



THE COMPASSIONATE **Bluegrass Chapter Newsletter** FRIENDS

P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, Kentucky 40356

April 2009

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We need not walk alone..

The death of a child of any age, from any cause, is a shattering experience for a family. When a child dies, a family needs emotional support for the long grief journey that lays ahead.

Since 1980, the Bluegrass Chapter of The Compassionate Friends has been actively helping families toward the positive resolution of their grief following the death of a child.

Meeting Information

Lexington

Third Monday of Every Month
6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.
Hospice of the Bluegrass
2321 Alexandria Drive
Lexington, Kentucky

Winchester

First Tuesday of Every Month
7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Hospice East
417 Shoppers Drive
Winchester, Kentucky

Meeting Format

Doors open one-half hour before meeting times to provide the opportunity to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.

It is always difficult to say “welcome” to those coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially for the newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.

New to our Lexington Meeting:

Lillian Eichelberger, mother of **Steve Swango**, 12/04

New to our Winchester Meeting:

Anne Lucas, mother of **Michael R. Lucas**, 12/28
Judy Hunt, mother of **David Nelson Hunt**, 2/19

A Big Thank you...

The Bluegrass chapter provided a "quiet room" for reflection and remembrance at the recently completed regional conference in Frankfort. It was well received and many compliments were offered by those that visited it. The butterfly notes on the remembrance tree was a highlight. Thanks are in order to several members that were involved but an enormous Thank You is given to Suzie McDonald and her friend Debbie Muller for doing most of the planning and preparation, all in special memory of Suzie's son Jamie Flynt.

Love Gifts

**In Loving Memory of Keith Gadbois
Given by George Gadbois**

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Some parents remember a birthday or anniversary date of their child, or a holiday with a "Love Gift". The Love Gifts help with the mailing of the newsletter, maintaining and updating our library and meeting costs. Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include his/her full name. A very special Thank You to those who contribute Love Gifts to the basket during monthly meetings. We greatly appreciate your support!

Please send Love Gifts to:

David Fields
P.O. Box 647
Nicholasville, Kentucky 40356

Telephone Friends

Sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort

Jim Sims
(859) 858-8288
(859) 797-2168

Monique Podgorski
(859) 381-8256

Suzie McDonald
(859) 576-7680

Check Out Our Library

Our library is a great resource for our members, friends and families. Before meetings is an ideal time to browse the selections.



2009 National Conference Information Announced

The 32nd National Conference will be held in Portland, Oregon August 7-9, 2009 with the theme *Mountains of Compassion – Roses of Love*. You can register online at www.compassionatefriends.org.

As with past national conferences the upcoming event promises a good dose of caring, sharing, and healing with well over eleven hundred people who understand much of what all those attending the conference have gone through.

There will be plenty to do, or you can simply relax with friends, old and new, during the conference, which features four outstanding keynote speakers.

- **Candy Lightner** is well-known as the dynamic founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD). Candy's 13 year-old daughter Cari was struck by a vehicle from behind and killed May 3, 1980, as she walked down a quiet street. The hit-and-run driver had four previous drunk driving convictions and had served virtually no time in jail. Candy went from being a divorced mother selling real estate to a "crusader with a cause," testifying before legislatures. Obsessed with her crusade, Candy, with friends, started MADD, which has grown to more than 600 chapters and three million members throughout the United States and at least four other countries.
- **Reg and Maggie Green** are the parents of Nicholas Green, the seven-year-old American boy who was shot and killed by highway bandits in Italy in 1994. Their decision to donate his organs to seven Italians became a major news story around the world, spawning thousands of organ donations in Italy (a country where organ donations were virtually unheard of before Nicholas' death) and around the world. This remarkable story was made into a CBS movie of the week called *The Nicholas Effect*. They will be the Friday afternoon banquet keynote speakers.
- **Darcie Sims**, a bereaved parent, nationally certified grief management specialist, a psychotherapist, and a board certified hypnotherapist. An international speaker on grief, Darcie co-founded Grief, Inc., an international grief consulting firm. She is a well known author, international speaker and was Coping Editor for *Bereavement Magazine* for fifteen years. She currently writes for *Grief Digest*. She is the Sunday Closing keynote speaker.
- **Michele Longo Eder** is author of *Salt in our Blood—The memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*. Michele, an accomplished lawyer, started journaling what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Never did she dream that her journaling would include the account of a personal tragedy that struck just before Christmas 2001. She will be the Friday Opening keynote speaker.

