

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**December 2022**  
**Volume 34, Number 12**

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

### Chapter Leader

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### Meeting Information

When: First Thursday of  
each month. 7-9 p.m.  
Where: St. Timothy's Church  
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,  
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of  
Six Mile

### Coming Events:

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**December 1** - Monthly Chapter  
Meeting see page 7

No Craft Day

**December 11** - Annual Candlelighting  
at Kellogg Park at 7:00 pm

**December 20** - 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner  
at: Grand Tavern 37714 Six mile Rd.  
Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park Mall.

Contact Kathy Rambo (734-306-  
3930); you can text, call or e-mail her at  
Katjrambo@gmail.com.



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all  
children who have died

**Worldwide  
Candle  
Lighting®**

... that their light  
may always shine.



### Livonia Chapter Annual

#### Candle Lighting

Where - Kellogg Park  
Plymouth, Michigan

When - December 11 - 7:00 p.m.

Candles are provided

The Worldwide Candle Lighting will  
be held on Sunday, December 11, at  
7:00 p.m. in Kellogg Park. Friends  
and family are welcome.

PLEASE REMEMBER that we  
started a new list this year. Previously,  
we had over 600 names on the list. If  
your child(s) name was on that list, it  
has NOT been added to the new list  
unless you submitted it within the last  
year. So, if you want your child(s)'  
name read or an ornament on the tree,  
you must call by December 9th.

You're welcome to make your own  
ornament and place it on the memory  
tree or there are some at Kellogg Park  
by our memorial tree as well as being  
available at our Dec. 1st meeting.

### Coming Unwrapped

We wrap ourselves for the holidays  
much like the presents we give. The  
brightly colored paper hides what's  
within. When people look at us they  
only see the outside. We promise  
ourselves we will not come unwrapped.  
We'll make it through the family  
celebrations, the church services, and  
the big occasion. The paper and the  
ribbon will remain intact.

But it is the small thing that manages  
to untie the bow. The little insignificant  
moment, the Christmas parade, the  
search for the tree, the discovered orna-  
ment, the special carol, the memory, and  
the paper gets wrenched off. The true  
Christmas presence shows itself. The in-  
evitable tide of feelings bursts out of the  
artificially decorated facade. The emo-  
tions pour out. The intense anger wells  
up. The tears are shed and the holidays  
come. These are as sure as the tides of  
the sea and the march of time. Only a  
compassionate friend, a bereaved par-  
ent, knows of what I speak.

Yet the answer isn't in fighting or in  
denying these feelings. We have paid  
the price. We have the right to grieve.  
The resolution of our grief is the griev-  
ing. Our hope for all who read this letter  
is that you will make it through the  
holidays. We cannot make the pain go  
away. But know there are others who

(continued on page 4)

# **Our Children Loved and Remembered Always**

*This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.*

## **Let Us Remember Them Always**

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
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*Names available to members*



## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

*Softly ... may peace  
replace heartache  
and cherished memories  
remain with you always on  
your child's birthday*

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A Christmas Wish!  
I'll miss you at Christmas  
When laughter's everywhere,  
When church bells chime  
In merry rhyme  
And warmth is in the air.!

I'll think of you at Christmas  
Of when you were with me,  
Of simple joys and silly toys  
And days that used to be.!  
I'll miss you at Christmas  
When children's faces glow,

And gaze in childish wonderment  
At Santa and presents in a row.!  
I wish a Christmas miracle  
Could bring you back this way,  
And we could be together  
For one more Christmas day.!  
*Lily deLauder!*

suffer with you. We have made it, and together will continue on.

*Hank Hewett  
TCF, Scranton, PA*

## A Loss Before the First Christmas

I think the only thing sadder than looking back at Christmases that were and will never be again is having no Christmases to look back to at all. There are some people who believe it is easier to lose an infant than an older child, and I am sure that for some parts of grief, they are right, but this is not one of them.

Memories are painful, but they are treasured, wonderful things that can help fill the emptiness. Christmas is one of the big expectations. Matter of fact, it is one of the reasons we have children. So, if our child dies before sharing a Christmas with us, we know we are missing something wonderful, but we don't know exactly what. We will try as hard as we can, over and over again, to imagine our children on Christmas, but we cannot fabricate a memory. We can not see our child's face light up, or hear their sweet voices, or watch their movements. So the more we try, the more frustrated we become. We hurt horribly, and we are empty, lonely, and devastated. But because we did not have them long enough, most people (even ourselves, sometimes) will feel we have no right to grieve this Christmas.

So I've got to tell you, we have as much right and as many reasons to cry and grieve, as any parent whose child has died.

