



The Compassionate Friends Fayetteville Area Chapter

Volume 21, Issue 3

July 2017



Life Can Be Good Again



For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence.

Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more. He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve. Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not

exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process, but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience. I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unrelenting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing.

Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

.....Continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Life Can Be Good Again, Chapter News</i>	1,2
<i>A Personal Evolution Through Grief</i>	2
<i>Siblings Walking Together, One</i>	3
<i>Love Gifts, National Office Information, Regional Coordinators</i>	4
<i>The Dragonfly, Thought From A Parent Who Lost an Older Child, Meeting information</i>	5
<i>Our Credo, Summer Memories</i>	6
<i>Birthdays</i>	7
<i>Angel Dates</i>	8
<i>TCF National News</i>	9

Chapter News

Congratulations to our very own Cindy Tart Bowers "Dennis' big sisser" for completing her Master degree in Social Work. Also she has been nominated to be the Sibling Representative on the TCF board of director's. Her term will start at the national conference later this month. **CONGRATULATIONS CINDY!** I know this degree has been a dream come true and I know you will do a great job on the board. Dennis is proud of his big sisser and so am I.

I will be stepping down as chapter leader in December. As one of the charter members I have been active in this chapter for twenty one years. It is time for someone new to take over as chapter leader. I know there are some very qualified members in the group. I will do all that I can to help the new leader or leaders. I will continue to be the treasurer and newsletter editor for the time being. It has been such a privilege to work with this chapter and I have received far more than I have helped and met so many amazing people. Honestly, there is no better way to help yourself than to reach out to others. Contact me at 910-245-3177 or jojegerman@outlook.com if you are interested. Please do not let December be the end of our chapter.

Thanks, Jennifer German "Amy's mom"

..cont. from page 1 *Life can be Good Again*

- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.
- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.
- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone, and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Don Hackett, TCF, Kingston, MA
(In memory of my son, Olin)

A Personal Evolution Through Grief

I have been a bereaved parent now for three and half years. I have learned a few things during that time, and I have much to learn in the future. I am evolving. Evolving from what I once was.....a person who had reasonable expectations of a life that included my son, his children, graduations, holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Now I have become a person who has virtually no expectations that are similar to the ones I had before my son died.

I have evolved into a more sensitive person. I know what some people are thinking before they even say the words. I feel others' joy as if it were my own. I cheer for the success of others. I feel their sorrow, their failures, their missteps. I watch children play and remember my childhood, my son's childhood and I think of the joy that is childhood. I sit for hours watching birds at our feeders, marveling at the beauty of the natural world.

I have slowed down the pace. I no longer feel the pressure to be here or there, to do this or that, to call this one or that one, to wear certain clothes, to "put on the best face" for strangers. I have liberated myself from the mundane and the materialistic. Instead, I simply feel deeply about others. I have become extremely sensitive to all that surrounds me.

I believe the loss of my child has changed me in many different ways. I see this in the attitudes of those who are in the Compassionate Friends as well. While few of us will broach no nonsense in our lives because it is meaningless compared with our experiences, we will listen intently for long periods to the weeping, hysterical cries of a newly bereaved mother. Or we will nod quietly as a parent who is far into grief has a sudden flash of sorrow that is overwhelming. We have a heightened sensitivity to others through no choice of our own. It came with the loss of our beautiful children.

I wonder about what my son would think of events that have unfolded since his death. I have come to conclusions about others that aren't, quite frankly, flattering. Yet, he had come to these conclusions before he died. While I tried to mollify his perception of the dysfunctional people with whom he was burdened, he just said, "that's how it is, mom." And he was right. That's how it is. I have learned to accept people for what they are. If I can help, I will certainly do so. If I can't help, I accept that some things can't be changed, and some people won't change. There is no magic here. It's a simple fact of life. "That's how it is, mom."

I volunteer more these days. I give of myself, my knowledge, any wisdom I may have acquired on life's path to others who are in need. I give of my time, my talents and my labors to those who don't ask as well as those who do. I am comfortable with this.

