



# JULY and AUGUST 2014



Seattle-King County Chapter P.O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166 206-241-1139

## Embracing Life After Loss

Below are five steps for fully living life again after a loss.

### Step One: *Losing*

*If you believe yourself unfortunate, because you have loved and lost, perish the thought. One who has loved truly, can never lose entirely.*

~ Napoleon Hill, American author

Losing a loved one is not easy. I know - I have had many losses in my life. The one that made the most impact on my life was my wife's death when she was 34. In addition, my mother, my father, my four grandparents, my sister-in-law, several cousins, and both my mother-in-law and father-in-law have died, as well as over 40 friends and colleagues who are no longer here because of AIDS or cancer.

I don't think we ever forget the people we lose. So in some sense, they are never gone. But, still, it hurts not to be able to see them, hear them, or hold them again. Loss hurts. But it can also help us be stronger, wiser, and, if nothing else, more appreciative of every moment we have on this earth.

### Step Two: *Learning*

*Turn your wounds into wisdom.*

~ Oprah Winfrey, American television host

Every time you lose something, you are presented with an opportunity to acquire something new. With each loss, there is a golden opportunity for a new beginning. You may not realize it right now, but your loss is part of your growth process. In fact, your loss can be seen as a gift.

How could you possibly even think of loss as a gift? You have lost someone who was very dear to you. You have perhaps lost the one person in your life who meant everything to you. You have lost a significant part of who you were. It certainly doesn't feel like a gift. And yet, it is.

Your loss is serving you. It is helping you examine who you are, why you are on this earth, and how to live your life.

- the gift of appreciating life more fully
- the gift of cleansing through mourning
- the gift of love

The best thing you can do after reading this is to open the gift.

### Step Three: *Letting Go*

*The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us.* ~ Voltaire, French philosopher

Crying is the body's way of dealing with loss. It is unhealthy to squelch your tears. What you stifle today may come back in greater force tomorrow. But continuing to endlessly wallow in those tears is not healthy. At some point, you need to get on with your life.

Today might be the day to take the first step, to let go, to move on.

### Step Four: *Living*

*I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have — life itself.*

~ Walter Anderson, American magazine editor

The loss of someone close to you provides an opportunity for a new beginning and an enriched life. Once you start to work through your grief process, you can begin to fill the vacuum that was created by your loss with an even fuller sense of life.

Ultimately, in dealing with a loss, the choice is yours. No matter what the situation, you have a choice of how you react to it. You can remain in your grief and turn your face away from life or you can move on and embrace life.

Choose life.

### Step Five: *Laughing*

*Tragedy and comedy are but two aspects of what is real, and whether we see the tragic or the humorous is a matter of perspective.*

~ Arnold Beisser, American polio-disabled author

It may seem ludicrous putting laughter and loss in the same sentence. How can you possibly laugh after losing a loved one? Yet recent research by Dacher Keltner and George A. Bonanno shows that "the more widows and widowers laughed and smiled during the early months after their spouse's death, the better their mental health was over the first two years of bereavement."

Laughter is a great coping mechanism. Finding the humor in anything and laughing about it gives you a break from the pain of loss. It allows for a breath of fresh air at a time when everything seems dark and heavy.

Many of the world's top comedians intuitively knew this when they experienced a major loss in their life. They turned to humor to cope and eventually perfected their craft and made comedy their career.

Your goal is probably not to become a stand-up comic, but you can take a lesson from these renowned comedians and use humor and laughter to help you to cope with your loss. Laughter and humor are one of God's gifts to overcome your trials and tribulations.

