



# The Compassionate Friends of Canada

## When A Child Dies...

## National Newsletter - April 2018

### National Office

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### National Executive:

Donna Rodin (Medicine Hat, AB) - President  
Susan Doyle Lawrence (Victoria, BC) -  
Vice-President and International Liaison  
Cathy Sosnowsky (Vancouver, BC) - Secretary  
Kathy Brooks (Victoria, BC) - Treasurer  
Eileen and Andy Bond (Ottawa, ON) -  
Chapter Development Committee  
Directors-at-Large  
Barbara Kachur (Saskatoon, SK)  
Gary Kachur (Saskatoon, SK)  
Judy Dowd (Campbell River, BC)

*Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.*

- Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF

### Elections

Our thanks go out to those who considered allowing their names to stand, and to those who continue their commitment to serve on the National Board. At the Annual Business Meeting at the beginning of June, the following slate of Directors will be declared elected by acclamation:

**Donna Rodin, Judy Dowd, Susan Lawrence, Eileen Bond, Andy Bond, Barbara Kachur, Gary Kachur, Cathy Sosnowsky, Kathy Brooks**

At the first Board meeting after the Annual Business Meeting, the Board will assign Directors to the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chapter Development, and Directors at Large, and the results will be communicated to member chapters in the subsequent national newsletter.

### Donations

Once again we express our appreciation to member chapters and individuals who have contributed monetarily toward the support of our national TCF organization. This month we recognize the following donors:

**Burin Peninsula NL, Kamloops BC, Lacombe AB, Victoria BC, Weyburn SK**

## A Sad Milestone: Margaret Balfour, 1922-2018

Some months ago we were contacted by Katie Diotallevi, daughter of Peggy (Coyle) Balfour, to ask for some details about her mother's earlier involvement with TCF Canada. We passed along what we knew, and TCF Winnipeg generously offered what information they had. After all, Winnipeg is where the first Canadian TCF chapter was formed in 1977, and Peggy Balfour was our first president when TCF Canada was incorporated in 1986. In *A Personal History of the Compassionate Friends of Canada*, Pat Pinch writes:

November 1986 saw Gwen Brown and Ken Pinch's dream of a national organization realized. Gwen and Ken worked tirelessly for months in this pursuit and in November, at the Health Sciences Community Services Building, in Winnipeg, Jean Paul Blais (LAC/Montreal) by telephone; Peggy Coyle (Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario), Adaline Leir (TCF/Regina), Sandra Wallace (TCF/Portage Plains), Gwen Brown and Ken and Pat Pinch (TCF/Winnipeg) met, and TCF/LAC of/du Canada was formed. Peggy Coyle [Balfour] was the first president, Jean Paul Blais the second, Adaline Leir third, Ken Pinch fourth, Rick Lepinsky fifth and Gwen Linski the sixth. Donna Rodin became the seventh president in 2015.

We are grateful for the efforts of those who laid the foundation on which we build today. Thank you to Jean Paul, Adaline, Sandra, Gwen, Ken, Pat, Rick, Gwen and Donna, and to Peggy Balfour. Your efforts are recognized and will not be forgotten.

A copy of Peggy's little book, *The Gifts of Suffering*, is available from our National Office.

To read the obituary: <http://www.henrywalsler.com/book-of-memories/2282254/Balfour-Margaret/obituary.php>

## Where are the Helpers?

*When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world.*

—From "The World According To Mister Rogers"

The tragic bus and semi-trailer collision in Saskatchewan that resulted in the deaths of 16 members of the Humboldt Broncos hockey club and left 13 others critically or seriously injured sent a shockwave across the country. A modest GoFundMe campaign initially aimed at covering travel expenses raised over \$15 million to establish a professionally managed trust fund. This outpouring of grief and support for the families from the international hockey community shows that "they need not walk alone" as they slowly begin to rebuild their lives around their loss.

Members of The Compassionate Friends know from direct experience that these parents face a long and painful journey and we offer our understanding and support. The death of a child is a tragedy that no parent should have to experience, no matter the age of the child or the cause of their death.

Regrettably, such incidents are all too frequent but rarely receive such public attention. Friends and family expect the parents to be "over it" and move on with their lives months and even years before they are truly able to come to terms with the devastating loss. The Compassionate Friends understand that grieving takes time and we continue to be there for as long as the parents need support. The leaders of the TCF Saskatoon Chapter attended the vigil last Sunday to begin the outreach process. In next month's newsletter, they will provide an update on their progress.

However, as a volunteer organization, our ongoing challenge is to make the public at large aware of our presence and our principles of compassion, understanding, and support that are so needed at such times. The tragedy in Saskatchewan provides us with an appropriate opportunity to reach out through our Chapters to any parents grieving the death of a child.

The attached letter template can be adapted and sent to your local newspaper, community and service organizations, doctor's offices, churches and funeral homes. The message is that The Compassionate Friends is there to provide understanding and support when the unthinkable happens.

Where are the Helpers? We are here.

## Other Helpers: Barbara Bush, 1925-2018

We are all aware that Barbara Bush was both the wife of a US president and the mother of a US president, but how many knew that she and her husband were also bereaved parents? Their daughter, Pauline Robinson "Robin" Bush, was just three years old when she died from leukemia in 1953. Barbara later wrote:

*The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal....I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others....It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into*

volunteer work. *That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time.*

## More Legislative Changes

In our December 2017 issue we brought you news of “Jonathan’s Law,” changes to the Employment Standards Act of Ontario that will ensure that Ontario parents whose child dies will be entitled to a 104-week leave of absence with their jobs protected. On April 11, an article from The Canadian Press published in the *Times Colonist* newspaper for Victoria, BC, reported that similar changes are coming for our westernmost province:

*A statement from the Labour Ministry said the amendments support workers by extending compassion to families facing tragic circumstances. The changes include an option for longer leave for mothers before the birth of their child, extended, unpaid parental leave for new parents, and up to 52 weeks of unpaid leave for parents dealing with a crime-related disappearance of a child. Parents grieving the death of a child could receive up to 104 weeks of unpaid leave without concern about job loss, while compassionate care leave will more than triple from eight to 27 weeks for employees caring for a terminally ill family member.*

## Big League, a new Canadian anthem

In another article from The Canadian Press (*Times Colonist*, Victoria, BC) we learn the back story to Tom Cochrane’s recently reworked song, *Big League*. The Canadian singer was preparing to perform with his band Red Rider in Northern Ontario in 1987 when a man approached him and asked if they would play their song *Boy Inside the Man*, saying that his son “would’ve loved to hear it.” Tom noticed the use of the past tense and spoke further with the father, learning that the son was a really good hockey player who had a promising career before being killed in a collision involving a truck. Tom says that the experience stuck with him and worked itself into the lyrics for *Big League*, which appeared on the 1988 album *Victory Day*.

A CP story out of Toronto tells us that a reworked version of the song has been released by Universal Music and that all proceeds from sales of the single will be donated to the Humboldt Strong Community Foundation, which was established to administer the more than \$15 million raised through a GoFundMe campaign to support "Humboldt Broncos players, employees, families and volunteers, as well as first responders and emergency services personnel, teams, athletes, related organizations and communities affected by the crash." Cochrane’s updated lyrics incorporate a new verse that draws closer parallels to the Broncos story: *All the right moves when he turned 18. Ridin' to the game and ridin' with his team. Ridin' with their friends and ridin' for their dreams. Ridin' off to immortality in the big league.*

