



**Jan- Feb 2024**

*THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358*

**CO-LEADERS:** Susan Fletcher, Julie Mariano  
& Lesa Hartranft  
Sibling Coordinator - Courtney Langdon  
Technical Support - Scott Higgins

**NEWSLETTER:** Susan Fletcher

**PHONE:** 980-938-4589

**E-MAIL:** [tcf.clt@gmail.com](mailto:tcf.clt@gmail.com)

**WEBSITE:** [WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG](http://WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG)

Facebook Page: *Compassionate Friends of  
Charlotte, NC*

**MONTHLY MEETING**

Meeting place: St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235

Meeting Time: 3rd Tuesday of Each Month at 7:00 pm

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Our monthly chapter meetings will take place 1/16/24 and 2/20/24

**REGIONAL COORDINATOR**

Regional Coordinators for NC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Phone Number: 980-938-4589

E-mail: [iluvu2lauren@gmail.com](mailto:iluvu2lauren@gmail.com)

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**NATIONAL OFFICE**

*The Compassionate Friends*  
(877-969-0010)

[nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

Website:  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

online private closed facebook pages:  
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/>

## TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!!

**We congratulate you on having the courage to walk through our door for the first time. Please give our meetings at least 3 tries before deciding if they are right for you. We hope, with the resources available through TCF, you will find the right person or the right words to help you. You Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends.**

## TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS:

**We need your encouragement and support. TCF continues because of YOU. You give hope to the newly bereaved - hope that they too can eventually find joy in life again. Please attend when you feel you are able to reach out to another bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling.**

Did you know that TCF Charlotte has its own Facebook page? Just search in facebook groups for - Compassionate Friends of Charlotte, NC

LIKE our Facebook page and please post any article, quote or personal musings that you feel may help another member. All information for meetings and special events will be listed on our facebook page.

**PLEASE VISIT US ON OUR WEBPAGE!!**

**[WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG](http://WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG)**

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART OF TCF CHARLOTTE STEERING COMMITTEE?

We need your help. Volunteering to be on our Steering Committee is a wonderful way to give back to the organization that helped you when you were starting your grief journey, and what better way to keep your child, grandchild or sibling's memory alive? Contact any of the leaders at our meetings if you would like more information. We need YOUR help to ensure our Chapter is as successful as possible in helping others. This is YOUR Chapter - help us make it a welcoming and caring place for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings to come to for help.

Our Chapter survives by donations only. There are costs associated with the Chapter, i.e., supplies, books, refreshments, food and supplies for our annual events, and our fee for our website. PLEASE help support our Chapter!!! Please consider donating to your Chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling on their special days or during the holidays. What better thing to do in their memory than to pay it forward for the help you have received from TCF.

You can also help your chapter by being a Steering Committee Member. Just contact one of our chapter leaders. We have lots of different areas that we need help in.

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***TCF Charlotte would like to thank these members for their generous donation to support our chapter. Carol Patton for her generous donation in memory of David, Billy and Michael.***

Please Mail All Donations to Our TCF Charlotte Treasurer at The  
Following Address:  
Kay Thomas  
5807 Cheerful Lane  
Charlotte, NC 28215

TO OUR MEMBERS

If there are any errors in dates or names in our listing of our children's, grandchildren's or sibling's, please let me know. We are trying to get our database as accurate as possible. Many of our loved one's names do not have a last name listed. In these cases, we assume it is the same as the parent, grandparent or sibling who is listed as a member in our database. If this is incorrect, please let me know. There are many names that do not have a birth date or a death date listed. We know this can be very difficult to list, especially in the early days of grief. If you feel like adding those dates, just email them to me at: [fletcher1mom@gmail.com](mailto:fletcher1mom@gmail.com). We are only human so we do make mistakes, but I have tried to be as accurate as I possibly can. Thank you for understanding.

## REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS - JANUARY

Gabriel Jordon Arethas 1/24  
Willi Blottman 1/25  
Michael Rodas 1/5  
Frank Chen 1/20  
Dennis Darrell 1/10  
Savanna Eastwood 1/3  
Stacy Glickman 1/19  
Cynthia Boza 1/24  
Ryan Hartranft 1/12  
Sergio Huerta Jr. 1/11  
Matthew Jackson 1/2  
Adyson Faith Mendicino 1/24  
Jeanna Norton 1/28  
Raymond Pierce 1/13  
Anthony John Pijerov 1/5  
Steven Vaughn Ray 1/27  
Daniel Joseph Schrieber 1/10  
Ryan Scott 1/16  
Corey Smith 1/16  
Joseph Matranga 1/6  
Aubrey Wiger 1/1982

