



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

March 2025 Newsletter

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

Chapter Leader, Notes from Susan

Dear Friends,

If wishes could come true... I know what I would wish for, I Wish that our son and brother Westley was here with us and living his life in wonder, grace, and fulfillment. And I also know it cannot come true. So, I hope that our children who have gone too soon are in a place of rest and peace. Sometimes in life there are losses. Losses that can never really be replaced. Losing you has been the hardest thing I've ever had to live with. I wasn't ready to say good-bye. 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.

Continued to page 2

Continued from pg. 1

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 we 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

Third Thursday of the month meets at
 Millburn Congregational Church
 19073 West Old Town Court
 Lake Villa, IL 60046.

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

Open discussion

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



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 passionate 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 your chapters. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

*Thank you to Cathy Bixler for her donation,
 In memory of her daughter,
 Alyson Bixler.*

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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>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 &amp; 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>David Spannraft</i> | <i>March 18</i> | <i>Son of Elizabeth &amp; Dan Spannraft</i>    |
| <i>Paulina Welch</i>   | <i>March 26</i> | <i>Daughter of Grace &amp; Merrell Parsons</i> |
| <i>Adam Rubin</i>      | <i>March 28</i> | <i>Son of Linda and Nicole Rubin</i>           |

### *ANNIVERSARIES*

|                        |                 |                                                                      |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Edgar Villareal</i> | <i>March 1</i>  | <i>Son of Oziel &amp; Guadalupe Villareal</i>                        |
| <i>Cole Adkins</i>     | <i>March 13</i> | <i>Son of Amy &amp; 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 &amp; 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 &amp; Margarita Reyes</i>                           |
| <i>Roderick Young</i>  | <i>March 27</i> | <i>Son of Scarlet Austin</i><br><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](mailto:Lanwesmar@comcast.net)*

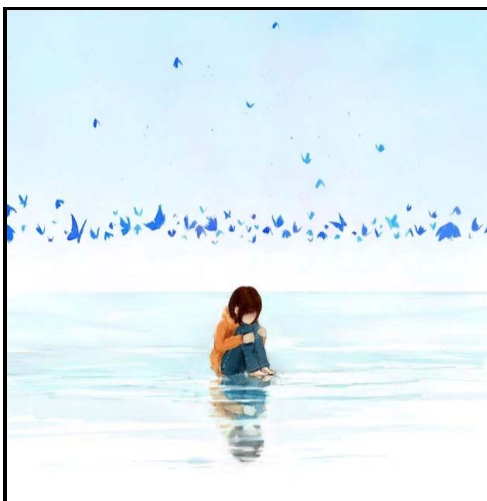
### *Memories*

*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*

## One more Day

If I could have just one more day with you...  
 I would hardly speak. I would simply listen to your voice and commit every tone of it to memory until it became my favorite melody.  
 I would look at you. I would study your eyes and your mouth, and I would learn every angle, every pane of your face until I could see you perfectly with my eyes closed.  
 I would hold your hand in mine. I would trace all the lines on your palm until they became a trail – a map - that I could retrace on my own palm every time I felt lost.  
 I would soak you up and breathe you in until there was not a single thing that I could not recall at a moment's notice.  
 But more than anything, if I had one more day with you,  
 I would hold you.  
 I would hold you so tight, hoping that maybe if I didn't let you go...  
 You wouldn't.  
 Yes, if I had just one more day with you, I would hope... I would hope so hard...  
 that you wouldn't have to leave again.  
 Becky Hemsley 2023  
 Artwork by immensely talented@endmin1 "One More Day is from the book "When I am Gone"

