



TCF CANADA - VOICES

February 2026 Issue

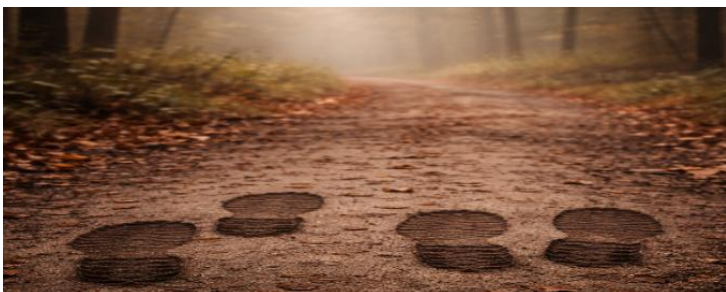
Welcome to the first 2026 issue of the TCF Canada National Newsletter, **VOICES**.

We are pleased to share that **VOICES** is transitioning from a quarterly publication to a bi-monthly one. Our hope is that this change will allow us to offer more timely connection, shared experiences, and ongoing support to our Compassionate Friends community.

With the addition of two more issues this year, we warmly invite increased contributions from our chapters and individual members. There are no strict guidelines for submissions. Whether you wish to share part of your grief journey that may offer comfort to others or contribute to regular features such as **Chapter Happenings** or **Volunteer Spotlight**, we would truly welcome hearing from you.

As Valentine's Day approaches, many experience it as a commercial occasion centered on cards, flowers, and dining out. For others, it is traditionally a time to celebrate love. For those of us who are grieving, this day can raise difficult questions about how to navigate a focus on love when someone deeply cherished is no longer physically present. In this issue, we hope you will find a few gentle suggestions on page 7 that may offer comfort, reflection, and understanding.

As always, we are deeply grateful for the compassion, honesty, and courage shared within our community. Each story, each act of listening, and each moment of connection reminds us that love does not end with death. We walk this journey together, supporting one another as we honour our children and carry their love forward, one step at a time.



WALKING TOGETHER IN GRIEF

The Compassionate Friends of Canada (TCF Canada) exists for one profound reason: no parent should have to grieve the death of a child alone. Guided by the belief that grief shared is grief softened, TCF Canada offers peer support to families whose lives have been forever changed by the death of a child, at any age and from any cause.

Through local chapters, online communities, and national initiatives, TCF Canada provides safe, compassionate spaces where grief can be expressed without judgment. There is no timetable for healing and no expectation to "move on." Every story matters, and every child is remembered.

TCF Canada is grounded in peer support. Those who offer understanding are themselves bereaved family members, creating a unique bond of empathy and trust that reminds families they are not alone on this journey.

Beyond meetings, TCF Canada offers resources, gatherings, newsletters, and opportunities for remembrance that foster connection and meaning over time. Many members find that giving back, when they are ready, becomes a way to honour their child's life and legacy.

Grief does not end, but it does change. TCF Canada walks alongside families through that change offering hope that makes room for love, memory and continued connection.

Together, we walk this path—one step, one story, and one child remembered at a time.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Jan Bryant & Cathy Sosnowsky - North Vancouver Chapter



When Jan Bryant and Cathy Sosnowsky stepped into leadership at the North Vancouver Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, neither could have known they were beginning a partnership that would last more than three decades. What began as two bereaved mothers seeking understanding grew into a shared commitment to guide others through the long road of child loss together.

Jan first attended a North Vancouver TCF meeting in 1993, six weeks after her daughter Lindsay died at the age of ten. Lindsay was smart, funny, creative, and athletic — a child who loved to sing, read, draw, and care for animals, and who dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. Jan kept returning to TCF because, as she has said, the people there understood her grief and helped her see that what she was experiencing was not something to be fixed, but something to be carried.

That same year, Cathy and her husband Woldy arrived at TCF two months after the sudden death of their son Alex, just days after his 17th birthday. Alex was playful, artistic, athletic, and deeply curious about the world. One line from his art teacher stayed with Cathy: “He probably wanted to have a closer look at the stars.” It captured not how Alex died (by falling through a tennis bubble) but who he was—a way of remembering him with tenderness.