I have less appreciation for money than I once had. Perhaps that is the best thing to come out of this. What was I chasing? What was my son chasing? What was the point? Bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more. It's a shallow existence when one is so focused on the material things that one is defined by materialism. I have learned to let go of preconceptions, and in that letting go, I have been pleasantly surprised by many people.

How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It's as close to a near death experience as I can imagine. Instead of great epiphanies, there are moments of clarity. Instead of instant gratification, there is much work to achieve tiny steps forward. But the effort is well worth making.

.....Continued on page 3

*Sibling Walking**Together*

(Formerly The Sibling Credo)

We are the
surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the death
of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us. But have patience with us.

Sometimes we need the support of
our friends.

At other times we need our families to
be there.

Sometimes we feel we must walk
alone, taking our memories with us,
continuing to become the individuals
we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister;
however, a special part of them
lives on with us.

When our brothers and
sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different from
what we envisioned, and we feel the
responsibility to be strong even when
we feel weak.

Yet, we can go on because we understand
better than many others the value
of family and the precious gift of
life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten
mourners that we sometimes are,
but to walk together to face our tomorrows
as surviving children
of

The Compassionate
Friends.

...Continued from page 2 *A Personal Evolution Through Grief...*

When I came out from the pits of hell, I realized that my reality was changed; I realized that I was a different person. I discovered that the world doesn't run on the dollar. I found that all people have a capacity for goodness, but that many will never use this capacity.

But most importantly, I discovered that after leaving the pits of hell, there is a road toward hope that is traveled by each of us. Some walk more quickly, some more slowly. But we each walk that road to hope. Hope represents a life that is tolerable once again. Hope represents the acceptance of our child's death and the acknowledgement that we will keep our children alive in our hearts for all eternity as we continue into our tomorrows. Hope is reconciling those two elements: yesterday and tomorrow.

I have learned to adjust to change, because change is inevitable. I have learned to stand up for what is right because that is our duty as human beings. I have learned much about the fears of others and even more about my own fears. I have conquered my phobias as a result of my son's death. Nothing my imagination could conjure would equal that gripping pain, the ache that hangs in my heart forever because my child has died.

But most of all, I have learned that my son was right. "That's the way it is, mom." Shortly before he died, he said he wanted to give me a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* He never had the opportunity. But I will read it. I have a feeling I know what it will say. Perhaps Todd gave me the plot line when he died. I'd like to think that he was subconsciously preparing me.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

One

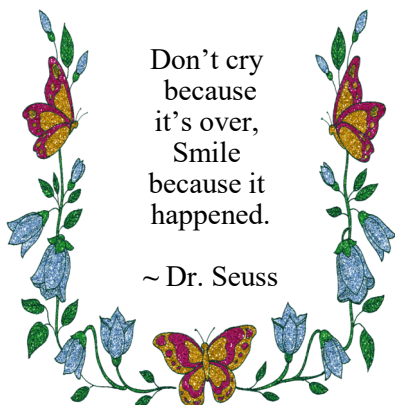
It was only *1* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this *one*. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being – I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity – for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this *one* decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that *one* moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that *1* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that *one* moment be the only *one*.

Michele Mallory



Don't cry
because
it's over,
Smile
because it
happened.

~ Dr. Seuss



Love Gifts



A Love Gift is a donation to honor a child who has died, or as a memorial for a relative or friend.

The Compassionate Friends depends entirely on voluntary contributions from individuals and organizations to meet chapter expenses. TCF is a 504(c)(3) non-profit organization: all donations are tax deductible. 100% of every dollar donated goes toward chapter expenses.

We thank the following for their kind generosity, love and sharing. There are no dues. We have already paid the ultimate price to be a member.

Bill and Diane Lanier in memory of their son Ralph Mitchell Lanier

Ben and Christine Traylor in memory of their son Benny Michael Traylor

John and Jennifer German in memory of their daughter Amy Elizabeth German

If you wish to make a donation or a love gift, please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends, and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394. Please include the name of the child, love one, or friend that you wish the donation to be made in memory or honor of.



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

The National Office of The Compassionate Friends

P.O. box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org Toll free: 877-969-0010

Regional Coordinator for the Fayetteville Area Chapter of TCF

Donna & Ralph Goodrich

704-822-4503 or iluvu2lauren@gmail.com



The Dragonfly

(Is Your Child Like The Dragonfly?)

