

Remembering and Sharing - News from West Yorkshire

In March we held our annual Service of Remembering and Sharing. We were joined by friends from many parts of the country. The service included readings, music, the lighting of candles and the laying of flowers. Some talented and artistic members of our group arranged the flowers into a beautiful display to be left in the church (we have since heard that the congregation really appreciated the display and the meaning of it, and they have looked after it for us). *Diana Hack*

NEWS, INFORMATION & CALENDAR

Leaflet writer wanted!

We know that our leaflets are much appreciated, especially by newly bereaved parents. This makes the work of producing them particularly rewarding. We review each of the 30 plus titles currently in print on a four year cycle, and occasionally produce a new one when a demand arises.

There is a small team of writers that meets twice a year. Each writer will take a draft of a leaflet to the meeting and the team will discuss any amendments or improvements that can be made to it. Between meetings, there is work involved in making final alterations to the leaflet, and then work starts on drafting for a new one. We use email to communicate with each other, so that would be useful – though not essential – to have.

We now have a vacancy for a writer. This will appeal to someone who enjoys writing (of course) and can remember enough of their English grammar to know the difference between : and ;. We would particularly like to broaden the age range to include a younger perspective. If you would like to be considered for this post, please get in touch with David Lloyd Hughes at 5 Hollin Gardens, Leeds LS16 5NL or david@lloyd-hughes.fsbusiness.co.uk.

Fundraising

A big thank you to all those who have done so well in raising money for TCF through your own charity events. As you will appreciate, the TCF Newsletter is very small for a national publication, hence we have had to leave out all references to local charity events in this issue. Our difficulty is compounded because so many of our members participate and organise charity events that we could fill almost all of our pages with reports on these events. However, this would not give us a balanced national newsletter. So what can we do? Simply to list fund raisers would not do justice to their efforts. In relation to submissions already received, we shall be including reports on

these in our next issue. In the long term we are considering alternative ways of publicising fund raising events, maybe having one edition of TCF News published each year that concentrates solely on fund raising, or a special inserted page for each edition. Other possibilities might be to extend the newsletter to eight pages but this would involve considerable expense beyond our means at this stage (Catch 22). This topic will be discussed at the next meeting of the National Committee. In the meantime, we are well aware of the importance of your noble efforts in raising money, much needed by an organisation strapped for cash; and we welcome members' views on this issue. (Phone Editor Mick Wilson on 01284 728608 or e-mail mick.wilson11@tiscali.co.uk).

Compassionate Friends Rose

The Compassionate Friends rose (see front page) is a floribunda with satin pink flowers with a spicy perfume, flowering throughout the season. a compact and sturdy plant, ideal for borders and patios, 60cm tall x 50cm. This years price for bare root plant is £6.00 plus postage of £3.75 for any quantity of plants. They are dispatched from the growers from November onwards but you need to order early to avoid disappointment. TCF get a commission of £1.25 per plant.

To place an order contact Julia at the office on 0845 1209 3785

Fundraising Directory

The new Christmas 2005 catalogue is available with everything from toys to furniture, to exercise and kitchen equipment. Up to 25% of all sales go to TCF.

Contact Julia at the office on 0845 120 3785 for a copy.

BBC Radio Appeal

BBC Radio 4 will be making an appeal for TCF on Sunday, 11th December at 07.55 and 21.26, which will be repeated on Thursday, 15th December at 15.27. Countess

Mountbatten will be speaking. We have produced stickers of the above to publicise the appeal: these can be attached to envelopes, letters, leaflets etc.. If you would like a supply please contact Julia at the office.

This Year's AGM

will be on 5th November at Holy Cross Community Centre, Bristol.

Candle lit Services

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE - TCF Group will be holding a Candle Service at Seighford Church, near Stafford on Wednesday, 14th December at 7.30 p.m.. Bereaved parents, family and friends are all welcome.

Paddy Hind (Group Contact)

STOCKPORT - The Sale Group will be holding a Candlelight Service on Sunday 11 December 2005 at St Thomas's Church, Buxton Road, High Lane, Stockport SK6 8DX at 3pm. The service will be conducted by Rev Marc Wolverson.

b.. Deptford - awaiting confirmation

WEST WATFORD - Watford group will be holding a Candlelight Service on 11 December 2005 at St Michael and All Angels Church, Durban Road, West Watford, Herts. starting at 6.30pm. Contact Bob or Lynda Humphrey 01923 245829 or email boblyn@lineone.net for further information.