In 1996, Cathy was asked to step into the role of Chapter Leader. She agreed on one condition: she would not do it alone. She invited Jan to serve alongside her, and together they formed a co-leadership that would guide the North Vancouver Chapter for more than 25 years. Their partnership became one of steadiness, trust, and mutual respect, rooted in shared loss and a deep understanding of grief.

Under their leadership, the chapter became known as a place where grief was not rushed or minimized. Parents were welcomed whether they were weeks into their loss or decades beyond it. Conversations were honest, children’s names were spoken freely, and members were met exactly where they were.

Alongside their leadership roles, both women contributed in practical and lasting ways. Jan served as Treasurer and helped ensure the chapter’s charitable responsibilities were maintained, a role she will continue as she steps back from co-leadership. She has also given many workshops at TCF conferences, sharing her experience and insight with bereaved families and fellow volunteers across the organization. Cathy edited the chapter newsletter for many years and contributed nationally by helping refresh TCF pamphlets and written materials used by newly bereaved families across Canada. She also shared her own grief journey through writing and workshops, offering others a way to put words to loss.

Together with their chapter community, Jan and Cathy also played a role in the creation of Enduring Love, a public memorial that has become meaningful to many families in North Vancouver.

As Jan and Cathy step down as Co-Leaders, they leave behind more than years of service. They leave a legacy of friendship, compassion, and leadership grounded in love for Lindsay and Alex, and for every child remembered within the TCF circle.



Jan’s Daughter Lindsay

Their story reflects the kind of leadership that sustains The Compassionate Friends: steady service, deep compassion, and a long-term commitment to walking alongside others, reminding us that we need not walk alone.



Cathy’s son Alex

WORDS THAT HELPED ME by Karen Destun, TCF Chapter Leader



Through my grief journey I find things that resonate for me in many places... books, conversations, and often television shows. Recently an episode of 'The Pitt' provided a particularly poignant piece.

The Hawaiian Death Ritual entitled **Ho'oponopono** offers these phrases as a means of reconciliation when a loved one is dying. I found it especially cathartic to say these phrases and I extend on each of them with my words conveying a message to each Lauren and Sarah.

**I love you
Thank you
I forgive you
Please forgive me**

Perhaps this ritual with its phrases will resonate with you too.

A NEW TCF CHAPTER BEGINS IN BARRIE, ONTARIO

We are pleased to share the welcoming news that a new chapter of The Compassionate Friends has officially opened in Barrie, Ontario.

Following their completion of facilitator training, Katie Dawson, Louise Stevens, Stephanie Davenport, and Donna Currie came together to host the chapter's first meeting on January 28 with 18 parents in attendance. In a meaningful coincidence, this date also marks the anniversary of the very first Compassionate Friends meeting held in Britain, where our organization began. It is a powerful reminder that what started as a small gathering of grieving parents has grown into a worldwide community of support, understanding, and shared compassion.

The launch of the Barrie chapter reflects both the dedication of its facilitators and the continuing need for safe, caring spaces where bereaved parents and families can connect with others who truly understand. Each new chapter strengthens our national network and extends the reach of peer support to families who may otherwise feel alone in their grief.

We warmly welcome the Barrie chapter to the TCF-Canada family and extend our heartfelt thanks to Katie, Louise, Stephanie, and Donna for stepping forward to serve. May this chapter grow into a place of comfort, remembrance, and enduring connection for all who attend.

(The group meets at the Hospice Simcoe, the last Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.)

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

TCF Canada chapters hold both in-person and virtual meetings. Individuals can participate in virtual meetings from any location. To attend contact the meeting organizer by email to request the access link.

When

Every Tues, 1:00pm Central Time

1st Tues, Monthly, 7:30pm Pacific Time

1st Thurs, Monthly, 7:00pm Eastern Time

2nd Mon, Monthly, 7:00pm Eastern Time

3rd Wed, Monthly, 6:30pm Central Time

Last Wed, Monthly, 5:30pm Eastern Time

Winnipeg, MB

Vancouver, BC

Ottawa, ON

Waterloo, ON

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TCF-CANADA INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT – GOES LIVE

We have taken a meaningful step into social media with the launch of our official Instagram account! With the new Instagram presence, TCF Canada aims to reach a broader audience, share grief-support resources, promote events and virtual support opportunities, and create a space where families can feel connected and supported between meetings. The platform will feature uplifting messages, reminders about national and some chapter-level activities, and insights designed to help followers through the grief journey.

