



The Northeastern WI Chapter of TCF meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at
NEW MEETING PLACE

OneWay Christian Church
2071 9th St.
Green Bay, WI 54304

For further information contact:
Main Number: 920-370-3858

- ◆ Sue DeLong, Remembering our Children
- ◆ Joleen Krings, Facebook Administrator /Steering Committee
- ◆ Mike Nieft, Meeting Facilitator/ Steering Committee
- ◆ Carol Pomrenke, Remembering our Children
- ◆ Mickey Schmeisser, Chapter Leader
- ◆ Steve Schmeisser, Treasurer
- ◆ Kim Skar, Newsletter Editor

E-mail: compassionatefriendsgb@gmail.com
Website: compassionatefriendsgreenbay.org



New Beginnings.

Welcome to 2025, I hope your Christmas season was peaceful and you found some way to get through it.

In December we had the National Candle Lighting Ceremony. I hope if you attended, that you found the ceremony comforting.

This last quarter has brought many changes to our Compassionate Friends Group. As previously mentioned, Mike Nieft will be facilitating the meetings. Mike will conduct the meetings on an open forum/discussion versus a specific topic. Joleen Krings will be greeting new members and current members at our meetings and Joleen will also be taking care of our Facebook Page. I have decided to undertake the task of continuing our quarterly newsletters.

I am excited to begin this new chapter as newsletter editor. I would like to start a new section, called **Sharing our Children**. I enjoy reading about our children and getting to know who they were. I will start the first one, with our daughter, Amanda Rose. You can share anything you would like to about your child and if you wish, include a picture, so we can all meet them. If you would like to contribute, please send over a paragraph or two about your child and include a photo. You can send them to me, Kim Skar, at wkskar@gmail.com.

On behalf of our Chapter, I would like to extend a special THANK YOU to Mickey Schmeisser, for over a decade, Mickey has shared her time, talent, and treasure, by providing us with our quarterly newsletters and for being our meeting facilitator, Mickey will remain on as our Chapter Leader.

Until We see you again.
You are Always in our hearts,
Amanda's Mom and Dad,
Kim and Wayne Skar



Our Mission Statement:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



Monthly Support Group

Bring along a photo of your child.

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 6 p.m.

Open Forum Discussion

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 6 p.m.

Open Forum Discussion

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 6 p.m.

Open Forum Discussion



Grieving in the New Year

By: Claire Bidwell Smith



Permission to Reprint authorized by Claire Bidwell Smith a therapist, renowned grief expert.
<https://Clairebidwellsmith.com>.

If you're like me, the new year always brings an opportunity for renewal and a fresh start. Except when you're grieving. When you've lost someone you love – recently, or even years ago – the new year can bring on a tidal wave of emotions and expectations. The idea of starting over in the new year can feel unwanted or even just overwhelming.

New Year's Resolution: Be less sad. Impossible.

If you have this one on your list strike it out right now! I've heard so many clients tell me stories of trying to "quit" grieving at the beginning of the year, only to have this resolution fall flat on its face. New Year's simply looks different for those who are grieving. You may find yourself feeling more alone than ever as you watch your friends and loved ones carry on celebrating and making resolutions to embrace the year ahead. Because when you're grieving there is a poignancy that comes with the passing of time, and nothing feels like more of a reminder of this than the new year. I'll never forget the first new year after my mother died. She had been gone for almost a year but when the clock struck 12 that night and the minutes carried forth into a year in which she was not alive, I literally sank to my knees in pain in the back hallway of a nightclub. The intense pain I felt in that moment was unexpected for me. For most of that first year, I had felt numb. But when the hands of the clock began to move forward and I realized I was entering a year in which she would not be a part of, I felt overcome with searing grief. The club patrons carried on celebrating around me and I curled into a corner of the hallway sobbing into my hands, missing my mother more than I could stand, and not knowing how I would get through an entire lifetime without her.

Be kind to yourself in the new year.