Laird Ramirez 1/11  
Robert Wylie 1/29  
Gabriel Jordon 1/24

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -  
JANUARY

Jeremiah Bellard 1/27  
Michael Boyle Jr. 1/4  
Edward Stephens 1/6  
Trenton James Scott 1/31  
Tess Crespi 1/20  
Sammie Crespi 1/20  
Adam Dixon 1/30  
Anderson Fairley 1/30  
Cynthia Boza 1/14  
Lauren Marshall 1/30  
Karson Whitesell 1/23  
Ryan Hartranft 1/15  
Tommy Horton 1/21  
Diana Phillipi 1/20  
Isaiah Pinkney 1/13  
Debra Kern 1/25  
Gevaughnti Lawson 1/5  
Jacki Grinstead 1/11  
Mason Crist Heller 1/15  
Scott Lee 1/9  
Kristin Stinson 1/11  
Paul McGrath 1/22  
Michael McKinley 1/9  
Bobby O'Shea 1/7  
Breondra Newman 1/5  
Michael Ragone 1/17  
Amanda Lee Stanley 1/22  
Phillip Templeton 1/15

Christopher John Thorne 1/25  
Matthew Wright 1/28  
Joseph Matrenga 1/8  
Denis Anthony Giacobbe 1/18  
Robert Wylie 1/17

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -  
FEBRUARY

El Barnhill 2/18  
Laura Barrowman 2/26  
Stephen Benish 2/3  
Chet DeMilio 2/10  
Brian Courtemanchie 2/3  
Jessica Cudd 2/22  
Ben Huff 2/21  
George Dumaine 2/26  
Karson Whitesell 2/18  
Jordi Bone 2/8  
Jacob Preston Penrow 2/24  
Jeramiah Karriker 2/17  
Rickey Buchanan 2/25  
Natalie Rose Ruiz 2/1  
Jonah L. Gray 2/18  
Austin McRee 2/16  
Chaylan Tucker 2/7  
Jaqueline Nicholson 2/13  
David Patton 2/25  
Jameel Pearse 2/28  
Adam Powalski 2/4  
Ben Huff 2/21  
Kirsten Ashley Whicker 2/21  
Phillip Templeton 2/12  
Chris Taylor 2/23  
Philip Templeton 2/12  
Zachary Michael Tobey 2/4

Laura McDermott 2/10

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -  
FEBRUARY

Sam Wallace 2/22  
Jack Hicks 2/24  
Brad Aylward 2/9  
Laura Barrowman 2/28  
Frank Chen 2/11  
Kevin Goodnight 2/17  
Brendan Cullen 2/24  
Bobby Dowling 2/28  
Mike Goepp 2/11  
Christopher Cullen 2/8  
Brady Hopkins 2/1  
Sean McCormick 2/17  
Russell Kershaw 2/28  
Jeannie Liebertz 2/12  
Missy Minor 2/26  
Natalie Rose Ruiz 2/1  
Jason Lubeznik 2/16  
Corey S. Flint 2/2  
Richard McPeck 2/8  
Aiden Miller 2/25  
Stephanie Midkiff 2/3  
James O'Keefe 2/19  
David Patton 2/25  
Adam Mashburn 2/24  
Kirsten Ashley Whicker 2/7  
Max Rudie 2/24  
Christina Rupp 2/12  
Robert Paul Alexy 2/25  
"Danny" Gary Scott 2/24  
Allie Brown 2/21  
Jason Smart 2/17  
Keeghan Drake McCormack 2/22

Martha Charlotte VonDietman 2/26  
Elliot Grayson Thomas 2/13  
Sam Wallace 2/22

### **An Evening of Remembrance**

It was a pleasure to see so many chapter members and their families at the Candle Lighting ceremony in December. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. It rained heavily all evening and I'm afraid that convinced some members to stay home. This year marked the 27<sup>th</sup> annual, worldwide candle lighting event that sends a wave of light and love around the globe. It gives us the opportunity to grieve openly and constructively but also to share joyful memories, meet family members and share a meal. I hope that everyone who attended the event found some measure of comfort and camaraderie. It is a most companionable way to do that hard "grief work". A huge thank you to all the members who brought something delicious to eat and share. No one left hungry! The Charlotte chapter would like to thank the following members who contributed to the planning, preparation and presentation of the Candle Lighting event, Donna and Ralph Goodrich, Susan Fletcher, Julie and Vince Mariano, Kay Thomas, Connie Tobey, Caitlin Copeland and Scott Higgins.

### **The New Year: A Time of Hope**

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day.



There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

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

## Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now,

there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!

