesn’t have a long list of credits and accomplishments. Bryan hadn’t made a name for himself. Bryan was Bryan, no more, no less. His friends loved him for who he was, not what he was.

Strange the lessons
fathers learn from sons
to care
to share
to be there...

I wrote these words blinded by pain, and I could sense what it was that brought together people from all over in a common bond of shared grief—Brian cared about them. I wondered if I were to die suddenly, but after more than 50 years of life, how would I be eulogized? “A real professional, a true marketer, a dedicated employee...?” I’d settle for two words: “He cared.”

I’ve tried to put the pieces of my life back together again, but I’ve tried to be selective. I’ve left many pieces lying in that field because they don’t fit anymore. And I’ve fashioned new pieces—each in some way inspired by the lesson of Bryan’s life.

Hemingway wrote, “Sooner or later life breaks everyone, but afterwards some are stronger at the broken places.” I’ve tried to put the pieces of my life back together selectively. I’ve fashioned new pieces. Some pieces no longer fit. As bereaved parents, we have a choice: We can fixate on the death or we can affirm life. I know which my son would have wanted for me.

--Bob Rosenberger, TCF, Burke, VA

It’s a myth that if you had a faith, you will be ok. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith. Grief is the price we paid for love.

--Darcie Sims

Now Let Us Look to Butterflies

Where are all the butterflies?
Do they wing their way
unaccompanied toward light?
Do they rest sometimes
in their silent flight?
Are they ever frightened
in the murky depths of night?
Or do they sleep within our hearts?

If so, let us awaken them
with gentle voice and touch.
Let's bid them spread their wings
to fly transformed with joy
and such abandon that our pain, too,
will yield within their tender clutch.

Now let us look to butterflies
as symbols of our deepest love.
Death, for all its boastful claims,
has power only over mortal clay.
Our children's souls unbound
by earthly frames, now soar;
and we, enriched by steadfast love,
ignite new lives
from their love's flames.
--Shirley C. Ottman

Missing and Valuing on Mother's Day... [Father's Day...Memorial Day]

Mother's Day is a special day, and special days are hard after the death of a child. For the first few years, it's a normal and natural thing for either parent to zero in on who is missing, rather than who is left... and I was no different.

Fortunately for me, not long after the Atlanta chapter formed, a local psychiatrist, Dr. Victor Gonzales, spoke one evening shortly before Mother's Day. He told of his parents' loss of their first two children. His story of how his life had been influenced and molded by his mother's reaction, touched me. He spoke of how he and his siblings who came later were forever denied his mother's happiness and joy. She was unable to value what she had left as much as what she had lost.

Dr. Gonzales said he spent a great deal of his childhood trying to make his mother happy, always failing and always feeling there must be something lacking in him that caused him to fail. The picture in my mind of him and his siblings always trying and always failing, through no fault of their own, made a great impact on me. I determined from that day forward that my daughter would not have to lament later in life

that she had been denied my happiness and joy because her brother had died.

On Mother's Day now, I make room for both missing and valuing, for they are not mutually exclusive. Now when I go to the cemetery with my rosebud on my day, my daughter has no part in my needs while I am there. When I come home, my son doesn't interfere with my acceptance and appreciation of my daughter's expression of love. She gives me a gift on my day, and I give her one in return. *It's probably the best gift I could possibly give her...my happiness and joy for life.* She is as important as what I have lost, and I know her worth.

If you are fortunate enough to have surviving children, I hope you too are able to value as well as to miss. There's room for both, you know.

--Mary Cleckley

The Graduation Party

You've been gone so long, I couldn't feel the spirit of you over my sadness. My grief was taking me further away from you.

Then you came to me, just as I remembered you—laughing, shining eyes, moving so gracefully, so Alive. It made me happy just to look at you, for I hadn't seen you that clearly in years.

It would soon be your brother's graduation, and I wondered how I could get through it without crying for you. "YOU should be here.... YOU should be part of this," I cried.

"HAVE A PARTY!" You bounced the words at me. "No," I said. "You were our party person." We could hardly have company over, especially without you egging us on. But as the days went by, those words continued to gnaw at me, or was it you?

Last night your brother graduated. We had a BIG party...lots of friends, lots of laughter, lots of memories and YOU. The banner, the balloons, all were touches from you. For a while you were back with us. It felt so good.

--Lynn Kulp, TCF, Sonoma County, CA

Don't Die With Me

I watched you the other day as you sat by my grave, talking to this cold stone and laying down some flowers. You started to cry, and your lips trembled. You asked God, "Why not me instead of this beautiful child?"

I wish you knew how sad I felt to watch you break down. I need you to know this is not what I wanted. Please, please, "**Don't die with me.**" I know you can't feel my arms around you, but I'm always here, and I love you, too. I need you to keep me alive in your laughter and thoughts. And, by the way, "Thank you for the pretty flowers."