You don't have to make the traditional fresh start, embrace diets, work out regimes, or start a daily gratitude list. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or whether it's been many years since the loss, it's important to honor your feelings and give yourself the proper time you need to grieve. There will be other years in which you can feel celebratory again. But this year be gentle with yourself. Let your resolution be one of vulnerability. So many of us are afraid to feel all the big emotions that come after a loss. These feelings can be overwhelming and also make you feel like you are not functioning like everyone else around you but let that be okay for now. I've had many people tell me years after a loss that they feel they missed an opportunity in their grief – that they did not let it in when given the chance, and that it hardened something about their relationship with their loved one. Use the new year to take a deep breath and to embrace who you are in this moment. We change so much more than we realize. So, remember that you will not always be in this space, but while you are, allow yourself to feel all that comes with loss. There is undeniably an identity shift that comes with losing someone close to you. Be it a friend, family member, spouse, or child, their absence in your

life will force change upon your soul. Most of us try to resist that change, thinking that the answer to getting through the pain is to try to remain exactly the same, to try to retain the person you were before the loss. But in fact, the opposite is true. When we can allow ourselves to let the loss shape us and change us, we will grow with experience, rather than against it. And whenever we stop resisting something then we can give ourselves the opportunity to heal.

The Year of Letting Go.

Let this be the year of letting go. Not of your loved one, but of your expectations of yourself. You will never get over your loved one and you do not ever need to let go of them, but in order to heal you do need to release the idea that you can remain unchanged. Each time you find yourself judging your grief process – whether it's thinking you are too sad or too angry or simply too consumed by it all – let go and know that whatever you are feeling right now is normal and natural. You will eventually reach a state of less pain and sadness and anxiety. You will find a new normal. Until then, be gentle with yourself.

Meditation for the New Year.

I want to walk you through a simple meditation that you can do anytime you have a quiet and private space for 5-10 minutes. Don't worry if you've never meditated before. Just give it a try. First lie back in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Then take a moment to simply breathe and become attuned to your body. When you are ready, I want you to imagine that you are rising up above yourself and looking down. Take note of everything that you are experiencing in this moment in time. Do not resist what you see. If you think you are too sad, or too heavy or too scattered or too whatever I want you to let yourself see it and accept it anyway. This is who you are in this moment. Take another moment to imagine reaching down and stroking your own head in a loving way. Forgive yourself for anything you think you are doing wrong and just for this one moment, during this meditation, let yourself feel real love and compassion for who you are, right here and right now. Give yourself a message of reassurance and love. See yourself as you would see a friend or a child, and meet yourself with true compassion. When you are ready, return to your body and take some slow, deep breaths before you open your eyes. Do this meditation as often as you need. It will help keep you present and balanced in the new year. And remember, the path to healing starts with giving yourself space to grieve.

Article taken from Wings-a Grief Education Ministry, a non-profit organization.

Website: <https://www.wingsgrief.org/>

You can also subscribe to receive their free quarterly newsletter.

A Valentine for Mom

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years....from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, handmade gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes give a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."



Sharing Our Children



Our daughter, Amanda Rose Skar, passed away unexpectedly on May 9, 2018, at the age of 30, from a Bi-lateral Brain Stem Stroke, just 3 months before her wedding. After her funeral, I had to cancel her wedding, something no parent should ever have to endure.

One thing Amanda loved to do is write. Her dream was to pursue writing as a career and to become a published author. She loved to

write mysteries like her favorite mystery author, James Patterson. She never thought she was a good enough writer to be published, but as an avid reader myself, and maybe more because I am her mother, I thought she was an excellent writer and I will always cherish not only all her short stories she gave me throughout her lifetime, but also the copy of her book she gave me for Christmas a couple of years before her death. She always asked me to edit whichever story she was working on, I would get into the story she was telling and it would abruptly end, when I would ask her where the rest of the story was, she would typically smile at me, and say, I haven't written it yet. I can think of these memories with so much love now and I can smile. I miss doing this for her.

I am now the keeper of her laptop and her stories, some finished, some not. It's always a surprise when I open one of her many notebooks, as to whether or not I will find a finished story. Her stories were always a work in progress. Someday I may pick one and see if I can figure out how she would have finished it.

Another love Amanda had, was for her puppies as she referred to them, she had 3 of them in her lifetime, Whiskers, her childhood puppy, Bella and Bailee, her after college puppies. When she was younger, she loved to dress them up, especially Whiskers, they tolerated her doing it and she always thought she was funny and that they were cute all dressed up.