Pat Akery  
TCF, Medford, OR

### ***A LIGHT IN THE DARK: ON GRIEVING IN THE WINTER***

Here in the New England winter months, the days become not only colder, but also shorter and much darker, and these changes may have an effect on our mood, our behavior, and how we care for ourselves and our families as we grieve. As we stand at the threshold of a new year, we offer these strategies for pacing yourself through the next few months before the dawn of spring.

#### **Acknowledge the darkness.**

Though winter can place many extra demands on us, it is important to remember that winter, too, has its place in the course of seasons, and darkness always has its place in relationship to light. Similarly, when feeling overwhelmed, pausing to acknowledge that your grief may feel difficult to manage at this time of year can be an important first step toward clarifying how you might cope with the season. Taking time to understand that the season's

changes may be affecting you, and naming the ways that they might be doing so, can help you start to identify the best ways of caring for yourself and your family.

### **Make time for self-care.**

Making time for your own needs and self-care is especially important in winter. It may seem too difficult or unrealistic to put your own needs first, but neglecting to make self-care a regular part of your daily routine can compound stress and negativity. Like grief, self-care is unique to each individual, but a few examples may include:

- adjusting your diet and exercise routines to take the best possible care of your physical body
- getting plenty of sleep
- taking more time alone for self-reflection and stillness
- leaning on the support of family, friends, and fellow community members
- making more time for activities that you enjoy like reading, watching movies, taking a walk, cooking, or journaling
- expressing yourself creatively through painting, drawing, writing, singing, dancing, etc.

Without taking time for self-care, you may find yourself even more depleted and susceptible to being overwhelmed by painful emotions. Even a few minutes of engaging in self-care each day may have a significant impact on your outlook and your ability to better cope with your grief.

### **Lean on old rituals or start new ones.**

Rituals and ceremonies can help bring us back to our present experience as we express our grief and process our emotions. Those who are grieving may find that participating in or creating new rituals and ceremonies may help create a more positive framework for engaging with grief. They do not have to be elaborate to serve an important purpose. An act as simple as lighting a candle can be an important way to remember the person in your life who died and to remind you of the power of light in the winter darkness.

### **Remember: it is okay not to be okay.**

We encourage you to feel what you are feeling when you are feeling it. There is no one “correct” way to feel—oftentimes when we are grieving, several

emotions can be felt all at once. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. You are the expert on your own grief. Be patient and be gentle with yourself as your emotions ebb and flow this winter.

By [The Children's Room](#) Published On: January 20th, 2021

# 10 Winter-Inspired Ideas for Grieving a Loss

Whether your loved one passed away during the winter or they had a winter birthday, these ideas can help you grieve and honor your loved one.

From relaxing activities to more active ones, there's something for everyone. We've brainstormed 10 ideas for you to start with.

## 1. Make a Snow Angel

Although it may seem a bit cheesy, making a snow angel is a simple way to feel closer to your loved one. It's the perfect activity for including children so they can honor their late loved one as well. You can even take a picture of everyone's snow angels each year and add them to a photo album or scrapbook.

## 2. Make Their Go-To Winter Treat

Did your loved one enjoy sipping a warm cup of hot chocolate on a snowy winter day? Or did they have a favorite winter dessert or casserole? You can make their [favorite treat](#) in their honor. Whether you share it with loved ones or keep it to yourself, it will help you feel a little bit closer to them.

## 3. Decorate a Memorial Wreath

Decorate a winter-themed wreath to honor their memory. You can include pinecones, holly, photos, and other things that capture your loved one's essence. If you want to include the whole family, have everyone contribute an item to the wreath.

## **4. Go Snowshoeing on Their Favorite Trail**

Did your loved one enjoy being out in nature? Even if they were more of an indoorsy person, being surrounded by nature can help you clear your mind and process your feelings. If you live somewhere with snow, give snowshoeing a try!

## **5. Do Their Favorite Winter Activity**

If your loved one was an outdoorsy person even in the winter, do their favorite activity! It can be anything from skiing or snowboarding to ice fishing or building a snowman. Or if they preferred to spend the winter season indoors, you can do their favorite indoor activity, such as reading a book or writing in a journal by the fire.

## **6. Watch Their Favorite Winter Movie**

Did your loved one have a favorite winter-themed [movie](#) that they watched every year? Continue this tradition on their behalf by watching it with family and friends. You can even eat their favorite winter treat that you made while watching it!

## **7. Crochet Winter Hats, Mittens, and Scarves**

I love this idea because not only is it a meaningful outlet for grief, but it also gives others something to remember your loved one by. For example, you can crochet winter hats, mittens, and scarves for your family using your loved one's favorite color. You also can donate some to your local homeless shelter.