Lots of activities are planned for the 2009 conference:

- Friendship, understanding, and hope in everything that makes up the conference from workshops and banquets, to sharing sessions and the Walk to Remember.
- A special Friday evening performance of the Rabbit Hole, the Pulitzer Prize winning play about a couple's struggle with grief after the sudden death of their four year-old son.
- Nearly 100 workshops for parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members. Sharing sessions on different topics will be held every evening.
- The Tenth Walk to Remember® Sunday, August 9 starts out at the Doubletree Hotel and encompasses a scenic route. This symbolic two-mile walk shows, as members and supporters of The Compassionate Friends understand, We Need Not Walk Alone. All are welcome to register and participate in memory of all children who have gone too soon. You do not have to be registered for the conference to participate.
- A variety of gifts and mementos available in the Butterfly Boutique.
- Memory boards (please bring a picture—or hanging memento—up to 8X10")
- Silent auction and raffle to benefit The Compassionate Friends.

The Compassionate Friends Bluegrass Chapter Annual Picnic

Date: Saturday, June 6, 2009
Location: South Elkhorn Christian Church
Time: 5:00 pm.

Chapter will provide:

- hamburgers
- hot dogs
- buns
- condiments
- drinks
- paper goods
- silverware

Please bring a side dish or dessert.

Events planned for this year:

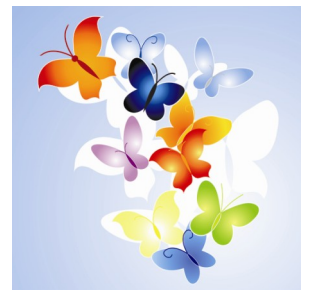
- Butterfly Release
- Memory Table

Please bring a photograph of your child or sibling to share.

- Silent Auction to benefit the Garden of Angels at Bluegrass Memorial Gardens.

There will be more information about this special garden in the May 2009 newsletter.

Please bring items in memory of your son, daughter or sibling to be auctioned.



Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

April Birthdates

4/5 **Kelly Renee Powell** 7/15 Daughter of Cecil and Barbara Powell
4/5 **Michael R. Lucas** 12/28 Son of Anne and Ed Lucas
4/8 **Annemarie Timm** 10/28 Daughter of Helen and Charles Timm
4/9 **Anthony Eugene Gay** 7/2 Son of Larry and Gayle Gay
4/11 **Sean Robert Wright** 9/3 Son of Sherry Conway & Mark Wright
4/13 **Tony R. Applegate** 2/27 Son of Dolly Wallace Bellemy
4/13 **Jason Davis** 5/1 Son of Curt Davis
4/15 **Colin Spencer** 6/7 Son of Stephanie Spencer
4/15 **Jeonna McDaniel** 11/2 Daughter of Jennifer Sebastian
4/20 **Ivy Britton Freeman** 10/17 Daughter of Kevin and Cindy Freeman
4/22 **Brenna Jiwon Kihlman** 3/7 Daughter of Dale and Shan Kihlman
4/24 **James Edward Auberry** 2/8 Son of James Auberry
4/24 **Glenn Ray Carter** 11/30 Son of Angela Carter
4/28 **Katie Lynn Brandenburg** 10/5 Daughter of Michael & Gennie Brandenburg
4/28 **Jeremy Daegan Hicks** 7/9 Son of Joe and Sheila Hicks
4/29 **Bridget Elizabeth Kolles** 5/1 Daughter of Greg & Mary Ellen Kolles
4/29 **Christina Leigh Kolles** 5/1 Daughter of Greg & Mary Ellen Kolles
4/30 **Kevin Wayne Gardner** 12/2 Son of Doug and Vicky Gardner