We still treasure Bella, who is almost 15 years old and has slowed way down in her golden years. It will be a very sad day when she is no longer here.

Amanda had a big heart, a generous soul and a wonderful sense of humor. We were very close and the best of friends. She was very loyal to her family and her friends, and to the people she surrounded herself with. She is, was, and always will be our world, our pride and joy and our biggest and very best accomplishment.

If you would like to share your child, send a short story about them and photo (optional) to Kim Skar at wkskar@gmail.com

Remembering our Children

During the three months that each newsletter covers, we include your child's birthday and the anniversary of your child's death — if we know those dates. Based upon TCF National policy, we will not print the year of your child's birth or death.

BIRTHDAYS

Marisa Nelson (daughter of Amy Nelson)	1/01	Amy Laedke (daughter of Fred & Debra Laedtke)	2/02
Alex Wolf (son of Keith Wolf)	1/02	Jeff Baenen (son of Susan Otradovec)	2/03
Aliina Manders (daughter of Spring Manders)	1/03	Ryan Brunner (son of Bill & Sue Brunner)	2/03
Allison Fields (daughter of Leanne Fields)	1/04	Matthew Dulak (son of Frank & Maddy Dulak)	2/03
Ben Garot (son of Keith Garot)	1/07	Adam Federwitz (son of Gary & Mary Federwitz)	2/03
Megan Kelley (daughter of Bev Kelley-Miller)	1/09	Mike Smith (son of Dave Smith)	2/04
Kandy Kostka (daughter of William & Sally Kostka)	1/09	Jesse Hettmann (son of Linda Hettmann)	2/05
Mathew Odea (son of Nan Odea & Greg Warcham)	1/09	Caitlin Van Duyse (daughter of Brenda Van Duyse)	2/06
Eric Glass (Son of Linda Glass)	1/13	Julie Sarah Smits (daughter of Jeane Smits)	2/10
Alex Neiman (son of Angel Neiman)	1/13	Brett Buhr (son of Tim & Michele Buhr)	2/11
Corey Calaway (son of Paul & Nancy Calaway)	1/14	Jason Peck (son of Marianne Peck)	2/11
April Erickson (daughter of Darla Nooyen)	1/14	Kelby Bagneski (daughter of Bill & Kelly Bagneski)	2/12
Travis Christenson (son of Cheryl Oettinger)	1/17	Sam Compton (son of Mark Compton and Todd & Sandra Scheffen)	2/13
Joshua Hedtke (Son of Debra Lupien)	1/19	Ricky Lambert (son of Maria Lambert)	2/14
Justin Banaszynski (son of Donna Baranczyk)	1/21	Katie Culhane (daughter of Kevin & Muffy Culhane)	2/15
Jason Banaszynski (son of Donna Baranczyk)	1/21	Ryan Jozwiak (son of Lenee & Eddie Jozwiak)	2/15
Dustin Wilkinson (son of Dave & Donna Wilkinson)	1/21	Aislinn Shimon (daughter of Dave & Patricia Novak)	2/16
Christian Warzniak (son of Tara Hein)	1/22	Samantha LaCount (daughter of Dale & Linda LaCount)	2/22
Brian LaViolette (son of Doug & Renee LaViolette)	1/23	Nick Hietpas (son of Bruce & Diane Hietpas)	2/23
Joseph Wesolowski (son of Jennifer Heller)	1/25	Raina Manders (daughter of Spring Manders)	2/26
Roberta Jean Glebke (daughter of Joyce Glebke)	1/26	Brad Cox (son of Robert Cox)	2/27
Lawson Aerts (son of Dennis & Teressa Aerts)	1/28	Karen Mary Schley (daughter of Jon & Ann Schley)	2/27
Dylan Krings (son of Jason & Joleen Krings)	1/28	Lucas Shallow (son of Robert Shallow)	2/27
Austin Lindberg (son of Todd & Sandy Lindberg)	1/28	David Staude (son of Irv & Bev Michaud)	3/01
Maliyah Monacelli (granddaughter of Brenda Hendries)	1/29	Matthew Blazek (son of Bill & Betty Blazek)	3/03
Doug Kwiatkowski (son of Dave & Theresa Kwiatkowski)	1/30	Samantha DeLong (daughter of Joe & Sue DeLong)	3/03
Nevaeh Cadman (Daughter of Angel Young & Matthew Cadman)	2/01	Mark Louis Starr (son of Ruth (Patti) Schmidt)	3/04

