



The Mask

Lennie Neal, TCF, Victoria, BC

There's an old mask I wear for the public,
Smiling face, I'm sure you've seen the act.
Concealing all the grief so deep and wild,
The deep and desperate longing for my child,
Buried under courtesy and tact.

An invitation brought me to Seabeck
Hesitantly, hoping for some peace.
Walking slowly, shy among the strangers
Mask in place, alert for hidden dangers,
Hoping against hope for some release.

A fortunate seating at the table,
I sat beside a woman, calm and mild.
She turned to greet me with a gaze so fine,
Compassionate eyes that never left mine
As she smiled, and asked about my child.

The wave of relief fairly shook me,
I saw at once that I could drop the mask.
The workshops and the sharings all were real,
Emotions in the songs that made me feel,
The meals also, all that I could ask.

Candles in the night, so very moving,
We gathered on the bridge under the moon.
Couldn't stop the flood of tears from streaming,
Can't mistake the song, or miss its meaning,
Our children all were taken far too soon.

Our burdens were all burned at the closing,
Cascades of bubbles floating far and near.
The sense of community was stronger,
But we just couldn't stay any longer,
That's OK, we'll all come back next year.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Our annual retreat at Seabeck was once again an exceptional weekend for bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings and the widowed. As we listened to our special guest, Alan Pedersen, share his music and grief journey with us there were both tears and laughter. Our other speakers and workshop leaders: Margarita Suarez, Bob Baugher, Pheo Rose, Kristin Brandon, J.A. Jance and Betty McLain were also great and helped the bereaved work on their grief. For most folks, what makes the retreat a special place is the nurturing environment as we connect with others who understand our grief. Sharing our stories and remembering our precious loved ones makes the weekend truly memorable. The candlelighting and closing ceremony especially reflect our love that will never fade. The Love and Memories we have are forever! ~ MT

Who Was *That* Person?

Rich Edler, TCF, South Bay/LA Chapter



An eight year retrospective...

Who was that person? He looked like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply "before" and "after."

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he is going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often, "Why did he live?"

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself. *Who was that person?* I don't think I know him anymore.



The Compassionate Friends

Seattle-King County Chapter



The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a *non-profit mutual assistance, self-help* organization offering *friendship, understanding, and hope* to bereaved parents and families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings provide an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, but to support bereaved parents, grandparents and adult siblings in the positive resolution of the grief feelings and issues that revolve around the death of their loved one and support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief work. Try to attend three times before deciding if TCF is right for you.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF 'veterans' to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE come to a meeting. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group, but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the other members is okay, too. Our meetings are open to parents, grandparents, adult siblings, or other adult family members.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

This group belongs to you and cannot survive without assistance. Areas of help needed are refreshments, setting up before a meeting, being a phone friend for those who may be having a particularly difficult day, help with the newsletter, send thank-you notes, become a facilitator, volunteer to help with Chapter activities or serve on the steering committee.

Part of getting better, is being there to assist others, too, through this journey.

If you'd like to help, please contact us.

Chapter Co-Leaders: Mike McLeod: 206-369-7366 and Marge Tomlinson: tcfmarge@aol.com



KEEPING IN TOUCH



Seattle-King County Chapter **Phone: 206-241-1139** (TCF Line)

Seattle-King County Chapter **Mailing Address: P. O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166-0896**

Seattle-King County Chapter **Website: www.tcfseattle.org**

Seattle-King County Chapter **Facebook: The Compassionate Friends, Seattle King County Chapter**

Phone Support: Having a rough moment? Need someone to talk to? Call Robyn at 360-259-8006 ♥

Western Washington Regional Coordinator: Jacqueline Russell 360-457-7395

TCF National Office Phone: 877-969-0010

TCF National Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

TCF National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org (website has link to Facebook)

♥ **TCF Online Support** - Please visit the National website to get the session schedule.

OBSTACLES

We who lived in the concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: The last of his freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

~ Viktor E. Frankl

There is an Egyptian story that says when God created the world, He made everything small so that it could grow up with time. The grain into the wheat, the baby into the man, the bud into the flowers. Only sorrow was created full grown so that it might decrease with time and Man might be able to live with it.