April Remembrances

4/1 **Ash Valic Coffey** 11/2 Son of Stacy M. Coffey
4/2 **Cody McClure Speer** 12/1 Son of Lin and Mark Simmons
4/10 **Andy Jones** 3/10 Son of Jean and Cal Jones
4/15 **Jennifer Podgorski** 10/31 Daughter of Monique Podgorski
4/15 **Bill Varney** 2/15 Son of Judy Varney
4/16 **Daryl Clinton Barnes** 11/1 Son of Vada and Mike Barnes
4/16 **Deana Mari Sea** 1/22 Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
4/16 **Brian Jason Hardin** 6/9 Son of Richard and Sue Hardin
4/17 **William Henry "Bill" Sanders** 9/1 (Born) Son of Barbara Sanders
4/19 **Jesse Caldwell Higginbotham** 3/10 Son of Jerome Higginbotham & Rebecca Woloch
4/19 **Kara Elizabeth Horton** 12/21 Daughter of Carole Mull
4/19 **A. Daniel Morris** 1/1 Son of James and Marie Morris
4/18 **James Michael Farris** 2/18 Son of Hulda Farris
4/19 **John Andy Girdler** 1/3 Son of Ella Girdler
4/20 **Madeline Violet Benton** 4/20 Daughter of Amy & Tony Benton
4/21 **Shari Eldot** 9/25 Daughter of Roz Eldot
4/22 **Ron Jones** 4/3 Son of Mel and Jeanette Jones
4/23 **Weston "Ashe" Marlowe** 1/27 Son of Brandi & Wesley Marlowe
4/24 **Trista Erin Lane Hail** 2/27 Daughter of Bill and Debbie Lane
4/25 **Robin Ricci Kuniff** 11/65 Daughter of Norma Forston
4/26 **John Thomas Parks** 11/24 Son of Rosemary Parks
4/27 **Joshua Scott Barker** 2/28 Son of Deborah Barker
4/27 **Lisa Jean Johnson** 5/16 Daughter of Sam and Doris Strader
4/28 **Mark Robert Bartella** 5/7 Son of John and Brenda Peterson

Should I Keep My Changing Grief a Secret: An Article for Long-Term Bereaved Parents)

By: Bob Baugher, PhD

*The following article is reprinted from **We Need Not Walk Alone***

When your daughter or son died, you discovered what the depths of grief were. You didn't want to live. Why go on when your precious child has been torn from your grasp? Like many parents, you may have thought of suicide. Early in their bereavement process many parents have said to me something like, "Bob, I'm not going to go out and kill myself, but if I'm driving down the street and a semi-truck is coming at me, I'm not going to get out of the way. I can't take this. The pain [of living each day] is too great." These feelings are common; but fortunately for most parents, the power of these feelings subsides as the months and years go on. And so does, as one father called it, whose three year-old son died in an auto accident, "the white-hot pain of grief."

If you are more than a couple of years from the day of your child's death, you may have begun to notice that the white-hot pain is not so intense. Although the grief is still there and although you would give anything to bring back your child, the pain may have eased in certain areas of your grief. For example, when your child died, you may have experienced incredible guilt. You might have said to yourself, "What kind of parent am I whose child would die?" Do any of the following phrases sound familiar? "If only ..." "I should have

..." "Why didn't I. . . ?" "I feel so guilty about. . ." These are guilt statements. Anger is also a huge issue for many. Have any of the following words come up for you following your son's or daughter's death? mad, upset, irritated, enraged, ticked, po'd, furious, bitter, frustrated. As time has passed have you seen yourself not as mad, upset, irritated, and so on? In addition, are you not as numb, fearful, and sad? Has your concentration improved somewhat? In other words, is your grief changing?