Increased visibility on Instagram also supports TCF Canada's ongoing outreach efforts — helping connect individuals who may not yet be aware of the support available through chapters across the country. National and local leaders hope that the account will foster community, raise awareness about the experience of grief, and offer gentle encouragement to anyone navigating loss.

Family, friends, and supporters are invited to follow the account to stay informed, engage with content that speaks to the realities of grief, and help spread TCF Canada's message of hope and understanding.

You can find the page by searching 'compassionatefriendscanada'. If reading this electronically you can click on the link <https://www.instagram.com/thecompassionatefriendscanada/#>

NATIONAL OFFICE UPDATES

Eleven participants from BC, AB and ON attended the Facilitator Training session on January 24th. Most were stepping into the role for the first time and learning while some more experienced shared their advice and guidance. The next training session will likely be held in the Spring, or whenever three or more candidates express interest.

It has been discovered that some of the newer chapters (during or post-Covid) may not be in possession of a Chapter Registration Certificate. If your chapter does not have your Certificate, contact the National Office to request.

Members of the **TCF Canada Board** continue to work diligently behind the scenes to strengthen and modernize our systems. Vice President Karen Destun and Webmaster Larry Cadman have been leading several important initiatives focused on improving efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing collaboration.

One major step forward has been the transition from our former software platform to Google Workspace. This change offers both cost savings and improved ease of sharing and communication. Larry has successfully completed the migration of the TCF Canada email system from iPage to Google Workspace, and all core email services are now fully operational.

In addition, testing is currently underway to assess a potential move from Zoom to Google Meet for virtual meetings. This evaluation will help determine the best option for reliability, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness moving forward.

The Board is also actively investigating a transition from a U.S.-based web host to a Canadian web service provider. This move is expected to result in lower costs and, we hope, improved service and support.

Importantly, visitors to the **TCF Canada** website should not experience any service interruptions as these updates are gradually implemented over the coming months. We are committed to ensuring a smooth transition while continuing to support our community without disruption.

Contact - Email nationaloffice@tcfcanada.net or call the toll-free line: **1-866-823-0141**

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

North Vancouver – Enduring Love

“Blessed are those who have been touched by the love of a child.”

These words open the dedication on the bronze plaque beneath the sculpture ***Enduring Love***, located in West Victoria Park in North Vancouver, BC. This moving public art installation was made possible through the advocacy of the **North Shore chapter of The Compassionate Friends**, which successfully lobbied for the project in 2010.

Carved in white marble, the sculpture depicts the body of a woman gently embracing an empty space. The smooth stone invites touch, while the figure’s posture conveys tenderness and protection. As passers-by pause to read the plaque, the meaning of that emptiness becomes clear: it represents any child who died too soon, and the enduring bond that remains.



When the North Shore TCF group applied for a North Vancouver Community Art Grant, they issued a Call for Artists. They were clear in their vision—they did not want a sculpture that was overwhelmingly sad, but rather something others could relate to and find comfort in. This led to the selection of artist Daniel Cline, a marble sculptor who lives and works on Vancouver Island.

Daniel suggested adding stepping stones leading up to and surrounding the sculpture. The committee chose to leave the stones open to interpretation, rather than inscribing the names of individual children.

At the close of each North Shore TCF monthly meeting, members stand in a circle, hold hands, and share a word or phrase that captures the spirit of their child. Many of these words found their way onto the stones: *Hero, Exuberant, Gone Fishing, Flying, Happy and Strong, Joy, and Companion*—with more than sixty stones in total.

When it was discovered that Daniel could inscribe images as well as words, one decision was revisited. Instead of the word “laughter,” often spoken in the closing circle, Chapter Leader Cathy Sosnowsky and her husband, Woldy, chose something more personal for their son Alex’s stone. They asked Daniel to recreate an eagle Alex had drawn at age eight.

The eagle—Alex’s chosen emblem—symbolized freedom and strength. Alex once said he wanted to come back as an eagle after he died. Today, his eagle rests in Victoria Park, a quiet reminder that love endures.

