



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511 March 2026 Newsletter

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



A Note from Susan

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. Some bonds cannot be broken. Because even though you're not physically here, your heart is, it lives on within me. I carry your 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 it with me always. Someday we will meet again, and we will no longer be separated by time or space. But until that day, I'll find comfort in knowing that you are still with me. Your heart safely tucked inside mine. Some hearts just belong together, and nothing will ever change that. I loved you then. I love you now. Always did. Always will. Forever in my mind. Forever in my heart. I will carry you.

"Thoughts shared with an unknow author"

My wish for each of you; May you all have a gentle entry to the new season; it is on the way, soon spring will be sharing its warmth, sprouting new growth, and inviting us to the outdoors. I look forward to being outdoors, going for long walks and bike rides. I do enjoy gardening, always have. I keep looking at my gardens and I see evidence of new growth. I must be patient a wait a little while longer before I can start the spring cleanup and preparing the gardens for summer.

There are creatures still hibernating, but once we have a steady number of warm days, they will surface and attend to their duties of pollenating, turning the soil and reentry to the warm weather months.

Grief changes from day to day but never goes away. It becomes a part of you, that you carry every single day. As I think of my son, Westley I let myself remember and feel the memories of joy; his smile, his laugh, his kindness, how it felt when I would see him walk through the door when he came home for a visit.

It's always so uplifting to listen to the stories of our children and to hear in your voices and see on your faces the pride and love you have for your child. Then, I hear in your voice and see on your face, the heartfelt sorrow of how much you truly miss your child. And I hope that in the stories that we share and as we listen to each other's memories of our children, we can find peace and joy.

I know each of you have a system, method, approach to keeping yourself available and present for each day, each week, each month. You are all so brave and so loved by your families and friends. I hope the changing of the season and the expectation of spring will bring comfort and may you find those moments of remembering and feeling the joy your child brings to your heart and mind. 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.

Your friend, Susan Westley's mom

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.

March 5, 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

March 19, 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 MARCH

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. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, if we remember them and celebrate their lives.

BIRTHDAYS

<i>Maxwell Malesh</i>	<i>February 15</i>	<i>Son of Don & Debbie Malesh</i>
<i>Camden Frisby</i>	<i>March 1</i>	<i>Son of Kris Frisby</i>
<i>Griffin Schumow</i>	<i>March 2</i>	<i>Son of Jeff & Krista Schumow</i>
<i>Kyle Glueck</i>	<i>March 4</i>	<i>Son of Dolores Krason</i>
<i>Charlie Schmit</i>	<i>March 9</i>	<i>Son of Jean Schmit-Gill</i>
<i>Cinnamon Porter</i>	<i>March 15</i>	<i>Daughter of Karen Porter</i>
<i>David Spannraft</i>	<i>March 18</i>	<i>Son of Elizabeth & Dan Spannraft</i>
<i>Paulina Welch</i>	<i>March 26</i>	<i>Daughter of Grace & Merrell Parsons</i>
<i>Adam Rubin</i>	<i>March 28</i>	<i>Son of Linda and Nicole Rubin</i>

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Cole Adkins</i>	<i>March 13</i>	<i>Son of Amy & Ted Adkins</i>
<i>Korey Hill</i>	<i>March 5</i>	<i>Son of Deena Hill</i>
<i>Eder Alamilla</i>	<i>March 12</i>	<i>Son of Magda Alamilla</i>
<i>Taylor Rydahl</i>	<i>March 14</i>	<i>Son of Carol & Keith Rydahl</i>
<i>Chris Dvorak</i>	<i>March 23</i>	<i>Son of Karen Dvorak</i>
<i>Luis F Reyes</i>	<i>March 24</i>	<i>Son of Felipe & Margarita Reyes</i>
<i>Maximillion Herrick</i>	<i>March 25</i>	<i>Son of Jared Herrick</i>
<i>Roderick Young</i>	<i>March 27</i>	<i>Son of Scarlet Austin</i> <i>Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson</i>
<i>Marc Hawkinson</i>	<i>March 28</i>	<i>Son of Mary Kay Clark</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 Banks Lanwesmar@comcast.net

Memories

*You are gone, but thank you for all these soft, sweet things you have left behind
In my home, In my head, In my heart...Nikita Gill*

LETTING GO OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

It must be a truism that we all feel a little misunderstood in our grief. Ever since May 25, 1989, when our little girl died after only 44 hours of life, we have faced a variety of attitudes regarding her death and our mourning process - from downright rudeness to tremendous compassion and understanding. Yet all we ask is the chance to allow her to "BE." We loved her from the beginning, and when she died, our love didn't simply stop. Quite the opposite, in fact, and more complex in ways because she is dead. Even so, we want to give her life significance. We want her to be proud of her Mommy and Daddy. We want her to exist not only in our hearts, but in everyone else's as well.

