



**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
Sioux Falls Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July 2015

Upcoming Meeting: July 7, 2015

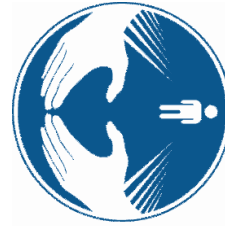
Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:15 with the exception of December.

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
3801 E. 26th Street  
Sioux Falls, SD

*There is no religious affiliation.*

[www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.com](http://www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.com)

**The Compassionate Friends** is a support group for those who have experienced the death of a child at any age, for any reason.



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Compassionate  
Friends**  
Sioux Falls Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*If you are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter,  
please contact us at:  
rstoecker53@gmail.com*

The Compassionate Friends  
Sioux Falls SD Area Chapter  
2804 South Kingswood Way  
Sioux Falls, SD 57106

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Grief is in two parts. The first is loss.  
The second is the remaking of life.

*-Anne Roiphe-*

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

There are so many grieving families not helped by our local chapter of The Compassionate Friends. We **MUST** do better --- it is our ministry and our mission to provide the caring, supportive, long-term rehabilitation that only survivors can provide.

We are inviting you and anyone you think can help us to come brainstorm ideas for the rest of 2015 and 2016. Put your creative thinking cap on and come!

When: 7:00 p.m., July 14, 2015

Where: Our regular meeting site at Westminster Presbyterian Church

3801 E. 26th Street, Sioux Falls

If you are unable to join us, you can email your ideas to us at:

[Rstoecker53@gmail.com](mailto:Rstoecker53@gmail.com)

[pmastel@sio.midco.net](mailto:pmastel@sio.midco.net)

[Kristin.tcf@gmail.com](mailto:Kristin.tcf@gmail.com)

Please join us. Help us reach every family, every parent, grandparent, and sibling whose world has been broken apart by the loss of a child.

As part of remembering our children, we will have a table set up for you to bring pictures and anything you wish to share about your child during the month of your child's birthday.

TCF Leaders for Sioux Falls:

Ruth Stoecker 605-201-1426

[rstoecker53@gmail.com](mailto:rstoecker53@gmail.com)

Peggy Mastel 605-351-8823

[mpastel@sio.midco.net](mailto:mpastel@sio.midco.net)

Kristin Seruyange 605-610-9432

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### **The Compassionate Friends**

National Office: 877-969-0010

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

The Sioux Falls Chapter of Compassionate Friends met June 2, 2015. We were able to welcome some parents and siblings who are in the early stages of grief. Discussions were teary as families shared their stories of loss. Those parents who are further along in the grief journey also struggled with their pain, especially those whose children's birthday or death anniversaries are in June.

### **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.



### *The Gift of Love*



Please send in love gifts by the 5th of the month so that they may be included in the following month's newsletter.

Your donation is greatly appreciated.

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Love Gift Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send your love gift to:

Tami Meeker  
48424 Beaver Valley Rd  
Valley Springs, SD 57068

From Jack & Karen Huber



In loving memory of



**Nicholas Aron Huber**

From Gloria & the late Tom Faber



In loving memory of



**Denise Faber-Meyers**



In loving memory of



**Matt Brooke**

## HONORARY ASSOCIATES OF COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Sponsors are considered Honorary Associates of our organization and are recognized at the level of their donation. We would like to offer our sincere and grateful appreciation to the following supporters:

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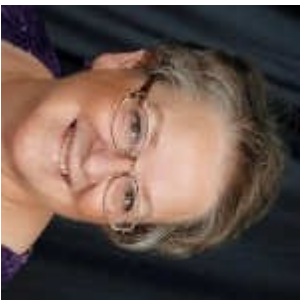
Special thanks to:

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—hosting our monthly meetings

MILLER FUNERAL HOME—providing cookies for our meetings

AVERA—donating the printing of our newsletters

# Q. & A.



Dr. Watson-Miller

Dr. Watson-Miller is a Clinical Psychologist who lost her own son while in Graduate School in 1997. She graduated from the University of South Dakota in 2002 and has worked in both the private and public sectors. She is on the faculty of USD Sanford School of Medicine where she teaches psychodynamic psychotherapy and provides supervision to psychiatry residents as they learn therapeutic techniques. She works from her own private practice on evenings and weekends.

