

The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

April 2026 Newsletter

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents.



A Note from Susan

I know each April will always bring a mixture of emotions for myself and my family. As I know for each one of you and your families the many days approaching a birthday, the day your child died and the many special occasions we have in our lives will always be full of emotions and memories. We love and miss our child because of who they were. They contributed to us and those around them in ways that made a difference. "I tell myself; I need to focus on how he lived, not how he died, because it is how he lived that really defines his life" Louise Weil.

As I think of my son, Westley I let myself remember and feel the memories of joy; his smile, his laugh, his kindness, his many talents and accomplishments. How it felt when I would see him walk through the door when he came home for a visit.

Losing a child, at any age, is a heartbreak beyond words, because the loss touches every part of who we are. We grieve the child we held and loved, the future and the person they meant to become, and even the version of ourselves that existed before our world changed forever. Their absence reshapes our hearts and our lives forever, and nothing about us is ever quite the same again.

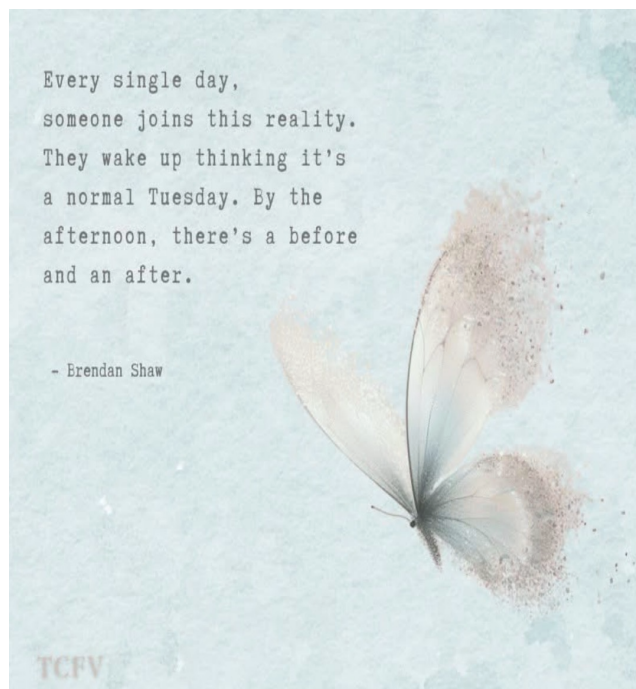
I wasn't ready to say goodbye. I wasn't ready to let you leave. I would give anything for just one more day, just one more minute. But I've learned to trust in unconditional love. Because the one profound thing about death is that love never dies. I carry his heart inside mine. I carry it on days when I

discover something new. I carry it on days when beauty unfolds in the most unexpected places. I carry it on days when I find courage to heal and to grow. I carry the little gifts he leaves for me to find; I have a pocket full of love; a silver heart, a red glass heart, a penny, a marble and a yellow dice. I carry him with me always. Forever in my mind. Forever in my heart. I will carry you.

I wish each of you the happiness of the season and that you may find peace with the season changing; the sunshine, the warmth, and the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, however you may do this. I think of each of you and your journey when you share your stories at our meetings, and as you share your loved one's names, hopes, dreams and memories. I hope you know we all are listening and thank you for sharing your loved one with us.

Take care, your friend Susan

In honor and memory of her son, Westley.



Chapter Meetings

Northern Illinois Chapter TCF #1511

<http://www.iltcf.org/index.html>

Zoom meeting

First Thursday of the month

7p.m. to 8:30pm

Susan Banks will email the link to the meeting.

April 2, 2026

Third Thursday of the month meets at

Millburn Congregational Church

19073 West Old Town Court

Lake Villa, IL 60046.

Park in the lot behind the church, enter through the double glass doors.

Park in the parking lot behind the church, enter through the double glass doors.

It's also ok to sit and listen and when you feel comfortable sharing, please share with us.

Open discussion

April 16, 2026

Chapter News

Upcoming events for our Chapter

**Your attention Please; The month of June 2026 will not have any meetings. We are taking time the month of June to be with family and friends.*

September; the HeART remembers.

Thursday September 17 meeting will feature; Family and friends ~ The HeART Remembers. We will create art in memory of our loved ones.

Sunday December 13, 2026~ The 30th Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony; The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one

hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. *More information will be shared to our members.*

If you have any questions please call, email, or text Susan at 847.366.9375 or Lanwesmar@comcast.net



GIFTS OF LOVE

A donation to our chapter in honor of or in loving memory of your child.