Our Chapter's Sharing Group Location:

FEDERAL WAY

~2nd Wednesday evening of each month~

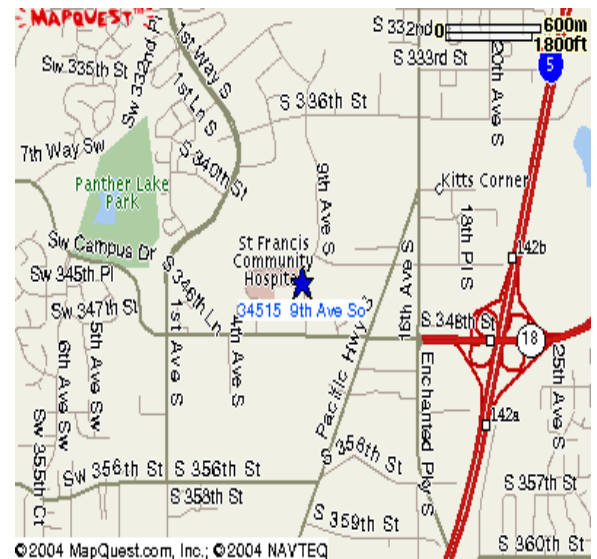
Meetings: July 11, August 8, September 12,
October 10, November 14, December 12,
January 9, February 13, March 13, April 10

6:30pm – 8:30pm

St. Francis Hospital
34515 9th Ave. So.

Federal Way, WA 98003

Ask at the information desk in the main lobby for
directions to the meeting room.



Books on Grief Available

We have quite a large selection of grief books at our monthly meetings. We invite you to look over the books from our library. We hope you can find something that may help you and your family. If you have a book you would like to donate and share with other bereaved parents, please bring it with you to the meeting.

Birthday Table



In the month of your child's birthday, a Birthday Table is provided where you can share photos, mementos, your child's favorite snack, a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers – anything you'd like to bring to share. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth and for us to become better acquainted.

TCF National Magazine *We Need Not Walk Alone* Available Free Online!

To sign up for a free electronic version of TCF's *We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine, go to TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on "Sign up for National Publications" at the top of the Home (or any inside) page. Fill out the information and when each issue of the magazine is published, the National Office will send you a special link so you can be among the first to read its great content. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use. When you sign up for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, you also have the opportunity to sign up to receive the monthly national e-newsletter which provides information about what is currently happening within the organization.

Where to Buy Grief Books

Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for – or they'll be able to tell you where to find it.



Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402-553-1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org.

When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.



AFTERGLOW

Toba S. Cohen, TCF, Bustleton, PA

We came to the beach in Florida intending to watch the sun set over the Gulf. The sun had already disappeared over the horizon, apparently lost beyond the waters. After a brief period, emerging from where the sun had set arose a brilliant afterglow, seemingly covering the sky with a growing, pulsating display of molten gold.

I was struck by the spectacular beauty emanating from the sun already gone from view. Involuntarily I thought, just like our children! When the sunshine of their lives disappeared, we expected eternal darkness to remain. After our initial period of grief, we find that each child has left an afterglow – the memories of the beauty and joy their lives brought us.

It is incumbent upon each of us left on the beach of mortal life to allow ourselves to maintain that afterglow and continue to bring meaning to the "suns" of our lives who have disappeared from view "over the horizon."

Hopefully, we can help one another honor our children's lives by perpetuating their afterglow with our own meaningful lives of hope, optimism, and peace.

"Wounds do not heal without time and attention. Yet, too many of us feel that we don't have the right to take the time to heal from emotional and physical wounds."

- From Judy Tatelbaum's *Courage to Grieve*



TIME is the passing of moments lived one at a time. Our recovery depends on what we do with each moment. We cannot sit back and say, "TIME will heal me." TIME is merely the movement of the clock. Our successful return to comfortable living is what we do while the clock is moving. We have to look at the beauty left us in life instead of what we no longer have. We must find reasons to go on. — Margaret Gerner, TCF, St. Louis, MO

HOPE

Excerpted from the keynote address by Susan Chan
at the Jefferson City, Missouri Regional TCF Conference, September 21, 2002

Hope can stand for many things. Hope is like a scout that goes out ahead into that unknown territory known as grief. That scout lets you know that you can travel there, you can survive this "landscape without gravity." Let's take a brief look at some of the possibilities of what TCF members offer when they lend us some hope.

"H" 1) TCF offers us **help** in learning how to **heal** when we don't know where to begin.
2) TCF offers us a **hand to hold** when we feel lost and a reassuring **hug** when times are tough.
3) TCF offers us an opportunity to be **honest** about our feelings without fear of judgment or censure.
4) TCF shows us that **happiness** can again be possible as we move once again into life **honoring** our child's memory s we go.

