



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter – Winter 2022

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF.

Welcome to the Winter edition of the national newsletter! Our objective continues to be to provide news, information, and items of interest to connect members from coast to coast, and to provide guidance to leaders in organizing events and activities. If you have any material that you would like to contribute, or suggestions for topics that you would like to see included, please e-mail the National Office.

Garden of Hope

After six years of planning, a new place for grieving parents to commemorate and remember their children who have died has just opened in Grand Prairie, AB. The *Blossoming Garden of Hope* was a collaboration project brought to fruition by two local bereavement groups. TCF Grande Prairie Chapter Leader Elizabeth Naeth, alongside Karen Gilkyson with the Tiny Hands of Hope organization, came together to bring families and the community a place of healing and hope.

Local landscapers, artists, sculptors, and indigenous representatives have each executed their designs meticulously.

The garden features whimsical sculptures beginning with two bears holding the outline of an empty heart. The hole in the heart symbolizes

how we feel, however, the intent is when you look through the hole, you will see a garden of hope there to comfort you. Continue walking the garden and you will come across a family of geese in costume, several picnic tables, benches etched with inspirational quotes, and a large wooden gazebo next to a metal sculpture of the little dipper. This represents the Pleiades constellation, which Métis tradition considers to be a channel to speak to those who have passed, and a piece to honor all the children who did not make it home from residential schools. All these items are surrounded by many perennials and shrubs, and a variety of trees outlining the walkways.

Elizabeth started her own backyard garden in memory of her daughter Emily, who died in 2014 at the age of eight. Soon after a bench was installed at her school, she realized that something on a much bigger scale was needed for all families. TCF Grande Prairie and Tiny Hands of Hope worked together to execute this vision.

Karen Gilkyson (Tiny Hands of Hope), left, and Elizabeth Naeth (TCF), (photo Luke Ettinger/CBC)



Worldwide Candle Lighting – Sunday, December 11th, 2022: Although this newsletter is arriving only a few days ahead, we hope that your chapter has been preparing for this annual event. If you are planning a virtual celebration, perhaps over Zoom, please consider opening it to others outside your area or time zone who may not otherwise be able to participate. Some chapters have already posted notices on the Facebook page. If you are still looking for ideas, you can find a simple program on our website (select *Resources* -> *Articles*).

For those who are not able to arrange a local celebration, the US Compassionate Friends organization is offering virtual events in four time zones. For details and to register, visit <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/wcl/>.

Chapter Check-ins: Board members will be reaching out to chapter leaders in the next few weeks for our annual chapter check-in calls. Please watch your in-box for an initial e-mail contact.

Donations: We gratefully acknowledge donations made directly to our Treasurer and through the *Canada Helps* link on our website. This month, we send a big "Thank You" for recent donations from TCF Portage Plains, MB, TCF Montreal, QC, and one individual in BC.

New Resources: Following the requests in the last issue, we are pleased to announce the following additions to the TCF Canada website.

Virtual Support: A big "Thank You!" to chapters in Vancouver North Shore, BC, Winnipeg, MB, and Ottawa, ON, who offered to open their on-line sessions to parents outside their geographic areas and time zones. These centres, based in Pacific, Central, and Eastern time zones, make support available across most of the country to grieving parents who are not able to attend an in-person meeting. The National Office has already referred isolated parents from BC, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia to these meetings. Contact details are provided on the website under *Resources* -> *Virtual Support*.

If your chapter offers on-line support and would welcome visitors from out-of-town or out-of-time zone, please advise the National Office and we will add you to the list.

Recommended Reading: We received a few initial suggestions for reading materials that are posted on the website, together with a link to the Ottawa Chapter library page. If you have any personal recommendations that you would like to share, please contact the National Office and we will add them to the list.

Other Resources: The website offers other resources, including:

Grief Information Leaflets: The updated leaflets are available under the *Resources* tab on the national website as pdf documents for download at no charge. Please consider making copies available at your Sharing Circles.

Facebook Groups: Our largest TCF Canada community is the *Parents* closed Facebook group, which currently has over 1,190 members across the country sharing stories and offering support. We also offer smaller closed groups for *Siblings* and for *Men in Grief*. To join any of these groups, click on *Resources* -> *Facebook Links*.

Resources for Chapter Leaders: The website includes a link to the *TCF Canada Leadership* closed Facebook group, and the *Resources* tab includes an area for Chapter Leaders with various forms and reference articles. Please contact the National Office for the password to access this area.

The Final Word: If you have any chapter news to share, would like to promote a chapter event on the national website, support Board activities, or offer any other comments or suggestions, please contact the National Office.

Closing Thought: As we approach the end of the year with its celebrations of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza, we wish you a peaceful holiday season, and comfort as you gather with family and friends. It is our sincere hope that 2023 will bring some relief from the flood of pandemic, economic, and environmental uncertainties that have complicated our grief journeys in recent years.