Once, in a little pond, in the muddy water under the lily pads, there lived a little water beetle in a community of water beetles. They lived a simple and comfortable life in the pond with few disturbances and interruptions. Once in a while, sadness would come to the community when one of their fellow beetles would climb the stem of a lily pad and would never be seen again. They knew when this happened, their friend was dead, gone forever. Then, one day, one little water beetle felt an irresistible urge to climb up that stem. However, he was deter- mined that he would not leave for- ever. He would come back and tell his friends what he had found at the top. When he reached the top and climbed out of the water onto the surface of the lily pad, he was so tired, and the sun felt so warm, that he decided he must take a nap. As he slept, his body changed and when he woke up he had turned into a beautiful blue-tailed dragonfly with broad wings and a slender body designed for flying. So, fly he did! And, as he soared he saw the beauty of a whole new world and a far superior way of life to what he had ever known existed. Then he remembered his beetle friends and how they were thinking he was dead. He wanted to go back to tell them, and explain to them that he was now more alive than he had ever been before. His life had been fulfilled rather than ended. But, his new body would not go down into the water. He could not get back to tell his friends the good news. Then he understood that their time would come, when they too would know what he now knew. So he raised his wings and flew off into his joyous new life!

~ Author Unknown ~

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT WHO LOST AN OLDER CHILD

Perhaps I had a child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me—even if your memories are only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years, there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three grandchildren who now live three thousand miles away from me. My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living one day at a time—enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

—Helen Godwin TCF Orange Park Jacksonville, FL

MEETINGS

First Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm meetings will be held in Room 224 of the General Class Building at Fayetteville Technical Community College. 2817 Ft. Bragg Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303 (across the street from the Barbeque Hut)

Unless otherwise posted on our website.

If there are changes for any reason, meeting location and information will always be posted on our website www.tcffayetteville.org

Contact Jennifer German at (910) 245-3177 or jojegerman@outlook.com if you have any questions.



Our Credo

We need not walk alone.
We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with
love,
With understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at
All ages and from many different
Causes, but our love for them
unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain
Just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of
life, from many different
circumstances.

We are a unique family because
We represent many races, creeds and
relationships.

We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief,
But others still feel a grief so fresh
And so intensely painful
That we feel helpless and see no
hope.

Some of us have found our faith
To be a source of strength;
While some of us are struggling to
find answers.

Some of us are angry,
Filled with guilt or in deep
depression;
While others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring
To this gathering of
The Compassionate Friends,
It is pain we will share
Just as we share with each other
Our love for the children who have
died.

We are all seeking and struggling
To build a future for ourselves,
But we are committed to
Building that future together
We reach out to each other in love
to share the pain as well as the joy,
Share the anger as well as the peace,
Share the faith as well as the doubts
And help each other to grieve
As well as to grow.

We need not walk alone....

We are The Compassionate
Friends.



Summer Memories



Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country: vacations, holidays, family reunions, relaxed days at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mown grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him. The summer solstice on June 21 was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year. As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST), I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year. Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light...the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience. We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship. Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night. We light candles, take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions. Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.



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

Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Birthday's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:

July

"DJ" McKenzie July 11
 Joshua Jona July 12
 Jeremy Melvin July 12
 Carla Parker July 14
 Justin Seifert July 17
 Glenda Hudson July 18
 Gregory Trent July 23
 Dominic Barnes-Mateo July 26

August

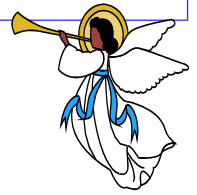
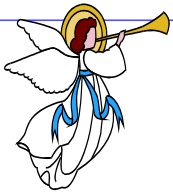
Randy Lee Dalton August 3
 Will Rivalland August 7
 Archi Kagy August 7
 Melba Ross August 19
 Valencia Federick August 24
 Justin Lopes August 26
 Kayla Francis August 28
 Grant Miles August 29

September

Emily Haddock September 5
 Spencer Walden September 5
 Dylan McKelvey September 6
 Amelia Moody September 6
 Querokee Velez September 8
 Cody Mclendon September 11
 Tony Pantano September 17
 Wayne Tyner, Jr. September 21
 Stephen Dew September 23
 Timothy Bowman September 24
 Sean Payne Jr. September 27

We were put on this earth *to love them*
 for as long as **WE** live...
 not for as long as **THEY** lived.