At the same time, have you noticed that people around you have not changed as much as you? That is, even though you have begun to see the intensity of your grief subsiding, you see that others who also love your child are still feeling the white-hot intensity of grief. The question I have for you is, "Should you tell others that your grief has been changing?" Let's look at the positives and negatives of this question. First, sharing where you are in your grief process is quite helpful for most people. It is at the core of the credo of The Compassionate Friends and is the title of this magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*. However, should you tell everyone? Including those who are not as far along as you? (By the way, isn't the term "far along" interesting? It assumes that grief is a straight path, when in fact grief

is more like a maze in which you hit dead ends, circle back to the beginning, and often get lost.) Sharing our feelings is an honest reflection of who we are as humans. Why hide what we are truly experiencing? Those who care for us would want to know if we are beginning to feel better. Make sense?

However, there is another side to sharing your grief journey. What if you told the people in your life that the heaviness of your grief is lifting? What harm could this do? Those of you who have done this, know what is coming in this paragraph. Telling others that you are not hurting so much can lead and has led to some of the following responses:

1. "Oh, you must not love your child as much as I do."
2. "Good, you're getting over it. Now I don't have to support you as much. And you don't need to go to those Passionate Buddies meetings or whatever they call themselves. I never knew what you saw in that group anyway."
3. "You must be blocking your feelings. You haven't really dealt with your grief. Perhaps you need therapy."
4. "So, you're not as angry anymore? Well, I still am."

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Grief's Roller-Coaster Ride

By: Dawn Morville Johnson

*The following article is reprinted from **We Need Not Walk Alone***

Do you ever feel you are on a roller-coaster ride in your grief over the death of your brother or sister? There are lots of ups and downs. Sometimes the pain is so overwhelming that your heart aches and grief rushes over you. At other times, the grief subsides and you go on living your life.

For siblings, the roller-coaster ride can last for many years after the death of a brother or sister. That's because at every significant milestone or event in our lives, the grief rises to the surface and we once again confront the death of our brother or sister. For our parents, difficult times may be important events that would have occurred in our brother's or sister's life: at a certain age, they would have gone to kindergarten, graduated from high school, got a job, got married, had children, and so forth. While mourning the death of their son or daughter, our parents grieve the absence of significant milestones in the life of their child, as well as the absence of the event from the parent's life.

While we, as bereaved siblings, may also grieve these events that our brother or sister will no longer experience, what is different for us is that these events are actually occurring in our lives. We must live each event without our brother or sister. And this occurs over and over throughout our lives, as we progress through childhood and adulthood, through the happy times and the sad times.

I have seen this occur in my life during the years since my brother, Jerry, died. As time has passed, my grief has changed. I don't cry as often; I don't visit his grave as often. In that sense, my grief does not weigh as heavy on my heart as it did at first. However, as I have become older and passed through various stages of my life, my grief has resurfaced many times. My brother was 21 when he died. I was 22. Although he was at my college graduation and he saw me get my first "real" job, he wasn't there to give me his opinion when I was trying to decide whether to quit my job and go back to school. He wasn't there when I graduated from law school and passed the bar exam. When I got married a year ago, he wasn't there standing at the front of the church with me. If my husband and I decide to have children, he won't be there as an uncle to celebrate the child's birth. When my parents grow old and decisions have to be made about their health, he won't be there to help me.

As these events have occurred in my life, it is as though I am on a roller-coaster ride, approaching a hill. I feel my grief coming on again, with the same intensity of those first weeks and months after he died. I am scared and uncertain as the roller-coaster struggles to the top of the hill. The roller-coaster reaches the top and then rushes down the hill to the bottom on its way to another hill. When you eventually come down on

the other side of each of these hills, it is with a great sense of relief that you made it.

