



The Compassionate Friends Fayetteville Area Chapter



Volume 20, Issue 1

January 2016



Another Year Without My Child



It's a new year and I am marking it, for the fifth time, without my child. Last month was the fourth anniversary of his death. This is one more milestone in the journey of a bereaved parent. The new year brings the promise of new adventures, happiness and prosperity to others. To bereaved parents it adds another dimension to our loss. It also brings the opportunity to look at where we are and how far we have come.

I remember the first new year's day without my son. What an empty, hollow feeling I had on January 1, 2003. My world had ended, the shock was still systemic in my mind and body, and I counted the days since he last walked, talked and laughed on this earthly plane, dwelling on the passing of days, hours and minutes since the moment of his death. I was frozen.

Looking back at that time, I recall just how the pain felt; unlike other pain, the pain of losing a child is never forgotten. I feel the familiar jolt

each time I awoke to remember that my son had died. I remember the misery of slogging through endless, meaningless days. I remember the tears, the second guessing, the anger, the guilt...I remember it all. I still bounce in and out of those emotions; this will never end. It has moderated greatly, but it never ends.

Now I am more focused on my son's life. Details about his life spring into my mind...happy times, maturing times, good times and funny times. I remember it all with the clarity that only a mother can possess. And so, that is how I will begin this new year...remembering the life of my child but never forgetting the loss.

I am a different person than I was before my son died. I feel as though a lightning bolt struck me on the day of his death, and now I perceive the world from a different vantage point. I have simplified my life from what it once was. I have many new friends who share the

experience of losing a child; I have permanently removed old friends from my life who simply couldn't accept my grief and were fearful of talking about my child. I have a new understanding of the problems that other parents face...problems that a mother of one never has to address. I have become more solidly spiritual. I have gone through Dante's seven circles, walls and gates of hell and emerged as the unique person I should have been all along. People change. Bereaved parents change a great deal.

I no longer dread each new day. I no longer weep silently every night. I no longer ache from head to foot with the pain of losing my child. I read, I write, I stay active in the community. I work in my small business, doing what I want to do and what I must do. I go to museums, to movies, to stage plays. I listen to music, watch television and work in my home and yard.

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Our Quarterly News



Once again we had a wonderful and very meaningful candle lighting service on December 13th. I would like to thank everyone who had a speaking part in the service. Also a very big thank you to Jenniffer Hall for all of her hard work doing the slide show. It would not be possible to have this service with out everyone's help. The service was emotional and we certainly needed time afterward to unwind and socialize. I appreciate everyone that brought refreshments to share, everything was delicious.

Our January through May monthly meetings will be in room 224 of the General Class Building of FTCC. See page 2 for full meeting information.

Every couple of years it is necessary to update and purge our mailing list. Since 1996 there has been over 400 families attend our chapter. Most have found peace and no longer attend meetings or need as much support. I want everyone who find the newsletter helpful to continue receiving it. A large portion of our chapter expenses is for postage. Please see page 7 for more information.

The 39th TCF National Conference will be July 8 - 10, 2016 in Scottsdale Arizona. The theme is "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love". I will be sharing more information as I receive it.

Jennifer German

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.

..... *Another Year Without My Child*
Continued from page 1

Amazingly, my word recall and memory are returning. Forgetting names, events, people, destinations and other critical factors of daily life was something I dealt with for over three and half years. I thought I had lost my mind until I started talking to other parents. I have begun doing memorization exercises....something I probably should have done three years ago. I am learning that the journey through grief lasts for a lifetime. Each stage is different, each sudden, poignant memory is paralyzing and each new day brings an opportunity to evaluate progress.

Much has changed during the past four years. Much will change throughout my life. Each of us experiences the loss of our child at the deepest level of our psyches. Yet each of us comes to this place with a different set of experiences and a unique genetic composition. I cannot compare myself to others. I can only mark my tiny steps forward with a sense of wonder at the resiliency of the human mind and spirit while simultaneously accepting that I am not in control....at any moment a flash of the past might bring me to my knees. I have learned to go with it.

I have found hope for the future. It certainly isn't the future I had envisioned. There will be no late night talks with my son, no holidays or birthdays shared, no participation in my son's children's lives, no cards, no handmade gifts. That door was closed by lawsuit happy former in-laws who have no standing in my life

today. I have crawled through the minefields and dodged the bullets of some pretty mentally unbalanced people and survived. I have faced the abyss of losing my only child while enduring the cruelest of sniping, the worst of intentionally inflicted pain. I did none of this with grace and finesse, I merely got through it. I survived. I became stronger by letting go of my anger. I found hope by remembering the goodness that is my son and by leaning on friends who had lost their children. These friends were there for me when I so desperately needed the comfort of kindred souls: Compassionate Friends who reached out to me gave me the glimmer of hope when all seemed forever lost and living was almost intolerable.