TAUNTON - Taunton TCF Group Remembrance Service for all those affected by the death of a child will be held on 11 December at 3pm at St Peter and Paul's Church, Bishops Hull, Taunton. Contact Rev Sue Tucker for details on 01823 333032.

KENT - not sure whether anything has been set up

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE - On Saturday 22 January 2006 the 7th Memorial service "Celebrating a Life" will be held at 2pm in St John's Church, Grainger Street, Newcastle (close to central station). Service will be conducted by Fr Neil Wilson. Photos of children will be placed on the Altar, candles lit and readings from bereaved parents.

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53 North Street, Bristol BS3 1EN. Tel: 08451 20 37 85. Fax: 08451 20 37 86 www.tcf.org.uk

TCF News

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The Compassionate Friends

Catharine Pointer, brilliant fundraiser, gifted librarian, and wonderful compassionate friend dies



Catharine Pointer died suddenly on the 14 July 2005 at 10.00p.m. Linda Hurcombe has written a tribute and she has kindly given us permission to re-print the last paragraph (below).

'I met Catharine in her capacity as TCF National Librarian, and discovered not only a scholar but a counsellor, agony aunt, comforter and encourager. Catharine took up what began as a small collection of books for bereaved parents and over the course of nearly twenty years developed a unique National postal library with well over a thousand books and other resources for bereaved people of all ages. Until Catharine's retirement earlier this year and after nearly twenty years of

service, TCF library was run from Catharine's home with the help of one part-time assistant, extending to thousands of bereaved parents the benefit of quality bereavement literature and 'hands-on support...'

There will be a memorial service at 2.00 p.m., 29th October, at All Saints Church, Maidstone, Kent. If you would like to send a tribute to be included in a special booklet TCF is preparing, or make a donation towards the cost in Catharine's memory, please send to the TCF Library, Ground Floor, Under1roof, 5a New Road Avenue, Chatham, ME4 6BG. Catharine's husband Michael and son Jonathan survive Catharine, and our deepest compassionate thoughts go to them.



TCF Proudly Welcomes Our New Patron - Dr. Ann Dent

As one of the first Macmillan community nurses Ann was involved in the setting up and running of St. Peter's Hospice in Bristol. She has worked to achieve community care for dying children and their families in the South West Region.



She was also involved in initiating services nationally for children with cancer and running many workshops for professionals on care of the dying child and the family. She was one of three nurses to set up the first hospice in Russia.

More recently she has conducted research into support for families after sudden child death at the Department of Health in Bristol University, giving papers nationally and internationally on her work. She set up and helped to run two International Conferences on Children & Death in the UK. Over the years she has been involved in initiating and running two branches of Cruse. For four years she was chair of the consultant panel of the Child Bereavement Network and is currently chair of the Bereavement Research Forum.

The title of her most recent book is Sudden Death in Childhood: Support for the Bereaved Family.

Although now semi retired, she continues to run workshops to guide professionals in this important work.

She was widowed in her late twenties but is now married to Richard. Together they have six children and six grandchildren.

'Sad Tears and Brave Smiles'

2005 National Gathering at Cirencester

It was great to welcome 84 bereaved parents, of which 20 were first timers, to the 2005 Gathering at Cirencester in April. The impressive Royal Agricultural College was founded in the early 1800,s and is located in a beautiful rural setting on the outskirts of the small market town of Cirencester.

On the Friday afternoon following registration and signing up for workshops there was a meeting for first timers followed by supper in the impressive students' dining hall. On Saturday morning Allyson McCulloch from Winston's Wish, the Gloucestershire based bereavement charity supporting bereaved families mainly after the loss of a parent, was our keynote speaker. She gave a very informative talk with video illustration of the work they do. Allyson herself is a bereaved parent and her talk was well received. In the afternoon Bridie Taylor from the Meningitis Trust gave a lively and interesting talk about the work of her Charity.

Throughout the weekend there were a number of well attended discussion groups and creative workshops led by TCF members, plus aromatherapy and other relaxing therapies. A lovely Gala Dinner was held on



Roger Hunt 'in commanding mode'

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'Sad Tears and Brave Smiles'

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Saturday evening (see photos) and the weekend closed with the Candlelit Celebration Ceremony, beautifully orchestrated by Diana Youdale, our hard working chairperson, on Sunday, which included a poetry reading of one of her poems by Patricia Lloyd and excellent recitals once again by the TCF choir.