I sat in the chair right next to you today. You were looking at some really silly pictures, talking to each one with a smile, which I haven't seen in a while. You started to cry and your lips trembled. You asked God something new. "How is my beautiful child?" I wish you knew how happy I felt to watch you share your stories and pictures with everyone else.

This is what I wanted: "**You not to die with me.**" I know you can't feel my hands in yours. I needed you today and you came through. I want to say, "**Thank you for keeping me alive.**"

I was with you last night as you said your prayers. Your voice trembled a little and you tried not to cry. You said to God, "Please forgive me for almost losing faith in you. My heart was broken, and I was so lost. I'm much better now. Take care of my child; I know he is in good hands. Amen." I wish you knew how proud I felt as I watched you fall asleep. At last you have found some kind of peace. I know you can't feel my kiss on your head or hear me telling you good night. But I'm always right here, right here by your side.

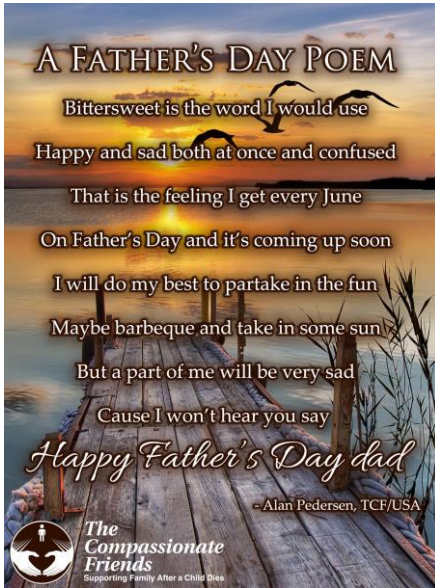
I heard you whisper before you fell asleep, "If you can hear me, dear child, I want to thank you for the short time we had together, and for the lifetime of memories you've given me. I love you now and forever." I heard you; thank you, Mama.

--Copied by Marie Casperson

Monarchs in Butterflights of Migration

How much I wish that the monarchs - in their butterflights around us on their way to Mexico - were really Chris and not his representatives stopping briefly for a visit. Losing him and the opportunities to visit with him, talk with him in person, kiss him, share his intensity for life and living it so well, make us so lonely. Thank goodness for the butterflights!

--Bonnie May Malody



Our Stories Go On

When the story of our loved one's death is told, the story still continues. Over the months and years that follow, we repeat our experiences to interested listeners. And the story never ends. Though our loved one's life is stopped in time, the stories are timeless.

People look for a cue from us that we have found closure. What truly is "closure"? Is it a time when we no longer grieve outwardly? Is it a time when we quit telling the stories and speaking our loved one's name? Others may assume that we have "accepted," found peace and left this event behind us as we move forward in our lives.

The truth is we never leave grief behind. We never forget. Our loved ones become a part of who we are to-day. And our stories are nestled in our hearts, safe and secure in the knowledge that life and love are eternal.

--Nan Zastrow

Butterfly Soldier

A butterfly is a colorful, delicate creature. A soldier is one who works for a specified cause, a fighter. These two words would never be thought of together, but for me they happen to fit the way I now must live my life.

The butterfly's life is so brief, but the magnificence of this creature stays in my mind, and I long for its splendor when it is gone. The soldier is to be strong in or out of combat, courageous in the face of the enemy. There is no room for weakness (society does not allow it).

The butterfly stands for my daughter, whose life was so short, but the impressions she made on everyone who knew her leave us with beautiful memories. The soldier stands for the daily struggle I have dealing with the tremendous grief I am left with due to her death.

My shield is a smile I must wear to protect others from the sight of grief. Yet in the center is the butterfly with its wings spread wide and all its colors as bright as the dreams left unfulfilled. Butterfly and Soldier... almost opposites that conflict with each other in a constant tug of war.

After the shock wears off, then "grief" becomes the war I must battle every day, without specific rules of assault defined. Tears can come as rapid as an automatic machine gun. The lacerations go so deep, but I can't find a medic for bandages or painkillers. The wounds seem to stay open and fester for such a long time. I feel alone on this huge battlefield, unable to hear anything but rifle shots or see anything but bombs lighting up a dark sky. No matter which way I turn, there is another minefield to cross that, with a sudden explosion, could take away my remaining body parts. I attempt to fight back, but it looks as if my position is forever taken over and I am in reverse, never moving forward.

Time seems to be my only ally, easing some of the pain and letting my mind use pleasant memories as healing agents for the open gashes. The Compassionate Friends (who use the butterfly symbol) is my lifeline to realizing that I will survive and learn to cope with the effects of "war." Now I am more like a soldier who has come back from a raging conflict and has to try and resume a "normal" life. But the "grief war" goes on, even though the scenery is different. I continue to suffer from all of its effects and battle scars.