Now the healing process has completed its circle. I am here for those parents who need me. Strangely this helps me to heal as well. I reach out to others who are new to the process of grief, and I tell them that there is hope. One day the sunrise will again be beautiful and you will find peace within yourself. You will remember your child's life, you will honor your child's life and you will forever be changed by your child's death. But always, always, your child will remain in your heart. This is my truth to all who wish to know. Lean on us, for we have been where you are today. We will walk with you on your journey toward hope, peace and resolution. It is in this place that the healing will begin. This is a new year.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
 In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

MEETINGS

First Tuesday of each month
 At 7:00pm;

January through May 2016 meetings will be held in room 224 of the
 General Class Building at Fayetteville Technical
 Community College, 2817 Ft. Bragg Road,
 Fayetteville, NC 28303



If you have questions contact Jennifer German
jojegerman@outlook.com or (910) 245-3177



The New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories...sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

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

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.





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.

Vickie Bowles in memory of her son Bryan Bowles

Mike & Petra Syfrett in memory of their son Archie Kagy

George & Maureen Lovings in memory of their son Gregory Lovings

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



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Regional Coordinator for the Fayetteville Area Chapter of TCF

Donna & Ralph Goodrich

704-822-4503 or iluvu2lauren@gmail.com

TCF Mission Statement: 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 be supportive.

A Valentine for Mom

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine.....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years.. from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, handmade gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes give a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."

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

Valentine Message

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX

Frost

On a cold winter's day,
Frost etches a beautiful artistry
On every thing it touches, every blade of grass
It glitters and sparkles, and for moments
Before the sun comes out and the master piece
evaporates before our eyes, we stand memo-
rized cherishing the wondrous sight.
Like frost, our children were only here for a
brief moment

But, while they were here
Whether it was moments in the womb
Days, months or many years
They etched their beautiful artistry of love
On our hearts and lives and all of those
They touched.

Unlike frost, what they etched is forever,
It is something that we can cherish and hold
onto always.

We stand here tonight lighting a candle to
remember children we will never forget.
Their light, their spirits, their artistry lives on
and like the flame of the candle gives warmth
on a cold winter's night
And light in the darkness

The love our children gave us still remains.
It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief
blow.

It lights our way through the darkness and
loneliness
That we feel,
And it gives us hope!

Julie Short.. In Memory of Kyra

There's No Law Against Grieving--Even for Men

Two years have now passed but I still remember that day like it was yesterday.

If you are reading this, then you have probably lived that day, too. It may have been slightly different—but still the same.

Even though there was a bunch of relatives and friends in the waiting room with me, it was like I was completely alone. I had been called to the hospital less than an hour before. There had been a car accident. My wife was injured but not in danger. But no one would tell me anything about my 8 year-old Stephanie or 5 year-old Stephen who were riding in the car with her.

I had been led to a waiting room, hoping for word from the emergency room doctor. The minutes seemed like hours. Then the doctor came in. Stephanie was in critical condition and would be flown to Children's Hospital. But they were unable to revive my precious Stephen.

The words echoed over and over in my brain. "Your son has died." The shock and the grief struck me at the same time. I had expected them to come in and tell me the kids were injured but would be just fine thanks to the excellent efforts of everyone involved. After all, that's the way it always happens on "Rescue 911." But that wasn't the way it happened this time!

I only half remember being led back to my wife where I broke the news to her. A moment later when I had been led into the corridor, someone asked me if I wanted to see my son. I don't even remember my response—just walking down the hallway, a nurse on each side holding my arms. All I could take were little half steps. My legs had no strength. Through the tears I could see all the nurses and hospital personnel stop everything they were doing and stare at us. Apparently they hadn't seen a grieving father before.

Finally we reached the emergency room at the end of what seemed like the longest corridor in the world. The door swung open and I spotted my son lying on a table at the far end of the room. I was helped to him and then left alone.

Waves of grief overcame me as I looked at Stephen's sweet face, laying there as if asleep. And the realization that I would never hear his laugh, I would never see him smile, I would never feel his kiss again.