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Please remember that our chapter will never solicit for donations. You will never receive an email, text message or phone call soliciting for a donation or a need of money or payment from any steering committee member. I, as the chapter leader will never ask for money for assistance with any chapter finances. We provide the opportunity for Gifts of Love as a place to give a donation in honor or memory of a loved one. *Susan Banks Chapter Leader and our Chapter Steering Committee members.*



OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN APRIL

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. Our children's lives will go on, if we remember them and celebrate their lives

BIRTHDAYS

<i>Brandon Travelstead</i>	<i>April 6</i>	<i>Son of Joan Travelstead</i>
<i>Michael Sean Gaede</i>	<i>April 8</i>	<i>Son of Maureen Gaede</i>
<i>Russell Isaac Thomashow</i>	<i>April 9</i>	<i>Son of Blythe Thomashow</i>
<i>Scott Ewing</i>	<i>April 11</i>	<i>Son of Alan & Renee Ewing</i>
<i>Qua'Shawn Wade</i>	<i>April 12</i>	<i>Son of June Andrejewski</i>
<i>Alyssa Carranza</i>	<i>April 15</i>	<i>Daughter of Angel & Raquel Gaso</i>
<i>Adrien Gonzales</i>	<i>April 21</i>	<i>Son of Lauren Gonzales</i>
<i>Lisa M. Johnson</i>	<i>April 25</i>	<i>Daughter of Issey Lugo</i>
<i>Jammi Hui</i>	<i>April 25</i>	<i>Daughter of William & Joyce Hui</i>
<i>Cole Adkins</i>	<i>April 28</i>	<i>Son of Amy & Ted Adkins</i>

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>José De Jesús Hernández</i>	<i>April 1</i>	<i>Son of Jesús & Virginia Hernández</i>
<i>Selene Martinez</i>	<i>April 8</i>	<i>Daughter of Manuel & Lidia Martinez</i>
<i>Ruthie Johnson</i>	<i>April 9</i>	<i>Daughter of Paula Ali</i>
<i>Matthew Tisch</i>	<i>April 10</i>	<i>Son of William & Barbara Tisch</i>
<i>Jennifer Corbett Dennis</i>	<i>April 12</i>	<i>Daughter of Joan K Corbett</i>
<i>Daniel Wang</i>	<i>April 13</i>	<i>Son of Millie Yu Wang</i>
<i>Montana (Monti) Brown</i>	<i>April 16</i>	<i>Son of Donna Brown</i>
<i>Thomas Mattingly</i>	<i>April 17</i>	<i>Son of Sue & Jerry Mattingly</i>
<i>Shannon McCarty</i>	<i>April 18</i>	<i>Daughter of Kevin McCarty & Pat Hays</i>
<i>Westley Banks</i>	<i>April 19</i>	<i>Son of Susan & Michael Banks</i>
<i>Alejandro Gonzales</i>	<i>April 20</i>	<i>Son of Matt & Renee Gonzales</i>
<i>Cinnamon Porter</i>	<i>April 20</i>	<i>Daughter of Karen Porter</i>
<i>Alexander Rettinger</i>	<i>April 20</i>	<i>Son of Kathleen Rettinger</i>
<i>David Nesheim</i>	<i>April 24</i>	<i>Brother of Toni Nesheim</i>
<i>Griffin Schumow</i>	<i>April 26</i>	<i>Son of Jeff & Krista Schumow</i>
<i>Gavin Short</i>	<i>April 29</i>	<i>Son of Beth & Alan Short</i>
<i>Anne Thomson</i>	<i>April 30</i>	<i>Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson</i>

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered. Susan; lanwesmar@comcast.net



