

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
POST OFFICE BOX 583 TAYLORS SOUTH CAROLINA 29687 864-288-8342

FEBRUARY 2003

CHAPTER MEETINGS

The Greenville Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the second Thursday of every month at 7:30 PM at Pelham Road Baptist Church, 1108 Pelham Road. Meetings are held in the Fellowship Hall behind the Sanctuary.

Meetings may include a brief program. General sharing is always included to allow parents to express concerns and feelings, but no one needs to share unless he or she wishes to do so.

Directions: From I-85 take Exit 54 (Pelham Road) and go West for 3.2 miles. The church is on the left. From I-385, take Exit 39 (Haywood Road), go approximately 2 blocks and turn right on to Pelham Road. The church will be approximately 1 mile on the right.

WEBSITE

Johnny Williams has created an awesome website for our Greenville Chapter. Visit the site at www.tcfogreenvillesc.org to list your child's name on the Memorial Page, keep up to date on events, etc.

COOKBOOK

Our Chapter is collecting our children's favorite recipes that we will publish in a cookbook. Charlene Vinson is coordinating this project. If you would like to submit your child's favorite recipe, please send it to Charlene at charlene.vinson@att.net or send through the postal service to Charlene Vinson, 141 Hollywood Drive, Piedmont, SC 29673. You can also FAX your recipe to Nona Walsler at 864-268-4089. You can include a very brief bio of your child if you wish

GUESS WHAT? WE'RE NOT IN ITALY, EITHER...

Emily Perl Kingsley wrote an essay about accepting her life as the mother of a Downs Syndrome child. Emily's analogy has helped me to move out of a prolonged state of numbing inertia following Allan's death and onto a path of action.

Emily says it is as if she had planned a trip to Italy. She purchased the guidebooks and anticipated riding in gondolas and seeing the Coliseum. She even learned Italian. BUT, after all her preparation for visiting Italy, the airplane lands and the flight attendant says, "Welcome to Holland!"

Emily is surprised and outraged. She replies that she is supposed to be in Italy, that she has always dreamed of Italy, that ALL of her friends will be going to Italy.

We have had the same problem with a change of destination. Our dreams included that perfectly healthy son or daughter growing up at our dinner table, graduating from college, and some day presenting us with grandchildren.

Emily concludes her essay by saying, "if you spend your life mourning that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland."

What other landmarks might we possibly enjoy visiting. Could we enjoy a close relationship with a niece or nephew, a neighbor's child or a child from church? Could we volunteer through Hospice or join a mission trip? Could exploring our creativity or starting a business be fulfilling? Granted, we will always be sad that we didn't realize our most cherished dream, the experience that most parents take for granted of nurturing a child into adulthood. BUT, we can't let grief paralyze us from searching out rewarding and pleasurable experiences. Consider, at some point, that we might need to buy new guidebooks and take pleasure in the unexpected scenery. Even though, IT WILL NOT EVER BE ITALY. . .

Jeannie Dobson
(Allan's Mom)

HAPPINESS IS . . .

"Happiness is . . ." and I don't remember the rest of the commercial, nor what they're selling. Soda? Cigarettes? A car? Who knows? Does it matter?

What is happiness? What do you mean be "happy?" Is it totally rollicky jollicky glee 100% of the time? Who do you know who has that? I imagine that the richest, the brightest, the prettiest, the most successful of people have issues they must face that trouble them, that render them less than "HAPPY."

Is "happy" the absence of misery? Who do you know with no misery? Yet don't you know some happy people? Haven't you even heard laughter at a TCF meeting? Only "HAPPY" people laugh?

Maybe it's like a big, steep hill. Down at the bottom, in darkness, is abject misery and sorrow. Way way up at the top, beyond the rainbow, is that beaming gleaming unreal total 100% glee. And somewhere in between is where most of us are. During the first years after our child dies, we're down in the pits with the dark miseries. And we know we're the most unhappy of people.

But sometimes there's a glimpse, a memory of what's on the upper slope of that steep hill. Smiles, laughter, good days, pleasure. Happiness?