"O" 1) TCF gives us an **opportunity** to be **open** and forthright in expressing our deepest emotions.
2) TCF gives us an **outlet** for our anger, frustration, and guilt.
3) TCF provides ongoing **outreach** and support when those in our other support systems may have receded or disappeared altogether as our grief journey moves from days & weeks into months & years.
4) TCF offers us a sense of **optimism** that life can be good again and that the intense pain of early grief will not last forever.

"P" 1) TCF helps us gain **perspective** on what we are experiencing, yet has the **patience** to listen to our story as many times as we need to tell it.
2) TCF offers us a **place** where we may feel safe and **protected** as we share our pain and our memories.
3) TCF offers us the **promise** of more inner **peace** as we move toward a **place** of remembering more about our child's life and dwelling less on the circumstances of the death.
4) TCF helps us understand the need to **pardon** ourselves for any mistakes we may feel we made as **parents** and not to blame ourselves for our child's death.

"E" 1) TCF provides **education** about the grief process so we can better understand & cope with what's happening to us.
2) TCF offers **encouragement** that our pain will not always be so great and that we will survive.
3) TCF members provide the true **empathy** which only those who have walked our path can know.
4) TCF offers us a chance to **express** what is in our hearts and **embraces** us with understanding.

Remember that life is precious,
love is all that really matters,
and who we are in the end -
and how we've touched the lives of others -
is the legacy we leave behind. — Erika Godwin

We created you with our love...

We cared for you with our love...

We nurtured you with our love...

We honored you with our love...

We buried you with our love...

We remember you with our love

Alice and Otto Weening, TCF, Cincinnati, OH



Remember ... if nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies.



The Death of A Stepchild

Stepfamilies

The term step-parent covers a wide spectrum of relationships within today's complicated second families. A stepfamily is created when two adults, one or both of whom already has a child or children, form a relationship where the new partner becomes an important adult or parental figure to the children. Adult sons and daughters can also become stepchildren if their single, widowed or divorced parent takes another partner. A step-parent can be someone who has been in this role for many years or is a recent family member or has joined the family after the death of a child.

Stepfamilies are complex and very diverse - there are many ways in which a stepfamily can be formed. What others call a family tree, stepfamilies describe as a family forest. The stepfamily may come about following bereavement, through single parenthood or after separation or divorce, and the stepchildren may live part- or full-time in the new family.

Those of us who have been step-parents for many years may find that some people do not adequately recognize or acknowledge our grief and we may be overlooked in their concern for the birth-parent's welfare. This attitude is hurtful and can leave us feeling an outsider in our own family. Our feelings are important, however, and just as we may have loved and cared for our stepchild, so we feel grief and loss at their death.

Those of us who are recent family members may feel deep affection for the daughter or son of the partner we love, even though we may have known the child for only a short time. We will feel shock and grief over the death and be concerned for our partner and his or her children. We might, however, feel isolated when the family is going over earlier memories of the child, at the funeral or at later family gatherings. Finding a specific role may help us to feel more involved.

Those step-parents who joined the family after the death of the child may also be affected by the feeling described above. Nevertheless, we may be able to bring comfort, support and practical help to the parent and the family because our emotional involvement in the situation is less intense. It is not always easy, however, to understand the very profound and variable emotions that parents experience after the death of their child. The emotional seesaw of bereavement is as bewildering to the parent as it is to others, and can continue for a very long time; we may find we need exceptional tolerance and understanding.

If The Child's Other Parent Is Involved

The child's birth-parents may be drawn together at the dying and death of their child, perhaps even feeling that their child might still be alive if the marriage had survived. Either of the birth-parents may feel responsible for the death of their child, or that the other was to blame, and there may be feelings of anger, guilt, remorse and failure. These emotions may last for months or years. There may also be practical difficulties to be resolved, such as the wording on the headstone reflecting recognition and acceptance of both birth- and step-parents' deep feelings towards the child.

Some of us may have been deeply involved in raising the child, and could then feel excluded if the birth-parents come together to make the funeral arrangements. We may also be concerned about the possibility of the birth-parent continuing their involvement with our partner when the immediate practical need for meeting has passed.