## **8. Play Your Loved One's Favorite Board Game**

Cold, snowy winter days are perfect for staying inside and playing board games with your family. You can play your loved one's favorite game to honor their memory. To pass down this tradition, you can teach your younger family members how to play it.

## **9. Collect Toys for a Local Charity in Their Honor**

Give back to those in need while honoring your loved one this holiday season. One idea is to collect toys for a local charity. To make it more personalized to your loved one, choose their favorite childhood toys.

## **10. Listen to Their Favorite Winter-Themed Songs**

Make a playlist of your loved one's favorite winter-themed songs. You can listen to it when you're driving or just missing them a little extra. You also can share it with your family members, so everyone can enjoy it and contribute to it.

By: Erin Ward in Grief and Guidance, Memorialization

# You Are Not Alone in Grief (Not Even in February-the Love Month)

*Where there is love, there is pain. English Proverb*

Holidays are painful when you are in grief but it seems (when living in it) that there is nothing worse than the month of February and Valentine's Day to make you feel more alone in your grief. And most days grief does not need any help in making the griever feel more alone in their situation.

Once the service, celebration or funeral is over, others in your life seem to forget your grief or just don't remember your plight. The pain takes over after the fog and numbness of grief lifts and it feels like no one remembers your situation and your loved one and we imagine we are the only ones who have ever felt this much pain.

Although I clearly remember having the flu on that first Valentine's Day after Zac died and doing a lot of angry analyzing of my feelings, my internal focus was on others and their external actions. This worked for me as it was difficult to cope with the loss of normalcy in life, the overwhelmingness of all the feelings and the pain of the loss of any love in my life.

Now you may identify with this scenario as many who are grieving feel as if they are alone in their grief process and feel that they may not be able to share or discuss these feelings let alone feel that anyone else would understand their feelings of loss.

So, it was with this context in mind that I recently identified another piece to grief that I wished I had recognized at that earlier time in my grief process.

Last weekend we attended the showing of the movie ***Lincoln*** with great anticipation due to the reviews and a strong personal interest in the subject matter. The focus of this Steven Spielberg movie was President Abraham Lincoln's last four months in office (and of his life) in which he worked to end slavery with the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment and reuniting the country after the Civil War. If this was not thought provoking enough ...and, if this position and situation did not find him so alone at times (and the movie clearly demonstrated this) at this same time, he and his wife, Mary were grieving the death (and death anniversary in February) of their third son from 3 years earlier. (They also were grieving the February death anniversary of their second son who died twelve years before this second child's death.)

While current death statistics show that about 2.5 million people die yearly, we usually do not think in terms of all those other people grieving those deaths. The movie ***Lincoln*** brought that fact clearly into awareness. So many people are grieving every day, regardless of the month.

This fact reminded me of another Steven Spielberg movie, ***Super 8*** (2011) in which the hero, 14 year old Joe, says to the alien creature before he is released from earth's captivity to return to his own home, **"Bad things happen but you can still live..."**

Yes, we can live in grief and we can live in the month of February – the month of love. So often we hear the phrase: “*you are not alone*” in your grief. Look at history, look at the statistics and look into your heart. The holidays can be painful but **you - are - not - alone ...** I hope you find comfort on this Valentine’s Day.

By: Chris Mulligan, Grief Toolbox

## **Supporting Grieving Siblings: What You Should now and How You Can Help**

Siblings are often among our first friends, rivals, and connections. They teach us and we teach them. Together we learn how to share, how to fight, and how to navigate the complexities of our families and the larger world. They play a pivotal role in our lives. They share our history; they often share our hopes for the future.

It is no wonder that when a sibling dies, the surviving sibling or siblings are left to navigate a world that is forever changed. Their lives change, and often, so do their identities. It is no exaggeration to say that, when a sibling dies, a grieving sibling asks in many different ways, “Who am I without my brother or sister?”

Our siblings are the people who are supposed to be with us for the long haul. We expect them at the breakfast table, kicking our feet when mom or dad aren’t looking. We plan for them to be at milestone events, like our birthdays, weddings, and graduations. They are the people with whom we were supposed to confide in, roll our eyes with when our parents are being ridiculous, and cry with when our family is struggling. When a sibling dies, all of these moments die with them. The loss of what could have been, and what we hoped would have been, can sting as deeply as the loss of our sibling’s life.

The death of any important person in childhood can significantly impact a child or teen’s sense of self and being. For bereaved siblings, the death of a brother or sister has unique impacts on their lives and grief process. Here are some common feelings that may arise for a grieving sibling and some ways you might help if you’re supporting them.