A "survivor" is the way I see myself and others who fight in this "grief war," not knowing why we are still here or who we are any more. I will go on fighting and withstanding what life has to fire at me each day. My wounds are healing very slowly and forming scars that do not show on the outside, but always exist. Each day the emotions of "war" continue, but get less intense with new-found friends, activities, and a loving family with whom to share the struggle.

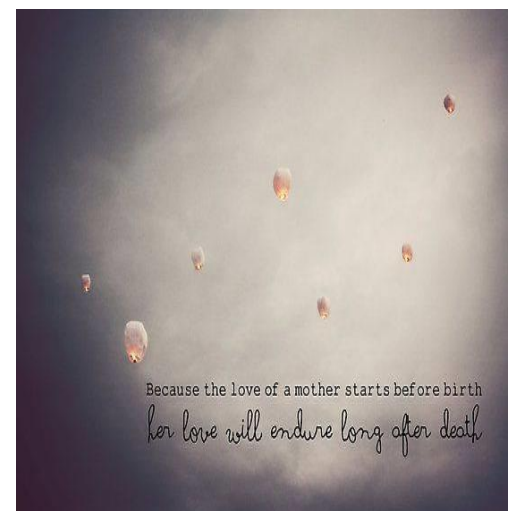
I am a "butterfly soldier" holding on to the beauty of my memories and battling the pain of loss. I was lucky to have had a daughter for a few years that added so much to my life. It hurts so much that she is gone, and before all of her goals had been met. The "war" goes on with each passing day, and I take each "battle" as it comes. I still have a long way to go, and a lot of pain to deal with, but I will be okay. I am a survivor, not a war hero, just a survivor. I don't have any medals to prove any heroism or courage... I'm just a Butterfly Soldier."

--Bonnie Harris-Tibbs,
TCF Richmond, VA

i carry your heart with me

I carry your heart with me
(i carry it in my heart)
i am never without it
(anywhere i go you go, my dear;
and whatever is done by only me
is your doing, my darling)
i fear no fate
(for you are my fate, my sweet)
i want no world (for beautiful
you are my world, my true)
and it's you are
whatever a moon has always meant,
and whatever a sun will always sing is
you
here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and
the bud of the bud and
the sky of the sky of a tree called life;
which grows higher than the soul
can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder
that's keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

--ee cummings



The Father's Grief

--By David Pellegrin, Honolulu, HI

At my second meeting of The Compassionate Friends three years ago, one of the mothers said how nice it was to see a man attending, since "men grieve differently from women."

Her remark was no doubt meant to help put me at ease. I hadn't said a thing so far, and might have been intimidating in my silence, but it caught me off guard. What I was feeling after George's death, was so absolute, so awful, how could it possibly come with any "differences"? Would one grieve differently for an infant than for an adolescent? For a son than for a daughter? Surely grief was absolute for both mothers and fathers.

Over time I came to acknowledge the differences the well-meaning mother had in mind:

- Neither I nor the other men who occasionally attended talked much; the women talked freely.
- I sensed I was better at compartmentalizing my grief than the mothers, better at keeping a lid on it socially and at work.
- My male friends seemed less comfortable than female friends in talking about George, bringing up his name, or even looking at his pictures.
- I came to see how intensely I felt that I had let my son down as his protector, the father's primary role.

Shortly after becoming editor of my chapter newsletter, I sent a copy to my friend Jack Knebel in California. Jack and his wife, Linda, had been involved with a TCF chapter after the death of their daughter, Hollis. He replied, "It's good to see that a man is taking an active role in the group." Then he went on to write movingly about those male-female grieving differences. The rest of his letter, which touched me deeply, follows:

"...Several years after Hollis died, Linda and I were being trained by TCF to be "buddies" for newly bereaved parents. One of the exercises was to list all the unhelpful things that others had said in trying to comfort us, so that we wouldn't make the same mistakes. The other trainees (who were all women) made long lists and did it with enthusiasm. When the lists were read aloud, they nodded knowingly at every entry and eventually hooted and howled with derision at the worst (some of which were pretty bad). When it came

my turn, I held up an empty page and said,

"People may have said such things to me. I just don't recall. What I do remember is that people tried to tell me how sad they were for us, how much they loved Hollis and how much they cared about us. I remember one of my law partners hugging me in the halls of our very stiff and proper law firm. I remember men who had never told me anything more personal than their reactions to a Giants' loss crying at our loss and their fears.

"You women are used to talking about your emotions and about personal things. I wasn't, and my friends weren't either. So, the fact that we could do so was a great gift, and it wasn't marred in the slightest by someone's choice of words.