Although our own feelings will be hard to cope with, hopefully we will be able to give comfort to our partner by our physical presence, reassurance and affection.

Surviving Children

Sometimes the other children turn to us for guidance, support and reassurance. They may want to talk about their

parents' grief, and about their dead sister or brother, perhaps sharing feelings they cannot express elsewhere. We can encourage the surviving children not to feel guilty that they are still alive. We will also be able to help them by taking an interest in their everyday lives and activities while our partner is finding it difficult to take their usual part in family life. We should try to ensure that other children in the family, or families, are included at this time, sharing tears and laughter, difficult and good memories.

Future Children

Some of us will be planning to have children in this new relationship. It could be painful to see the earlier death and its grief cast a shadow over our partner's feelings, as the memories fears and anxieties are carried forward. We may be able to help him or her by finding ways to talk through the past loss. If we can do this, we will be able to look to the future together while not forgetting what has gone before.

Grandparents (Birth And Step)

The child who died may have spent more time with one set of grandparents. All the grandparents, however, can be a resource to the grieving family in their different ways, and can help to bring comfort and stability to its members, especially the children. If the children can feel supported by all their extended family, then the various generations and branches of the family may grow closer together.

Emotions And Feelings

Death often evokes past losses, and each person's present grief will be affected by their own experiences. Our partner may have thought that feelings of loss relating to the end of the previous relationship were resolved, but now finds that painful issues are reemerging, particularly so if he or she was widowed. It may be that our partner has lost his or her only child, whereas we have surviving children; this can bring complicated guilt feelings, particularly for long-term step-parents.

We may find we are experiencing mixed feelings towards the child who died when we see how our partner and others in the family are suffering. Or we may regret that our relationship with the stepchild was not as cordial as we would have wished. Perhaps we find the child's personality incompatible with ours. Alternatively the child may have rejected us, despite our continuing overtures of friendship. It often helps to acknowledge these feelings by writing them down, perhaps in the form of a diary or in a letter to the dead child which no-one need see, and which we need not keep for ever.

These difficulties may cause painful rifts in our relationship as we struggle to adjust to the child's death. Even though we may feel isolated at times, particularly if we have joined the family recently, we are also in a unique position to be of positive, practical and emotional help within the household. However, while we are helping others in the family, remember that we too need support, perhaps from a friend or colleague who will allow us to talk about all that is going on at home.

Reading about parental grief can be of value and may help us understand our partner's feelings and reactions.

Hope For The Future

For step-parents, the grief experience may be a precarious journey as we try to balance the needs of our partner, our own feelings and other family relationships. We do, however, have a supportive role to play and it is a time when patience, understanding and tolerance are of the utmost value.

Many step-parents have found hope for the future through TCF, sharing experiences, feelings and concerns with other parents, perhaps meeting, or corresponding with, other step-parents in an atmosphere of acceptance and friendship.

Lifted from **TCF National UK**



GUILT ~

... IF ONLY... IF ONLY... IF ONLY ...

You may hear yourself using those words. Most parents whose child has died have periods when they feel guilty. A part of the guilt is wanting to undo what has been done...to stop time...to re-do a day or a minute that might make a difference.

Our culture teaches people to be hard on themselves and blame themselves when anything goes wrong. We tend, then, to feel responsible when children die, too. "If only I had kept him in longer...If only I had been there...If only I had known...If only...If only." We are people who want answers. It goes against all our beliefs, hopes, and dreams when children die. You will search and look for answers to questions which sometimes have no answers.

Feeling guilty is one way of getting some kind of meaning into a situation which makes no sense, of trying to answer the unanswerable WHY questions.

When you feel guilty, recognize it for what it is ... a sense of guilt and a searching for an answer. If you could have prevented your child's death, you would have. You and your family are not to blame.

From the booklet Children Die by Joy & Mary Johnson

OPENNESS

I cannot survive my grief with a closed mind, a closed heart, or a closed fist. I must open my ears, my thoughts, my feelings of all kinds, and speak and listen to sharing and caring compassionate friends and my arms to comfort and HUG the grieving and newly bereaved. For it is not possible to heal and help yourself to survive the loss of a child if you cannot receive ...

For a clenched fist is not able to give or receive.

By Ed Kuzela, TCF, Atlanta, GA

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, know struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen."

-by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Grief and Anger

Jackie Wesley, TCF, East Central Indiana

At a recent chapter meeting, we discussed anger in our grief. Many experience anger after their child or loved one dies. A description of anger is "A feeling of rage, an emotional agitation to what is viewed as unfair, unjust and sometimes even shameful."

