



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter - October 2018

National Office

The Compassionate Friends of Canada

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Gary Kachur (Saskatoon, SK)

Judy Dowd (Campbell River, BC)

Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

- Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF

This month we bring you two great ideas, one from the East Coast and one from the West:

An Alternative to a Balloon Release

Our Compassionate Friends chapter of Southeastern New Brunswick (Moncton area) had been researching and discussing options to our annual balloon release because of growing environmental concerns. This proved to be more challenging than anticipated but as we persevered we came up with an alternative that we were comfortable with trying. I am happy to say that the event was very well received. I would like to share with other chapters what our group did, in case some of you are looking for an alternative to a balloon release as well.

On Saturday morning, September 22, 2018, our group of parents had a Rose Petal Release. We met at a local park in a private area next to a small bridge traversing a small brook. Parents were invited prior to the event to bring a poem or reading they might like to share with the group. One of our fathers wrote a beautiful poem for his daughter. After a welcome by one of our facilitators we opened with this father's reading and then proceeded to share some simple but significant symbolism around the red rose. As

parents gathered in a circle and shared their name, and the name of their child, one of the parents sang "The Rose" and a single red rose was passed around the circle for each parent to remove one of its petals. When parents were ready, they made their way quietly to the bridge and released their rose petal into the water. Parents lingered as they watched the beautiful red petals flow slowly along the brook. We ended this part of the memorial with a single pink rose being released into the brook as a symbol of gratitude and peace.

As parents returned to the circle we concluded with a final reading.

Parents were invited to a local coffee shop for a social time together. This is the only social time our group has. Parents in attendance expressed that it was a very positive and moving memorial.

We are very pleased that we have found a beautiful alternative to a balloon release. If you have any questions or comments it would be a pleasure to hear from you.

Warm regards,

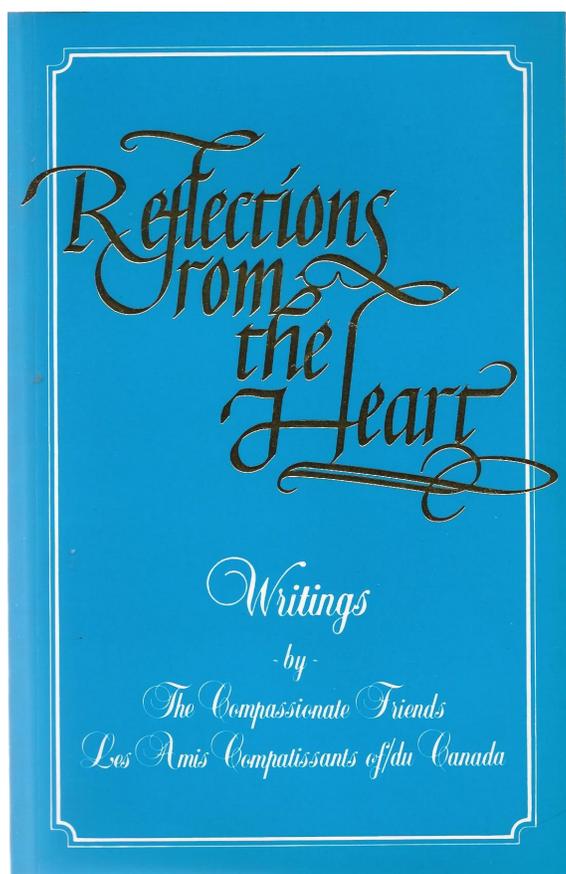
Janice Beaudoin (Greg's Mom)

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The Compassionate Friends of Southeastern New Brunswick

In the Frame

So many bereaved families feel the pang of loss every time there is a family photo taken. We are so acutely aware of who is missing as we take our places. At the September meeting of the Victoria, BC, Chapter, a member shared an idea: as we pose, we can hold a photo or portrait of our loved one, so that they are present and continue to be part of the photographic record of the family. Simple. Effective. An idea gratefully received.



Reflections From the Heart

We have a volunteer who has offered to mail copies of this resource out to any chapter or member who would like a copy. Just send a message to TCFVicePresident@shaw.ca and we will soon have a copy on its way to you. A donation to TCF Canada (\$5 suggested) to cover the cost of mailing would be appreciated. The book is a gentle read for any bereaved parent, and a great resource for newsletter editors.