For families, friends, and visitors alike, ***Enduring Love*** offers a place to pause, to remember, and to feel less alone. It stands not only as a memorial, but as a testament to the lasting impact of children whose lives, though brief, continue to shape the world around them.

(Adapted from an article commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Enduring Love installation, written by Cathy Sosnowsky.)



Woldy & Cathv Sosnowskv

RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER LEADERS

A reminder that the following resources are available to Chapter Leaders on a dedicated area of the website. Please contact the National Office for the password to access this area.

Facebook Group: A link to the TCF Canada Leadership closed Facebook group allows leaders to post news, share stories, or look for support.

Grief Information Leaflets: Editable pdf versions of the updated leaflets can be customised with your chapter contact information. The non-editable versions are available to the public for download at no charge. Please consider making copies available at your Sharing Circles.

Discounted Copying and Printing: Staples Canada offers a 20% discount on printing and copying services for TCF members. The discount may be used for both chapter materials and personal copying. Please contact the National Office for the discount code.

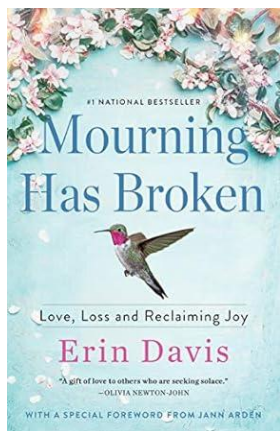
TCF Canada Video: A link on the website provides access to the newly published video that could be used for informational and promotional purposes.

TCF Slide Presentation: This slide deck outlines the history, principles and practices of TCF Canada and can be tailored to brief local communities or other organizations of interest.

Pins and Books: Copies of the TCF Canada book of poems *Reflections from the Heart* and a supply of TCF Canada pins are still available. To receive either or both, please contact the National Office with your mailing address. A donation to cover mailing costs is requested.

Chapter Chat: The next chapter chat is scheduled for Saturday April 18. @ 12 EST. Registration will be available on the TCF – Leadership Facebook group, closer to the date or email Karen Destun at vicepresident@tcfcanada.net

RESOURCE PICK



Mourning Has Broken by legendary Canadian broadcaster Erin Davis is a deeply moving memoir that chronicles the devastating loss of her only daughter, Lauren, and the path Erin and her husband, Rob, have walked through grief.

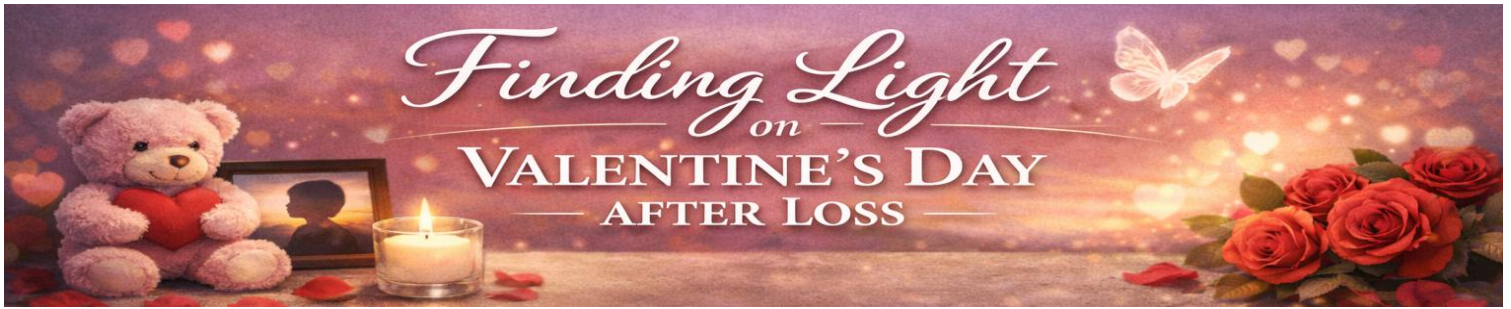
With honesty and grace, Davis recounts the shock of Lauren's sudden death, the profound ripple effects on family and friends, and the long, uneven journey toward learning how to live again. She reminds readers that grief is not something one "gets over," but something carried—woven into daily life—while slowly finding ways to reclaim meaning, purpose, and even joy.