*Laura Bouse,  
TCF Hardin County, OH*

## One Word COURAGE

I will not tell you that you are strong. I know you do not feel strong. A single word could bring you to your knees. I will not tell you that I admire you. I know you do not feel admirable. More like confused and hurting; falling down a deep, dark hole. What I will

tell you though, is that you have courage.

Courage you may not have recognized in yourself. Whenever you open a book on grief, read a magazine article on grief, attend a support group, or talk about your grief, you have courage. Whenever

you positively express your suffering, you have courage. When you got out of bed but didn't want to, got dressed, went to work or took care of children and then made it to the end of your day, you found courage. Courage that you never wanted to know you had, but courage that you now have.

Courage is not easy to find, let alone keep. However, it can be found; it can be kept. During those horrible days when you may think you are going to die, keep courage firmly in front of you. When your pain is overwhelming, keep courage firmly in your heart. Courage is where your healing lives.

The opportunities to find courage are many, if we pay attention. When you went to the grocery store, even if you collapsed on the floor at the sight of your child's favorite food, but made it back home, you found courage. When you looked through photo albums of your child and cried and cried, you found courage. When you spoke their name, told their story and allowed yourself to grieve, you found courage.

Courage born can never die. Courage found can never be lost. It can be difficult to wake up every day and find courage. The devastation from our child's death is like nothing we have ever experienced. Words like happy, smiles, laughter, meaning, and joy are concepts in a distant reality we think we will never know again.

So when you hear the bereaved parents talk about the return of their smile or how they have found meaning again, let that give rise to your courage. Try to have an attitude that says, "If it can happen for them, maybe, just maybe, it can happen for me." It is true, it can happen for you, it has happened for thousands of parents who

did their work and did not let death win.

Bring courage into your life and it will bring along its partners of hope, a positive attitude, and the desire for a better day.

*Rob Anderson,  
Sugar Grove, IL*

## Gifts of Love

As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered. My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and admonish that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears. It has been four and a half years



since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about: one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat...smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on...so many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memories...beautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone...no one can ever take those priceless memories away. Though they may hurt now and probably always will but not as intensely, give yourself a gift...the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

*Cathy Seehuetter*  
*TCF, St. Paul, MN*

## Grief for Children in the Holidays

Holidays are times of sharing and togetherness. But after a death in the family the Christmas season can be difficult to endure for everyone, including the children. Traditions that bring about memories may bring a flood of emotions for a child. Some families mistakenly try to deny these feelings by avoiding certain holiday customs like putting up a tree or exchanging gifts, according to Alan Wolfelt, author of *Helping Children Cope with Grief*.

"Such avoidance is an impossible task in an environment that constantly reminds us of the holidays," Wolfelt says. "Families might consider withdrawing some from excess holiday activities. Christmastime is very stressful, and the combined emotional weight of grieving may drain children.

While there is no easy formula for helping children deal with grief, Wolfelt gives the following suggestions for adults to consider: \*Be aware that your behavior influences a grieving child. The child's ability to cope with the problem depends on the ability of important adults to express their grief and convey to the child that it's okay to express a full range of feeling. Adults must let children know that tears are not a signal of rejection, but sadness. If a parent says, "I feel sad because I miss Grandma," the child will understand that emotions are an acceptable demonstration of grief.

\*Don't avoid family tradition during the holidays. Children find comfort in customs, such as decorating the tree or baking Christmas cookies. Traditions provide a structure for the expressions of the child's thoughts and feelings.

\*Create a special time during the holidays to talk about the deceased family member. Younger children might find it helpful to look at family photographs when they discuss their memories. While helping children cope with the pain of their grief during the holidays is difficult, slow, and wearing, the process can also be en-

riching and fulfilling for loving adults.  
*Alan Wolfelt*

## My Dilemma

Shall I cry for Christmases gone  
And mourn the joyful times:  
The sleepy-eyed mornings  
Of love and warmth,  
Coffee and cinnamon censing the air,  
Whoops of delight and groans of amusement,  
Wrapping paper and bows and emptied boxes  
Stuffed behind the sofa  
And that dear delighted grin  
Never to be seen again?  
Or shall I smile and treasure  
The cherished memories of those faces,  
The boom of laughter,  
The quick hug and shy kiss,  
The merry Christmas pranks,  
The midnight run for batteries?  
My heart is full of sorry and joy-  
Both intertwined by love,  
Both felt in the same instant,  
The thread of life that was and is.  
Life continues,  
Love continues.  
Shall I cry or  
Shall I smile?