When we are angry we need a target. Sometimes the target may be God. (He understands.) Some may even feel anger at their child or loved one, thinking, "How could he/she leave me like this? Why? Doesn't he/she know I'm hurting and in pain?" Some people are angry at the doctors, some at the funeral directors, some even feel anger toward themselves, think they could have done *something* to prevent the death.

We may even be angry at our spouse. He/she may not grieve the same way and we may misunderstand their feelings that are just as deep as our own. Maybe our clergyman is not as compassionate as we believe they should be, or maybe they were not available to us at all.

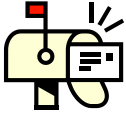
We are angry because we feel abandoned and that life is unfair. We also feel very alone and no longer in control of our emotions. We may also think nothing will ever be the same, and it **won't**. But as time goes on, it does get somewhat easier as you work through your grief.

We all try at times to not let this anger show to others, but suppressing it can only lead to sickness and withdrawal. Masking anger will often hurt the ones around you and may even drive them away from you.

You may even risk losing your closest support system. Dealing with your anger and admitting it and also seeking help from others who have experienced this feeling is always the healthy thing to do. Personally, talking has been the best help for me. Attending a Compassionate Friends meeting and talking to others who have "been there" has helped many.

♥ **TCF asks for donations in memory of our children who have died.** ♥

Our chapter is funded solely through donations; therefore we sincerely appreciate your support. Your generosity helps us send newsletters, purchase brochures and to cover the many expenses to help grieving families in our community. All donations are tax deductible. You and your child's name will be noted in the next newsletter. Workplace "Matching Gift" programs can increase your donation by 50-100%. ♥ **Please help us help others by making a LOVE GIFT today.** ♥



Love Gift Form

Love gifts are **tax-deductible donations** made to the Seattle-King County Chapter of TCF in memory of your beloved child, sibling, grandchild or loved one.



Send checks and forms to: Seattle- King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896

Your name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (if we have any questions): _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

In memory of (name of child): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Special Message: _____

Send checks and forms to: Seattle – King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896



With Love, We Remember Them...



In Memory of ...
NORMAN
October 1953 – February 1995
From Homer and Dorothy Lockett

In Memory of ...
STACI
From Arlene and Michael Saito

In Memory of ...
JON
June 1977 – May 2008
"Miss you so much and love you forever."
From Rosemary Cavin

In Memory of ...
KYLE
From Shirley and Dwight Shiotani

In Memory of ...
DERRIK
April 1991 – April 2010
"In honor of my grandson, Derrik, Grandma Vicky."
From Vicky Kantnor

In Memory of ...
BRETT
February 1986 – January 2009
"My beloved son, Brett, I miss you and love you more than life. Always & Forever, Mom."
From Michelle Dunford

In Memory of ...
GLORIA
April 1958 – November 1980
From Sonja Larson

In Memory of ...
MAUREEN
January 1965 – February 2012
"I feel your love. I miss your smile and laugh.
Love you always, Mom."
From Carole O'Brien

In Memory of ...
DAVID
From Jean and Max Willner

♥ **Thank you to all who make donations to Seattle-King County TCF!**

The Compassionate Friends
Seattle-King County Chapter
P.O. Box 66896
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July & August 2012

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Mark your calendar and make plans for these upcoming TCF events!



Eastside TCF – Kirkland
TCF WALK TO REMEMBER
at Marymoor Park in Redmond
Sunday, July 8, 2012
10:00 AM ~ 1:00 PM

The Eastside “Walk to Remember” is a two-mile Walk open to everyone who wants to join “Hands and Hearts” in remembering our children who have died to soon. The reflective, peaceful Walk will be followed by a short remembrance ceremony, live butterfly release and lunch. Plan to participate with family and friends.



For a registration packet contact:

Charlene DePuy:
Ph: 916-817-7259 Email: scdepuy@comcast.net
Juli Lund:
Ph: 425/765-1382 Email: julilund@comcast.net

**35th TCF/USA National Conference and
5th International Gathering**
July 20-22, 2012
Costa Mesa, California



35TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE,
5TH INTERNATIONAL GATHERING
July 20-22, 2012 | Costa Mesa, California

For information and registration packet:
Call the TCF National Office 877-969-0010 or
visit: <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>