



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

October 2025 Newsletter

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



A Note from Susan

Dear friends, the month of October, brings us Autumn colors and a stirring of the holidays and the winter months ahead of us. The holidays will soon be here; they are approaching and are just around the corner. Already the stores are full of decorations and display all the seasonal items that you might need. But it's not always that easy to be around and view all the displays and suggestions of food, celebration, and decorating ideas. Sometimes it's just too much. 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 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.

Thinking of you and your families during the holidays,

Your Friend, Susan ~ Westley's mom

Our chapter held its annual HeART Remembers; an evening of creating art in memory of our loved ones. It's a gentle event that brings us together to remember, celebrate and care for each other as we think of our loved one who has gone too soon.

We had some special guests join us this evening from the LLC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry; 2 comfort dogs and their handlers; Jenni Hoffmeyer with Tobias and Chelsi Todd with Gethsemane. It was wonderful to visit with the handlers and snuggle with the dogs. We enjoyed their visit and kindness.

Tobias and Gethsemane



Miss Todd and Gethsemane

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
 October 2, 2025

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.
 It's also ok to sit and listen and when you
 feel comfortable sharing,
 please share with us.
 Open discussion
 October 16, 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, daugh-
 ters, 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.*

If you have any questions about the mentioned
 events, 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 indi-
 viduals 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.

The October newsletter is sponsored by
 Barbara Fleming in Honor of her de-
 ceased daughter, Kerrin Fleming,
 October 21, 2014.

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 com-
 mittee member. I, as the chapter leader
 will never ask for money for assistance with
 any chapter finances. We provide the op-
 portunity 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 THIS OCTOBER.

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

Victoria Piela	October 1	Daughter of Joanna and John Piela
Levi Nichols	October 4	Son of Bambi Nichols
Dan Furlan Jr.	October 9	Son of Dan and Pat Furlan
Kian Williams	October 10	Son of Jeanda Williams
Susan Allbee	October 11	Sister of Toni Nesheim
Marc Hawkinson	October 11	Son of Mary Kay Clark
Marleea Gerfen	October 12	Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell
Nick Weber	October 16	Son of Glenda Weber
		Brother of Karen Lumusga
Martin H Bernal	October 17	Son of Leticia Bernal
Jennifer Corbett Dennis	October 17	Daughter of Joan Corbett
Timmothy James Pitzen	October 18	Grandson of Alana Anderson
Marcia Stone	October 19	Daughter of Kathryn & Arthur Castillo
Donyel Prather	October 22	Son of Donna Prather
Kelly Klawonn	October 23	Son of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
Aaron R. Moore	October 24	Son of Rob & Sherry Moore
Colin Henderson	October 27	Son of Lisa Henderson

ANNIVERSARIES

Sharon Beth Gray	October 4	Daughter of Pam Gray
Martin H Bernal	October 6	Son of Leticia Bernal
Russell Isaac Thomashow	October 6	Son of Blythe & Andrew Thomashow
Kian Williams	October 10	Son of Jeanda Williams
Elora Jane Montgomery	October 11	Daughter of Linda & Christopher Montgomery
Tracie Musich	October 19	Daughter of Trisha Musich
Lisa M. Johnson	October 20	Daughter of Isabelia Lugo
Kerrin Fleming	October 21	Daughter of Barbara Fleming
Martin H Bernal	October 21	Son of Leticia Bernal

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

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

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## *Autumn*

As autumn approaches, I begin to feel invigorated and alive. I suppose that it's the crisp, cool air that makes me realize that there is some small thing inside of me that is not dead. I've always loved autumn...the smell of burning leaves and the chirping of the locusts; bring a flood of childhood memories. Memories of a simpler, more innocent time. I long to be back there, where my biggest worry was my spelling test every Friday. Where there were no bills to pay, no car notes, no mortgage, and no broken hearts...just friends, school, and play.

Whenever I think of autumns past, the smell of my mother's homemade soup fills my senses. I can still see myself sitting at the 1950's yellow and chrome kitchen table, doing my homework while my mother prepared supper. Maybe part of the reason that I looked forward to autumn then was because it meant that my birthday was just around the corner ...October 4.

*Continued on page 5*



## Autumn

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Needless to say, I no longer await birthdays with the same anticipation that I did then. But there was always something special about autumn and for me, there still is. I still look forward to the first day that I can turn my air conditioner off and open all of the windows and let the fresh, cool air inside but for some parents this isn't the case. They find this time of year very difficult because of the memories triggered by the beginning of a new school year. For them, autumn is a painful reminder of what might have been.

Autumn doesn't depress me...not at all! It's what follows autumn that I do not look forward to...the holidays...Thanksgiving and Christmas and the entire holiday shopping season, which begins earlier and earlier each year.

That's the part of the year that I dread ...the toy ads, the TV commercials filled with smiling, happy faces of children ...children like mine, children like yours ...children who should be here but aren't. I loath it...all of it. There are so many reminders and no way to avoid them...one less gift to buy, one less stocking to fill, one less place to set at the table. No one else on earth knows this kind of pain except those of us who have been through it. When all the world is supposed to be happy and filled with joy, we are at our lowest...out emptiest. The winter is within our hearts...cold, bleak, and long. I used to love Christmas and everything that accompanied it. Now I long for a place to hide until it is all over...until the last Christmas tree is taken down, the last decoration put away, and the last twinkling light extinguished.

