



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

# Bluegrass Chapter Newsletter

**"We need not walk alone."  
[www.tcfbluegrass.org](http://www.tcfbluegrass.org)**

**P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, Kentucky 40340**

**November/December 2011**

## **Chapter Co-Leaders**

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**Dusty Rhodes**

(502) 330-4769

**Suzie McDonald**

(859) 576-7680

## **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

### **Mary Camp**

(859) 737-0180

### **Suzie McDonald**

(859) 576-7680

### **Janie Fields**

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## **The Compassionate Friends National Office**

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522

(877) 969-0010

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## **Love Gifts-A Thoughtful Way to Remember**

Love Gifts are a beautiful and loving way to remember a loved one. Through Love Gifts, we are able to reach out to others with our brochures and newsletters as well as obtain books and other information for our library. We truly appreciate every Love Gift, donation. Our Chapter work is done by volunteers and these donations help us reach out in many ways, and many thanks to Lisa for our TCF newsletter.

During the holiday season, whether you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, it is our prayer that each of you find peace in your heart, joy in your families and hope in the future.

Butterfly Hugs & Kisses To All:

Suzie & Janie

## **Your Loved One lives In Your Heart**

*~ Helen Steiner Rice*

Many tender memories soften your grief,  
May fond recollection bring you relief,  
And may you find comfort and peace in the thought  
Of the joy that knowing your loved one brought...  
For time and space can never divide  
Or keep your loved one from your side  
When memory paints in colors true  
The happy hours that belonged to you.

## **We welcome you with Compassion, Love and Hope**

It is always difficult to say, "Welcome" to people 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 if they are 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 our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.

New to Lexington Meeting:

Amy Burke, mother of Kristopher Kevin Owens

NanHutt, mother of Duane Pfannkuch

## *Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered*

### **November Birthdates**

- 11/1 **Daryl Clinton Barnes** Son of Vada and Mike Barnes  
 11/1 **Kimberly Ann Holder** Daughter of David and Sondra Holder  
 11/2 **Ash Coffey** Son of Stacy Coffey  
 11/3 **Taiann Nicole** Daughter of Sue Wilson  
 11/4 **Brian Staats** Son of Juanita Staats  
 11/8 **Ralph Winton Wesley** Son of Gen Wesley  
 11/8 **Randy Blake Johnson** Son of Randy and Doris Johnson  
 11/11 **Patrick McDonnell** Son of Bob and Ann McDonnell  
 11/13 **Joseph Carl Richardson** Son of Jim and Jean Richardson  
 11/20 **Ruth Ann Proutey** Daughter of George and Sarah Hudgins  
 11/22 **Isaiah Thomas Stewart** Son of Connie Stewart  
 11/23 **Debra Cay Stinson** Daughter of Bill and Letha Stinson  
 11/23 **Amanda Williams** Daughter of Donna Riley  
 11/24 **John Thomas Parks** Son of Rosemary Parks  
 11/24 **Marcie Reynold Thomason** Daughter of Barbara and Bill Thomason  
 11/27 **Bobby Lee Grimm** Son of Brenda and Peter Grimm

### **November Remembrance Dates**

- 11/1 **Brian Alan Frith** Son of Larry & Rowena Frith  
 11/2 **Jason Randall Johnson** Son of Sundae and Brad Park  
 11/2 **Christy Weldon** Daughter of Connie Weldon  
 11/2 **Zane Gregory Brown** Son of Gale and Joe Brown  
 11/8 **Colleen Christine Owen** Daughter of Diane and Andrew Owen  
 11/12 **Becky Fister** Daughter of David and Meriam Fister  
 11/12 **Lonnie Gene Centers** Son of Oneida Centers  
 11/14 **Sherilyn Annette Adams** Granddaughter of Ann Milton Adams  
 11/16 **Jonathan Walker Mayberry** Son of Jonathan & Stephanie Mayberry  
 11/19 **Jennifer Lee Guenther** Daughter of Helen Burch  
 11/20 **Ashley Riggs**, Son of Sharon Bellows  
 11/21 **Paul Travis Hickey** Son of Al and Sandy Hickey  
 11/21 **Allyson Mailfald** Daughter of Bill and Carole Mailfald  
 11/21 **Joseph William Minor** Son of Pat and Joseph S. Minor

People who pray for miracles usually don't get the miracles...but people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. Their prayers helped them tap hidden reserves of faith and courage which were not available to them before.