Written with clarity and emotional depth, *Mourning Has Broken* balances raw pain with reflection, warmth, and hope. Davis's voice is both deeply personal and widely relatable, offering reassurance to those who may feel alone in their loss.

Several recurring themes resonate powerfully throughout the book:

- **Grief as a personal journey:** No two experiences of loss are the same.
- **Love beyond loss:** Profound love does not end with death.
- **Support and community:** Connection helps ease the isolation of grief.
- **Reclaiming joy:** Life can still hold meaning, even after unimaginable loss.

Mourning Has Broken is a heartfelt exploration of love, loss, and resilience. It offers comfort, insight, and gentle hope to anyone navigating grief, affirming that while life is forever changed, moments of joy can still be found.



Valentine's Day is often pictured as a day filled with love, hearts, and celebration—but for parents who have lost a child, it can also be a day of quiet sorrow and aching absence. If you are facing this day without your child, it's natural for emotions to feel intensified, memories to surface, and grief to feel heavier.

Here are some ways to care for yourself and honor your feelings while navigating Valentine's Day:

1. Acknowledge Your Emotions

It's okay to feel sad, angry, lonely, or even confused. Allow yourself to experience whatever comes up without judgment. Grief doesn't follow a calendar, and trying to force happiness can be exhausting.

2. Create a Personal Ritual

Consider a small act to honor your child's memory. This could be lighting a candle, placing a flower on their favorite spot, writing a letter to them, or listening to music that reminds you of them. These rituals can bring comfort and connection on a day that may otherwise feel empty.

3. Seek Support

Reach out to friends, family, or support groups who understand your grief. Sharing memories, talking honestly about your feelings, or simply sitting with someone who listens can ease the weight of the day. Online communities like The Compassionate Friends provide a safe space to connect with others who have walked a similar path.

4. Focus on Acts of Love in Your Life

Valentine's Day doesn't have to be about romance alone. You can channel the energy of the day into acts of love for yourself or others—volunteering, supporting a friend, or even doing something kind for yourself can create meaningful moments.

5. Plan Your Day Intentionally

Decide ahead of time how you want to spend the day, even if that means ignoring the date totally. Some parents find comfort in keeping busy, while others prefer quiet reflection. Giving yourself permission to choose your own way honors your grief and your healing process.

Remember, there's no "right" way to get through Valentine's Day after losing a child. Compassion for yourself, small rituals of remembrance, and support from understanding friends or groups can help you navigate the day with care and connection.

Even in the midst of grief, small acts of love—toward yourself, your child, and those around you—can create moments of light in a day that may otherwise feel heavy.

“Though our children are gone from our arms, their love remains forever held in our hearts.” 💜

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Donna Rodin (Medicine Hat, AB) – Past
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Development

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Tina Flamond (Calgary, AB)



GRIEF IN THE DEPTH OF WINTER

Winter can be a particularly difficult season for those who grieve. The days are shorter, the nights longer, and the natural world seems to withdraw into stillness. When grief is already weighing heavily on the heart, winter can deepen feelings of isolation, fatigue, and sadness.

For many bereaved parents, winter mirrors what grief can feel like inside: cold, quiet, and endless. The routines that once helped us cope may feel harder to maintain. Social gatherings may seem overwhelming, while staying home can intensify loneliness. There is no right or wrong way to experience this season. Grief does not follow the calendar.

It can help to gently lower expectations during the winter months. This is not a time for pushing through or “fixing” grief. Instead, it may be a season for rest, reflection, and self-compassion. Small acts of care matter: opening the curtains to let in daylight, stepping outside for a brief walk, lighting a candle in memory of your child, or allowing yourself to nap when your body asks for it.



Connection is especially important in winter. Reaching out to others who understand, whether through a Compassionate Friends meeting, a phone call, or a quiet message, can remind us that we are not alone. Even when words are hard to find, shared understanding can bring warmth.

Winter does not last forever, even when it feels unending. Beneath the frozen ground, life is quietly preparing to emerge again. Grief also changes over time, though it may never disappear. As we move through the depths of winter, may we give ourselves permission to move slowly, to honor our love and loss, and to trust that light will gradually return.