

Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope 33rd National Conference Arlington, Virginia, July 2-4



"Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope" is the theme of The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The event will be held at the Hyatt Regency, Crystal City promising a beautiful venue. There will be more than 100 workshops covering many areas of grief for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. There is a hospitality room, reflection room, butterfly boutique, bookstore and memory boards. Saturday evening's banquet will end with a candle lighting and the final day of the conference will feature TCF's 11th annual Walk to Remember.

Independence Day will not only feature our Walk to Remember, but will include a world-class display of fireworks over the National Mall, visible from Arlington

Go to the National website for information.



Would You SHAVE your head for a Child?

The St. Baldrick Foundation raises awareness and funds to fight childhood cancer. While battling cancer, children not only lose their hair but years of their childhood, and sometimes their lives. Participants in a St. Baldrick's event shave their heads in exchange for donations towards research. It's a simple concept, a fun time and a very effective fundraiser – since its founding in 2000, the St. Baldrick's Foundation has raised over \$69 million by shaving over 107,000 heads in 24 countries.

The event is at the Waterville Firehouse, 1551 Thomaston Avenue, Waterbury on Monday, March 15th, 4 PM – 10 PM.

Preregistration is suggested but not required. You can register online at:
<http://www.stbaldricks.org/events>
Food and beverages will be provided.

Thank you, Shawn McDonald, for this information and participating in this event.

Love Never Goes Away

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable some day.

TIME, the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child, the first word, first tooth, first date, first car. Now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME to hurt, to grieve, to cry, TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper. Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments, but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief. It only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child. HE/SHE DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between us. It still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

By Darcie Sims
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