~ Alan Pedersen



Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Angel Date's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:

July

Allison Bennett July 7

Tony Pantano July 9

Benny Michael Traylor July 11

Justin Seifert July 11

Johnny Cole July 14

Justin Lopes July 15

Anthony "Brian" Smith July 18

Sean Payne, Jr. July 21

Nicholas Hayden July 22

Elijah Caddick July 26

Dominic Barnes-Mateo July 29

August

Renee Anderson August 3

Ricky Diaz August 3

Will Rivalland August 7

Daniel "Adam" Clark August 8

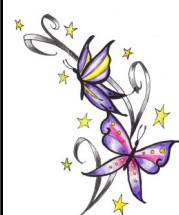
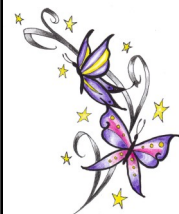
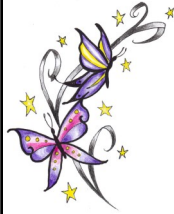
Erran Zachary Dawson August 8

Joe Dan Rumley August 8

Gregory Trent August 8

James Campbell August 12

Crystal Dawn Jackson August 14



Daniel McDonough August 15

Jimmy Wallace August 22

Jeremy Melvin August 28

Jeffrey George August 29

Pierce Matthews August 30

September

Akiana Lopez-Sellas September 1

Daniel Shivy September 2

Amelia Moody September 6

Mikayla Watkins September 8

Malachi Matthew September 16

Emily Haddock September 21

Scott Tyree September 27



TCF NATIONAL WEBSITE NAMED TOP RESOURCE ON THE INTERNET FOR GRIEF AND LOSS

The Compassionate Friends national website was named at the top of the list of best 2012 resources on the Internet for people experiencing grief and loss. TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org was named first by GoodTherapy.org, which describes itself as "an advocate for ethical therapy."

The Compassionate Friends national website has evolved from a very good volunteer website maintained by conscientious volunteers to one that is now professionally maintained and has been greatly expanded to provide even more support for TCF's membership. The announcement from GoodTherapy.org says that "among the criteria we used to select our top 10 websites are quality and depth of content, presentation, and functionality."

TCF's national website includes a wide range of support information and materials for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.

To read GoodTherapy.org's announcement of the top 10 grief and loss websites, visit Goodtherapy.org.

TCF NATIONAL OFFICE SEEKS YOUR STORIES AND ARTICLES

For many years, The Compassionate Friends National Office has provided on its Leadership site stories and poems by TCF members that can be published in Chapter newsletters around the country.

Currently, the Newsletter Editor Database has over 500 stories and 200 poems. The National Office would like to include your personal grief related stories and poems. Please submit your articles and poems to sara@compassionatefriends.org. Please include your name and chapter affiliation.

TCF "ONLINE SUPPORT COMMUNITY" OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR GRIEF SHARING



The Compassionate Friends national website 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.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu.

The Compassionate Friends
Fayetteville Area Chapter
703 Rosebud Court,
Vass NC 28394



The Compassionate Friends
Fayetteville Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Secretary/Treasurer
Jennifer German.....(910) 245-3177

Printing of the newsletter
John German.....(910) 245-3177

Webmaster
John German.....(910) 245-3177

We're on the Web
www.tcffayetteville.org

Copyright © The Compassionate Friends

Love Gifts

There is no charge for our newsletter, meetings, or lending library, and we depend solely on your contributions. Love gifts can be made in memory of your child, grandchild, or sibling. Your love gift will insure that all who need our newsletter, will receive it.

I wish to make a donation in memory of _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Donated by _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

If you would like to make a donation please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends,
and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394

Please send form with check. **A donation is not required to submit items for the newsletter.**