How do you get there? At some point it takes a conscious decision to survive, to smile, to rearrange, probably to compromise. Each of us has to make this decision for ourself. In a family people arrive at (and abandon for a bit) this decision at different times.

So—once you've decided to survive, what can make you "happy?" Different things for different people. You're still basically you. But look around, listen. Talk to other bereaved parents. Ask them.

For me, I decided to snatch at simple pleasures. Flowers that bloom in the cold—crocus, snowdrops—that's good. Birds are interesting to watch. Squirrels and chipmunks can be funny. A blue sky with puffy white clouds—that's beautiful.

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OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Pamela Askew 02/18/82 - 11/21/00
Matthew Caporino 02/01/80 - 05/08/01
Jon Carpenter 01/31/76 - 02/09/02
Joshua Combs 02/22/80 - 03/22/96
James Cox 02/15/77 - 11/21/92
Anthony Duncan 03/29/89 - 02/16/01
Lisa Etherington 10/09/80 - 02/11/00
Katheryn Hawkins 02-03-85 - 10/12/02
Greg Lackey 02/08/76 - 12/04/00
Brock Madden 08/07/93 - 02/14/94
John David Rice 10/14/76 - 02/14/97
Melissa Rowland 07/11/81 - 02/10/99
Jantzen Satterfield 02/08/88 - 10/17/97
Billy Smith 02/26/61 - 02/27/83
Ashley Staudinger 02/12/82 - 09/13/96
Roger Strange 02/06/61 - 03/13/88
Arlene Walters 02/20/82 - 05/07/99
Tracy Whaley 01/09/63 - 02/27/70
Eric White 08/11/57 - 02/05/97

HAPPINESS IS . . . Continued

A shining silvery airplane overhead—
amazing! Snowflakes are a geometric
wonder. Raindrops' collarbuttons
plopping into a puddle are fun to watch.
All around me there are small things to
bring a small smile, to give me little
pleasures.

But the world is not only for watching.
There's doing, too. I've learned that an
absorbing activity, something new to be
mastered, something old to be perfected,
an enjoyable project to be completed—
these also bring pleasure (and are
distractions). Painting can be engrossing
for hours, as can quilting, knitting,
working with wood, latch hooking, cross
stitch, jigsaw puzzles. There are probably
as many concentration activities as there
are people. (Ask someone to teach you –
or try a class).

Major muscle activities (exercise) are good
for letting off excess energy, or steam.
Walking, bike riding, swimming, or the
really strenuous athletic kinds of games
can divert the mind, be fun, and they're
usually good for you, too.

It takes a conscious decision, some
thought, some determination. I will
survive. I will smile again. I will be
"happy," at least for part of each day.
There will be bad minutes and sad hours;
but I'll let the tears flow, and then try to
find something good.

I need not walk alone. There are others to
share and to care. When we listen or give
an idea, talk or get an idea, we're helping
each other. That's good, too. That's what
TCF is all about.

Peace and Love!

Joan Schmidt, 2/28/85

ASK

I do not ask that you forget your dear
departed. I want you to remember. I only
ask that you remember more than the
moment of death, more than the funeral,
more than the house of mourning.
Remember life! Remember the whole life,
not the final page of it.

Rabbi Maurice Davis
TCF, Baltimore

The nicest gift we can give one another is
the gift of friendship. Please come to the
next meeting and receive your gift.

At the advice of our National Office, there
will be a number of changes in our
monthly newsletter beginning in March.
We must have written consent to publish
your child's name in OUR CHILDREN
REMEMBERED. Your child's name will
be listed in the month of the anniversary of
his/her birthday and death day. If you
would like to have your child remembered
in this way, please complete the following
form and send it to The Compassionate
Friends, Post Office Box 583, Taylors, SC
29687.

Please include my child in the Greenville,
South Carolina Chapter Newsletter
column, OUR CHILDREN
REMEMBERED:

Parent/Parents' Name

Child's Name

Date of Birth

Date of Death

He best understands who has felt the pain

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