When I married, it was the climbing of the hill that was the tough part. The two months before the wedding were the worst. In addition to all the headaches of planning a wedding, I cried a lot, realizing that my brother was not going to be there for one of the happiest days of my life. I thought about how handsome he would look in his tuxedo, how proud he would be of his big sister, and what a great friendship he would have with my husband, his brother-in-law. While I still think about these things, they took much more of an emotional toll on me in the months before the wedding. When I reached the hill—the wedding day—I did not feel as overcome with grief as I had expected. While I was sad and very much wished he was there with me, I had worked through this hill of grief and was already coming down on the other side.

The way that I made it through my wedding and have been able to face other "hills" in the roller-coaster ride of my grief is to include him in these events, just as if he were here. For example, when I have to make a tough decision, I ask myself what advice Jerry would have given me. When I graduated from law school, I took a framed picture of him with me to the graduation. One of my favorite pictures from that day is a photo of me in my graduation gown, standing in front of the

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5. "Are you forgetting the life of our daughter (or son)?"

6. "I guess I'm glad you're getting better; but I'm not."

7. "I'm glad you're recovering. I'm looking forward to getting the old you back."

Which path is preferable regarding your changing grief: sharing it or keeping it a secret? We've come to the point where you can begin to answer this question for yourself. Think of each person in your life who is coping with the death of your child. One by one, imagine what his or her response might be if you shared your changing grief. Can you take a moment now to do the following? If you are married, think of your spouse. What would he or she say about your grief? If your parents are alive, what

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gown, standing in front of the stage holding his picture. When I look at that picture today, I realize what an inspiration he was in my decision to pursue a new career. When I got married, I carried my bouquet in his memory and printed a message about that in the ceremony program, along with a thought about him. In addition to the many family pictures taken that day are the ones of me holding Jerry's picture. At the wedding reception, I had the disc jockey play a song in his memory.

Although Jerry isn't here anymore and all I have of him are memories of years past, including him in my life today creates new memories. It has become so important to include him in these

would they say if they knew exactly how you are now feeling? The same question for your siblings and other relatives. How would your brother react? What about your sister? What would she say? And what about your close friends—how would they react? In which of the ways (1-7 above) might any of these people respond?

How did you do? Of course, you cannot always predict how a loved one will react. Remember to permit yourself to grieve however you grieve. Try not to be so hard on yourself and decide whether or not you wish to share with others where you are in your grief. If you've already done what you need to in this area, good for you. If not, I hope this article has given you a way to make the decisions that are best for you.

events that not doing something special would seem odd. I look forward to the challenge of thinking of unique ways to include him in my life. And I don't care what other people may think about me doing special things in his memory.

However, the reaction from people has been positive. When others become aware of what you are doing, they often share their own losses with you. After a friend attended my wedding and saw the special ways that I had included my brother, I learned for the first time that he had a sister who died. This created a new bond with a friend. If significant events in your life include holidays, there are many possibilities. Create a special gift for your parents in memory of your brother or sister. Write down favorite memories of your

Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychology instructor at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, where he teaches courses in psychology, death education, and suicide intervention. He is a 22-year member of the South Seattle Chapter of TCP, serving as a professional adviser. Bob has given more than 500 workshops on grief and loss, has presented at several of the TCP National Conferences, and has written several articles and seven books on the bereavement process.

sibling and have everyone read them. Or share one thing that your brother or sister gave you or that you learned from him or her, whether it is an article of clothing or a toy or a personal trait such as your sense of humor or your fighting spirit.

Our brothers and sisters existed. Recognizing their lives at milestones in our own lives can help us in our roller-coaster ride of grief. It can help keep the memories of our brothers and sisters alive, even if they aren't.

Dawn Morville Johnson has been the sibling representative on the Board of Directors of The Compassionate Friends. Her brother died in September 1984 in a truck accident.

The Compassionate Friends 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 they 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 a 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.

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