



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

November 2025 Newsletter

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



A Note from Susan

Dear friends, this month of November I offer this to you, take it all in tiny doses, don't let yourself become overwhelmed with all the visual and auditory stimulus. Pace yourself when you are in the stores, be gentle with yourself and it's ok to take a break. We need to be gentle with ourselves and our family members as we acclimate to the approaching holidays. I wanted to share a few words of wisdom that were shared to me. It's for those of us many years in, a few years and for those who have a very recent loss of a loved one.

Focus on what you can control ~ do what is right for you during the holidays. Plan for family gatherings, have an A plan and a B plan. Communicate, Listen, and pause for understanding ~ it's ok to take a breath and sit for a minute. Find a way to honor your memories ~ Embrace your treasure of memories. Continue with traditions, create a new tradition, or make slight changes. Express your faith. Do something kind for others. Set healthy boundaries. Be with supportive comforting family and friends. Allow yourself a range of emotions ~ It's ok to be sad, it's ok to share tears, it's ok to feel joy and it's ok to celebrate.

Halloween the holiday that marks the beginning of the winter holidays, is over. November takes over with its' expectation of happiness and good times until January. November is the month of "thankfulness". It is difficult to feel gratitude when the holidays will be celebrated with a missing loved one. I think of this phrase "Gratitude in Grief".

I have learned over the many years of grieving that gratitude can coexist with grief. In fact, gratitude can be healing. I have moved from not caring if I woke up in the morning to being blessed that I do. Each day is a gift. I consciously think of something that I am grateful for each day. It may be an act of kindness such as a friend dropping off a pot of mums to my porch or

heartfelt such as glancing at a picture of my son that is on my bulletin board at my desk and remembering that moment. I am grateful each day to live on for my son and to keep his memory alive. I am grateful that I was his mother for 21 years. Daily gratitude ties me to the present. Ties to the present keep me sane.

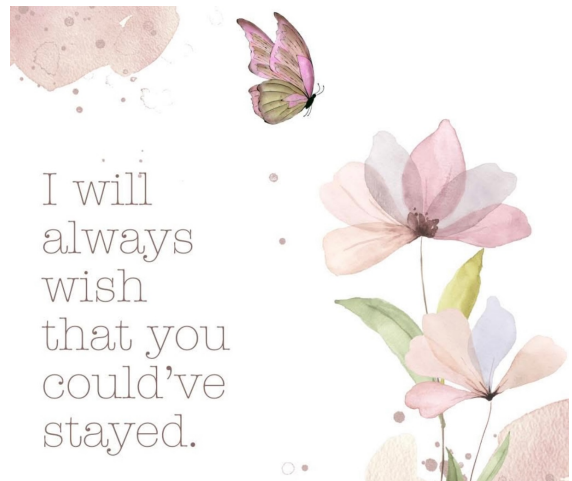
A blessing, it is simple and loving and touches on the importance of every chair, especially for those of us who now live with an empty chair.

Blessed be the table
And every chair.
Blessed be the family
Sitting there.

Blessed be the talk
And blessed be the laughter.
Blessed be the memories
Kept thereafter.

Thinking of you and your families during the holidays,

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.

November 6, 2025

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

November 20, 2025

Chapter News

Upcoming events for our Chapter.

Sunday December 14, 2025 ~ The 29th 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. See pages 7, 8, 9 of this month's newsletter.*

Our Zoom Candle Lighting Ceremony is Thursday December 4, 2025. 7:00pm – 8:30pm.

Thursday December 4, 2025

The first Thursday of the month meeting on December 4, 2025, is our Zoom meeting. At this meeting you will be invited to light a candle for your loved one and share a picture with those joining the meeting. This will not be a formal

Candle Lighting Ceremony, but we will honor the memories of our loved one with readings, lighting a candle and showing a picture. I will send an email and the Zoom link for the meeting the week of November 24, 2025.

Sunday December 14, 2025,

The Candle Lighting Ceremony is Sunday December 14, 2025. The Ceremony begins at 6:30 pm. The candles are provided at the ceremony. We do invite you to purchase a luminary in memory of your loved one. A luminary is an opaque bag with a weighted base that holds a flameless candle. We will place a name label "In loving Memory" with your loved one's name on the outside of the bag. The luminaries will line the hallway to the sanctuary, the location of the Ceremony. After the Ceremony, please take the luminary in memory of your loved one. You may purchase as many luminaries as you would like. We are asking for a donation of \$5.00 for a luminary, but no one will be refused.