*Lynn Avant*

## What I Really Want

Recently, a couple in our church lost a 19-year-old daughter to an accident where a drunk driver crossed the median and hit Sarah's car. Sarah died instantly. When I visited the couple in their home, I felt their heavy heart-ache. I knew what they were going through for the early days of Daniel's death manifested themselves. I saw the potted plants and flowers from florists and remembered our house after Daniel died. Dozens of vases of flowers sent by family and friends crowded the dusty dining room table. Meals brought over by friends were wedged into the refrigerator. And my heart was breaking, more and more each moment. For what I really wanted to appear at my front door was not a potted plant or a casserole, but my son. How would I live now?

*Alice J. Wisler ~ Daniel's House*

## The Brink

Holidays are frequently difficult times for survivors. Family gatherings just don't seem the same without our lost loved one. I can recall that after my brother had taken his life, my family was planning the memorial service. We got into a rather heated argument over what should be done and how it should be done. The frustration and anger following a suicide often leaves survivors in a frenzy. Finally, in exasperation. I said, "I don't even want to go to this memorial service. It isn't what Ken would've wanted anyway!" The room quieted down and my mother looked at me and said, "The memorial, isn't

for Ken. It's for us. To help us deal with "it". It was stark and it was so clear. So right.

Months later, Christmas was approaching. My mother spoke about "canceling Christmas". She lamented without Ken there. I thought about that. I thought about the fact that my brother had always been the life of the party at holiday gatherings. He trotted out old stories deliberately designed to embarrass everyone but himself. He presented one of us with a "gag gift" every year. It could be a rock, a can of pork brains or the smokeless ashtray that he and my brother Tony gave back and forth every year. He had all the best quips. He made us all laugh and enjoy the season. But in the end, I recalled my mother's earlier words and paraphrased them "Mom, holidays

are for the living. This Christmas is for us." It seemed almost callous but it was the truth. And we had a nice Christmas that year. No, it wasn't the same. How could it have been? But life, including holidays, must go on.

One of the most bitter pills for me to swallow during my brother's memorial service was the preacher saying, "Life must go on." For me and my family, life had seemingly stopped. But it does go on.

Our loved ones could not have known the extent of emotional and social paralysis their irrational act would leave us with. We might ask ourselves if our loved one would want us to languish in our pain and avoid carrying on tradition with our friends and families. Better still, we might give ourselves the ultimate Christmas gift of allowing ourselves to experience some joy.

Wading through the holidays soon after the loss of a loved one is difficult. Often times you won't believe you can ever find the holiday spirit again. Sometimes old traditions have to be changed. The arms and shoulders of friends and family help pull us through. Sometimes you won't feel at all like having fun. Allow yourself your grief. Listen to the cues our hearts, minds and bodies give. Whatever you choose to do, remember that the holidays are for family. They're for your children, your parents and your siblings... And you. Peace.

*Kelvin Wade, Survivors of Suicide, Vacaville CA*



PLEASE REMEMBER  
Siblings are welcome to attend  
the Livonia Compassionate  
Friend meetings. We ask that  
you be at least 16 years old.

## Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings Telephone Friends

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062

Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938

Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

**Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.**

**TCF CHAT ROOM:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

**National Mailing Address:** 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### **OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:**

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel:MikeFedela2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

**St. Clair Shores:** 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, kjmac21@aol.com

**Detroit:** Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church,12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

**Troy:** St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

**South Rockwood TCF Chapter:** Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

**Tecumseh TCF Chapter:** First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Marsha & Jeff DiCenzo 517-918-5608 & 517-358-1883





## Livonia Chapter Page

Regular meeting: Thursday, December 1st at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“How do you cope with major holidays - “shall I cry or shall I smile?”*

*We will have a candle lighting at our meeting, as well as inviting all of you to participate in the candle lighting at Kellogg park on December 11th.*

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**A Love Gift** is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form is on back page.

- ♥ Joyce & Rob in memory of Adam; “Adam, 17th Christmas We love and miss you.”
  - ♥ In memory of Nancy; “Nan, missing you every day.”
  - ♥ Susan Wobig in memory of Michael Ryan; “ In memory of my son, Michael, love and miss you lots. Merry Christmas.”
  - ♥ Brendolyn Jasper in memory of Jeffrey Parker; “Wishing you a Heavenly X-Mas. Love, Mom & Kimberley”
  - ♥ Judy Cappelli in memory of Christopher; “Happy Birthday Christopher. No matter how much time goes by, I will always cherish the memories. I love and miss you son. Love Mom”
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## New Members

