



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter – Fall 2023

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF.

Welcome to the Fall 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.

The Warmth of Summer (continued)

The Labour Day long weekend is usually the trigger to switch back from relaxed summer days to the regular schedule of work and school. However, this year sees the extreme weather and wildfires that have ravaged great parts of the country continuing with little regard for the calendar. Although cooler weather will eventually bring long-awaited relief, the impact of this undesired consequence of the warmth of summer will persist for several more weeks before life is allowed to return to any kind of new normal.

To those whose lives have been disrupted by floods, heatwaves, wildfires, and smoke, we send our heartfelt wishes for a speedy resolution. Those also grieving the loss of a loved one already know the trauma of a life-changing event, and coping with another presents an extra challenge. We hope that knowledge of the comfort of others will give you the strength and resilience to overcome this too.

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” to TCF Metro Vancouver (BC) and to TCF Cranbrook (BC).

Chapter Chats: Our chat sessions provide an opportunity for leaders across the country to connect, share ideas, ask questions, and discuss issues in an informal setting. The next chat will be held on **Saturday, September 23rd** at **12 noon Eastern** time for up to an hour. If you would like to participate, please e-mail the National Office for the Zoom invitation and link.

Facilitator Training: The next training session will be held on **Saturday, October 21st** starting at **12 noon Eastern** time for about 90 minutes. The training will use the updated *Information for Facilitators* handbook and is open to both new and experienced facilitators to learn and to contribute. To register, please e-mail the National Office.

World-wide Candle Lighting: First started by TCF US in 1997, this is an annual event in which candles are lit from 7pm to 8pm in each time zone, creating a band of light around the world in memory of all children who have died. The 2023 celebration will take place on **Sunday, December 10th**, with literally thousands of people expected to participate in small and large groups, in-person and on-line. Many TCF chapters conduct their own ceremony which can involve simple readings or a more extensive program with music. While December may seem a long way off, now is the time to begin planning and promoting your chapter's event.

If your chapter is planning an on-line program, please consider posting the contact information on the *TCF Leadership* and / or *Parents* Facebook pages. Many individuals unaware of the event, or unable to attend in person, will appreciate being able to join with others in commemorating their child(ren).

First time chapters can find a suggested program on the TCF Canada website under *Resources -> Articles*. Alternatively, TCF US offers on-line celebrations in different time zones that can be viewed either individually or in a group. Visit www.compassionatefriends.org for details.

Regional Retreat: Looking even further ahead, TCF Powell River (BC), with the support of TCF North Vancouver (BC), is planning a weekend retreat for the fall of 2024, "*Nurturing Our Souls – A Retreat for Bereaved Parents*". Initially, attendance is limited to members from other BC chapters and more information will be provided in the coming months.

In addition to meeting other TCF members, events like this and the World-wide Candle Lighting, are a way to raise your chapter's profile while providing a helpful service to the local community. Until we have a host chapter for a National Gathering, you may consider whether your chapter could organise a similar event in your region.

Outreach: One of the ongoing challenges we face as a volunteer organization is ensuring that grieving parents looking for support can find us. Our national Outreach Committee, Barb Noseworthy and Karen Destun, has started researching how we may achieve this objective. While they investigate a "top-down" approach through relevant country-wide organizations, we recommend that active chapters ensure that they are registered with their local social service agency. This may be a full 211 service, or an on-line resource listing. Also, funeral homes, hospitals, churches, and medical and community centres are generally receptive to public service posters or leaflets for the information of their clients. Being visible at the municipal level can lead to direct contact or referrals for those in need.

If you have any other suggestions, perhaps examples of what has worked for your chapter, or would like to support the outreach initiative, please contact the National Office.

Resources: A reminder that the following resources are available on the TCF Canada website:

Grief Information Leaflets: The updated leaflets are available under the *Resources* tab 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 1,300 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*.

We are still offering an invitation to a bereaved father to host the Men's Group and encourage more activity.

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.

Closing Thought: We continue the theme of self-care from our last issue. As Sharing Circle facilitators, our main role is to guide the progress of the group. In doing so, we put aside our own grief and forgo the opportunity to share as a bereaved parent. It can be challenging, or even harmful, to try to share the burden of another's grief while still carrying your own. If necessary, consider attending another circle where you are not the facilitator, or perhaps meeting one-on-one with an understanding and supportive friend. In thanking you for your support to grieving parents, we again encourage you to be aware of and pay attention to your own well-being.