The photo montage is a slideshow presentation of our members' loved ones who have gone too soon. We are inviting our new members to send a picture of your child, sibling or grandchild to Susan Banks and the photo will be included in our Chapter's photo montage, presented at the conclusion of the Candle Lighting ceremony.

If you have any questions about the Candle Lighting Ceremony, the Luminary or the Photo request 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.

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The November newsletter is sponsored by Alana E. Anderson; the donation is in loving memory of Amy Fry-Pitzen and in honor of Timmothy James Pitzen.

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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.*

GIVING THANKS

By Sascha, from WINTERSUN

I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see your smile.
I cannot hear your voices now,
my children, who are gone.

But I recall your faces still,
the songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times and winter walks
And sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live
beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see,
you gave me finer ears to hear
what living means,
what dying means,
my children, who are gone.

So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
and you are not with me.
And, while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gifts you were,
and all the gifts you gave to me,
my children who are gone.

"Sometimes I touch the things you used to touch,

Looking for echoes of your fingers."

Iain Thomas



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

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>Selene Martinez</i>	<i>November 1</i>	<i>Daughter of Manuel & Linda Martinez</i>
<i>Heidi Anne Hermann</i>	<i>November 2</i>	<i>Daughter of Bonnie Brackus</i>
<i>Gina Marie Almas</i>	<i>November 9</i>	<i>Daughter of Mary Severin</i>
<i>Nathan Clyde</i>	<i>November 21</i>	<i>Son of Valerie Clyde</i>
		<i>Sister of Michaela Clyde</i>
<i>Douglas Ramsay</i>	<i>November 17</i>	<i>Son of Carlene Ramsay</i>
<i>James McClintock</i>	<i>November 18</i>	<i>Son of Charles "Chip" & Louise Knoll</i>
<i>Marcia Castillo-Stone</i>	<i>November 19</i>	<i>Daughter of Sissy Castillo</i>
<i>Luke D. Laskowski</i>	<i>November 20</i>	<i>Son of Pam & Mark Laskowski</i>
<i>Javier Ramirez</i>	<i>November 21</i>	<i>Son of Julie Ojeda</i>
<i>Mitchell Rodefer</i>	<i>November 24</i>	<i>Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer</i>
<i>Sharon Beth Gray</i>	<i>November 25</i>	<i>Daughter of Pam Gray</i>
<i>Amanda Lauren Cecchi</i>	<i>November 27</i>	<i>Daughter of Kim & Steve Cecchi</i>
<i>Zachary Taylor</i>	<i>November 30</i>	<i>Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor</i>
<i>Zachary Maslanich</i>	<i>November 30</i>	<i>Son of Karen Zimmerman</i>

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Lila Ruffolo</i>	<i>November 1</i>	<i>Daughter of Jenny Selle</i>
<i>Andrew C Perkins</i>	<i>November 3</i>	<i>Son of Richard & Thelma Perkin</i>
<i>Rachel Salomonson</i>	<i>November 15</i>	<i>Daughter of Toni Nesheim & Denny Salomonson</i>
<i>Erin Dinklenburg</i>	<i>November 16</i>	<i>Daughter of Kelli Brooks</i>
<i>Kyle Glueck</i>	<i>November 17</i>	<i>Dolores Krason</i>
<i>Aaron Barrera</i>	<i>November 18</i>	<i>Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera</i>
<i>Megan Candice Grace</i>	<i>November 18</i>	<i>Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace</i>
<i>Nicole Parfitt</i>	<i>November 18</i>	<i>Daughter of Robin Parfitt</i>
<i>Paulene Welch</i>	<i>November 20</i>	<i>Daughter of Grace & Merrel Parsons</i>
<i>Keegan Cray</i>	<i>November 22</i>	<i>Son of Kristin & Ken Willis</i>
<i>Kevin Lopez</i>	<i>November 22</i>	<i>Son of Diahnn Estes Lopez</i>
<i>Camden Frisby</i>	<i>November 23</i>	<i>Son of Kris Frisby</i>
<i>Rachel Robertson</i>	<i>November 23</i>	<i>Daughter of Regan Robertson</i>
<i>Mickey T. Lesniak</i>	<i>November 26</i>	<i>Son of Isabelia Lugo</i>
<i>Zachary Maslanich</i>	<i>November 30</i>	<i>Son of Karen Zimmerman</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