A bit much to ask, do you think? If the truth be told, we probably all feel very much the same way. We have each been faced with attitudes that are hard to understand, whether our child was miscarried at eight weeks or lived to be 40 years old. We, as parents, simply cannot allow any indifference concerning our children. Some part of us pleads for new understanding from our family and friends.

We were very concerned that folks would think since Lindsay was "just a baby" when she died, then we only had a little amount of grief, or that we really have no reason to mourn her passing. I held on to this misunderstanding, even (because of a few bad experiences) with some dear friends of compassion.

There are a few who consider us lucky, and I concede their point. In contrast to some of the other stories we hear in The Compassionate Friends circle, our child's life and death seem relatively simple. Sometimes I want to get down on my knees and beg your forgiveness for asking you to understand my grief when yours seems the ultimate tragedy. My heart aches for each and every child who has died.

Who am I to compare our circumstances with the one who lost all her children, or their only child, or their firstborn son, or the one whose son was in and out of the hospital his whole life, or even

the one whose child died from miscarriage. At least we had nine months together!

Who am I to determine which cause of death is worse? Would it be an automobile accident, or suicide, or murder, or sudden infant death, or a long-term illness, or a stillbirth. Who could possibly say? Who would "prefer" one over the other? Surely not I. I would prefer no death at all. And what is the "perfect" age for a child to die? In the early weeks of pregnancy, before the mother even felt life. At birth, before hearing a cry? Or a few days or weeks later? Would it be better if we got to spend more time with them - five, ten, twenty years? How long is long enough? It's always "too soon."

Is it harder to mourn the memories we do have, or the memories we do not have? Is it harder to mourn for what was, or what was supposed to be? Is it harder to bury the baby child, or the one who lived 50 years or more?

Enough of this! There is no need to compare. If we have any hope at all of anyone understanding our agony, then we only have each other, my dear Compassionate Friends. Our baby's life and death may seem effortless and uncomplicated. She was born. She died. The end. But it's not the end.

However simple Lindsay's little life may seem, the process of mourning her death has never been simple. It is the most intense pain I have ever suffered, just as yours is. It is a shock to the system with life-altering effects. The death of any child at any age, under any circumstances, is the most horrifying, devastating, humbling event in our lives.

Before joining The Compassionate Friends, I got the distinct impression that any mention of our baby was a sign of mental instability. Thank you for showing me differently. The truth of the matter is, there will always be those who think I'm a little "crazy" where Lindsay is concerned, and there will always be those who cannot understand. But I can't let it stand in the way of my recovery any longer. I am determined to let it go and cross this steppingstone towards reorganizing my life in a positive way.

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LETTING GO OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Continued from page 4

Who could have known the
exquisite difference your brief life
would make upon mine?
Who could have known a tiny baby
would show me the beauty of a sunrise,
of the wonder of a rainbow, or the pain
of a tear? Who could have known an innocent
child would take away my
fear of death, and point me in the
direction of heave? Who could have known that
you would succeed
where so many others have failed?

Dana Gensler
TCF, South Central, KY
©1995 and reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*,
the national publication of The Compassionate Friends
-reprinted from TCF Front Range Chapters March
2008



Permission to Rest

Without quit for many of us, rest feels like something that needs to be earned. Something that comes after - after the dishes are done, the emails answered, the invisible boxes checked. Even then, it can feel uneasy. The body may pause, but the mind keeps scanning the edges, quietly listing what still remains undone. Over time, rest starts to feel like an indulgence rather than necessity. Something optional. Something we have to explain or justify. This is a belief many of us carry without realizing —
and one that can be gently set down.
Because rest does not need to be earned.

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When Busy Becomes the Default

Modern life keeps us moving. And productivity is often mistaken for purpose. Without much noticing, we learn to measure our worth by how much we do and how little we stop.

The body adjusts to this pace, even when it isn't kind. We learn to run on low reserves. To stay alert longer than we should. Choosing to rest, then, isn't laziness — it's a quiet decision to value your life for more than what it produces outwardly.