## *Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered*

### **December Birth Dates**

12/1 **Cody McClure Speer** Son of Lin and Mark Simmons  
12/1 **William Fredrick White** Son of Fred and Rebecca White  
12/2 **Michael "Mikie" Varnell Norton** Son of Mike & Vada Barnes, Varnell Norton  
12/4 **Jennifer Lee Guenther** Daughter of Helen Burch  
12/8 **Chad Hammons** Son of Dottie and Walter Hammons  
12/5 **Shannon D. Robinson** Son of Dale and Teresa Robinson  
12/7 **Evan Charles Thomas** Son of John and Keila Thomas  
12/11 **Michael Rhodes Burton** Son of Harold and Pat Burton  
12/13 **Zack Camp** Son of Mary Camp  
12/19 **David Wayne Meade** Son of Sue & Fred Meade, Brother of Susan Bayes  
12/21 **Christopher Andrew Keefe** Son of Michael & Anna Keefe  
12/21 **David Alexander Keefe** Son of Michael & Anna Keefe  
12/23 **Will Fister** Son of Gayle and J. W. Fister  
12/24 **Hank Butler Scolf** Son of Michael and Doretta Scolf  
12/27 **Frank Thomas Glowatz** Son of Frank and Dawn Glowatz  
12/28 **Bessie Renee Root** Daughter of Patricia Root  
12/30 **Noah Edward Kenawell** Son of Mike and Andrea Kenawell

### **December Remembrance Dates**

12/1 **Debra Cay Stinson** Daughter of Bill and Letha Stinson  
12/2 **Kevin Wayne Gardner** Son of Doug and Vicky Gardner  
12/2 **John Martin Laswell** Son of Frances Shaver  
12/6 **Jacob Daniel Akin** Son of Becky Akin  
12/8 **Noah Edward Kenawell** Son of Mike and Andrea Kenawell  
12/12 **Timothy Richard Woodworth** Son of Richard and Sharon Woodworth  
12/12 **Robert "Rob" N. Lamb** Son of Carol Lamb  
12/14 **Robert Allen "Robbie" Joseph II** Son of Mary Treadway  
12/21 **Christopher Andrew Keefe** Son of Michael & Anna Keefe  
12/21 **David Alexander Keefe** Son of Michael & Anna Keefe  
12/23 **Keith Allen Gadbois** Son of George H. Gadbois  
12/24 **Louis Tsey Gakpo** Son of Seth & Philomena Gakpo, Brother of Paul Gakpo  
12/28 **Michael R. Lucas** Son of Anne & Ed Lucas  
12/28 **Renee Peterson** Daughter of Roy and Juanita Peterson  
12/29 **Julie Dawn Hall** Daughter of Sharon and Don Hall  
12/29 **Tiffany Creech** Daughter of Jim and Karen Rice

## **Another Christmas**

**Printed from “Where Are All The Butterflies” with permission.**

**By: Brenda Hobbs, Bereaved Mother, Denton, Texas**

What can I possibly say to help someone through the holidays? I cannot recall how many times I have wished for magic words to ease someone else's pain. But, of course, there are no magic words. There aren't even any answers. But there are suggestions of ideas tried in the past. As bereaved parents and siblings, it is important to share our experiences with newly bereaved families who look to us for help.

Our first Christmas without our son Jesse, we changed almost all of our normal activities. We traditionally had had dinner in my husband's parents' home. That first year, instead, we had dinner at my daughter's home. We invited friends who did not have family in the area. We shopped very little. The stores and crowds were too much to handle. We hung no decorations or stockings, had no tree - nothing. I stayed busy making candy and baking breads.

We tried to help others less fortunate than ourselves. We donated toys and food to various charities. We participated in a Breakfast with Santa with Project Kind, the wonderful school Jesse had attended. Basically, we did what we had to do to survive. Friends and family seemed to understand or at least accepted our changes. Maybe they just didn't want to discuss it. Whatever! We survived those first holidays, much to our amazement.

