



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter - September 2018

National Office

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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

Circle Facilitator Training

Several Chapter Leaders have asked about training for new leaders and facilitators. Andy and Eileen Bond are considering a teleconference based on the workshop and Facilitator Handbook material which they presented at the 2017 National Gathering in Medicine Hat. The teleconference would last about an hour and consist of a walk-through of the handbook and responses to questions.

If you are interested in participating in this workshop, please e-mail NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net,

indicating your preferred day and time. They will try to accommodate the majority.

The Facilitator Handbook is available to Chapter Leaders at no charge in .pdf format for local printing and binding. It is about 29MB and delivered via Dropbox.

Please e-mail:

ChapterDevelopment@TCFCanada.net

if you would like to receive a copy.

New Chapters

Please join us in welcoming our two newest chapters, both in Alberta: Grande Prairie and Olds & Area.

Donations

This month our thanks go to the Kelowna Chapter for their contribution in support of our national organization.

A NEW BOOK FOR AND BY BEREAVED PARENTS

reviewed by Cathy Sosnowsky

Always with Me, a newly released collection edited by Donna Sharkey (a member of TCF Ottawa), includes 31 personal stories and some powerful poems about the impact of child loss and its aftermath. Donna solicited these stories from members of TCF and other grief support groups from across Canada. Though the causes of death and the ages of the children cover a wide spectrum, the descriptions of the pain of loss will ring true to any bereaved parent. Many of the stories also include the journeys toward healing through reading, writing, finding supportive communities, and creating legacies.

I asked Donna how the book was organized (I could discern no pattern) and she replied that the random effect was purposeful—random just like our losses. I have to confess, I have not read all 31 entries at this point, seeking instead those written by authors I know. This proved enlightening. I thought I knew these stories, some of them by fellow board members, but reading the printed versions, written at the privacy of their desks, revealed more than what I had heard over coffee or in a sharing circle. This reconfirms my belief in the power of writing as healing. I'm sure the writers, like myself, discovered things they didn't know they knew through this process.

It is difficult to read one story of loss after another, so I'm recommending to my chapter members that they buy the book themselves, rather than borrowing the copy from our TCF library. Because the entries are short, and the placement is random, it's the kind of book you can take up and put down after half an hour. Then pick it up again a couple of days later and not worry about where you left off. After all, the concentration level of bereaved parents is not the highest!

One of the characteristics of deep grief is loneliness. Reading these stories, you will feel connected. Kudos to Donna Sharkey for this bonding experience!

Copies can be ordered through your local bookstore, or through Demeter Press, www.demeterpress.ca.

Sharing Newsletters

TCF Winnipeg has offered to send a copy of their newsletter to any chapter that is not currently receiving it. "We would be very happy to include them on our emailing or mailing list." Contact:

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Website: www.tcfwinnipeg.org

Do we have other chapters who would like to share newsletters, either as the sender or the recipient?

Feedback on the Question about Parental Suicide

A couple of months ago we passed along a request for information about parental suicide after the death of a child by suicide. This elicited the most feedback of any issue we have raised in this newsletter. That was encouraging. Thank you to all who responded, especially TCF Winnipeg, who sent a list of links that had been passed along to them by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba and Winnipeg. What was disappointing was that the articles that specifically addressed the issue turned out to be dispassionate reams of data about rates of “committing suicide”. Not helpful. Or they were newspaper accounts, playing up the tragedy. Other articles were about parental grief generally, not specifically related to this narrow topic. One article about surviving a child’s suicide did resonate positively, though. Here’s the link:

<https://thefriendshipbench.org/a-letter-to-parents-surviving-a-childs-suicide/>

The most touching response was from a bereaved parent who spoke of their own contemplation of suicide after the death of their child (not suicide related). Their words echoed what we hear time and again in the sharing circle: it’s not about wanting to end life, it’s about wanting to end the pain. As one mom put it, “I would never deliberately kill myself, but if a runaway truck were heading for me, I wouldn’t bother to step out of the way.”

Thank you, again, to all who responded, and to all who share from the depth of their heart. Because of them we know that we need not walk alone.

Meeting Suggestion

The North Shore (Vancouver, BC) Chapter had a good idea for their meeting last month: members were given plenty of notice to look for a stone that reflected the current nature of their grief. Each attendee brought their stone to the meeting and used it to introduce their sharing time in the circle. Simple, but effective.

Thank you, North Shore, for sharing this meeting suggestion. Do other chapters have ideas that they could pass along?