The Kind of Stress That Lingers

Stress doesn't always announce itself loudly. More often, it settles in as a continuous hum in the background. Shoulders stay tense. Breaths stay shallow. The mind rarely feels fully at ease and attention often gets divided.

Even moments meant for rest can feel edged with low-level vigilance — half-relaxing, half-listening for what comes next. When this becomes normal, it can affect how we sleep, how we feel, and how much patience we have to give.

Continues on page 6

Permission to rest ~ Continued from page 5

Burnout isn't a personal failure. It often shows up as a dull tiredness, a shorter fuse, or a sense of emotional distance from things you once enjoyed. These are signs that something within you is asking for gentler care, not more effort.

Untangling Guilt from Stillness

For many women, guilt arrives the moment we slow down. What's unfinished, who might need us, what could be done instead? Gradually, this voice becomes convincing enough that rest feels like a transgression.

Letting go of that guilt doesn't happen overnight — and it doesn't need to. It can begin simply by noticing the urge to justify a pause and choosing not to answer it. Stillness doesn't need a reason. Rest doesn't need permission.

A Quieter Kind of Self-Care

Not all care needs to be neatly wrapped in routines or labels. Sometimes it can just be simple: like leaving an evening open. Sitting longer with your coffee. Letting a morning unfold without urgency.

This kind of care isn't performative, it's preserving. It doesn't need to be shared or checked off. It works quietly and steadily, supporting you in ways that aren't always visible but are deeply felt.

A well-lived life leaves room for pause. It allows space to breathe, to soften, to simply be — without apology. Rest becomes less of an event and more of a way of moving through the world with more presence and kindness toward yourself.

Bella Grace magazine; Grace notes February 2026

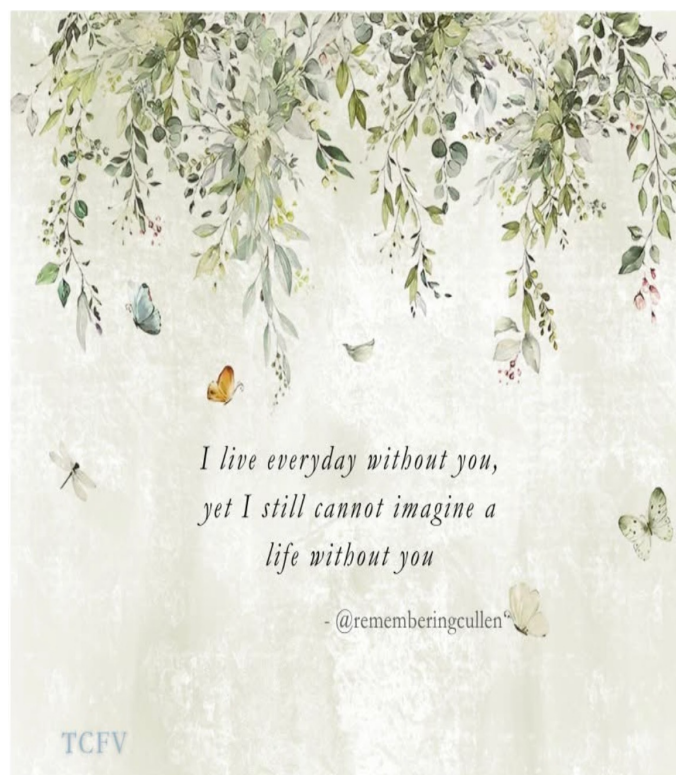
If this reflection stayed with you, *Bella Grace* offers a place you can linger even longer. Explore our magazines.

Grief

Grief often asks us to hold two truths at the same time. We wake up, breathe, function and keep moving through the days that no longer include the person we love. From the outside, it can look like survival has turned into acceptance. But inside, something else is happening.

Living without them is not the same as imagining a life without them. One is forced upon us by time. The other feels impossible because love doesn't end where life does. Their presence continues, in memory, in habit, in the quiet moments when we still reach for them without thinking.

We learn how to live, because we must. But we do not learn how to be without them, because they are still part of who we are.