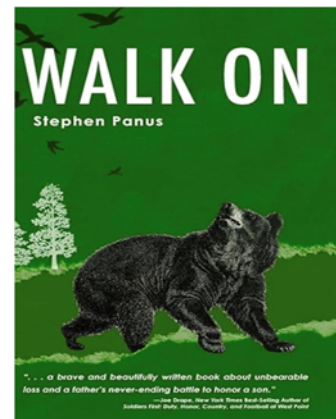


## A Book

"Walk on" by Stephen Panus

This book is a deeply moving journey of a father's rise from tragedy and a heartfelt tribute to a son's enduring spirit and a father's unbreakable love. This powerful memoir shares the story of

unimaginable loss and the resilience that follows, capturing the raw emotions of grief, hope and the relentless pursuit of honoring a loved one's legacy. With vivid storytelling and profound insight, "Walk On" is more than a book ~ it's equally a mindset as well as a reminder that even in the face of tragedy, love never fades. For anyone seeking inspiration, hope, healing and the courage to keep moving forward. Stephen Panus, Jake's father.



I know for certain  
 that we never lose the people we love,  
 even to death.  
 They continue to participate  
 in every act, thought  
 and decision that we make.  
 Their love leaves  
 an indelible imprint in our memories.  
 We find comfort knowing that our lives  
 have been enriched  
 by having shared their love.

Leo Buscaglia

## THE BEDROOM DILEMMA

by Cathy Seehuetter  
St. Paul, MN



There are many dilemmas affecting the life of a bereaved parent, but one that seems to cause one of the greatest amounts of stress and hand wringing is what we do with our children's (or siblings or

grandchild's) bedroom. My daughter Nina's room was her sanctuary--a very messy one at that. Much to my chagrin, the more clutter surrounding her the better! However, as a teenager, that is where she could be found most often; lying on her daybed chatting on the phone with her friends, homework and soda cans scattered around her, clothes and shoes thrown every which way. Laughter emanated from her bedroom, my daughter's intermingled with her friends, shrieks of delight. Many evenings I sat on her bed as she told me of her adventures as a freshman at Park High, her latest crush, and regaled me with her tales of a day in the life of a typical 15-year-old girl. Much of my memories are to be found in that room, and the realization I would never have those experiences again with Nina were almost unbearable. Therefore, what I would do with her bedroom now that she was no longer here was of utmost importance to me.

Over the 12 plus years since Nina left this plane, and I have been a part of TCF sharing groups, I have heard various ways others have dealt with this issue. Interestingly, what seems to come into play again and again is what friends and family thought should be done with the child's room. More often than not, their school of thought is that we should empty it completely, give away their possessions, and change it into an office or guest bedroom just as quickly as possible. They believe keeping things as is are only constant

reminders of our children's absence. In reality, we are thinking of them 24/7 anyway. Truly, they mean well and are only trying to find ways to help us. However, in the early stages of our grief most of us are not capable of making such an important decision, which is one that should be made only by us. With our loved ones gone, once we change something, there is no going back. To clear away her things and depersonalize her room felt to me as if I was somehow removing her from my life. What I learned from seasoned bereaved parents was that what are perceived, as painful memories of their absence, while in early grief, will, in time, become cherished memories we will want to hold onto. When the numbing brain fog lifts, we will more clearly begin to realize that, and only then make more rational decisions that are right for our situation.

I decided to leave Nina's room as it was, mostly from advice I received at a TCF meeting. I told myself that I would know when I was ready to tackle that decision. This is not always possible for everyone--maybe they had previously crowded conditions and needed that room for someone else or a variety of other reasons. What we need to remember again is that handling something like this is so personal; what feels right for one person may be entirely wrong for another. I think the key thing to remember is that if we are able to take our time that we try not to make a snap decision. We had no control over the fact that our child died; this might be something that we can make a choice about when we are ready and able to do so.