(Excerpted from *Learning to Laugh When You Feel Like Crying* by Allen Klein - ISBN 978-0-9798755-8-8)

**"For our kids to have died, it meant they had to have lived first. If we can let go of their dying, and embrace their living, we can get better."** ~ Darcie Sims



# 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](mailto: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](http://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: position vacant

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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) (website has link to Facebook)

**TCF Online Support** - Please visit the National website to get the session schedule for the following groups:

- |                                 |                         |                                |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ♥ Parents/Grandparents/Siblings | ♥ No Surviving Children | ♥ Bereaved Less than Two Years |
| ♥ Pregnancy / Infant Loss       | ♥ Survivors of Suicide  | ♥ Bereaved More than Two Years |

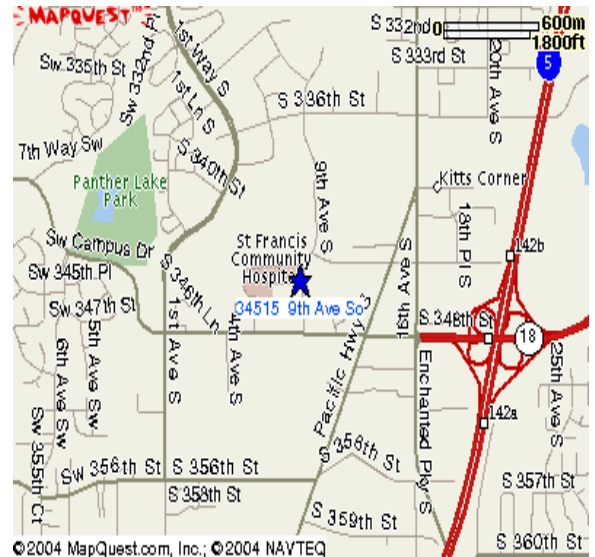
## **TCF National Magazine 'We Need Not Walk Alone' Available Free Online!**

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](http://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.



**~2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday evening of each month~**

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



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.



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.

Wounds of the spirit are most gently soothed and made whole by the passing years. Under the old scars flows again the calm, healthful tide of life. Under a great loss the heart impetuously cries that it can never be happy again, and perhaps in its desperation says that it wishes never to be comforted.

But though angels do not fly down to open the grave and restore the lost, the days and months come as angels with healing in their wings.

Under their touch aching regret  
passes into tender memory; into hands  
that were empty new joys are softly  
pressed; and the heart that was like the  
tree stripped of its leaves and beaten by  
winter's tempests is clothed again with  
the green of spring. ~ George S. Merriam

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now—right now—it is our hearts that are freshly wounded and our hearts in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss, to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt and anger, and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony will be as an abscess—to swell and undermine—erupting at a distant time. Or suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

~ Nancy Green, TCF Livonia, MI

Our life is not just about mourning our children's death, but also celebrating their life.



## WHAT KIND OF LUGGAGE ARE YOU CARRYING?

Helen Way, TCF Abilene, TX



For some time the tourist industry has urged us to travel “light” and with more convenience in order to save energy, time and general wear and tear. We have choices in luggage: “weightless” garment bags that fold, duffels and kits designed for certain items, totes with side pockets and roomy interiors for carry-on or car pack, bags that hang from the shoulders, Velcro and zipper closures, adjustable and removable straps and handles, and plastic bags for layering. We can be mixed or matched for different occasions and materials that are wrinkle-proof and washable. We can learn from those who do testing how best to pack our belongings.

We can also let someone help us carry our bags. It seems to me there are clues in this for us in our grief journey. After all, we choose what we will carry and for how long. What do we have in our luggage? What choices are there for you?

**UNRESOLVED GRIEF:** Feelings left over from experiences of the past (fears, guilt, rejections...). You may decide some are not worth carrying longer and others that cannot be discarded may well be given another look.

**HELPLESSNESS & HOPELESSNESS:** They are garments that take much space when you start out, but you may be able to fold them more neatly later on.

**THE “WHY” QUESTIONS:** “Why this?” “Why mine?” They are part and parcel of this trip, but after traveling a distance, you may pick up the “what” question – “What am I going to do with my life?” – and then the “how” question – “How am I going to do it?” These last are important – hold on to them.