After a few minutes a nurse came back and told me I would have to go because my daughter was being loaded into the helicopter and I should give her some words of encouragement, even though she might not be able to hear me.

I did that and I was driven to Children's Hospital where Stephanie died later that night.

The grief that I felt was so intense. The shock was incredible. This couldn't be happening. Both of my children were dead.

I remember the newspaper reporter who showed up at my house the next day. I had gone home to get some clean clothes and take a shower. On my way into the house she approached me. We sat on the porch and both cried and grieved as I related to her the story of the wonderful life I had spent with my children. This reporter never once stared at me with that critical look that I have seen from others. If translated into words, it would be "Men don't cry."

So often men are not allowed by society to grieve. They have to be strong for their wife and their remaining family. How many bereaved mothers have told me that "He holds it all in. He never cries. He never talks about our dead child." They want me to meet their husband because maybe I can get him to understand it's okay to open up and feel grief.

I was fortunate that I grew up in a family where it was okay to let my feelings show. If I was beaten up by the school bully, my father and mother let me know it was okay to cry. When the first person I was really close to died, my grandmother, no one told me it wasn't alright to grieve.

And this upbringing stuck with me. If I'm in a store and Bette Midler's song "God is Watching Us From a Distance" (Stephen's favorite tune to sing) comes on, I've given myself permission to cry, right then and there. If I read a poem that touches me, I've given myself permission to let it all out. And if I hear about the death of another child, I've given myself permission to feel my grief all over again.

The only thing bad about men grieving is that society looks down on us because we are not "strong." After losing both my children, I really don't care what society thinks. Only a small percent of them have had a child die, and they understand my feelings. The rest of them don't. And, God willing, they never will.

If you are a man and having a hard time allowing yourself to grieve, look at your inner being. Are you better because you haven't grieved? Or are you worse? Have your feelings of frustration from not grieving affected your relationship with your spouse or remaining children?

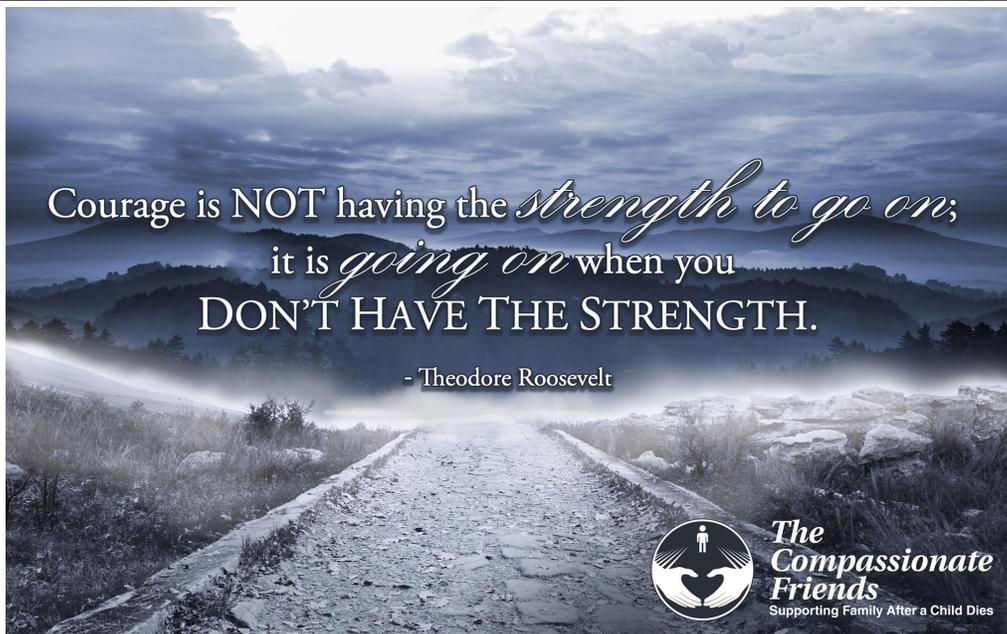
Our deceased children would, no doubt want us to accomplish something meaningful with our lives. They would want us to go on living.

Maybe it is time to grieve so that we can move forward with our lives.