Colton John Margotto (grandson of Deb Dobson)	3/05	Shawn Wendricks (son of Darrick & Amy Wendricks)	3/21
Molly Klika Zarnoth (daughter of Bob & Barb Klika)	3/06	Allison Hunt Bush (daughter of Terry & Nan Bush)	3/23
Kevin Keane (son of Mike Keane)	3/12	Cam Wendt (son of Lon Wendt)	3/24
Heather Fuller (daughter of Leslie Tagge)	3/14	Tami (Sam) Cornelius (daughter of Brenda Cornelius)	3/25
Anne Johanski (daughter of Judy Johanski)	3/16	Mike Quinette (son of Carol Quinette)	3/26
Beau Baxter (son of Laura Martens)	3/17	Steven L Vosters (son of Marvin & Patti Vosters)	3/26
Taylor Nieft (daughter of Michael & Dawn Nieft)	3/18	Lane Harris (son of Susan Harris)	3/27
Kali Pfaller (daughter of Sally Winger)	3/20	Heidi Lessmiller (daughter of David Lessmiller)	3/29
Ella Cumicek (daughter of Chris & Rhonda Cumicek)	3/21	Andrew (Andy) Short (son of Barbara Short)	3/29
Parker Wendricks (son of Darrick & Amy Wendricks)	3/21	Mark Malueg (son of Sue Malueg)	3/31

ANNIVERSARIES

Matthew Daley (son of Mary Daley)	1/03	John Charniak (son of Maynard & Jeanette Charniak)	1/24
Aliina Manders (daughter of Spring Manders)	1/03	Carson Murfield (son of Matthew & Christy Murfield)	1/24
Joseph Stetson (Son of Sherry Stetson)	1/04	Troy Jacques (son of Sally Martin)	1/26
Skylar Beattie (daughter of Krystle Cooley)	1/05	Heidi Lessmiller (daughter of David Lessmiller)	1/26
Matthew Dulak (son of Frank & Maddy Dulak)	1/08	Chad Olson (son of Brenda Olson)	1/26
Mark Shafer (son of Bruce & Pat Shafer)	1/10	Madeline Wotachek (daughter of Brandon & Michelle Wotachek)	1/26
Christy Stackhouse (daughter of Frank Stackhouse)	1/10	James Capelle (son of Tammy Capelle)	1/29
Ben Garot (son of Keith Garot)	1/11	Matthew Arnold (son of Bob & Carrie Arnold)	1/31
Jesse Hettmann (son of Linda Hettmann)	1/11	Mark Louis Starr (son of Ruth (Patti) Schmidt)	2/01
Ian Seymour (son of Paul & Diane Seymour)	1/12	Zander Varga Schenzel (grandson of Nancy Varga)	2/02
Craig Kozloski (son of David & Bobbie Kozloski)	1/14	Andrew Steiner (son of Nicole Steiner)	2/02
Robby Rohr (son of Carol Wautlet)	1/16	Steve Price (son of Steve & Jennifer Price)	2/03
Shawnie Silas-Grode (daughter of Pauline Silas)	1/18	Amanda Dulak (daughter of Frank & Maddy Dulak)	2/04
Matthew Murphy (son of Kathleen Murphy)	1/21	Dylan Krings (son of Jason & Joleen Krings)	2/08
Joshua Webster (son of Julie Denny)	1/21	Corey Calaway (son of Paul & Nancy Calaway)	2/09
Elias Gonzales (son of Maria Gonzales)	1/22	Karson Fenlon (son of Jennifer Neshek)	2/09
Alex Neiman (son of Angel Neiman)	1/22	Allen O'Harrow (son of Cal & Lois O'Harrow)	2/09
Alex Olmsted (son of Lisa Olmsted)	1/22	Jeff Baenen (son of Susan Otradovec)	2/12
Nick Argall (Son of Joyce Argall)	1/23	Nathan Crowe (son of Tom Crowe & Lisa Hanneman)	2/13