**EXPECTATIONS:** Some are helpful, some hurtful, and you may not be able to sort them out until you are underway. If you have a goal or timetable set by someone else, remove it early in your journey and proceed in your own way and at your own pace. If you expect others to understand and meet your needs, you risk disappointment and resentment that will delay your travel. Try substituting a resolution to tell those near you what you need and how they can help you. Then let them do it.

**VULNERABILITY:** You may be afraid to take this with you, but as you acknowledge and come to understand your feelings, the fear will diminish and lighten your load.

**THE “SHOULD”:** “I should have...” and the “if only” - they are heavy to carry, but you will find they are disposable.

**A STUBBORN, POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** This will come in handy, but you may not put it out to wear at first.

**TEARS:** Have them readily available. Not only is it all right to cry, but to cry as often as you feel the need and on someone’s shoulder. If you hold back, you waste energy.

**COURAGE AND SPIRIT:** Summon as much as you are able and expect to add more whenever and wherever you can, to make sure you keep on going—through the valley to the other side.

**TIME:** Use it for layering, but be sure it is time you intend to use.

**HUGS:** Carry them in your shoulder bag or outer pocket and have them at the ready several times a day. This is good therapy for the grieving traveler.

**PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF AND OTHERS AND REAL PERSONAL FORGIVENESS:** A three piece suit, one you won’t wear every day, perhaps, but it looks good on you and there will be occasions, more and more of them, as you discover who you are now; when it will be comfortable.

**MEMORIES AND MEMENTOES:** Tuck them in the corners and in the spaces between items. They will even the load.

**AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENORMITY OF YOUR LOSS:** Pack this so you can put it on daily for a while and gradually you will become aware of a new feeling: the wonder of living. If you exclude this, you put your grief on hold and it waits for you.

**A SENSE OF HOPE:** If you think you might as well leave this behind because you won’t have use for it on this trip, remember: Even Doris Nelson, a polio victim who spent 36 years in an iron lung, had “an expectancy to something more.”

**A PLAN:** I hope you have room so you can add a plan when you run across one, a plan for some activity you may not consider within the realm of possibility for you now. To miss that would be another grief.

*MAY YOU HAVE A SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE TRIP.*





## Thoughts and Reflections

### TCF Seabeck Retreat 2014 (May 30 - June 1)



The Seabeck Retreat was a positive and uplifting experience for me.

The workshops were fun and informative, giving me some new tools to help with the Grief Process. Just knowing it is a Process and that I am making some progress helps. The location was beautiful and relaxing and the food was delicious! The atmosphere was very relaxed, we could attend the workshops we liked or not attend if that's what we felt to do. Ironically, the most valuable part for me was connecting with other parents who know what it's like to have a child die, it was the part I feared the most. Talking to people about the most horrific thing that has ever happened in my life is not something I want to do. I avoid talking about Michelle's death because it makes folks uncomfortable and if others start asking about it I just want to scream and run away. It's always awkward and upsetting; however, I didn't feel that way as much while I was at the Retreat. There is a common bond that we all share, a connection with others who understand the unique situation that has no name. If parents die, you are an orphan, if a spouse dies you are widowed, but if your child dies there is no name, no title, no words to explain the depth of that pain.

It took me 6 years to finally get up enough courage to attend the Seabeck Retreat. Since my daughter Michelle died in 2008, following a 3 year battle with cancer, I have attended the local Seattle/King County Chapter of Compassionate Friends several times, but not on a regular basis. Thanks to the cards, emails and news letters that kept coming, even when I didn't, the connection was made and the time was finally right for me. Hopefully it won't take everyone as long to decide to take advantage of this opportunity, take time to pause and reflect, to take a break from the day-to-day and get a closer look at the Grief that is our constant companion, ever lurking in the shadows of our mind, the corners of our hearts, the depths of our soul. It's always there like a monster in the dark, Seabeck helped shine some light on that monster, helping make it a little less scary, a little less powerful, and a little less overwhelming. ~ LaNita Ferraro



*The retreat was wonderful in every way. My husband and I both came home feeling lighter. (Not from all the great food we ate.) It was an uplifting and intense weekend. I have told several people that I know that they should consider it next year.*

~ Susan Reinhart



Since the loss of my daughter I felt my world had collapsed and come to an end. At the Seabeck Retreat I found so many friends who truly gave comfort, support and love which has encouraged me to move on one step at a time. I feel like I am surrounded by a big family, a big circle of love and support for one another. The Retreat meant so much to me.