The Dream

We've gotten along so long,
And now it seems like you're nowhere, gone,
My opinion of you actually mattered,
And now my dreams seem so shattered,
You were my big brother forever,
I always assumed we'd grow up together,
Now I sit here thinking of the past,
Everything we had and loved is gone so fast,
No more dirt bikes, snowmobiles, horses or cars,
No more metal, jeeps, or even bars,
Although you're in heaven you still remain,
Along with the recurring memories, grieving, and pain,
The whole family misses you,
And you better bet your friends do.
But this whole thing opens your door,
Because now you're free, you were born to soar,
I'm starting to find peace in my soul,
Because you're my guardian angel, now I'm whole,
No one will ever take your place,
Everything's for you, every smile on my face,
Although this time for me will always be rough,
I know you're here with me to help me be tough,
So, rest in peace now, my dearest Nick,
Because if I ever had to choose another brother,
You would be the only one I'd pick.

Love forever and always,
Your little sister.

By Heide Hietpas
In Memory of her big brother Nick Hietpas

Some People

Some people imagine that years after a child dies, life simply resumes. That the parent is sad now and then, thinks of their child occasionally, but has largely moved on ~ back to a life full of joy and happiness.

The truth is often very different.

Many bereaved parents think of their child every single day. Grief doesn't fade neatly into the background. It can still arrive in waves strong enough to knock the breath out of them. There are still tears. Still heartbreak, still moments that hurt in ways that words can't begin to explain.

Life doesn't return to what it one was. It changes forever. The day their child died, something shifted that cannot be undone. What remains are memories, treasured possessions that sit quietly, a bedroom, a home left untouched, an empty chair at the table ~ sometimes avoided because it hurts too much.

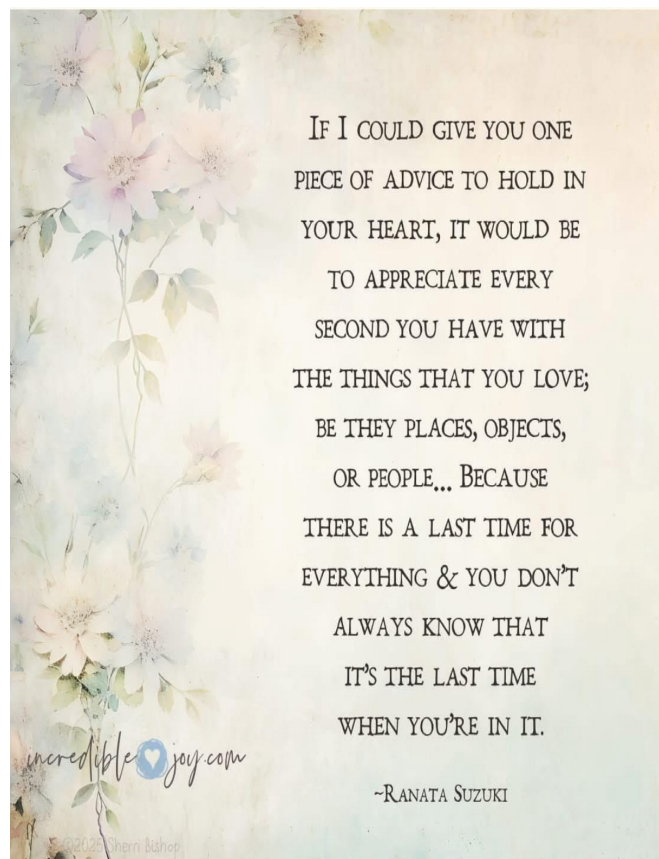
Siblings are changed forever too. Families are reshaped. The loss sends ripples far and beyond one moment, spreading wide and lasting for many, many years.

And yet, within all of this, there can still be meaning, connection, moments of peace and happiness ~ not because the grief is gone, but because the love never left.

Words by TCFV Compassionate Friends of Victoria



Art; Pinterest



It just happens. We do not die because of the pain. We keep on living, and I still wonder how this can be.

I do not want life to go on, but to stop it right here, or better yet, to turn back to the day when I lost my sister and baby niece. I do not want the changes life brings. Each change seems to increase the distance between the life I knew with them and the life I live today. I cannot ask my sister's opinion about the new things that happen. I cannot share them with her, tell her about them, laugh or cry with her about them, Changes make me aware that in fact life does go on, without her. My birthdays make me sad because they change the difference in age...my sister was always four years older than I was, and now we are down to three years.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I live on. I smell, breathe, touch, feel, see and experience life, while my sister and her daughter were ripped away from it.

My sister and I never talked about death or losing each other, but if we had, I am sure that we both would have said that we could not imagine life without one another.

If it had been me, my sister would have been forced to do exactly the same; go on living despite the agony, just because there is no choice.