Wayne Loder

TCF Lakes Area, MI

In Memory of my daughter and son, Stephanie and Stephen Loder



NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE

When someone joins our support group their child's, grandchild's, sibling's, nephew's or niece's name is entered into our database. The name is listed on our website, newsletter birthday list and newsletter angel day list with members permission. The name is also added to a list that is worn by someone participating in the annual "Walk to Remember" which is part of the National Conference. With having served over 400 families it is not possible to list all birthdays and angel days in the newsletter. Therefore when a person chooses to be dropped from the mailing list or if I loose contact with the person, their child's, grandchild's, sibling's, nephew's or niece's name is no longer listed in the newsletter. Their name is **NEVER** taken off the website or the "Walk to Remember" list unless requested. As I said on page 1, if you find the newsletter helpful then I want you to continue receiving it. Please complete the form below and mail it to me or email me your wishes. Anyone not responding will be taken off the mailing list. If you any questions, please call or email me. **Past newsletters are available on the website on the resources page.**

Thank you, Jennifer German

I _____ wish to be taken off the mailing list.
 (Name)

I _____ choose to remain on the mailing list.
 (Name)

If you choose to remain on the mailing list please update all of your contact information.

Mailing address: _____ Email _____
 (Street)
 _____ Phone _____
 (City, State & Zip Code)

Clip and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394
 or email me at jojegerman@outlook.com

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, aunts, uncles and siblings of the following children following children's:

January

R. Davis Turner January 7
 Jeremiah Davis-Kraut January 9
 Erica Graham January 10
 George Lee Perry January 14
 Benny Michael Traylor January 15
 Wendy Hair January 25
 Manzonian Hall January 25
 Christine Bailey January 28

February

Patrick Shea February 2
 Janes Campbell February 5
 Juliana Wilkins February 6
 Allen Arnette February 12
 Amber Marie Hall February 13
 Pierce Brantley Matthews February 16
 Daniel "Adam" Clark February 22
 Ian Redshaw February 23

March

Corey Fullwood March 1
 Joe Dan Rumley March 3

Robert Stevens March 4

Kyle Harris March 7

Mikayla Brielle Watkins March 7

Dennis Tart March 9

Stephen Bruno March 10

Christopher "Chris" Hondros March 14

Daniel McDonough March 15

Malachi Matthews March 18

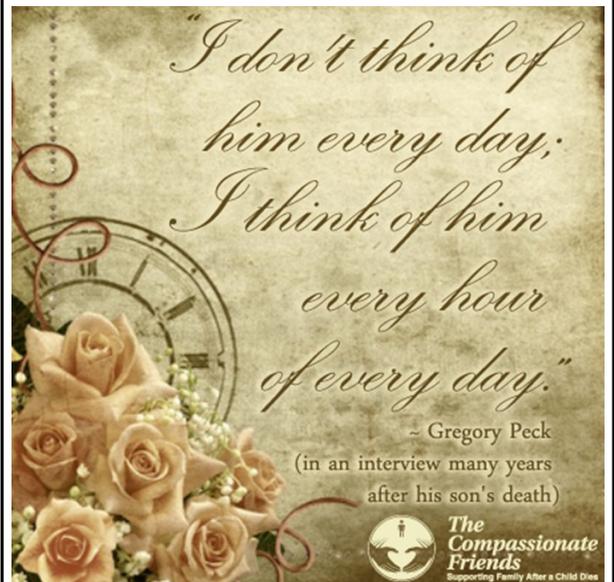
R. Davis Turner March 18

Talisha Morris March 22

Akiana Lopez-Sellos March 25

Sean Thomas March 28

George Lee Perry March 31





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, aunts, uncles and siblings of the following children.

January

RáMael McArthur January 1
 Jeremiah Davis-Kraut January 9
 James "Randy" Smith January 12
 Sean Thomas January 15
 Pam Tatum October 11
 Kevin Harlan January 21
 Erica Graham January 24
 Amy Zinsser January 24
 Zach Grullon January 28

February

Dennis Tart February 5
 Juliana Wilkins February 6
 Omar Sharaf February 8
 Gregory Lovings February 10
 Chad Allen Arnette February 14
 Mark Draughon February 14
 Cory Fullwood February 21
 Michael Pizzarella February 24
 Shawn Leigh Watkins February 24
 Wendy Hair February 26



March

Cody Mclendon March 2
 Tammy Owens March 2
 Melissa Thornton March 3
 Dylan Mckelvey March 5
 Matthew Guin March 7
 Sharnale Thompson March 13
 R. Davis Turner March 16
 Stephen Bruno March 18
 Bryan Bowles March 26

No matter
 how bright the sun
 or clear the air...
 no matter where I am
 or who I am with...
EVERYTHING is tinged
 with the *absence of you.*
 ~ author unknown

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We're on the Web
www.tcffayetteville.org
And Facebook

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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.**