~ Francis Shum

*Seabeck was a wonderful retreat/experience. My husband and I are so glad we attended. It was so comforting and healing. It was a nice mix of deep grief work and lighter more relaxing activities. Conference center is lovely! I will participate in more workshops next year.*

~ Janice Strangway

### Some Excerpts from the Evaluations:

#### Why did you decide to attend the retreat?

- To help me thru this journey; get some insight and meet others in similar situation
- Help our grieving process; to know we are not alone
- I want to attend every year. I LOVE being here.



#### What was done really well?

- Helpful workshops and excellent speakers.
- The meals; the retreat notebook; closing ceremony; craft room availability and materials

#### What was your overall impression of this year's retreat?

- Very organized; met many supportive people
- The candle lighting and closing ceremonies were wonderful.
- Very worthwhile
- Workshops were very informative and useful; the activities were fun
- Very informative; nice area; many nice people
- Very helpful, Fun, Inspiring and Supportive



If you haven't yet been to the retreat or it's been awhile since the last time you did, we encourage you to set aside **May 29-31, 2015** - the weekend AFTER Memorial Day – to attend this supportive and healing weekend retreat.

## So You Think TCF Meetings are Depressing?

— Debb, TCF Southwestern Manitoba

The first TCF meeting I went to, about a month after my daughter died, was one of the most awful, wonderful things I have ever done. I sat in the circle, waiting for my turn to come, only partly listening to the saddest stories I had ever heard, and not really knowing what I would say when the floor was passed to me. I only hazily remember speaking, crying, and remembering that day. Somehow the words just poured out of me. I don't know how long I talked, I only know that no one interrupted, no one tried to make me feel better (or worse), no one told me it wasn't that bad or to "get myself together". After I finished I felt calm. Still sad, still as though my world would never be right again, but calm, like a peacefulness had come upon me.

I know now that the peacefulness came because I had begun some of the hardest work I had to do—I had begun what we call "griefwork". For many, beginning their griefwork depends on the support of their Compassionate Friends family. It depends on being able to talk freely, openly, and without judgment about their feelings, about their child, their fears, and their progress.

But progress in Compassionate Friends doesn't mean what outsiders might sometimes think it means— forgetting, moving on or starting over. No. Progress in Compassionate Friends means remembering, giving tribute to our child whenever we can, and learning to live in a world that is no longer home to our child.

Sometimes it feels like learning to live on a different planet! We need to learn to live, to love and to laugh again (the three Ls, I call them). At TCF meetings, we can do this. True, the first meeting probably *will* make most cry! And maybe for some every meeting will make them cry (read: "me"! but then I cry at tissue commercials, so I don't think I count), but only if this is what the individual needs. Some of us need to cry but after a time we laugh, too! I remember at that first meeting seeing some of the others laughing, joking and generally having a pretty good time. I thought, "How could they?" Now I understand. They could because they had begun to live again. In fact, sometimes the only place where it feels truly OK to laugh is at a TCF meeting. There we're surrounded by others who know how we feel. They know we haven't forgotten our child, but that we are coming along in our griefwork. And they are happy for us.

So, I would have to argue that TCF meetings are *not* depressing. At least not in the way that some would expect them to be. TCF meetings can actually be one of the happiest places for a bereaved parent to be. There we are with people who want to hear about our child. To celebrate their lives. To laugh with us, to heal with us. To share our sorrow *and* our joy!