The second Christmas season we had a new one-month old granddaughter. She helped a lot. We all know that our children can never be replaced. But if there is someone or something else to focus on, even for awhile, it helps. We had dinner at our home that year. We put up decorations, including Jesse's stocking. We decided that anyone who wished could write Jesse a note and place it in his stocking. Between preparing dinner and loving the new baby, again we survived.

Now this year we intend to return to Jim's parents. I don't dread Christmas nearly as much as before. I'm not really looking forward to it, but I don't panic at the thought. What I would like to suggest to others is to do what you need to do. Other peoples' expectations don't automatically have to be met. Discuss your feelings with family members. Remember, they hurt too. They will try to understand and respect your feelings. It takes a lot of time and energy to grieve. Allow yourself all the time you need.

I hope that something I mentioned is of help to newly bereaved families. The holidays can be painful, but we shall survive them. Maybe next year will be easier, and the next even easier still. Maybe before too long, we can enjoy all the memories of Christmases past without so much pain. I wish you all a peaceful Christmas.

## **Grief experts remind us that:**

**Holidays are not always “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year”**

Holidays often center on certain traditions and rituals. For some, continuing these traditions without a loved one may be an important way to continue sharing their memory. For others, it may be more comforting to develop new rituals to help lessen the pain and immediacy of the loss.

While the holidays can be filled with meaning, they can also be filled with pressure and stress because of additional tasks such as shopping, baking and decorating. Grieving people should be encouraged to prioritize what needs to be done, and focus on those projects that may bring them pleasure. Perhaps the gift list can be pared down, cards need not be sent out, or another family member can cook the family dinner this year.

The holidays can bring opportunities to remember the person who has died in a way that is personally meaningful. Some families choose to participate in holiday events at a local hospice. Others may choose to share special family stories over a meal. Some may find that making a donation to a special charity or volunteering time to help others in need may be a comforting way to honor their loved one.

Most of us must be pro-active about sharing stories about your loved one; otherwise your holiday may be more difficult for you and that is not good for you or those that love you. Don't ask permission just begin with your favorite story, most likely they will follow.

**An Attitude of Gratitude**  
**By Martha Honn**

As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself thinking of people, events, feelings and things I am grateful for. However, the first Thanksgiving after my son died I cannot say I possessed an attitude of gratitude. My 16 year old son, Cameron, died in an automobile accident on June 4, 1999. That first Thanksgiving after he died, all I could think of was the things he didn't get to experience, the places he never got to go, items I never got to buy for him, subjects we never got to discuss, arguments I wished we hadn't had, finding out how his life would have unfolded, what he would have become, who he would have married, how many children he would have had, where he would have lived, etc., etc., etc. If you are newly bereaved, I know you can relate to those thoughts. My head was so full of the thoughts of what death cheated Cameron out of. I felt singled out and alone. Life wasn't fair and I felt cheated. I was hurt, angry and in pain. But, along the way, I was blessed to find fellow travelers on the journey through grief.

I found out that it was normal to have these thoughts. I feared that I would forget some of Cameron's ways and mannerisms that made him so unique. I have gained strength, insight and hope from other bereaved parents. I encourage you to go to support groups for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents and just talk. Tell your story as many times as you need to. Listen as others share their experience, strength and hope. I promise you that, if you do the grief work, and, yes, it's probably the hardest work you'll ever do, you will reach a point in time when you too can have an attitude of gratitude. This Thanksgiving finds me with an attitude of gratitude. I am grateful that I had a son names Cameron. I'm grateful for my two surviving children, Aaron and Josolyn, my husband,

Gene, and my son-in-law, Doug. I'm grateful for all the special people I have met on this unwanted journey through grief. I'm grateful for friends and family who supported me. I'm grateful that we can talk about Cameron and share special memories we have of him. I'll always miss him and wonder how his life would have unfolded. I'm grateful that I'm at this place in my journey through grief. I can, once again, participate and be a part of life. I have learned to love Cameron in death as much as I loved him in life. Today, I can talk about Cameron, share memories of him and smile.



