



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies....

National Newsletter – Spring 2025

REGISTERED OFFICE

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF.

Welcome to the Spring 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.

Time for a Change?

Every year, most of us experience one of the more disrupting events to our daily routine, namely, changing the clocks to Daylight Savings Time. While the lengthening days and brighter evenings are a welcome contrast to the shorter, darker winter ones, we may take a while to recover from the loss of an hour's sleep. However, when the upset passes, we are able to adapt to the new schedule and move on.

In time, we come to a similar transition point on our grief journey. Having experienced a major disruption with the death of our child(ren), we are ready to move away from negativity and depression and take a step forward to acceptance and positive reconciliation of our grief. Ron Toews has captured the essence of such a TCF graduation in his article below.

Consider whether this Spring could be your time for a change.

Chapter Annual Reports

Each year, chapter leaders are required to submit an Annual Report to the national office to confirm that the chapter is still active and to advise of any changes to their contact details or leadership team. Up-to-date information ensures that parents seeking support either by phone, email, or through the website can find it quickly and efficiently. To further simplify the process for 2025, in January we distributed a link to an on-line form that takes only a few minutes to complete. However, to date only 12 of our 47 chapters have responded.

If your chapter has not yet submitted a report, please take a few minutes to do so before the end of March. This will allow us to update our records before the Annual General Meeting.

Donations: This issue, we give a sincere "Thank You" for a donation from TCF Kelowna.

Annual General Meeting – Saturday, May 31st

As a registered charitable organization with CRA, we are required to hold an Annual General Meeting of our members. Our 2025 AGM will be held over Zoom on **Saturday, May 31st** starting at **12:00 noon Eastern** time for about 30 minutes. We need representatives from a minimum of 10% of our chapters for a quorum.

Please mark your calendar and contact the National Office to register your chapter's attendance. An agenda and information package will be sent out to registered attendees before the meeting.

We are always open to new members joining the Board of TCF Canada. Please contact the National Office if you would like to bring your ideas and experience to supporting chapters across the country.

That's a Good Idea!

The annual reports received so far have included some ideas for chapter activities that you may find helpful.

- **TCF Fredericton, NB** hold meetings at the local Hospice to complement their grief support programs
- **TCF Sudbury, ON** keep in touch with new parents between meetings using Messenger Chat
- **TCF North Bay, ON** plan to increase attendance by sharing advertising with the local Hospice
- **TCF Abbotsford, BC** held a summer BBQ with 35 attendees
- **TCF Cranbrook, BC** arranged an Art Therapy program led by an Art Psychotherapist and organized monthly Walk and Talk sessions for parents to gather and share while getting some outdoor exercise.
- **TCF Powell River, BC** has increased the number of spaces at their Fall 2025 Retreat to 42

Facilitator Training

Eleven leaders from NB, ON and BC attended the training session on February 15th. Most were new facilitators and some were experienced, but all benefited from participating and sharing. The discussion included many questions and answers, and everyone appreciated the opportunity to connect from coast to coast.

The next training session will be held in the fall. If you or any of your leadership team would like to attend, please contact the National Office.

Chapter Chats

After a brief pause, we are relaunching *Chapter Chats*, an open discussion over Zoom hosted by a Board member for up to an hour. Participation is voluntary, with chapter leaders or representatives invited to share successes, concerns, questions, or any other topics related to their chapter activities with other leaders across the country.

The next session will be on **Saturday, March 29th** starting at **12:00 noon Eastern** time. If you would like to participate, please contact the National Office to register.

Compassionate Friends (US) Conference

In 2024, Calgary-based Tina Flamond organised a gathering space for Canadian attendees at the New Orleans conference. This year, the conference will be held in Bellevue/Seattle, Washington, from **July 11 to 13, 2025**. Canadian attendees are warmly invited to visit the TCF Canada meet-and-greet table and to contribute to the Canadian Memory Board, a special space dedicated to honoring and remembering our loved ones.

With inspiring keynote speakers, insightful workshops, and opportunities to connect with others who truly understand, this conference is a place where lifelong friendships are often formed.

For more information and to register for the conference, visit www.compassionatefriends.org. If you would like to meet up with Tina, please email the TCF Canada National Office and we will put you in touch.

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.

Chapter Resources

In response to chapter requests, we are creating pdf versions of our grief information leaflets that can be customized with your local chapter contacts. When complete, they will be made available to Chapter Leaders through the TCF Canada website. The current pdf versions will continue to be available and downloadable at no charge.

We are still planning a TCF Canada video that could be used for informational and promotional purposes. If you have any experience or expertise in this field, we would very much like to hear from you.

Unsubscribing

Ron Toews (TCF Abbotsford, BC) contributed the following article which was inspired by a recent request to 'unsubscribe' from monthly emails. We hope that the message will inspire you on your TCF journey.

For some time, I had been trying to think of something comparable to the symbology of “graduation” — in this case, graduation from TCF. The closest I had come was the act of “unsubscribing” from the TCF email list. So, I started including the standard line one sees on the bottom of many marketing emails, namely, *“PS: If you do not wish to continue receiving this monthly email, please respond by writing Unsubscribe in the subject line and returning the email. Thanks.”*

Within hours, a couple who had been connected to our local Compassionate Friends chapter for nearly fifteen years responded, inviting us to remove them from the local TCF email list. They went on, in a warm, gracious, and perspective-filled letter, to share how they were doing, what they had learned over time, and how their deep grief had eventually changed into a loss that held space within them but no longer ran their lives.

I responded warmly by email, observing that the language in their email was befitting of Compassionate Friends ‘grads’, namely being ready to move on; closing down the Foundation they had started after their child’s death that had run its course; and acknowledging that grief still lives in our bodies but takes up less space.

In my email, I also referenced some significant practices that they said they had learned over time, namely, allowing space for grief, especially on special days; getting together with friends who get you and vice versa; observing special moments, perhaps by lighting candles; and going for walks with the right people.

Many grieving parents find Christmas nearly unbearable. Just as I was finishing my letter to this unsubscribing ‘graduating’ couple, I received a phone call from a friend of a mom whose adult child died very recently and who was finding Christmas difficult. The friend was feeling out of her depth in connecting with the grieving mom and asked me to call her, which I willingly did.

I ended my letter to the unsubscribing couple as follows:

“This is the work of The Compassionate Friends: to come alongside parents devastated by grief. I suspect that every ‘graduate’ of Compassionate Friends feels just a little bit more willing and able—even qualified—to come alongside parents devastated by grief. To be there. Without words. Or with words. This is the work of TCF grads, and I commend this good work to you.”

RT

And finally...

Please mark your calendar:

Chapter Chat - Saturday, March 29th Annual Reports due March 31st AGM - Saturday, May 31st