### Having a Good Day

How pleasant it was, this sunny day,  
To laugh at happy moments that came our way.

The sky was blue and a gentle breeze  
made a sighing sound through the trees.

It's times like this we are in disbelief  
That we aren't doubled over in our grief.  
It means we've moved forward since then,  
and soon we'll be with our little girl again.

—Dan Gardner, TCF Nashville, TN



Grief work is like winding a ball of string. You start with an end and you wind. Then the ball slips through your fingers and rolls across the floor. Some of your work is undone, but not all. You pick it up and start over again, but you never have to begin again at the end of the string. The ball never completely unwinds. You've made some progress.

—TCF Southwestern Manitoba

### Butterfly Quilt Raffle

We want to thank our chapter member, Lavonne Butenko, Auburn, WA and her sister, Dottie Richmond, Jonesboro, Louisiana, for the beautiful butterfly themed quilts they make to be raffled at our Seabeck Retreat. They've made quilts for the raffle for the past 5 years.

This year's winners were **Pam McCarty**, Coupeville, WA and **Charon Ritter**, Covington, WA.



*Pam's quilt matches her bedroom perfectly.*



*Charon's granddaughter with her new quilt.*

# 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 ...  
BRETT**

February 1986 – January 2009  
 “My dearest son, I love today,  
 tomorrow, and forever.”  
 From Michelle Dunford

**In Memory of ...  
KARLENE**

From Karen Flynn

## In Memory of ... TAMMY

April 1964 – February 1995  
 “We love you.”  
 From Allen Roth

**In Memory of  
DEANNA**

January 1959 – October 1981

**MELINDA**

July 1960 – August 1994  
 “You brought joy to our lives.”  
 From Marcia Johnson

**In Memory of ...  
AMBER**

From Kevin Williams and family

**In Memory of  
MATTHEW**

July 1958 – August 1987  
**MONTEY**  
 March 1960 – January 2004  
 “I miss my sweet sons.”  
 From Judith Hitchcock

**In Memory of ...  
LAURA**

and  
**ANDREA**  
From Anita Mammoser

## In Memory of ... JON

June 1977 – May 2007  
 “Thanks for the memories. I will  
 always love you. Mom.”  
 From Rosemary Cavin

**In Memory of ...  
GLORIA**

From Sonja Larson

♥ Loved and Remembered ♥

It is the gift of hope which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends. Hope that all is not lost. Hope that life can still be worth living and meaningful. Hope that the pain of loss will become less acute, and, above all else, The hope that we do not walk alone, that we are understood. The gift of hope is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

~Rev. Simon Stephens, Founder, The Compassionate Friends

*When dealing with the pain and grief of a child's death, take time to do the work of grief.*

*Grieve in the way that best works for you, talk about your feelings, be gentle with yourself, and remember that this is not a path that needs to be walked alone.*

*There are loving and caring people who are willing to be there with you.*

*Reach out, get support, and know that only the strong know how to ask for help.*

~ Howard Winokur, PhD and Heidi Horsley, PsyD.

**The Compassionate Friends**  
Seattle-King County Chapter  
P.O. Box 66896  
Seattle, WA 98166-0896



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**JULY & AUGUST 2014**

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**37th TCF National Conference**  
**July 11-13, 2014**



**37<sup>th</sup> National Conference**  
Chicago, Illinois  
July 11-13, 2014

**Chicago, Illinois**

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

**The Compassionate Friends**  
**Walk To Remember**

*Sponsored by Eastside TCF in Kirkland, WA*



**Saturday, July 19th, 2014**

**10:00AM ~ 1:00PM**

**at Marymoor Park in  
Redmond, WA**

A reflective, peaceful Walk at a comfortable pace followed by a short Remembrance Ceremony, Live Butterfly Release and Lunch.

Ask your family and friends to join us as we remember our children gone too soon.

For a registration packet and more information contact Juli Lund at 425-765-1382 or email her at [julilund@comcast.net](mailto:julilund@comcast.net).