**HOLIDAY HOPE**

TUE NOV 15, 2011 · 7-8:30 pm

Celebration Center of Lexington

1509 Trent Blvd · 859.272.3414

**Thanksgiving**  
**Meg Avery (James' mom)**  
**TCF Lawrenceville, Ga**

The time draws near  
 And the calendar says  
 Thanksgiving is really here.  
 Time to reflect and time to gather  
 Thoughts of what to be thankful of.  
 Thankful? I think not.  
 My life is not full these days  
 And to be thankful is beyond my grasp.  
 But to give thanks? This, I believe, can be done.  
 Searching my soul deep within  
 Reasons to give thanks surface to the edge  
 Yes, I give thanks  
 For the memories of yesterdays,  
 The love, the laughter, the joy of each day when James was with us  
 The trials & tribulations of being an active parent,  
 The rewards & the challenges of raising a child,  
 The days of blissful ignorance when I thought tragedy would never visit our home,  
 The days when life was normal, even though I took it all for granted.  
 For the treasures of todays,  
 The sunrise, sunset, the changing of the seasons,  
 The new found friends along this journey I reluctantly travel  
 The tried & true friends who stand by me still,  
 The strong and everlasting love of my husband  
 The warmth of wet kisses from my canine companion & feline friend,  
 The encouragement & support, compassion & caring I give & receive as  
 I survive and help others survive.  
 For the hopes and possibilities of a peaceful tomorrow,  
 With faith, love, & perseverance as I struggle to move on  
 With James in my heart forevermore, spiritually guiding me with his new presence,  
 With sorrow and reluctance, each new day,  
 To yet, somehow, be open and loving,  
 Not to forsake what I've learned Because of what I've lost.  
 You see, it's not about keeping up with the Jones'  
 having an SUV or two in the garage,  
 having the largest beanie baby collection having so many CD's,  
 video games, or the newest, most improved, latest and greatest new gadgets,  
 not even being up to date with state of the art technology -  
 It's about love - it's about the gifts of yesterday,  
 blended with the blessings of today to make meaning for tomorrow.

## **Grief Tips**

### **Acknowledge the reality of the death**

You will first acknowledge the reality of the loss with your head. Only over time will you come to acknowledge it with your heart. As Stephen Levin has noted, "There are pains that cannot be contained in the mind, only in the heart."

### **Embrace the pain of the loss**

It is easier to avoid, repress or push away the pain of grief than it is to confront it.

It is in embracing your grief, however that you will learn to reconcile yourself to it.

Many mourners discover that as they work on this need, they ultimately discover some positive changes in their self-identities, such as becoming more caring or less judgmental.

You may want to write out a response to the prompt below now and then do it again in a few months to see the progress you have made. I think I would have answered this prompt very different at the beginning of my grief than now 7and half years later.

Write out a response to this prompt:

I used to be \_\_\_\_\_. Now that \_\_\_\_\_ died, I am \_\_\_\_\_. This makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_. Write as much as you want.

This is what I wrote:

I used to be a bit shy and be quick to react. Now that my beautiful daughter Missy died, I try to just listen to others without reacting and take life a lot slower. I am calmer because I feel I know what is important and what is not. I refuse to "sweat the small stuff", because "IT" is all small stuff. I now can talk to complete strangers without hesitation. I have been forced to really look at me inside out, how I was before May 9, 2004 and after May 9, 2004. I think my daughter would be proud of me and the person I have become.

## **Holidays in Heaven**

**-Dan Bryl, Lawrenceville, GA TCF**  
**In Memory of his daughter, Jessica**

The Holiday Season is just not the same,  
A smile is missing when saying one name.  
For parents who've lost a daughter or son,  
Nothing can bring back the delightful fun,  
Of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.  
The memories are all that we do have now,  
We do go on.....only God knows how.  
A New Year comes as midnight arrives,  
Our Angels still a big part of our lives.  
If only we could trade the presents we receive,  
For one more day with those whom we grieve!  
But nothing can bring back our beloved child,  
The one that laughed, cried, and often smiled.

They are together in a much better place,  
Watching us cry.....touching our face!  
Although we miss them on Holidays to share,  
Be assured their loving presence fills the air,  
At home, in church, at New York's Times  
Square!  
So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do,  
But always remember they are thinking of you  
too,  
Wishing you happiness and showing their love,  
Not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!