Before I lost them, I trusted life to be good. I believed in fairness; if we are good, life will spare us tragedies and besides, these tragedies only happen to other people, those I do not know, those I read about in the papers, distant, easy to forget about. I lost this sense of security and trust in life. I now find that living takes courage. Life becomes meaningful through love and friendship but loving someone is what makes us vulnerable. Daring to invite love into our lives means to increase our vulnerability to the threats that seem to be around every corner.

Continued to page 9.

The Courage to Let Life Go On

"Courage is not the absence of fear and pain but the affirmation of life despite fear and pain."

-Earl Grollman

"Life goes on." I have often heard this sentence, said perhaps to console me, or perhaps as a way to put an end to conversation about loss and death. Of course, life goes on, no matter how shattered our lives are by the loss of someone we love so dearly. Life doesn't ask whether we want to go along. We want the world to stop turning because of our loss. Days turn into nights, again and again, and this is how we arrived at this day. Suddenly another month, another year has gone by, although we all probably asked ourselves how we would be able to go on living.

Continued from page 8.

The Courage to Let Life Go On

Instead of asking "why us?" I often find myself asking "why not us?" Tragedy hits good and bad people for no reason. It seems the world is just random and unpredictable. Just because I am a good person, and I already lost so much does not mean that I will be spared from more pain.

Life goes on and because it does, with all the good and bad things that happen to us, it scares me to live and particularly to love. What if more happens? The fear IS paralyzing. I pray to God, to my sister and my niece to protect us, although I know they don't have the power to prevent other bad things from happening. What then can I ask them for? Courage, I guess.

Courage to let life go on, to give myself a chance that new and good things will happen to me that will add JOY to my life.

Britta Nielsen TCF, Manhattan, NY ~lovingly lifted from No. Oklahoma City TCF Newsletter

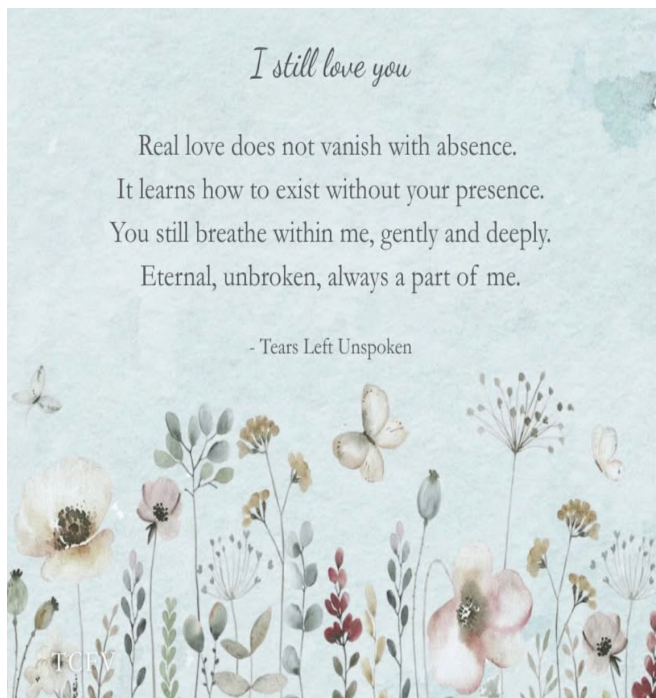
Spring Cleaning

As the seasons change and we become aware of the stirrings of nature, our thoughts turn to "spring cleaning". It prepares us for the new season by getting our "house" in order.

Let's dust off our memory chest, shake out and examine each item we've folded away in our heart and mind. Dig into the corners and bring light and air into the darkness. Deep in the closet we have accumulated all the things we couldn't face or needed time to think about. We must go through these. As we sort through, we will discard some unnecessary, unwanted feelings, hurts, anger, and other emotions. Now we can count our treasures and carefully fold and put them back in fresh containers, smaller, easier to find, more in time with now, and in good order.

A day spent doing these tasks will no doubt leave you exhausted, but the effort will bring a deep sense of contentment. For me, it brought a special plus, special memories and joys of our children.

Reprinted from Norman,
Oklahoma TCF newsletter March/April 2006.



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 16th Place, North Chicago, IL 60064. 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

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

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TREASURER Rosita Hernandez 847-602-0698 rosehernandez@juno.com daughter, Victoria Pickett Age 26 of suicide.

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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/>