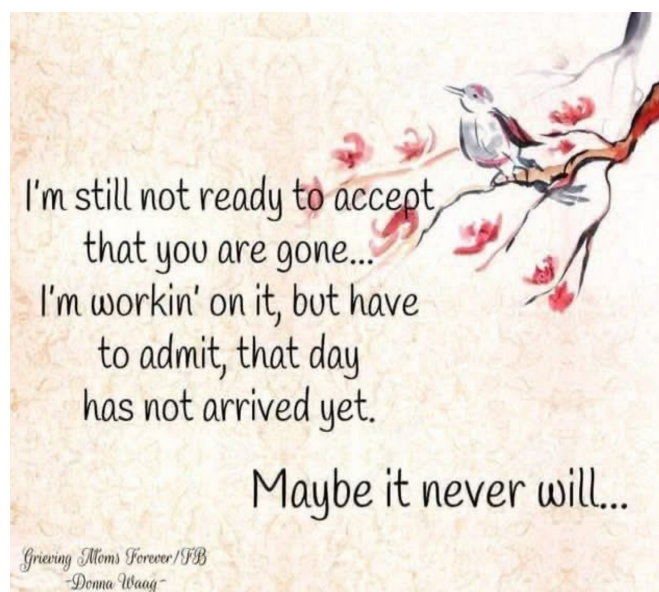
In my case, I waited for seven years before redoing Nina's room. I tried to do it at one and a half years and then again at five years and found that I just could not. When I finally did at seven years, I took my time and spent many weeks sifting through her life. I cried a ton of tears, but at that stage I spent the majority of time smiling and laughing.

Continued on page 6.

*Continued on page 6 Bedroom Dilemma*

I found things she wrote, what I call "buried treasures", that in the early stages would have set me back weeks because of its emotional impact, but years later brought me peace, and a deep personal understanding of Nina's thoughts that re-kindled our close relationship. I acknowledge that most people do not wait seven years to undertake the bedroom project; however, that is what worked for me. I made her room into a guest room that still included her daybed and many of her personal belongings. At that later stage, it became my private place where I would wrap myself in her handmade Afghan, lie on her bed, look at the glow-in-the-dark stars on her ceiling (that are still there today), and I felt close to my daughter. The point here is that seven months or seven years, we must try not to let someone else force the issue, as well meaning as they may be, with something as important as what to do with our child's room. Everyone has different timetables. Only we will know what and when it is right for us.

With gentle thoughts,  
Cathy L. Seehuetter - TCF/St. Paul Chapter



## *Separated by Suicide*

When we are separated by suicide  
From someone very dear, the grief that consumes  
our life is a mixture of sorrow, anger and fear.  
The sadness from so great a loss equals nothing  
else we've known.  
We strive ourselves to learn to cope  
But, in the end, we must be shown.  
Shown just how common the anger is and shown  
that we must not hide  
From the feelings--no matter how they hurt  
When we are separated by suicide.  
We must also learn to deal with the fear  
Of losing others that we love  
And we must confront what angers us  
Even if it's directed "above."  
It's not uncommon to feel anger with God.  
"Why didn't he just intervene?"  
And stop this terrible loss we've had.  
"Where could our God have been?"  
When we are separated by suicide  
We need support from people who care  
But, most of all, we need to be  
With others who have also "been there".  
To talk and hear from their own lips  
How they might have learned to cope  
Will help to validate our feelings  
And give us a glimmer of hope.  
Hope that one day we will return  
To a life without sorrow and pain.  
Because, when we are separated by suicide  
We have to learn to live again

By Jill Wagner  
In memory of son, Daniel Yorksie,  
10-4-68 - 12-23-94

*I still miss you  
as the days and years pass, I still miss you  
as the pain of grief softens  
I still miss you  
as new memories are made, I still miss you  
as I smile and laugh  
I still miss you today and every day, I still miss you.  
the grieftoolbox.com*

## *The day you left*

*The day you left, it felt like the world lost its color. The skies seemed dimmer, the air heavier, and the beauty of life turned to ash. But in the quiet moments, as the pain settled deep in my chest, I realized something: your love left traces everywhere.*

*Grief isn't just the absence of you ~ it's the overwhelming presence of everything you were. Every laugh we shared, every embrace, every moment we thought would last forever ~ it all echoes now, not in the noise of the world, but in the stillness of my heart.*