If wishes could come true...
 There Isn't a day that goes by that I don't
 think of you.
 Your laugh, your smile, your smell, your
 touch. I'll never know why you had to leave
 me, but as long as I live, you will live on
 through me. (a.m.tm)

~~~~~

*I found a picture of you  
 One that I had not seen in awhile  
 I held it gently in my hands  
 Lost for a moment in your smile.  
 I found a card from you, written in  
 your own special way  
 I held it gently in my hands, lost for a  
 moment in the day.  
 Memories, sweet gifts from you to allow  
 my heart a breath  
 To let me be lost for a moment,  
 To remember life not just death.*

~Author Unknown~

## *Please Let Me Mourn*

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling.  
 Will you try to understand and help me?

Please let me mourn. I may act and appear together, but I am not. Oftentimes it hurts so much I can hardly bear it.

Please let me mourn. Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle. Sometimes I am not always sure.

Please let me mourn. Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are all I have now. They are very precious to me.

Please let me mourn. Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it is all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't fear my tears.

Please let me mourn. What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and your understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

Please let me mourn. God gives me strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

Please let me mourn. Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

—Lonnie Forland ~ TCF, Northwood, IA



## *Say their name...*

There's something defiant about continuing to say their name.

The world has an unspoken rule about grief: soften it, shorten it, tuck it away so other people can feel comfortable again. Over time, conversations move on. Rooms adjust. Silence settles where a life once was. And somehow, we're expected to follow that silence.

But saying your name breaks it.

When I speak about you, I'm not pretending you're alive in the ordinary sense. I know the tragedy of what happened. I know the finality. I have stood in it. I stand in it still, today and always.

And yet, when I say your name out - loud, something shifts. The air changes. For a moment, you are not gone. Saying your name keeps you present in the only way I have left.

Grief is not only about missing you. It's about fighting the slow erasure that time tries to impose. It's about refusing to let the world reduce you to a date on a calendar or a photograph on a shelf.

Say their name, even if it makes us cry. Yes, sometimes it might make us cry. But those tears are not just pain, they are recognition, connection and love still being acknowledged. When someone says their name, it doesn't always bring tears, it brings relief. It says; they mattered beyond our own private grief. It reminds us that their life reached further than just us.

Because what hurts most is not just that they are gone. It's the thought that they might be forgotten.

Dear child, I will talk about you forever because love doesn't end at the grave. It changes form. It becomes a language. It becomes storytelling. It becomes repetition.

It becomes your name, spoken again and again, so that in this house, in this body, in this life, you are still here.

*Compassionate Friends. TCFV*



Say their name, even  
if it makes us cry.  
Let us know you  
have not forgotten  
they lived ...

- Grief To Glory Unfolding

## *In the Springtime of Your Grief*

by Judi Fischer  
Cleveland, Ohio

Spring has fragile beginnings; a tiny shoot of green that emerges from the cold earth, a hint of pastel against the brownish grass, a bud that awakens with the morning sun. Sometimes spring comes so quietly we almost miss it, but once it begins, it is impossible to ignore the daily growth and change. The morning sun brings sounds that were not there before. The breeze carries warmth that invites us to venture outside of ourselves. A promise is released with the budding and blossoming surrounding us. Hope emerges for the beginning of a new season; change is in the air.

What we experience in the springtime of the year is what we can experience in the springtime of our grief. There begins to be a growing radiance. The radiance is not just around us; it is within us. A gradual warming of the heart silences the chill of intense pain. The natural unfolding of the grief process moves gently to remind us that we will survive.

Life is changing, and growth emerges through the changes. The song of our hearts that seemed off key, begins to experience a harmonious blend of the past and the present. The songs of the birds invite us to join them in a celebration of new life. In the springtime of our grief, there can be a new song for us to sing. It will be a song we composed through the heartache of loss.

Optimism for a better day may awaken us one morning. Hearing laughter and discovering it is coming from within ourselves gives us promise for today. Dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow shine brightly with the morning sun.

Surviving the winter of our grief with the openness to embrace change is a decision to embrace loss and integrate its impact into the fabric of our lives. It can be a willingness to explore new

