



# The Compassionate Friends of Canada

## When A Child Dies...

## National Newsletter - May 2018

### National Office

The Compassionate Friends of Canada  
#4 - 69 Campbell Crescent SE  
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1B 1J7  
Toll Free: 1-866-823-0141  
(403) 487-1802  
E-mail: [nationaloffice@tcfcanada.net](mailto:nationaloffice@tcfcanada.net)  
Website: [www.tcfcanada.net](http://www.tcfcanada.net)

### 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

### International Gathering, November 1-3, 2019

To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of The Society of Compassionate Friends, TCF UK is organizing an International Gathering in Stratford-on-Avon next year. If you think you might be interested and able to attend, please let us know now. There would be no obligation and it would help the organizers to estimate the number of attendees to prepare for. We will keep you updated and you can watch for postings at :  
<https://www.tcf.org.uk> .

### Donations

In the past month we have received donations from Comox Valley/Campbell River BC, Southeast New Brunswick, Calgary AB, and Portage Plains MB. Thank you for supporting the efforts of your national organization. Thanks also to chapters who have sent in their Annual Report. Reports are welcome at any time of the year. Let's keep this communication going.

### TCF Saskatoon Response to the Humboldt Bronco Tragedy

We received news of a horrific crash involving a semi-trailer unit and a bus full of young hockey players, coaches and team support staff from Humboldt Saskatchewan when we arrived at our hotel room in Fort Saskatchewan on Friday April 6<sup>th</sup>. The team was on their way to Nipawin for a playoff hockey game between the two local rivals. The accident had taken place less than three hours previous and details were sketchy.

The ages of most of the young players were in the same range as our son was when he died of a heart attack in 1999. This was a trigger for us. Being far from home we were at a loss as to what we could do to support the

families affected in Humboldt. This event hit more than just Saskatchewan however. It hit the news in Edmonton where we learned that players from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, BC and Alberta were involved.

At the time, although fatalities were acknowledged, the numbers of injured and dead as well as any details about the accident were unavailable. On our trip back to Saskatoon on Saturday, we received constant updates as to what had transpired. All TCF members are affected, as they relive their own tragedies. During our six-hour return drive we contemplated ways in which we could inform grieving families in Humboldt about TCF.

We knew a vigil was being planned for Sunday evening in Humboldt and wanted to provide information about TCF before the vigil took place. There is no TCF chapter in Humboldt or Nipawin.

We printed up 200 TCF Grief Pamphlets including information about TCF National. We realized not all the players were from the Humboldt area, yet wanted to provide contact information about TCF outside of the Saskatoon area. We drove to Humboldt at noon on Sunday and distributed pamphlets at the two local funeral homes, the hospital, RCMP office, eight churches and the arena where the vigil was to take place. We had wanted to chat with the mayor, but he was busy with dignitaries as well as waiting for Prime Minister Trudeau to arrive.

The information was well received by all our contacts. The Saskatoon City Police had a representative there who did not know that we existed. This may be an area we may want to pursue in Saskatoon in the future to make fire, ambulance, city police and RCMP aware of our existence. We did not stay for the vigil itself, rather choosing to make room for the families, billet families and other community members and we did not wish to push our presence.

Barb created a wreath of 15 hearts, surrounding the Broncos logo, each one representing one of the team members that died April 6<sup>th</sup>. We had the honour of placing this along with flowers and a butterfly directly on the ice in the arena on behalf of TCF Saskatoon and TCF Canada. In total sixteen young people lost their lives as a result of this accident when the team trainer died days later.

Our presence in Humboldt was kept low key as the grieving community needed their space. Family, friends, the provincial, national and international communities are there to lend support during the initial days following the accident. We want to contact the media in the coming months to get the word out about The Compassionate Friends. TCF will be there after the initial support leaves.

We wish all our TCF family self-care to get through this wave of grief and we leave each of you with big hugs.

Barb and Gary Kachur

*Barb and Gary Kachur are TCF Saskatoon Directors and serve on the TCF Canada National Board.*

*We gratefully acknowledge TCF Winnipeg for their generous support following our initial response.*

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One of our objectives in publishing a national newsletter is to inform and support Chapters across the country. The topics for our occasional articles often come in the form of a question from a Chapter. We believe that if one Chapter is asking, there may be others with similar concerns. That is the case with this month's article:

### ***From Principle to Practice***

When a Chapter is starting up, or when new parents join an established Chapter, they often bring their own ideas as to how the Chapter should function. These ideas may be based on their experience with other organizations in

different sectors, their own personal interests, or perhaps their professional background. In many cases, the ideas may help the Chapter meet the needs of its members in a more efficient or effective way. However, Chapter Leaders and Circle Facilitators need to be vigilant and may have to reinforce specific guidelines. Two areas of frequent concern are spiritual beliefs and professional services, both of which are covered by the Seven Principles of The Compassionate Friends.

In a previous article on Sharing Circles (October 2017), we referred to the third of the Seven Principles and noted that *“Respect means accepting the spiritual situation of each individual and not promoting any specific religious or philosophical ideology or practice. Remember the insightful words of the TCF Credo – ‘Some have found their faith to be a source of strength, others are struggling to find answers.’ Offer support to their search but let them find their own answers.”* In this context, “ideologies and practices” includes established churches of any faith, and also adjacent topics such as Yoga, Tai-Chi, Reiki, and even after-death communication through mediums. While these practices may be individually beneficial or offer some comfort to grieving parents, it is essential that TCF Circles are not used to actively promote or endorse them. As mentioned in the earlier article, *“Respect means sharing our own relevant experiences while refraining from offering grief ‘solutions’.* Say ‘I found doing xxx helped me’ rather than ‘You should do xxx’.”

The second of the Seven Principles includes the statement that *“We do not offer professional psychotherapy or counselling”*. The corollary is that within the Sharing Circle, we are all simply bereaved parents supporting each other. Counsellors or social workers should leave their professional hats at the door, so to speak, and refrain from giving advice other than sharing personal experience.

Related to this is the principle that TCF is a volunteer organization and no TCF member shall benefit financially from their involvement with TCF. This also implies that any member operating a business should not use the Circles to promote or solicit for their goods or services. In addition to counsellors, such businesses could include florists, caterers, gym owners, or lawyers, to mention a few. In another article on sharing parent contact details (May 2017), we strongly recommended using the BCC: function when sending out group emails in order to protect privacy and ensure that the information is only used for TCF purposes.

The above paragraphs highlight some of the underlying principles that guide appropriate Chapter conduct and there may be occasions where a Chapter Leader must act to enforce them. In such situations, it is important that the principles are clearly presented in a personal conversation with the transgressor(s) to avoid recurrence.

Although you may initially encounter individual resistance, ensuring that your Chapter practices adhere to the TCF Seven Principles will ultimately be to the benefit of the group as a whole.

Andy Bond  
Chapter Development

## **Help Available**

The handbook *“Information for Facilitators”* compiled for a workshop at the recent National Gathering is being made available at no charge to Chapter Leaders for local printing and binding. The document is 40 pages, approx. 30 MB in .pdf format, and delivered via Dropbox. If you would like to receive a copy, please e-mail: [ChapterDevelopment@TCFCanada.net](mailto:ChapterDevelopment@TCFCanada.net).