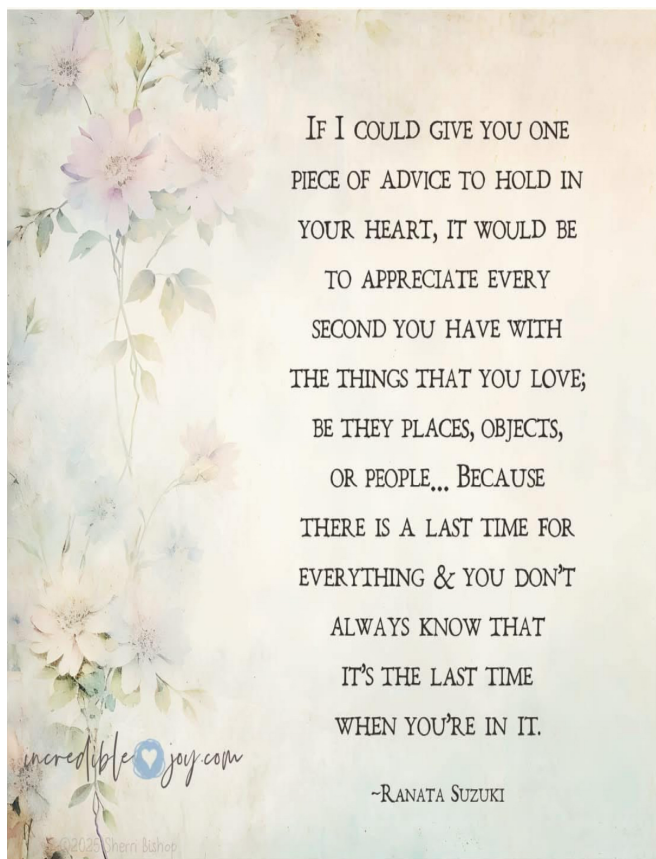
*Though the colors feel faded, I see you in the small things: a butterfly that dances in the sunlight, the way the wind brushes past my cheek, and the warmth of a fading sunset. It's like you're reminding me that you're still here, just in a different way.*

*Grief is love transformed, and I carry it with me every single day. You may be gone, but your light will always linger in the shadows, painting the world in hues only my heart can see.*

*You will never be forgotten. You're still the colors of my life, even if they shine differently now.*

*Dealing with Grief*





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.

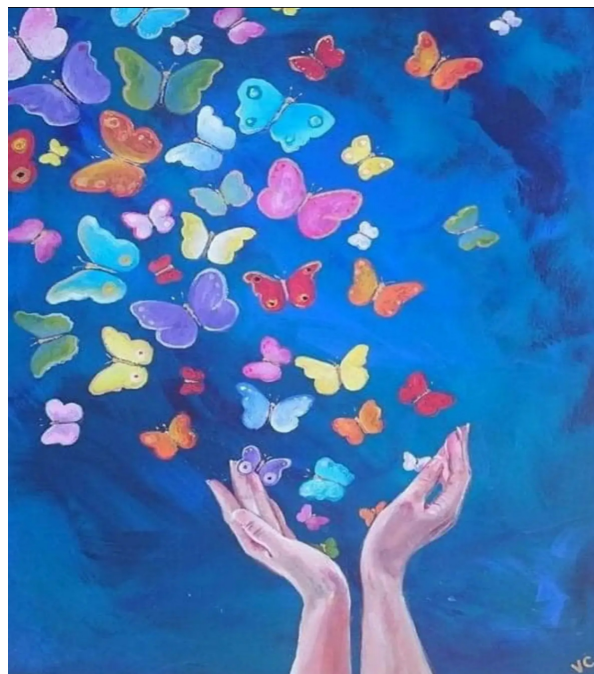
## *The Courage to Let Life Go On*

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) (\$30.00 assists the costs)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library \_\_\_\_\_

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

If you are making a donation, please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends**.

**Return to 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 [Lanwesmar@comcast.net](mailto:Lanwesmar@comcast.net) 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031.

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 - 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI - 48393 PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246. The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Steering Committee 2025 - 2026**

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**TREASURER** Rosita Hernandez 847-602-0698 [rosehernandez@juno.com](mailto: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>

**NORTHERN LAKE COUNTY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS FACEBOOK**

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

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



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Northern Lake County Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies