



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

September 2026 Newsletter

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



A Note from Susan

Dear friends, summer is coming to an end and the month of September, brings the awakening of Autumn colors and a stirring of the holidays and the winter months ahead of us.

September has always held memories for me. The days are noticeably shorter with daytime temperatures beginning to cool down requiring a sweatshirt or sweater. Early morning streets are filled with students and teachers going back to school. I do my best to keep myself in a good place and not to fall away to feeling my sorrow, but sometimes it just happens. My sorrow sits with me, always. It is my missing of my son, Westley so much. It has eased a little, but it's a part of me now and forever, my sorrow. I push myself to be my best and to live a life that Westley would have been proud of me and all that I do. Westley is such a part of our lives, his brother's, his sister's, and his father's. We keep him present in our daily lives and in our memories. It seems grief is a journey, and it is your journey that you care for, and find a way to be ok. It's a different ok, not like before. I hope you all find your place with this journey, be gentle with yourself, rest, and care for your health. Remembering all our children who have gone too soon.

I wanted to take a moment to mention the word *thank you*; it holds so many meanings, gestures and promises. In the early days and years of my grief and feelings of painful loss, I know I replied with thank you when someone would approach and say something to me about Westley's death. But I did not always say the words with heartfelt gratitude, just politely responding. As I truly did not have the strength or wisdom of thank you.

I'm in a place now where I once again can passionately feel gratitude for all that is in my life, and I am acutely aware of this as I navigate my every day.

With that said, I appreciate and say thank you to all of you, who receive our newsletter, attend our meetings, bring a refreshment, donate to our chapter, attend our Candle Lighting Ceremony or other special events, and our very kind chapter volunteers. I thank you for sharing your loved one with us and sharing their story, their name and your love for them. I am thankful for my family and for my friends who stayed close and the new friends who are by my side.

Thinking of each of you, those who I have met and those I have not, may you have a safe, kind and thankful September.

Your Friend,

Susan
Westley's mom

Eventually, every single human being will have a date frozen in time. A date when life changes in the most unimaginable ways. A date one will never forget. And regardless of how much time passes by, that date will be part of who you are alongside the grief you now carry in your heart.

michele deville

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
 September 3, 2026

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.
 Open discussion
 September 17, 2026

Chapter News

Upcoming events for our Chapter.

**Thursday September 17 meeting will
 feature;**

Family and friends

**The HeART Remembers. We will create
 art in memory of our loved ones. All are
 welcome!**

***If you are interested in assisting with
 this event, please contact Susan Banks:
 email Lanwesmar@comcast.net**

Sunday December 14, 2026 ~ 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.*

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 your chapters.
 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 mes-
 sage 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 SEPTEMBER

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>Marlon Meana</i>	<i>September 2</i>	<i>Son of Joy Steward</i>
<i>Chris Houchin</i>	<i>September 3</i>	<i>Son of Scott Houchin & Heather McDonald</i>
<i>Shannon McCarty</i>	<i>September 5</i>	<i>Daughter of Kevin McCarty & Pat Hayes</i>
<i>Korey Hill</i>	<i>September 6</i>	<i>Son of Deena Hill</i>
<i>Thomas Mattingly</i>	<i>September 6</i>	<i>Son of Sue & Jerry Mattingly</i>
<i>Kevin Lopez</i>	<i>September 13</i>	<i>Son of Diahnn Estes Lopez</i>
<i>Anthony Alexander Sosa</i>	<i>September 16</i>	<i>Son of Yvette Sosa</i>
<i>Shane Betar</i>	<i>September 21</i>	<i>Son of Leia Betar</i>
<i>Charlotte Martin</i>	<i>September 22</i>	<i>Daughter of Angela Martin</i>
<i>José De Jesús Hernández</i>	<i>September 24</i>	<i>Son of Jesús and Virginia Hernández</i>
<i>Andrew Shaver</i>	<i>September 28</i>	<i>Son of Dolly LeMaster</i>
<i>Alyson Bixler</i>	<i>September 29</i>	<i>Daughter of Cathy & Dave Bixler</i>
<i>Donette Klawonn</i>	<i>September 30</i>	<i>Daughter of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn</i>

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Donyel Prather</i>	<i>September 1</i>	<i>Son of Donna Prather</i>
<i>Levi Nichols</i>	<i>September 5</i>	<i>Son of Bambi Nichols</i>
<i>Brendan Hall</i>	<i>September 5</i>	<i>Son of Diane Arndt</i>
<i>Anthony Alexander Sosa</i>	<i>September 12</i>	<i>Son of Yvette Sosa</i>
<i>Marleea Bell Gerfen</i>	<i>September 13</i>	<i>Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell</i>
<i>Heidi Anne Hermann</i>	<i>September 14</i>	<i>Daughter of Bonnie Brackus</i>
<i>Michael Curtis</i>	<i>September 17</i>	<i>Son of Sonya Curtis</i>
<i>Victoria Pickett</i>	<i>September 17</i>	<i>Daughter of Rose Hernandez</i>
<i>Luke D Laskowski</i>	<i>September 18</i>	<i>Son of Pam & Mark Laskowski</i>
<i>Maxwell Malesh</i>	<i>September 22</i>	<i>Son of Don & Debbie Malesh</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

We talk about them, not because we're stuck or because we haven't moved on. We talk about them because we are theirs, and they are ours, and no passage of time can change that.

Angel Babies



CHASING AFTER CLOSURE By Amy Florian Hoffman Estates, IL

I have kept reading in the newspapers about survivors of tragedy or death seeking “closure.” Yet no one really defines what closure means, whether it is possible or how to get there.

For many in our society, closure means leaving grief behind, a milestone usually expected within a matter of weeks or months. Closure means being “normal,” getting back to your old self, no longer crying or being affected by the death. It means “moving on with life” and leaving the past behind, even to the extent of forgetting it or ignoring it. For we who have experienced death, this kind of closure is not only impossible but, indeed, undesirable.

Closure, if one even chooses to use the term, is actually more a process than a defined moment. The initial part of closure is accepting the reality. At first, we keep hoping or wishing that it weren’t true. We expect our loved ones to walk through the door. We wait for someone to tell us it was all a huge mistake. We just can’t accept that this person has died, that we will never physically see them again on earth, that we will not hear their voices, feel their hugs, or get their input on a tough decision.

Usually, it takes weeks or even months for the reality to finally sink in. We come to know, in both our heads and our hearts, that our loved one has died and is not coming back. We still don’t like it, but we accept it as true.

As the reality sinks in, we can more actively heal. We begin making decisions and start to envision a life different from what we had planned before, a life in which we no longer expect our loved one to be there. We grow, struggle, cry and change. We form fresh goals. We face our loneliness. We feel the pain and loss, but except for short periods of

time, we are not crippled by it. We also make a shift in memory. Memories of our loved ones, rather than being painful as they were at first, sometimes make us smile or even laugh.

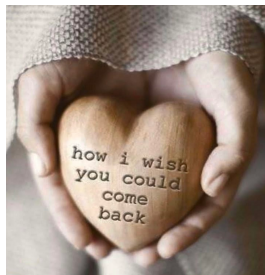
This healing phase takes a very long time and involves a lot of back-and-forthing. We alternate between tears and joy, fears and confidence, despair and hope. We take two steps forward and one step back. We wonder whether we’ll ever be truly happy again and often doubt that we will.

Eventually we realize we are taking the past, with all its pain and pleasure, into a new tomorrow. We never forget and, in fact, we carry our beloved with us; he or she is forever a cherished part of who we are. We are changed by the experience of having loved this person, by the knowledge of life’s transience and by grief itself. We become different and hopefully better, more compassionate, more appreciative, more tolerant people. We fully embrace life again, connecting, laughing and loving with a full heart.

Still, there is no point of “final closure,” no point at which we can say, “Ah, now I have finally completed my grief.” Or “Yes, now I have healed.” There is no point at which we will never cry again, although, as time goes on, the tears are bitter-sweet and less common. Healing is a lifelong process, one in which we often don’t even realize we are healing until we look back and see how far we have come.

“Closure?” I don’t think so. Acceptance—yes. Peace—yes. Hope—definitely. But putting a period behind the final sentence and closing the book on it? No! Life and love are much too complex for that. The story does not end; instead, it awaits the next chapter.

Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XIV No. 3, Summer 2009. <https://bereavedparentsusa.org>



ON GUILT AND SHAME

by Lexi Behrndt

www.scribblesandcrumbs.com/

“When am I going to stop blaming myself?”

She was desperate for relief from the weight of guilt. Her son died the year before and the “whys” and “what ifs” played like a constant movie reel in her mind.

The question wasn’t a new one to me, and yet, I still felt incapable of providing an adequate answer.

Who was I to say anything when I didn’t even have the answer myself? Who was I to say, “Don’t feel this way,” when I’m convinced that

in varying degrees, guilt simply comes with the territory of being a human and experiencing suffering? Who was I to answer when I still have moments of questioning what I should have done, could have done, in all my life circumstances to prevent negative outcomes— loss, heartbreak, devastation? Who am I to tell anyone not to blame themselves and not to spend expend their weary heart carrying that weight, when I myself don’t have the solution?

But maybe that’s the key.

In the face of pain and complexity, when we look into your own hearts, the answers become simple.

So, I came to her, not as anyone who had superior knowledge or wisdom, and not as anyone who thought that my answer could absolve the guilt she was feeling. I came maybe as I always should, a friend, another heart, broken for her with love and compassion,

knowing that there is nothing anyone can do or say to take away this kind of pain, saying the words I know my own heart has needed.



Friend,

The burden of guilt is far too weighty to carry, especially when you’re already weary and worn down. I’d be lying if I told you that you carried it alone. Guilt and shame have a funny way of digging in their claws when we least expect it.

It shouldn’t be this way. You shouldn’t have to hurt this badly.

This isn’t a burden for you to hold. Guilt loves to latch on, taking captive our broken hearts.

But realize this, and say it to yourself over and over if you have to... This is not punishment. This is not something you did. This is not consequence for bad actions. Do not blame yourself. Do not carry that. Do not hang your head in shame or guilt. Try not to think of all the things you could have, would have, should have done to prevent this— all the things you could have done to stop the pain. All the things you wish were different, and then maybe life would be just right.

It wasn’t your fault. Don’t blame yourself. Don’t hold on to that. It will only serve to tear you down, and they would not want that at all for you. You know that.

You know they would want you to live freely and love fully. They, of all people to walk this earth, know the power and depth of your love, and they wouldn’t want you to hide it away.

(Continued on page 6)

(On Guilt and Shame continued from page 5)

I know your heart is broken. I'm so sorry it is. There truly are no words for this kind of pain, and it's not a kind that heals with only a scar. It's a lifelong wound, one that we'll brush against every day for the rest of our lives. I think we're learning, over time, it's not as harsh. It's just something that just is and always will be. But I think, given a choice, we would both choose hands down, to feel them, whether with pain or joy, for the rest of our lives than to ever wake up one day and realize that we've forgotten them entirely.

I know the guilt, because I've been there. I know it, because sometimes I still am there. So, when the voice of guilt and shame become all, you can hear, let the voice of love be louder.

You are good. You are worthy. You are brave. Your broken heart still has so much to give. You can rise with love.

I look at you, and I see strength and love. That's who you are, not guilt and shame. You are a heart who has known pain, but also a heart who has known the richest love.

Let that love echo in your heart and drown out all the rest. I'm here learning right beside you.

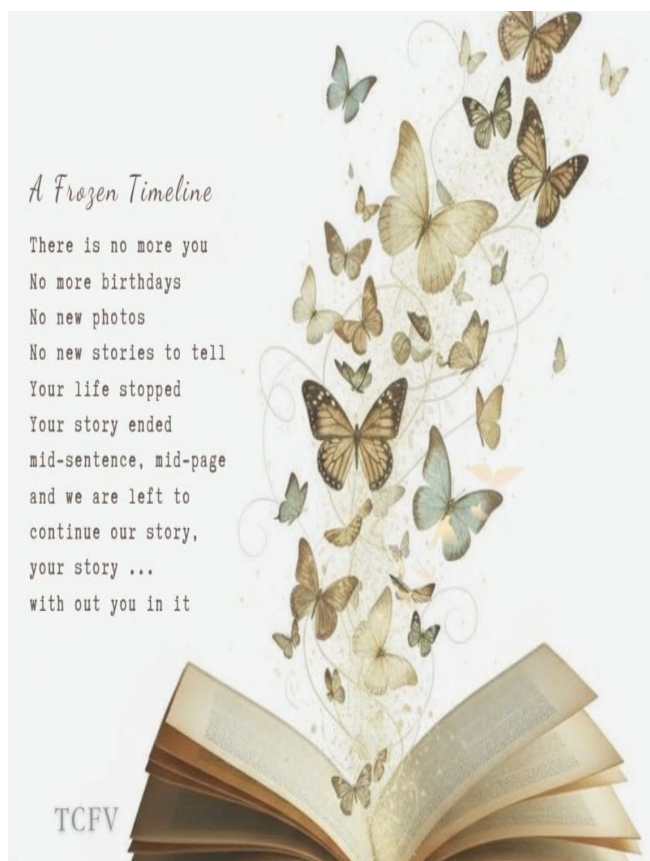
... Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XXvII No. 3, Summer 2022.

When I was younger, about 13, my friend lost his friend. I didn't know what to say; I asked him what can I do to help? He told me, "Ask me about them, all I want to do is talk about them". I never forgot that.



A letter to myself...

I know you are tired. I know your chest feels heavy like you have been holding everything in for too long. Some days you don't even recognize yourself. But look at you, you survived every day that tried to break you. That is not weakness, that is strength. You are not behind, you are becoming. Becoming quieter, stronger and more real. These days will pass. Don't rush healing. Don't punish yourself. You will find yourself again.





20 TIPS FOR HEALING ALONGSIDE YOUR CHILD

By Nikki Elliott

Cry scream, yell, cuss, sleep, repeat. Over and over as the waves roll in. Purge pain.

Be open to any and all healing tools even if they're not what you're used to

Know that your grief DOES NOT keep you connected to your child. At some point admit that your grief is not the depth of love for your child... your HEALING is.

Find your child. They are not lost. They aren't gone. They have not left. They are different now but very real. In a new way.

Be open and fluid in your beliefs.

Let go of any painful beliefs that no longer serve you. (Even... My child is dead or that they are a forever age)

Recognize your truth by the peace it brings (example... there is physical death only and my child is more alive now without a dense body vs my child is dead and gone. Peace equals truth)

Seek knowledge and guidance for expansion, growth and understanding

Find the others. Like minded folk who travel with you.

Recognize when you're stuck and reach out for help from those who walk with you.

Establish a new spirit to spirit relationship with your child.

Recognize where you are... the early days? The waiting room? The reentry?

Identify your pain to peace shifts and practice them

Be still.

Let go of who you used to be. A new authentic you will emerge from this. This is our rebirth to our truest self

Focus on the found.

Gratitude, gratitude, gratitude.

Eliminate toxic people from your daily life. Protect your peace

Stand strong in your truths. Regardless of what the outside world says

Vow to make the rest of your life the best of your life. That is how we honor our kids and it makes them so proud and gives them huge purpose.

... Borrowed from a Journey Together, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Volume XXvII No. 3, Summer 2022,



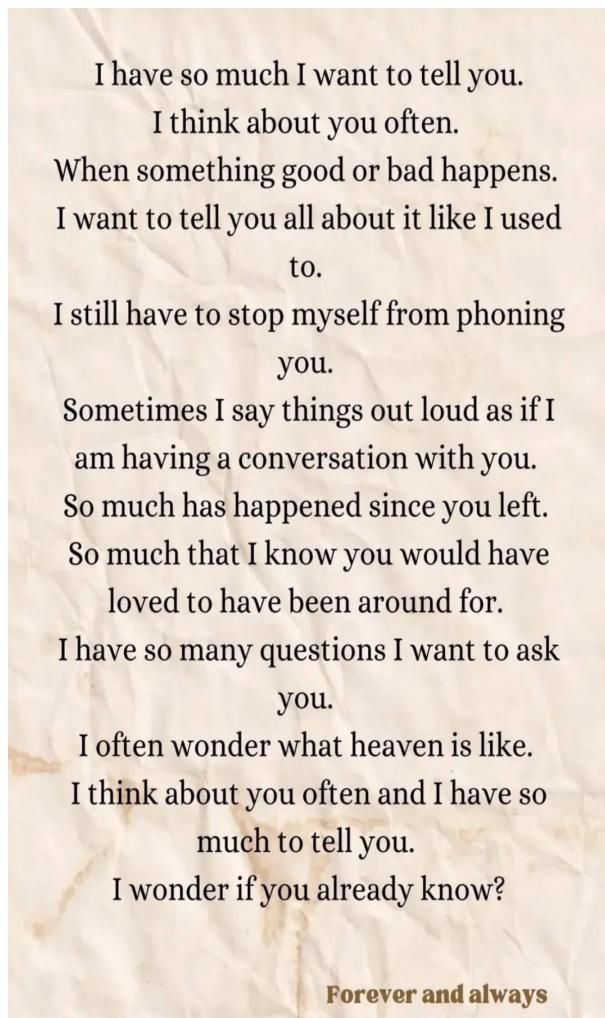
Dedicated to those who have lost
a sibling;
Losing you was like losing a part of myself.
No one knew me like you did. Growing up
With you was a privilege and I am so proud
that I am related to you. I will forever feel you
and forever miss you. Not only were you my
sibling, you were my best friend.
All my best memories were with you.
My life will never be the same without
you here. I carry you in my bones and in my
Heart.
By Sharon Marsh ~ leave her wild

~~~~~  
When a child dies, the entire family is  
changed ~ including the siblings.

Siblings may grieve openly or quietly. They may  
talk about their brother or sister constantly or  
rarely mention them at all.

There is no single way to grieve the death of a  
sibling.

What matters is creating space for their grief and  
letting them know: Your grief matters.  
Your feelings matter. Your sibling matters.  
And you are not alone.



## TCF Sibling Zoom Meetings

- SIB Suicide Support** - Meets 4th Monday of the month at 9:00 pm ET
- Meeting with Jordon** - Meets Tuesdays at 7:00 pm ET
- Grief Book Club** - Meets 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm ET
- Write Your Soul** - Meets 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm ET
- Meeting with Jason** - Meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm ET
- LGBTQ+ Sibs Meeting** - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 9:30 pm ET
- Canada Sibling Sharing Circle** - Meets 2nd Saturday of the month at 1:00 pm ET
- SIBS in Relationships and Partners** - Meets 2nd Sunday of the month at 7:00 pm ET

To sign up for TCF SIBS newsletter, visit [siblingisland.com](http://siblingisland.com) or scan the QR code.



*Connect with other siblings online with [tcfsibs.org](http://tcfsibs.org)*



## The HEART REMEMBERS

### Expressions of Love Through Our Hands

We are inviting you to attend The HeArt Remembers memorial "make and take" event for parents, grandparents, siblings and friends.

Each person may choose a simple craft project(s) and create a very personal memorial of your loved one for you to take home.

We have invited the LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs to join our event.

The dogs will offer companionship and they love hugs.

The handlers are wonderful and enjoy sharing about the dogs.

**What:** Make your own memorial to your loved one by painting an inspirational rock, planting a small terrarium, or designing a vase of flowers or creating a memory charm cable.

**When:** Thursday, September 17, 2026. 6:45 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**Where:** Millburn Congregational Church

19073 W Old Town Court

Lake Villa/Old Mill Creek, Illinois 60046

**Who:** Susan Banks and the steering committee will facilitate the activities.

~ If you are available to help with planning or assisting at the event, please contact Susan Banks for information ~

The Northern Lake Co IL Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

Questions? Contact Susan Banks at 847.366.9375 or [lanwesmar@comcast.net](mailto:lanwesmar@comcast.net)



***The Compassionate Friends***

*Northern Lake County Chapter*

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**LOVE GIFTS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Steering Committee 2025 – 2026

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

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

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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

**SECRETARY / LIBRARIAN**

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

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

**NEWSLETTER PRINTING & MAILING** Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 [tnesheim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tnesheim@sbcglobal.net) & Denny Salomonson, 847-223-7353 [drdeno@sbcglobal.net](mailto:drdeno@sbcglobal.net) - 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.

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

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

**NORTHERN LAKE COUNTY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS FACEBOOK** page <https://www.facebook.com/cfonlci>

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

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