Autumn is beautiful, with its vibrant colors and wind-swept leaves. I revel in the patchwork quilt that nature creates every autumn. No, it's not September's Indian Summer or October's crispness but November with its Thanksgiving Day parades and turkey and December with its nights filled with flickering lights and plastic

Santas...these are the things that bring an ache to my heart and tears to my eyes. It is this time, when the nights are lit so brightly, that are my darkest days!

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux

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## *Musings on Halloween's*

### *Past and Present*

On the evening, I type this, the nip in the October air is a reminder that the major holidays are just around the corner. Halloween decorations have been in the stores since July and Christmas décor even as early as August. For those of us who are bereaved parents, siblings and/or grandparents this means the sooner they are "in our face" the longer we have the constant reminders that we will be facing the holidays without our child. Whether it is your first Halloween following your child's death or years down the road, such as in my situation, the holiday season stirs the emotions bringing varying levels of sadness, anxiety and sometimes even anger. With Halloween, there is the sorrow of no longer having to find that perfect costume or witnessing the delight in your child's eyes when you found just the right one.

Many parents find Halloween a particularly hard one to get through. In the past, I always thought of it as innocuous enough; there were the costume parties with bobbing for apple, children excitedly dashing door-to-door trick-or-treating, pumpkin carving, and the occasional harmless prank. However, after my daughter Nina died, I became acutely aware of things that I never gave a second thought to in the past.

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### *Musings on Halloween's Past and Present*

For instance, my former neighbor made her whole front yard into a graveyard scene, complete with fake headstones that said R.I.P. with scary or silly epitaphs as well as hideous ghosts coming out of the earth with bony bloody fingers. Before Nina died, I too found the cemetery "creepy", but now I look at it differently, even with a sort of reverence, and no longer have a problem going out to my daughter's gravesite, even in the middle of the night.

I find the solitude of the historic countryside graveyard where she is buried peaceful and dignified and worthy of respect, and I was hurt by what I felt were apparent ridicule and disdain for the final resting place of our loved one's physical bodies to the point of tears and anger. Moreover, some of the masks and costumes portrayed faces of death in a way that I found highly offensive, especially since I knew many who lost their children to some of the means depicted. I took it personally and didn't appreciate what I perceived as a mockery of death.

Though I still don't pretend to understand the allure of the above-mentioned Halloween depictions, they aren't as painful to me as they were the first few years after Nina died. During the early grief years, we become very hypersensitive to our surroundings and more keenly conscious of anything related to death. It is pretty hard to look past the general non-bereaved populations seeming nonchalance about something we take so personally.

Though we wish there was more empathy and understanding, we also know all too well that they cannot truly sympathize unless they also have walked in our shoes. It is easy to forget that we too, before our children's deaths, may have shown the same indifference.

I believe that we would like to think that we wouldn't have been so callous because we now personally know how much this hurts those affected; however, before we lost our "innocence" truth be told, we probably didn't give any of it much thought. That being said, oftentimes it is still easier said than done.

On this 10th Halloween without Nina, I pretty much ignore all the ghoulishness surrounding this time of year. If I do find I am having difficulty, I try very hard to focus on positive and precious memories of Halloween's past, such as her belated birthday – Halloween party where our basement became a makeshift haunted house where giggling blindfolded costumed witches and princesses plunged their hands into bowls full of peeled grape "eyeballs" and wet macaroni "brains" to the shrieks of "Yuck!" or the photo taken of Nina on her last Halloween.

No longer of trick-or-treat age, she stayed home to pass out the candy and carve an awesome Jack-O-Lantern that she is pictured proudly alongside, with her ever-present smile and that wonderful twinkle in her brown eyes. Or the photos I have of her in her costumes over the years from Care Bear to Punk Rocker. Because of my photographs and precious memories, I also realize that I was one of the "lucky" ones in that regard. There are those whose children died before they ever had the opportunity to create memories; there is the sorrow that they were never able to experience even one holiday with that child, yet alone several, and that saddens me very much.

For those with a missing trick-or-treater this Halloween or the conspicuous empty chair at Thanksgiving dinner this year, the first ones are the most difficult. Though I find they are easier to bear as time goes on, you never really forget the absence from the family holiday gatherings of one loved so much, nor do you want to forget, really. Please try to remember that this roller-coaster grief ride each year brings different feelings. It is important that you just allow those feelings and let them happen.

Try not to be waylaid by other's expectations of you. Trust your instincts and go with them. Truly, only you know what you can or cannot handle.

With gentle thoughts,  
Cathy Seehuetter  
TCF/St. Paul, MN  
[peachy3536@comcast.net](mailto:peachy3536@comcast.net)  
~reprinted

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](mailto: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](mailto: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 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 2024– 2025**

**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

**NEWSLETTER PRINTING & MAILING** Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 [toninesheim@gmail.com](mailto:toninesheim@gmail.com) & Denny Salomonson, 847-223-7353 [drdreno@gmail.com](mailto:drdreno@gmail.com) - Daughter, Rachel Salomonson, 19 Auto accident

**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.

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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/>