Special thanks are due to Dale and Roger Hunt who masterminded this Gathering. Their organisation skills, knowledge and kind and informative responses to members' questions played a vital part in making the Gathering such a success: we are indebted to them! And a word of thanks also to their able team of assistants who helped maintain the smooth running of the numerous meetings and events.

The Gathering was a huge success and the positive feedback has been very encouraging. We have booked the same venue for the 2006 Gathering for next September 30th to October 1st, and hope to include the AGM at the start of the Event.

For those who have been to a Gathering please come again and for any newcomers please try it, you won't be disappointed.

Report by Marian Venn

If you would like to run a discussion group or workshop at the 2006 Gathering please let Marian Venn know and she will add your proposal to the list for consideration.

'I didn't once hide my tears'

A New Member's View of the Gathering

My name is Julie Donnelly and I lost my 17 year old son Adam on July 30th 2004. We were on holiday in Cyprus and he collapsed and died of a heart attack while playing volleyball. One of Adam's school friends was killed in an RTA in 2001 and her mother came to see me when Adam had died and told me about TCF. At first, I didn't think anything of it but, after six weeks, I returned to work and looked up TCF on the website. I went on to their meeting point and read hundreds and hundreds of postings from people - I just cried for hours and cried even more when I put my own posting on the website. Within hours I had responses from so many people and I felt for the first time that I had found a group of people who knew exactly what I was going through.

I quickly struck up regular communications with a few people - three of whom had lost 17 year old sons and one who had lost a son in the same way as we had lost Adam. I connected with these four more than any other. With two of my compassionate friends, we discussed the gathering and whether we would go or not. I think it became a case of "If you go, then I will too!" As it came nearer to the gathering, I was extremely nervous (and I know my other two friends were as well) and, if it hadn't been for the fact that we had arranged to meet there, then I'm fairly convinced I would have cancelled at the last minute, something I am so glad that I did not do now.

I was worried that it would all be too upsetting, that I wouldn't be able to cope with meeting strangers (something I have had some difficulty with since losing Adam). I got off the train and there was a lovely man called Peter waiting for me. He just gave me a hug and said 'Welcome!' and I burst into tears!

Meeting the two friends that I had been communicating with over the months was so nice: we had all poured so many feelings out into our e-mails, it was great to be able to talk to them face to face. The weekend itself was so well organised: you could participate as much or as little as you wanted and I did not once feel uncomfortable. It was so comforting to meet so many people who knew exactly what pain losing a child causes you - I didn't once hide my tears that weekend. I felt so peaceful when I was there. I would definitely recommend the gathering to anyone who is sadly in this club that none of us asked to join.

Julie Donnelly



First timers
Teri Crossland, Debbie Scott and Julie Donnelly



Peter and Jean Austin

'Sharing Experiences in a safe situation'

The views of two group leaders

Ever since I lost my son six years ago, I have been travelling over to Britain from Germany to take part in the Compassionate Friends Annual Gathering. Not because there is no support where I live (there is, and also a national branch of TCF) but because when you are an expat living abroad and something traumatic such as the death of a child happens to you, it can be just so consoling, comforting and familiar to be able to talk about it in one's native language. What's more, it was an uplifting experience to discover that I could help others in my writing workshops to create tributes to their children.

Sue Grant

The opportunity to share experiences and feelings in a safe situation was good. Why safe? Because we are free from the constraints of (1) being misunderstood by family and friends; and (2) not hurting them or adding to their sorrows. Always we hear of different circumstances that led to a tragic death, and shared the fellowship of suffering.

*They came, first timers, old timers
But all hill climbers.
For a brief time resting
On the journey that has no end.*

Sheila Clark



Sue Grant

Coventry Sponsored Walk Spending time at TCF's Heritage Founding Sites

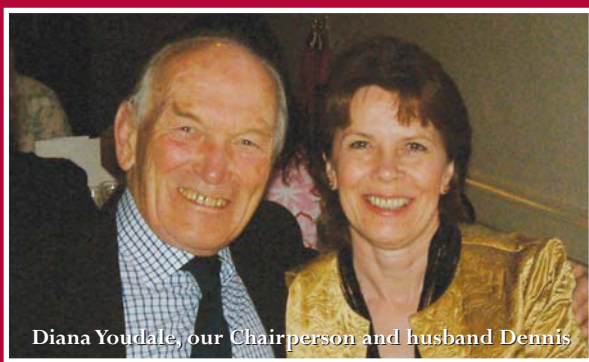
In the end people came, from our chairperson Diana Youdale, herself not long after major surgery, and her husband Dennis, to the Keach group from Kettering, including one young lady who jumps out of aeroplanes for good causes, a new member from Tamworth and her family supporters, Pat & Jerry Morris from Nottingham, Mary and Ken Evans from Birmingham and Jenny Bindon from Bath, one of our greatest supporters, bringing two friends. Last but not least, our elder daughter



Angela who, together with the Henderson children, was the first of the bereaved siblings within TCF, and her husband Jim.