Gifts of Love

by Cathy Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN

As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered. My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

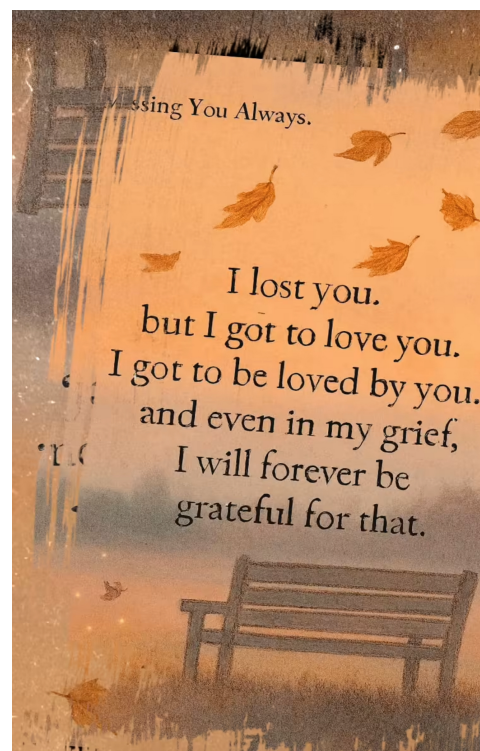
Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and admonishing that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears. It has been four and a half years since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time, I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened

there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about: one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on – so many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memories – beautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone – no one can ever take those priceless memories away. Though they may hurt now and probably always will but not as intensely, give yourself a gift – the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

~reprinted from Holiday Memories





Grandparent's Corner

MISSING DREAMS

Inside me is a tight, dark empty space, not large. I try to keep it deep and covered well, for looking there, is painful. Layers of busyness bury it. And I can keep it small by telling myself there is no time for it. Then comes the casual mention of something ordinary as a flat tire. And suddenly it swells, and I am engulfed by it, remembering.

My son, usually happy, optimistic, confident, even as a child, my gentle child who never wanted to hurt or be hurt by anyone, complained that nothing is going well. He's broken his glasses, lost some important papers and had a flat tire ... not all that day on the way to the hospital, just within the past three or four days.

And I realize he's really saying that being the father of a baby who may not live is too much to bear. I ache for him and want to comfort him with hugs and assurances that all will be well as I did when he was small. But when the doctors have no certainties to proclaim, how can I?

A painful memory. So, I push it down in the empty space where I deem that it must stay. And I keep the space dark, until on that day I catch a glimpse of my daughter-in-law absentmindedly stroking the arm of the chair, and I am back again. Watching her stand beside the baby, careful to avoid the tubes connecting him to the machines, but finding places to touch him, stroke him, love him wherever she can.

A small bare leg. His temple. Softly touching him, and I know she aches to pick him up, as I do, and rock him and tell him, „This is not the way it's supposed to be. Life should be good!% But we can only touch, not hold.

The space is tight again and buried. Covering it are more bearable memories which I can allow myself to talk about. Seeing the pear tree along a street reminds me that there is a small grove of trees and a bench in the park dedicated to his memory. And I can think about the beautifully simple letter my son and his wife

wrote and sent to friends to meet us there to help create that special place.

Or I can remember my son bravely thanking all those friends for their love and speaking to them of the joy he knew in having a son, if only for a short time. I add more memories as time passes. Seeing the tenderness between two people who know the need for caring and know how to find caring in a world where most of their contemporaries prize macho individualism. Admiring their courage when they include a visit to an empty baby's room as they show their new home to guests, knowing of their hope for their future.

But still the empty space is there, sometimes, when I dare, I ask myself “why?” And each time I realize again that the space is empty and will always remain empty because there is no life there to fill it. No baby who would be waving goodbye, by now. No toddler starting to walk. No small boy learning skills from his grandfather. Or teenager to watch with pride. No life. And so, I quickly cover the space and push it down in the dark and keep it as small and tight as I can. Because it hurts to look.