Dr. Watson-Miller lost her son in a tragic automobile accident in 1997. The memories of her son standing in the bleachers as she graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice and Psychology in 1995 compelled her to honor his memory by completing her education and allowing him to live through her. In her journey through grief, she has gained unique insights into not just coping, but thriving through adversity. She was gifted through her life experience by the support of her graduate program, her faith, and encouragement from others. She states, "Without adversity, we do not know how strong we really are. We have an obligation to share the gifts we have been given with others—to help them learn how to honor others through self-care and, by extension, others."

If you would like Dr. Watson-Miller to respond to your questions through this format, please email them to [tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com). The questions will be forwarded to Dr. Watson-Miller without identifying information and will be used in future columns.

**QUESTION:** It seems like there is a videotape of what happened when my child died playing on an endless loop in my mind. It is impossible to control and I feel terrorized by it. What can I do to get beyond this?

**ANSWER:** It is not uncommon for people who have experienced a trauma to have intrusive thoughts that seem impossible to control. Based on your question, I can only assume that you witnessed the event, although I may be mistaken about this. If you did witness the death of your child, you may want to see a mental health professional who can help you work through the trauma. Sometimes not trying to control the intrusive thoughts makes them less intrusive.

Some of life's most salient events are more memorable than everyday events. For example, do you remember when you graduated high school? Or got married? Do you remember the birth of your child? While these are generally happy events, we still have very vivid memories of them. Painful memories are also more quickly brought to mind. We try to avoid them because they cause us so much pain. The energy we exert trying to forget is sometimes better used to take a closer look to discover what issues are left unresolved. There could be many.

Your second question, what can you do to get beyond this, requires some attention. I don't believe there is anything you can do **BY YOURSELF** to get through this. Everyone needs help at different points in their lives and the death of a child is just one of those points. **Why?** Because a grieving parent is usually so caught up in the grief process that it is difficult for them to maintain objectivity. The grieving parent is usually looking for relief from pain and would like to resolve the pain as quickly as possible. As you may have discovered, it is not that easy. By sharing this with a very close and wise friend and/or a mental health professional, they may be better able to listen for unresolved issues and offer alternative ways of thinking about things. With patience and understanding, you can put these issues to rest and you will feel less terrorized as you resolve your fears and come to find new meaning in "old tapes."

With Compassion Always,

Dr. Watson-Miller

**DISCLAIMER:** The responses published in the newsletter in no way suggest that there is a therapeutic relationship between the individual who submitted the question and Dr. Watson-Miller. The responses are written for the purpose of providing general suggestions to the recipients of this newsletter.

## Beautiful Dream

Eyes open wide  
I awake from a beautiful dream  
Within seconds the painful reality of my life sets in  
I find myself wanting to scream

Grief so strong  
Impossible to explain  
Living with a broken heart  
Struggling with the pain

Eyes closed tight  
I pray for that beautiful dream  
A short escape from the painful reality  
That makes me want to scream

*Robert Willis*  
*TCF, Frederick, MD*

## The Stone

The best way I can describe grieving over a child as the years go by is to say it's similar to carrying a stone in your pocket.

When you walk, the stone brushes against your skin. You feel it. You always feel it. But depending on the way you stand or the way your body moves, the smooth edges might barely graze your body.

Sometimes you lean the wrong way or you turn too quickly and a sharp edge pokes you. Your eyes water and you rub your wound, but you have to keep going because not everyone knows about your stone, or if they do, they don't realize it can still bring this much pain.

There are days you are simply happy now; smiling comes easy, and you laugh without thinking. You slap your leg during that laughter, and you feel your stone, and aren't sure whether you should be laughing. The stone still hurts.

Once in a while, you can't take your hand off that stone. You run it over your fingers and roll it in your palm and are so preoccupied by it's weight; you forget things like your car keys and your home address. You try to leave it alone, but you just can't. You want to take a nap, but it's been so many years since you've called in "sad", you're not sure anyone would understand anymore, or if they ever did.

But most days you can take your hand in and out of your pocket, feel your stone and even smile at its unwavering presence. You've accepted this stone as your own, crossing your hands over it, saying "mine" as children do.

You rest more peacefully than you once did; you've learned to move forward the best you can. Some days you want to show the world what a beautiful memory you're holding. But most days, you twirl it through your fingers, smile and look to the sky. You squeeze your hands together, and hope you are living in a way that honors the missing piece you carry, until your arms are full again.

*Jessica Watson*  
*fourplusanangel.com*

## The Gift of Someone Who Listens

Those of us who have traveled a while  
Along this path called grief  
Need to stop and remember that mile,  
That first mile of no relief.  
It wasn't the person with answers  
Who told us of ways to deal.  
It wasn't the one who talked and talked  
That helped us start to heal.  
Think of the friends who quietly sat  
And held our hands in theirs.  
The ones who let us talk and talk  
And hugged away our tears.  
We need to always remember  
That more than the words we speak,  
It's the gift of someone who listens  
That most of us desperately seek.

*Nancy Myerholtz  
TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH*

## The Tree in Our Backyard

My daughter Lesa was a free spirited child who always had something to say, who enjoyed school and loved life. One day, as part of a school project, she planted a tree in our back yard and announced that she had named the tree Angella. Lesa watered the tree daily, fertilized it, talked to it, and finally placed stakes in the ground to give it more support to help the tree grow straight. Lesa watched over this tree she named Angella with determination and a certain amount of pride that she was able to nurture a spindly, leafless tree into a blossoming life-giving part of nature.

One day our daughter Leslie was mowing the lawn and accidentally hit the tree. Lesa witnessed this event from an upstairs window and immediately flew down the steps to confront her sister. A confrontation followed between the two girls, with Lesa demanding an apology. Leslie told me later that she did, in fact, go over to Lesa's tree, pat it on the trunk and apologize. Laughing, she told me it was not only the first time she had spoken to a tree but also the first time she had apologized to one.

Angella the tree continued to flourish and grow, watched over and nurtured by my daughter. Lesa, however, became ill with cancer. As her cancer worsened, she was unable to watch over Angella. Before our last trip to the hospital, Lesa visited the tree and discovered bumps on the leaves. We delayed our trip to spray the tree to reassure Lesa that her tree would be safe while she was in the hospital.

Lesa died on a hot summer day in August, two days before her eighth birthday. We moved away from that house, hoping to find some peace in a new environment and we transplanted Lesa's tree Angella to the back yard of our new home. We watched it closely, wondering if the tree would survive the transplant. Our special friends who knew the story of Lesa's tree shared its progress with us.

Several years later we sold our home, but this time Lesa's tree was too big to transplant. I wrote the story of Lesa's tree and how she named it Angella and how Lesa had died of cancer and I left it on the kitchen counter for the new owners, hoping they would take care of the tree.

Several months passed while I considered contacting the owners, and then one day I met the daughter of the family that now lives in our old home. She stopped to tell me that the story of Lesa's tree had been passed on to them and that they would guard Lesa's legacy for us. She described how her family had been touched by this story and they were planning to pass on the story should they move in the future.

So, the legacy of a child's love of nature and determination to take care of a special tree goes on. My daughter did not survive her cancer but the story of Angella the tree has touched the lives of every family that has lived in our house.

## Our Children Remembered—July

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Parents
Beth Huffman	1-Jul	14-Dec	Jeanette & Leonard Huffman
Erik Lee Schmidt	1-Jul	25-Nov	Bob & Melanie Schmidt
James Daryl Swanson	2-Jul	25-Mar	Barbara F. Christensen
Tom Rosebrook	4-Jul	15-Apr	Norma Robinson
Michael Jeffrey Waller	4-Jul	10-Mar	Jeanie Young
Erin Mary Moore	5-Jul	27-Mar	Wayne & Tami Moore
Rich Bohlen	8-Jul	17-Jan	Earl & Helen Bohlen
Lisa Bonyngge	9-Jul	23-Dec	Marys & Brad Bonyngge
Matthew Steven Brooke	9-Jul	21-Aug	Mike & Artyce Brooke
Timothy Allen Waterman	11-Jul	9-Jun	Lori Christenson & Troy Waterman
Jacob Ryan Lidel	11-Jul	26-Feb	Dick & Sharon Wilson - grandparents
Austin Curtis Olivier	11-Jul	30-Jun	Curt & Connie Olivier
Kelly Kuper	12-Jul	19-Sep	Mary & Wayne Kuper
Jeremy Robert Baum	12-Jul	25-Jul	Robert & Carol Baum
Jordan Rychark	14-Jul	29-Jul	John & Joan Rychark
Mandi Gilliland	15-Jul	10-Nov	Ron & Sandy Gilliland
John Michael Pitman	16-Jul	30-May	Jeralyn Hafter
Brad Nicholson	18-Jul	12-Nov	Layne & Anita Nicholson
Lindsey Ann Masterson	19-Jul	9-Aug	Tom & Beth Masterson
Brian Van Wagner, Jr	20-Jul	29-Sep	Brian & Deb Van Wagner, Sr.
Jodi Klusmann	21-Jul	9-Feb	Delphi & Joel Klusmann
Alexia Dee Deffenbaugh	21-Jul	14-Sep	Dawnette Deffenbaugh
Leyton Bentley Burnison	23-Jul	23-Jul	Eric & Sara Burnison
Denton Nicholas Haber	23-Jul	4-Feb	Donald & Doris Haber
Brian James Enfield	24-Jul	3-Jun	James & Jolene Enfield
Kayla Marie Cleveland	24-Jul	5-Aug	Mark & Lisa Cleveland
Eric Walter Kondratuk	24-Jul	13-Sep	Michael & Laura Kondratuk
Jeff Nelson	26-Jul	9-Jun	Marie & Robert Nelson
Travis Kenyon	26-Jul	26-Sep	Peggy Naessig
Wayne Hoff	26-Jul	3-May	Durwin Hoff
Gene Van De Stroet	29-Jul	20-Sep	Alice & Case Van De Stroet
Ashler Eugene Allen	25-Mar	2-Jul	Denny & Karri Allen
Jon Andrew Plucker	9-Apr	3-Jul	Ron & Mary Plucker
Jeffrey Dean Sharlow	24-Mar	4-Jul	Joan & John Roth (step-father)
Brad Everhard	23-Jan	6-Jul	Marilyn & Frank Everhard
Jacob Meeker	28-Mar	7-Jul	Robert & Tami Meeker
Linda Lee Hofer Leaf	15-May	12-Jul	Orville & Irene Hofer
Todd David Brander	2-Nov	12-Jul	Jan & Ken Brander
Ryan Matson	11-Jan	13-Jul	Barb Matson
Amanda Kay Jensen	30-Dec	14-Jul	Monica & Jimmy Jensen
Isaaya Ayara	23-Jan	15-Jul	Amber Snustad
Kevin Alan Schmit	16-Mar	17-Jul	Michael and Cindy Schmit
Ashley Ann Engel	23-May	18-Jul	Joel & Jolene Engel
Nicholas Huber	8-Oct	19-Jul	Jack & Karen Huber
Joseph Cynkar	22-Jun	19-Jul	James & Shawn Cynkar
Jordan Ross Momen	21-Sep	20-Jul	Roger and Cheryl Momen
Lance Buseman	24-Apr	23-Jul	Mary and Joyce Buseman
Tate Michael Baloun	27-Oct	23-Jul	Brad & CamMay Baloun
Eric Lapppegard	22-Oct	23-Jul	Cindy & Boyd Lapppegard
Philip Sorensen	2-Jan	26-Jul	Terry & Cleo Sorensen
Daniel James Litterick	3-Aug	28-Jul	Jim and Bonnie Litterick
Rebecca (Becca) Rae Reese	6-Jan	30-Jul	Kristen Reese
Ryley Joe Peer	13-Aug	30-Jul	Chuck & Wendi Peer