Chad Seitzer (son of Fred & Sandi Seitzer)	2/13	Jason Ziemann (son of Diane Strick)	3/12
Lawson Aerts (son of Dennis & Teresa Aerts)	2/16	Elizabeth Turek Bigley (daughter of Albert & Mary Turek)	3/13
Maliyah Monacelli (granddaughter of Brenda Hendries)	2/16	Beau Baxter (son of Laura Martens)	3/17
Derek Waterman (son of Patricia Waterman)	2/16	Josh Gilson (son of Ron & Cindy Gilson)	3/17
Ella Cumicek (daughter of Chris & Rhonda Cumicek)	2/18	Amaris Soletski (daughter of Amy Soletski)	3/18
Nathan Axelrod (son of Johanna Axelrod)	2/19	Rebekah Puzen (daughter of Larry Puzen & Carol Schroeder-Puzen)	3/19
Patrick Meyer (son of Dan & Anne Meyer)	2/19	Julie Sarah Smits (daughter of Jeane Smits)	3/20
Federico Abarca (son of Concepcion Melgar)	2/22	Bryan VanderKelen (son of Bob & Debi Lepak)	3/20
Brett Buhr (son of Tim & Michele Buhr)	2/22	Ricky Lambert (son of Maria Lambert)	3/21
Matthew Odea (son of Nan Odea & Greg Warcham)	2/25	Parker Wendricks (son of Darrick & Amy Wendricks)	3/21
Shane Hopfensperger (son of Mike & Joann Hopfensperger)	2/28	Shawn Wendricks (son of Darrick & Amy Wendricks)	3/21
Jason Peck (son of Marianne Peck)	2/28	Peyton Haller (son of Paul & Angela Haller)	3/24
Christian Warzniak (son of Tara Hein)	2/29	Taylor Nieft (daughter of Michael & Dawn Nieft)	3/24
Tom Manning (son of Peggy Manning)	3/01	Hunter Vincent (son of Steven & Dawn Vincent)	3/24
Matthew Blazek (son of Bill & Betty Blazek)	3/03	Luke Watzka (son of Marty & Rita Watzka)	3/24
Matt Hanson (son of Dean & Mary Hanson)	3/03	Randy Blezek (son of Bill & Betty Blazek)	3/25
Colton John Margotto (grandson of Deb Dobson)	3/05	John Aulik (son of Germaine Aulik)	3/26
Chayse Michael Wilcox (grandson of Todd & Melanie Wilcox)	3/06	Dustin Wilkinson (son of Dave & Donna Wilkinson)	3/29
Todd Reigner (son of Arthur & Barbara Reigner)	3/08		
Brandon Groh (son of Cathy Groh)	3/11		



ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENTS, & MISC.

Meeting Dates 2025:

January 21: Open Forum Discussion

February 18: Open Forum Discussion

March 18: Open Forum Discussion

You are welcome to bring a photo of your loved one.

Please Visit Our Website:

www.compassionatefriendsgreenbay.org

All sorts of goodies are included:

- *Past Newsletters
- *Calendar of Events
- *Articles

Save The Date

48th National Conference

Fri - Sun, July 11-13th

Bellevue, WA



Please note:
If area schools are closed,
due to inclement weather, we will cancel
our scheduled meeting

Love gifts were recently given by:

Ken and Mary Gehm, in memory of Jared Gehm
Dan and Myra Krhin, Freshly Squeezed, in memory of all our children
Todd and Sandy Scheffen, in memory of Sam Compton
Wayne & Kim Skar, in memory of Amanda Rose Skar
Sue Van Straten, in memory of Jessica Van Straten
Pamela Vogels, in memory of Jason Vogels
Carol Wautlet, in Memory of Robby Rohr



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
of Northeast Wisconsin
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



PO Box 211
Green Bay, WI 54305

We need not walk alone!

Our monthly
support group meets
next on:

Tuesday,
January 21, 2025
at 6:00 p.m.

**OneWay Christian
Church**
2071 9th St.
Green Bay, WI 54304

Call 920-370-3858
for information.



I Am Spring

I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.

I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests



where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth – life is change.

I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.

(written after attending a workshop presented by John Fox, author of 'Finding What You Didn't Lose' and 'Poetic Medicine'.) Carol Clum