*Light a candle for all the children that have died  
...that their light may always shine.*

*The Compassionate Friends*

*Candle Light Service*

**Sunday, December 11, 2011**

**6:00pm**

**South Elkhorn Christian Church  
4343 Harrodsburg Road Lexington**

For more information

[tcbluegrass.org](http://tcbluegrass.org)

Suzie McDonald 859.576.7680      Janie Fields 859.881.1991

Friends and family welcome

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause.

As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, a virtual wave of light is created as we remember our children.

**"Twas the night before Christmas  
for bereaved parents"**

"Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,  
That I knew I was facing-the holiday craze.  
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,  
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.  
As others were making the holiday plans,  
My heart was breaking-I couldn't understand.  
I had lost my dear child a few years before,  
And I knew what my holidays had in store.  
When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,  
I sprang to my feet and was looking around.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The sight that I saw took my breath away,  
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.  
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,  
I knew in a moment, this wasn't by chance.  
The hope that they gave me was a sign from above.  
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.  
The message they brought was my holiday gift.  
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.  
As I knelt closer to get a better view,  
One allowed me to pet it-as if it knew-  
that I needed the touch of its fragile wing,  
To help me get through the holiday scene.  
In the days that followed, I carried the thought,  
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart-  
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,  
Our children are with us-they're not really dead.  
Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears.  
A message of hope-a message so dear.  
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight.  
"To all bereaved parents ~ We love you tonight."

## **Holidays**

November, December and January – some of the toughest months to get through when you're newly bereaved (and sometimes when you're not so newly bereaved). Changing seasons. A sense of foreboding about the dreaded march toward the cold winds of winter. And around every corner, the signs and sounds and smells of the family holidays to come. For some, the signs may be comforting, but in the beginning of a grief journey, for most, they seem to make an already challenging life even more challenging.

*Continued on page 12...*

**All the Gifts I Can Never Give**  
**Written by a Bereaved Mother**  
**Christine, Luke's Mom**

I find myself wandering through the mall.  
 Christmas past I want to relive.  
 Tears fall from my eyes as I gaze upon...  
 All the gifts I can never give.  
 Allured by the scent of his favorite cologne.  
 Beckoned by sounds from a music store.  
 I needlessly search for that card "To My Son",  
 Longing for Christmas with him just once more.  
 There are so many things I would give him...  
 The warmth of a hug and a smile.  
 I would give him that one last "I love you".  
 Then we'd sit and we'd talk for a while.  
 I'd give him the strength to overcome death  
 that found haven in his room.  
 I would be there when he needed me most.  
 Perhaps he wouldn't leave so soon.  
 The gift of time for a long goodbye,  
 Something I desperately wish I could do.  
 I would tell him how deeply I miss him,  
 How his absence makes Christmas so blue.  
 But the music and hugs can't be given,  
 nor time for talks or long good-byes.  
 For my son has gone, he'll never return.  
 He dwells with angels up in the sky.  
 So this year I'll wrap up my memories,  
 those of a happier Christmas lived.  
 I'll place them beneath the Christmas tree with...  
 All the gifts I can never give.

**Create a Page in Memory of Your Child**

If you interested in creating a page in memory of your child, please contact Lisa at [garandsmom@yahoo.com](mailto:garandsmom@yahoo.com). We would love to hear your stories.

If you have experienced a comforting coincidence following the death of your child, please share your story with us for a future edition of our newsletter. If you have a favorite poem, article or prayer, please consider having it featured in one of our newsletters. We take comfort in knowing our feelings are shared and understood. You may send it to Lisa at [garandsmom@yahoo.com](mailto:garandsmom@yahoo.com).

**I Will Be There**  
**Sharon J. Bryant**

Mom and Dad, tomorrow I will be there  
 Though you may not see  
 I'll smile and remember  
 The last Christmas, with you and me

Don't be sad mom and dad  
 I'm never far away  
 Your heart has hidden sight  
 My memory will always stay

I watched as you touched the ornaments  
 Sometimes a tear was shed as you did  
 I touched you gently on your shoulder  
 And on tiptoes I proudly stood

I'm only gone for a little while mom and dad  
 I'm waiting for the day to be  
 When God calls out your name mom and dad  
 We'll be together, just you wait and see

But until that time comes

Carry on as you did when I was there  
 I tell the angels how much I love you  
 There are angels here everywhere!