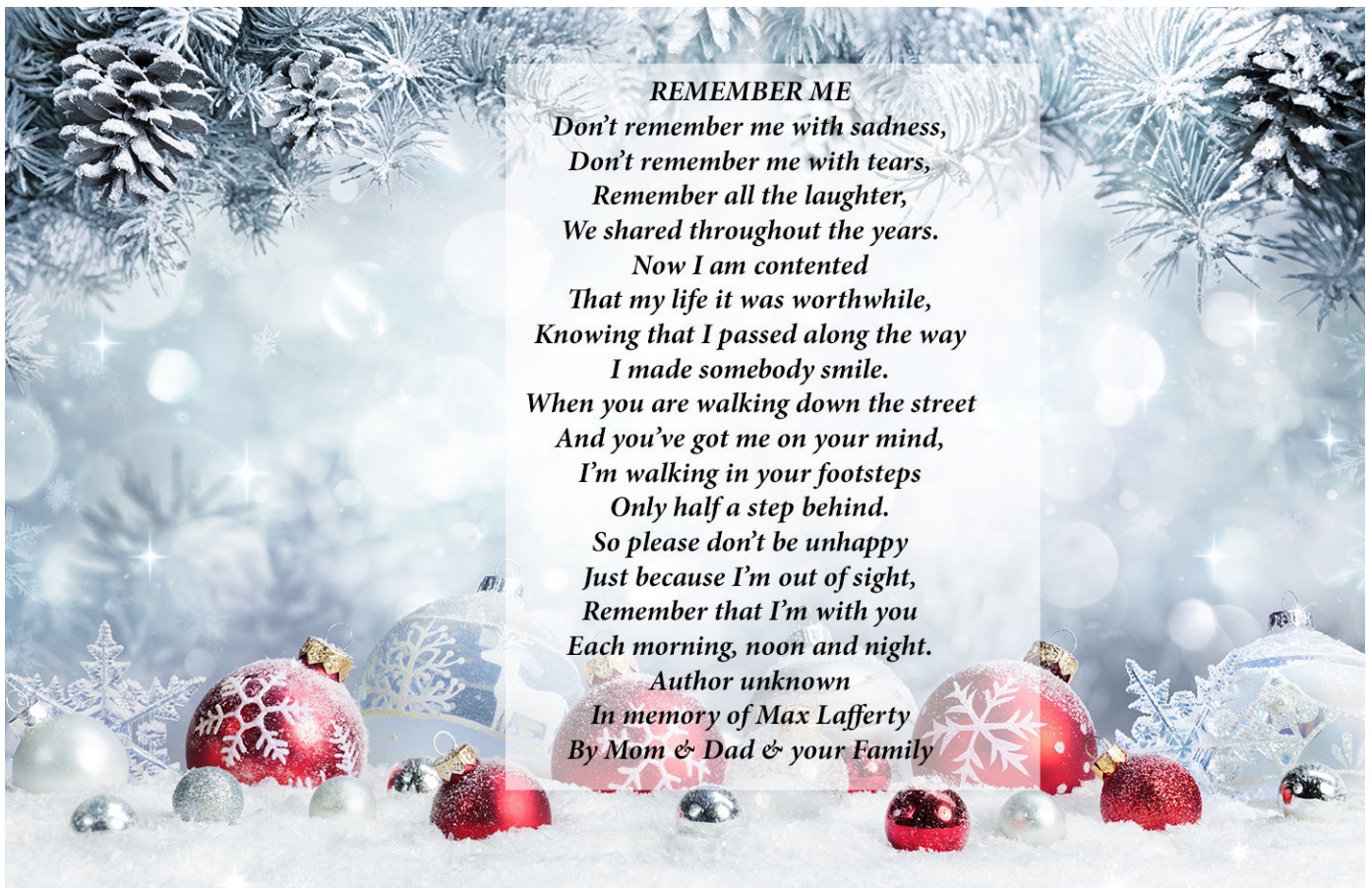
*We welcome new members. We are so sorry for the circumstance that has brought you here. Although we have no easy answers, we can offer you understanding through our common experiences. We also know how much courage it took for you to attend.*

Kate Gregory, whose beloved son, **Jason Mayleben**, Born 6/27; Died 5/4; 34 years

Linda Hanner, whose beloved son, **Steven Abdo**, Born 5/10; Died 2/22; 38 years

Angelia and Rick Martin, whose beloved daughter, **Nicole**, Born 4/30; Died 8/24; 25 years

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TCF Livonia Chapter  
Brenda Brummel  
10531 Calumet Trail  
Gaylord, MI 49735

## ***December 2022***

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,  
*please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel*

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### ***LOVE GIFTS***

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Love Gift Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

Direct my gift to: \_\_\_\_\_ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web  
\_\_\_\_\_ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

### **We Can Make It**

During the holiday season, both Christians and Jews light candles in celebration of their respective faiths. As they do so, even the darkest rooms become warm and bright from the glow of a candle. Then we can ask ourselves, how powerful or sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle?

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us— and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of a winter night— we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as bereaved parents must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but oh we need that little bit so badly.

*Betty & Sam Rosenberg,*