## **Some common threads of grieving a sibling**

### ***Isolation***

One of the most common feelings for those grieving a sibling is isolation—that others “just don’t get it.” Grieving siblings often find that their peers and the adults in their life don’t know how best to support them. While so much attention is directed to the parents, who are grieving a child, a grieving sibling can be left feeling that his or her own grief “doesn’t matter” in relation to that of their parents. An unintentional minimizing of their grief can happen by both their peers and the adults in their life. Surviving siblings may feel neglected or forgotten in their grief, unsure and anxious about where to turn for support. A grieving sibling’s isolation can feel particularly intense; although they may very much want to turn to their parents for support, it can feel difficult to do so when the parents are often struggling to cope and support each other in their own grief.

### ***Secondary Loss***

Surviving siblings not only grieve the death of their brother or sister, but in many cases they also experience important secondary losses. The entire family dynamic has been changed by the death, including the surviving sibling’s relationship to their parents. The reconfiguring of relationships that naturally occurs after a death is an often an unacknowledged aspect of grieving a sibling, but its impact on the surviving sibling should not be overlooked.

### ***Guilt***

Sometimes depending on their ages, surviving siblings may feel guilt for various reasons. Older children may wonder directly why they survived and their sibling did not. Young children, who think in very concrete terms, may believe that they somehow caused the death of their sibling simply because they had hurtful thoughts about them at some point.

Sometimes a surviving sibling may feel guilt for acting out or misbehaving in response to feelings they aren’t sure how to manage. They act out, but they do not want to be the “bad sibling,” and so they feel guilty when they make mistakes, or when they say what they perceive to be the wrong things to their parents.

Surviving siblings may also feel an internal pressure to “be” the deceased sibling in addition to being themselves. They may feel a burden to carry on the

sibling's legacy or personality traits. They often experience the enormous difficulty of feeling the pressure to "live for two," even while their own individuality is still being formed.

## Ways to help support a grieving sibling

- **Honor the surviving sibling's relationship with the person who died.** It may feel more natural to ask a surviving sibling about how his or her parents are doing, or even to ask an older sibling how another younger sibling in the family is coping with the death. However, taking time to ask a surviving sibling how he or she are doing is an important step in showing your support. Even if they don't respond, that's okay. Asking them how they are can be an important validation that it's okay to grieve, too, even while their parents are also grieving.
- **Say the name of the person who died.** Honoring the person who died by naming them, especially on holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays can be very important for the surviving sibling. In addition to grieving the relationship and shared history as siblings, it's important for the surviving sibling to feel comfortable grieving the person.
- **Make time just for them.** Make a concerted effort to do things with the surviving sibling that he or she enjoys. You might also spend time together doing activities that the person who died loved to do in order to honor them, or find ways to incorporate new rituals that honor the person who died into regular activities. It's important to share time with the surviving sibling or siblings and let them know, implicitly or explicitly, that their feelings about the death and grief are welcomed whenever they are ready to share them.
- **Understand that this grief will be a lifelong process.** Our culture's instinct to put a time limit on the grief process can fall particularly hard on grieving siblings. When a sibling dies, there might be extra internal or external pressure to "move on" or "get over it." Remember: there is no time frame. Grief is a process, not a final destination. You are the expert of your own grief, and there is no one "right" way to grieve.

By **Colleen Shannon**, LICSW, Associate Program Director – Youth & Community Outreach, and **Emily Carson Dashawetz**, MFA

## **A Letter from the Editor**

Hello Friends,

A very happy new year to you all. I wish you and your families all good things in 2024. We can all pat ourselves on the back! We have made it through the dreaded holidays unscathed (I hope). I've made it through another year! I've carried my grief resourcefully and emerged from the season feeling stronger. If you are reading this you are stronger as well. Keep doing the "grief work" in 2024.

I was disappointed that the weather put a bit of a damper on our candle lighting event. We had fewer than expected attend however, it was a terrible night to drive. The size of the crowd did not diminish the feelings of comfort, hope and friendship that were shared. We also shared many varied and delicious foods and deserts. So many cookies, oh so many cookies!!! To those who brought a photo of your child, grandchild, or sibling, thank you. It's very meaningful for me to put a face to a name. That way, when you talk about your child, I can visualize them.

Winter has its ups and downs, bitter cold to warm and balmy. You never know what the next day will bring. Grief is like that too. You may be peaceful, happy, or even elated one day and be in the "pits of despair" the next. Call on your strength on those desperate days. You have more strength in reserve than you think. You will make it through the hard days and recharge on the good days.

Love and peace,

Susan (Michael's mom)