I stand behind you some days  
 When I know that you are sad  
 I want you to be happy mom and dad  
 It would make my heart so glad

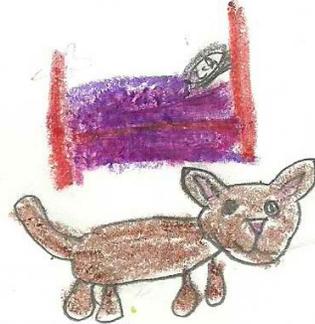
So on this Christmas Eve, Mom & Dad  
 Think of me as I will be thinking of you  
 And touch that special ornament  
 That I once made for you

I love you mom and dad, also  
 I know you know I do  
 And I'll be waiting here for you  
 When your earthly life is through

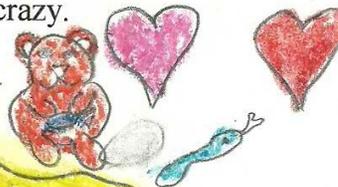
Love,  
 Your child in Heaven

## My Sweet, Sweet Dream

I woke up in my Twizzler bed,  
I looked down and my chocolate chip cat said,  
"Go on an adventure of candy and dreams.  
And just keep in mind, nothing's quite what it seems."



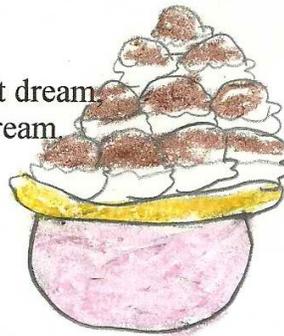
I walked outside and went for a stroll  
And ended up near a Peep's bunny hole.  
A Peep handed me a Sweet Tart heart that could make someone lazy.  
And another that would make someone go crazy.



I ran to the Sprite river,  
I looked up and saw a gummi worm slither.  
There was a big gummi bear  
Eating Swedish Fish, which are rare.



I followed it to the candy cane trees  
And I wandered all I pleased.  
I was tired and leaned on a candy cane, but it broke!  
Alas, it was then that I woke!



Although I loved my sweet, sweet dream  
I woke up craving delicious ice cream.

By: Elizabeth Ragle

Typed by: Sandy Ragle  
3/2/09

*Great Imagery  
Love the Rhyme!*

### Meeting Information

#### Lexington

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



#### Winchester

Third 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.

#### *...Continued from page 9*

During the 12 holiday seasons that I have lived without my daughter, I have been fortunate to have been a part of our support group, where other bereaved parents have shared their "holiday lessons" with me: It's going to be tough. (For a few, it will not.) Sometimes acknowledging that right up front seems to help. Make some plans – they seem to help many get through the special days. But, feel free to abandon the plans if you can't go through with them when the time comes.

You CAN and WILL make it through. As we all know, when our worlds stopped, everyone else's kept right on moving. And so it is with holidays and seasons. While they may seem to last forever, they won't. For many of us, the anticipation of the special days is sometimes far worse than the days themselves.

Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel. Friends in our group repeat this message often because as bereaved parents we feel certain that we must be "losing it" when we experience such a wide range of emotions during the holidays. But many have said that we need to acknowledge, not deny or judge, our feelings – whatever they are – and let them flow.

Take care of yourself and do only what you can do. Don't let others set your schedule or detail your day's activities. As hard as it is for a parent to do, you may need to put yourself first this time around. Your world has changed, and you are allowed to establish new "ground rules."

Bring your deceased children with you into the holiday season. From lighting special candles on special holidays in memory of your children, to giving special gifts that you think your child may have given to siblings or grandparents – or gifts that are in memory of or have a connection to your child. Including and remembering our children in the holidays can be quite comforting before and after the holidays.

Good luck to each of you as enter this holiday season! Our support group welcomes you to our meetings in November, December and January – we understand how you feel and want to hear how you're doing.

#### 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.