Casey Pound's grandparents,
TCF, St. Louis, Missouri
~reprinted from Denver Metro TCF November 2007
Newsletter

*If I was to survive, grief had to
become a part of my essence.
In that realization, I felt a release:
Grief was love and had been right
from the start.
Only then did I understand why
grief had never left my side and
never would ~
because it was the love for my
child, and that was everlasting.*

KATJA FABER

REQUEST FOR PHOTO FOR
POWER POINT/SLIDE PRESENTATION
OF LOVED ONES

We Remember Them

ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Sunday December 14, 2025, 6:30 pm

Zoom ceremony is Thursday December 4, 2025

Millburn Congregational Church
19073 W Grass Lake Road, Lake Villa, IL 60046

Please consider including a photograph of your loved one in the candle lighting ceremony through a Power-Point presentation. It is very touching to see the faces of the children and brothers and sisters and grandchildren of our fellow members of The Compassionate Friends.

If you have a photo that you would like to include in the presentation, please include your loved one's name, age at time of death, your relationship (son, daughter etc.) as well as your phone number and email address. Attach 1 photo to the email or text. If you are not able to send the photos electronically, you can mail them to me, and I will scan them for the presentation and mail the originals back to you.

If your loved one was included in last year's presentation, we will use the same photographs in the Power-Point presentation.

Please send photo and information by November 29, 2025.

Attach it to an email or send it in a text message or mail your photo to:

Susan Banks 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031/email; Lanwesmar@comcast.net

847.366.9375



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

We Remember Them

*The Compassionate Friends of Northern Lake County
invites you and your family and friends to the
Worldwide Children's Candle Lighting Ceremony*

*"We come together in memory of a precious child whose light burnt so
brightly, yet so briefly. These children, who have died from so many
causes and at all ages, are forever a part of our lives.*

Sunday, December 14, 2025 ~ 6:30 p.m.

Millburn Congregational United Church of Christ

* Note that road construction has created a new Grass Lake Rd & changed the access to the building which is now on Old Town Court.

Candles are provided for everyone at no cost.

You are invited to stay for refreshments after the ceremony.

You are welcome to bring a dessert or snack to share if you like.

Coffee and water will be provided.

*A table & display board will be provided for
families who would like to post photos
and/or share mementos of their children and siblings and grandchildren.*

Questions? Please call Susan 847.366.9375/email Lanwesmar@comcast.net



IN LOVING MEMORY LUMINARIES – order form



The Northern Lake Co IL Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is offering an additional opportunity for bereaved families to remember their loved ones during the annual Candle Lighting Ceremony on Sunday December 14, 2025. The ceremony will be at the Millburn Congregational Church, 19073 W. Old Grass Lake Rd, Lake Villa, IL 60046 at 6:30 p.m.

The luminary is an opaque bag that has a weight and a flameless, battery-operated candle inside of it. The label on the outside will read “In Loving Memory” and your child’s or sibling’s name will be printed on it. The luminaries will be used to line the hallway of the Millburn church that leads to the sanctuary where the candle lighting ceremony is held. The soft light will provide a touching and welcoming entrance to the ceremony. The luminaries will be placed in alphabetical order by last name so that you can easily find your luminary and take it home with you.

We are asking a donation of \$5. for each luminary but no one will be refused. The donations pay for the materials for the luminaries and the remainder will go toward chapter activities and materials.

If you have questions, please call Susan at 847.366.9375, Lanwesmar@comcast.net
Please mail in by November 30, 2025.

— — — — — _cut here_ — — — — —

I/we would like to order _____ (total no.) luminaries in memory of the following:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Ordered by (your name): _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

Enclosed Amount: \$ _____ Check #: _____

Please make checks to: “NO LAKE CO TCF”
Mail to: NO Lake CO TCF – 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031

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)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library _____

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter _____

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that 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 making a donation, please make the check payable to The Compassionate Friends. Return to 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 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

Steering Committee 2024– 2025

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP Susan Banks 847-366-9375 lanwesmar@comcast.net – Son, Westley Banks Age 21 of suicide

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

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

HOSPITALITY Kris Frisby 847-366-3170 Kefrisby88@comcast.net Son, Camden Frisby Age 15 of suicide.

SECRETARY / LIBRARIAN

REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY Shannon Seay 224-456-2891 Seayseven1@comcast.net Daughter, Ashley Seay Age 17 Auto accident.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Susan Banks 847-366-9375 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 - 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 & Raphael Vidal 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 & Raphael Vidal 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>

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/>