"Now, the shell has been broken and I find it easier to talk about my emotions, my hopes and fears, about those things that really are important. And that for me was one of Hollis' greatest gifts.

"I know that even after George's death, he is a major part of your life. My guess is that you're becoming more open to the gifts that he and those who care about you are able to give. With compassion and friendship, Jack"

Reflections

Melissa has been dead for as many years as she lived on this earth. Nineteen. Did I learn from her illness and death? Am I a better person now? I knew before that life is precious. That family is more important than things. That money can't buy happiness. That everything and everybody dies, and the ever popular "life goes on." What have I learned? That I can live with a hole in my heart. She is there always. When I meet a nineteen-year-old girl or a thirty-eight-year-old woman I see her—and she is always smiling at me. For a very long time I couldn't see her smiling—just sick and suffering. Miss her? Oh yes! At least once a day and at times so over-powering that I almost go to my knees. A better person? I wasn't a bad person before. I know that I have come full circle in my faith—that the "why" no longer matters—that "don't sweat the small stuff" is a really big category! Missy's strength has become my strength and I never doubt the power of love. I guess I am a better person.

--Missy's mom, Alice Micke

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones
taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place
clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers
inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish
their hearts desiring
what they cannot have--
to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held--
to all the fathers who leave a part
of their hearts at the stones
may breezes underneath trees of
time
ease their pain
as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

--Alice J. Wisler

For David, in memory of our son Daniel

There Is No Goodbye

For Tracy, my special angel

I close my eyes and you're a newborn in
my arms,
Already I was promising to keep you
safe from harm.
I blink and you're a toddler taking your
first step,
So proud of you I could have wept.

I look again and you're starting school,
Already learning how other hearts to
rule.
Before I know it you're graduating high
school,
So wise, so young, no one's fool.
Now you're ready to face the world,
Off to college no obstacle too big to
hurdle.
No longer would you be mama's little
girl,
In front of you lay the whole wide
world.
Now I open my eyes and your standing
there,
Wind blowing through your hair.
I see that beautiful smile on your face,
That from my memory I could never
erase.
In my mind I know for now our time is
gone,
You will never see another dawn.
No, my darling girl, there is no goodbye,
For in my heart you will never die.

--Tina Robertson, in *Labours of Love*, Noble
House, © 2005

So, what I really discovered is that maybe grief is more like an artichoke. Have you ever wondered when you walked through the woods for the first time and you snap a stick. An artichoke has layers; each one has layers and each have pickers on the top, more like life than a smooth onion. After you peel back each layer of the artichoke for all of your losses, what you have left is a heart. That is why we hurt
--Darcie Sims

Butterfly Dream

Last night I dreamed of butterflies;
 It was a most glorious sight.
 Like beautiful feathers in the wind.
 they left no footprints on the night.

Against my wishes, I awoke
 To a morning filled with sadness,
 Remembering the time had passed
 When they sipped my blooms with gladness.

But they didn't leave me empty-handed;
 I had sweet memories to treasure
 Of the too-few days they spent with me,
 Giving me joy too great to measure.

They landed softly on each flower,
 And sipped sweet nectar from each one,
 Knowing each was filled with goodness
 They would not sleep 'til day was done.

A butterfly's wise in butterfly ways,
 He can sense the coming of winter's night.

Nature has told him the time has come
 For sweet goodbyes and his final flight.

--Bernice Maddux, Weatherford, TX, in loving memory of good friend and butterfly expert, Tom Allen.

A Father's Thoughts on Father's Day

Am I still a daddy
 after my daughter is gone?
 I have no one now
 to toss gently in the air and hug
 upon returning to my arms.

I have no one now
 to blow "xerbits" on her belly,
 generating billows of laughter.

I have no hand to hold

while she tearfully gets a shot,
 no foot to tickle, no hair to comb,
 no tears to comfort and
 no child to hold upon my lap.
 My heart would ache much less
 if I weren't a father.
 So, I guess I'm still a daddy
 even though this daddy's girl is gone.
--Larry C. Brincefield



*From where I stand I cannot see
 How far it is from you to me.
 At different times it seems to be
 a step or an infinity.
 --Richard Dew, TCF Maryland*

Please help us help others. Make a LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O Carol Cavin 214 E Hansen Ct, Independence, MO 64055

UPCOMING EVENTS:
 41ST TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 JULY 27 - JULY 29



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National

Conference on July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. To register for the event and Hotel registration go to the National website www.compassionatefriends.org, our website at www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org as well as on our chapter TCF Facebook page and TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.



Our Sixth Annual Walk to Remember will be held September 15, 2018 At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass Pro) In Independence, MO Registration will begin at 8:30 am Walk will begin at 9 am Please watch for future emails and/or check the website www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org for preregistration and t-shirt order information.

For Remembrance dates 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.**