Crunched together for group photographs or straggling out along the pavements we looked a sizeable group. Down into the town centre viewing the new sculpture to Sir Frank Whittle inventor of the Jet Engine, through the Lady Herbert garden, past St Marks and into the Coventry & Warks Hospital Complex where, in the absence of 'security' (which was meant to meet us), we viewed 'The Nurses Home' where on 28th January 1969, in a small lounge around a small table, Joan & Bill Henderson, Iris and Joe Lawley, Betty Rattigan, and the Revd Simon Stephens founded the Society of the Compassionate Friends, the name which somehow inspirationally emerged. Then we visited the TCF Plaque that is positioned at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Children's Wards, down which we and many other bereaved parents had tearfully stumbled, our beloved children's lives at an end. However, we were in more uplifting spirits today and in the absence of anyone to stop us we moved two portable beds out of the way and took some nice group photographs.

A helpful young woman opened up St Marks where we were able to view it from a point of view as a possible 'International Heritage Centre' including our National Office. Now we needed to get our proverbial skates on to reach our next Heritage Site, Warwick Road URC by 4.15pm where we were to meet the Lord Mayor and Mayoress of Coventry, Councillor Ram Lakha and his wife Reemi. Rushing past Lady Godiva, the most energetic amongst us made it and held the fort as the Lord Mayor and Mayoress were already there. The Lord Mayor gave us of his time and interest, during which he described how eastern religions deal with child bereavement. Finally we departed for our last Heritage Site, the Coventry Cathedral and Ruins. The Coventry Cathedral is another famous Heritage Site for TCF, the Bishop Bardsley, at that time Simon's boss, was our second Honorary Chaplain and in 1994 for the First International Gathering and again in 1999 for our 30th Anniversary they hosted two wonderful commemorative services for us. Ten of us attended the six thirty service. They made us very welcome and one of our party Sue from Bath gave thanks for the miraculous survival of her son after a serious accident. After further tea and biscuits we said goodbye and thanked the Dean and staff. *Joe Lawley*



Diana Youdale, our Chairperson and husband Dennis

'What TCF is all about'

Our Chairperson's view of The Gathering

This was the first TCF Gathering to be held at the Royal Agriculture College in Cirencester. I arrived the night before in heavy rain but the initial wet and chilling start, could not dampen the overall warm and friendly atmosphere. The college staff were extremely kind and helpful at all times, and the setting lent itself wonderfully to the supporting and caring environment of TCF.

It is always lovely to meet old friends but it was even lovelier to have the opportunity to meet new ones too. However, the highlights for me were seeing the emerging smiles, and rays of hope and light, amongst the tears, and the wonderful pieces of art work that were made in the creative memory workshop. Each one had a story to tell, a story containing many precious memories of a dearly loved son, daughter, sibling or grandchild.

I felt that the whole weekend was an uplifting experience and one of warmth, love, understanding and acceptance, amidst an abundance of compassion and friendship.

And that, my friends, is what TCF is all about!

Diana Youdale

Scottish Forum 2005 - Perth A Light in the Darkness

Seventy four bereaved parents, of which 14 were first timers, attended the Scottish Forum in Perth in May. A candle lighting ceremony in memory of all our children started off the Friday evening just before dinner. The keynote speech on the Saturday morning was informative and heart-warming by Dr. Nancy Reeves, who herself is a bereaved sibling, and was well received by all attending. A range of discussion groups followed morning and afternoon. Aromatherapy sessions, 'Comfort from Words and Music', and a bus trip to various locations in Perth completed the afternoon. The star prize at the raffle on the Saturday night was a brand new mountain bike generously donated by a local publican.

On Sunday morning the ecumenical service was led beautifully by the Rev. Evelyn Cairns, and the Brightons Praise Group performed the service of hymns in their usual uplifting style.

The closing ceremony brought the weekend to a close and included a humorous yet sensitive poem, 'No I do not want to go to the Pub', written by Danny Sherlock and recited by Wendy Pye.

Hugh McAninch