possibilities that create a different landscape to behold. We can make a decision that we will begin to appreciate what we still have, not just focus on what is missing.

We will know when we have made that decision. Something buds; something opens. The harshness of winter is softened with new life and new growth. It is not something we can force; it is something that unfolds when the time is right. The springtime of grief arrives with no dramatic entrance, no flashing lights. The stillness of the beauty unfolds and captures our attention. It is happening around us, but it is also happening in us.

If spring has already crossed the path of your personal journey of grief, rejoice! But if the chill of winter remains in your heart, be encouraged; spring is on its way. Look for it, expect it, and it will be yours to experience around you and in you!

*Borrowed with love from Bereavement Magazine  
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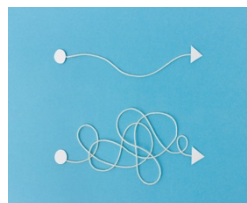


## *Thoughts From a Parent Who Lost an Older Child*

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem so long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years, there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after 2 ½ years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one day at a time enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

*Helen Godwin - TCF, Orange Park/Jacksonville, FL  
From the TCF National Newsletter, Spring 1994  
Greater Kankakee IL Area TCF © 2009 Volume 8  
Number 4 P*



## **CHOICES**

The issue, finally distilled to its essence, is revealed as not so much who you were as who your example inspired us to be. Because we walked beside you in life, we grew strong enough to handle grief, determined enough to endure emptiness, wise enough to cry when hurting, brave enough to start over every day.

We are different people from the ones who accompanied you on your journey. We don't think the same or look the same and we certainly don't feel the same. Every event plowed and furrowed our souls, shaping us into fields of unconditional love capable of bearing an inexhaustible harvest that will always and forever exceed our need.

Our choices in the new world thrust upon us are whether we shall limit our experience to daily memories of grief, pain and sorrow, or opt for deliberate expansion of heart and mind. Whether we shall define your passing as the ending of all we cherished and sought and dreamed or lean into the loss to reveal an opening we never thought possible or let ourselves see.

An opening that beckons and promises a transcending, a separation from the grief everywhere present like the fine dust of an explosion. A hidden place where tears give way to freedom, hearts recover and songs begin to play again. A shelter where your legacy of victory heals, revealing the power of seeking joy in sorrow and the bliss of finding peace in what is.

*Copyright © Harold G. Hopkins, May 2001. Lawrenceville, GA TCF*

*In loving memory of Lance Porter Hopkins, July 1975 to November 1999*

*~reprinted from TCF Atlanta March/April 2002 Newsletter*

## THOUGHTS ABOUT PROGRESS

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to “recovery”, when all of a sudden, you seem to be back at square one. But are you really?

Let’s keep in mind most of us have had no previous experience “recovering” from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference – It’s all new to us. Actually, the “roller coaster” of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left – just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute.

After a couple of months, we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM – back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let’s be realistic!! There is something wrong – terribly wrong: we have each lost a child.

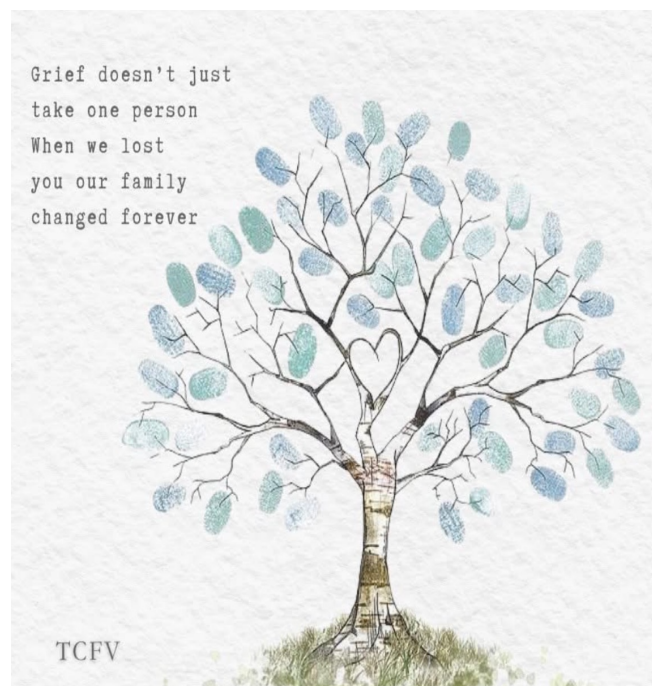
Let’s be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, “laughing on the outside – crying on the inside.” We want to be acceptable to society. “You are doing so well,” we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean “getting over it”; it means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let’s not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well-meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person’s general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally

withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy.

Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

*Mary Ehmann, TCF/Valley Forge, PA*  
*(Lovingly lifted from TCF/Phoenix, AZ - Feb/Mar 2003 Newsletter)*



## *Becoming Stronger at The Broken Places*

If I am what I do, and I don't, then I'm not. Those words have been spinning around in my head ever since I heard someone comment on how we tend to define ourselves by what we do, rather than by who we are. I thought about those words incessantly, almost to the point where they became nonsensical. But they aren't.

Until April 25, 1978, the day of my son Bryan's death, I'm afraid I was guilty of defining myself by my roles in life; computer marketer, husband, father - and without really being aware of it, most often in that order. I was caught up with "bringing home the bacon", "making a name for myself", and the tunnel vision that goes with all of that. My sense of self-worth was wrapped up with these feelings.