Excerpt from *A Personal History of The Compassionate Friends of Canada* by Pat Pinch:

Gwen Brown had long had a dream of publishing a book of writings by Canadian bereaved parents and in 1994 "Reflections From the Heart" was published in her honour. She did not get to see the finished product but knew the struggles we went through to see it in print and was very pleased to know her dream would come true. Dolores Belot and Pat Pinch organized, edited, typed and proofread the 224 pages of writings sent in from across the country by bereaved parents and siblings. Adaline Leir's advice, proofreading and many

hours on the phone were invaluable. TCF Winnipeg member, Loree Conan also put in many hours at the typewriter. Another TCF Winnipeg contributor was Rosanna Berube who did all the editing of the contributions we received en francais. The title, "Reflections From the Heart", is Dolores'; Dolores and I came up with the section titles and then decided which writing went where. The butterfly pages were done by Gil Cenerini; the cover was done by Gil and by Ken Pinch. It was a labour of love to honour Gwen Brown's work and her dedication to bereaved parents and in memory of all our children.

Facebook Grief Support

TCF Canada endorses new technology in the support of grieving parents and siblings. A Canadian closed Facebook grief support group has been operational for some time and is expanding to include a Sibling Facebook group as well as a group for TCF Leaders and Facilitators.

To ensure security, anyone wishing to join one of these groups is asked to complete an application which is monitored before allowing new members.

To join any of these Facebook Groups you must have a Facebook account.

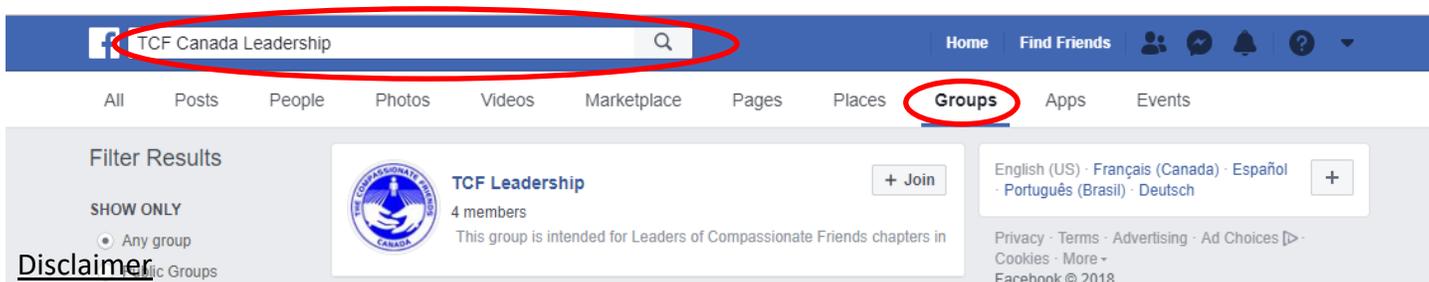
On the Facebook home page type in the following on the search line to search for the appropriate group:

The Compassionate Friends of Canada - for the Grieving Parents Group

TCF Canada Sibling Support - for the Sibling Support Group

TCF Canada Leadership - for the Leadership and Facilitators Group

Make sure that you select the **Groups** filter on the line following your search to display the group results.



TCF Canada hosts these sites and monitors to the best of its ability the membership applications to provide an environment that is as safe as possible.

Milestones

A key part of TCF's support philosophy is giving hope to the newly bereaved by showing how others have walked the path before them and endured. This personal story illustrates how one family has come to terms with their losses by finding personal meaning in apparently random natural events. Do you have a story you would like to share?

Irene's Apple Tree

When our daughter Irene died in 1998, our family gave us an apple tree to plant in her memory. It was an Akane, a variety I had not heard of before, but one that would bear its fruit each year close to the time of her last day, September 3. In the early years, the number of apples could be counted in single digits. Sometimes the number would correspond exactly with the number of years that she had been gone, more often it would be just an approximation. As the number of years climbed into the teens, so the number of apples increased. Until now.

The year 2017-2018 has been the year that Irene would have been 50. I have thought, so often, of how she would have matured, and what she would be like now, had she lived. This past year also marked 50 years since her brother Michael died. I did a lot of grief work throughout the spring and summer, over that milestone, leading up to Irene's twenty-year mark in September. I can honestly say that my grief has "matured".

And so has our apple tree. This year, the number of apples was equal to the number of years that our Michael and our Irene LIVED. I leave it up to you to make of that what you will.

--Susan Doyle Lawrence, TCF Victoria BC