One of my colleagues used to call me "Rapid Robert" because of my pace in going places - or was it a treadmill? I was a workaholic, and only too often by the time I'd gotten around to family matters, I'd run out of steam.

Then my son Bryan died. The superficiality of my life smashed headlong into a brick wall. For months I felt like I was sitting in the middle of a field scattered with pieces of my life; job pieces askew here, family relationships trailing off there, dreams piled akimbo over here, hopes were asunder over there.

As I listened to my son's friends at the two remembrances for him, it dawned on me that at nineteen a young man doesn't have a long list of credits and accomplishments. "Bryan hadn't made a name for himself." Bryan was Bryan, no more, no less. His many friends loved him for who he was, not what he was.

Strange the lessons Fathers learn from sons - To care - To Share - To be there.

I wrote these words blinded by pain, and I could sense what it was that brought together people from all over in a common bond of shared grief, Bryan cared about them. I wondered if I were to die suddenly, after more than fifty years of life,

how would I be eulogized? "A real professional, a true marketer, a dedicated employee" I'd settle for two words: "He Cared."

I've tried to put the pieces of my life back together again, but I've tried to be selective. I've left many pieces lying in that field because they don't fit anymore. And I've fashioned new pieces, each in some way inspired by the lessons of Bryan's life.

Hemingway wrote, *"Sooner or later life breaks everyone, but afterwards some are stronger at the broken places."* I've tried to put the pieces of my life back together selectively. As bereaved parents, we have a choice; we can fixate on the death or we can affirm life. I know which my son would have wanted me to do.

*Robert Rosenberger, TCF, Burke, VA*

*Borrowed lovingly from the online newsletter of the Atlanta Chapter of TCF*



We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 49<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference in Baltimore, MD! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

**LOVE GIFTS**

Enclosed in a check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor the newsletter for \_\_\_\_\_ month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be included in the “special days” list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are donating, please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends. Rosita Hernandez 3016 16<sup>th</sup> Place, North Chicago, IL 60064. [rosehernandez@juno.com](mailto:rosehernandez@juno.com)**

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include the author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Susan Banks 1427 Clavey Lane, Gurnee, IL 60031. [Lanwesmar@comcast.net](mailto:Lanwesmar@comcast.net)

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its’ mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive

TCF National Office PO Box 46 Wheaton, IL 60187. 877-969-0001. [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### Steering Committee 2025 – 2026

**CHAPTER LEADERSHIP** Susan Banks 847-366-9375 [lanwesmar@comcast.net](mailto:lanwesmar@comcast.net) – son, Westley Banks Age 21 of suicide.

**TREASURER** Rosita Hernandez 847-602-0698 [rosehernandez@juno.com](mailto:rosehernandez@juno.com) daughter, Victoria Pickett Age 26 of suicide.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**HOSPITALITY** Kris Frisby 847-366-3170 [Kefrisby88@comcast.net](mailto:Kefrisby88@comcast.net) son, Camden Frisby Age 15 of suicide.

**SECRETARY / LIBRARIAN**

**REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY** Shannon Seay 224-456-2891 [Seayseven1@comcast.net](mailto:Seayseven1@comcast.net) daughter, Ashley Seay Age 17 Auto accident.

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR** Susan Banks 847-366-9375 [lanwesmar@comcast.net](mailto:lanwesmar@comcast.net) – son, Westley Banks Age 21 of suicide.

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**WOODLAND WALK COORDINATORS** Christine Pado 847-455-6642 [chpado@gmail.com](mailto:chpado@gmail.com) - daughter Lindsay Wilcynski Age 29 Pulmonary Embolism

**FACILITATORS AT HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH WAUKEGAN, IL.** SPANISH AND ENGLISH. Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 [mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com](mailto:mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com) & Raphael Vidal [rvidal1027@yahoo.com](mailto:rvidal1027@yahoo.com), son Raphael Vidal age 17 of suicide. Mirtha is available by phone call or email.

**FACILITADORES EN HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH WAUKEGAN, IL.** Española e inglés. Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 [mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com](mailto:mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com) & Raphael Vidal [rvidal1027@yahoo.com](mailto:rvidal1027@yahoo.com), hijo Raphael Vidal de 17 años de suicidio. Mirtha está disponible por teléfono o correo electrónico.

**Northern Lake County IL Chapter #1511** <http://www.iltcf.org/index.html>

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**Facebook Pages for Siblings - The Sounds of the Siblings:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

**TCF SIBS:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tcfsibs/>

