

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

• NEW MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. Box 8283 • Hermitage, TN 37076 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) •  
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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month at the ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Tennessee) Building, 560 Royal Parkway, Nashville, TN 37214 (SEE MAILING ADDRESS ABOVE). We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

## April 10th Meeting

Be sure to attend our April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. We begin by briefly sharing our names and our child/children’s names. Birthdays of the month are given an extra moment of remembrance then we begin our program of the month. A brief break following the program gives us time for refreshments that have been lovingly shared in memory of our children. Finally, the last hour of our time together is spent in small sharing groups at tables scattered throughout the meeting room. This is the time for more intimate sharing of our grief experiences including the pain and the healing we find along the way. It is during this time that our members become closer and healing begins.

We hope to see you there.



**Phone Friends**

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can't reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

<b>Accidental Death</b> .....	Mike and Paula Childers	615-294-4959
<b>AIDS</b> .....	Joyce Soward	615-754-5210
<b>Illness</b> .....	David and Peggy Gibson	615-308-2520 or 615-504-4307
<b>Infant</b> .....	Jayne Head	615-264-8184
<b>SIDS</b> .....	Kris Thompson	931-486-9088
<b>Suicide</b> .....	Ron Henson	615-789-3613
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle	615-712-3245

*See page 6 for information*

*on this year's*

**TCF National Conference**

*In*

**New Orleans, LA**



Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.

We need not walk alone.

**ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM--****In the month of their births**

**James Michael Bolton**  
(Mikey)  
April 9  
Son of  
Jim and Loretta Bolton

**Patrick Jonathan Bruce, Jr.**  
(Jon)  
April 18  
Son of  
Patrick and Pam Bruce

**Mark Joseph Dinkel**  
April 27  
Son of  
Richard and Kathleen  
Dinkel  
Brother of Amy

**Kenneth Elberson**  
April 18  
Son of  
Harry and Winnie  
Elberson

**Aaron Garner**  
April 30  
Son of  
Don and Vicki Garner

**Viktoria Nicks**  
(Tori)  
April 22  
Daughter of  
Brad and Amanda Nicks  
Sister of Braden and Austin

**Michael Hunt**  
April 13  
Son of  
Robin Hunt

**Stacy Leigh Kraft**  
April 10  
Daughter of  
Keith and Meryl Kraft  
and Terry Kornman

**David Benton Lowe**  
April 26  
Son of  
Charles and Teresa Lowe

**Janessa Dian Wellman**  
April 24  
Daughter of  
Timothy and Debra Pharris  
Granddaughter of  
Glen and Dian Wellman

**Daniel Wayne Vick**  
April 5  
Son of  
Wayne and Marsha  
Vick

**Sherry Hooten**  
April 15  
Daughter of  
James and Ann Flatt

**Christian Thompson**  
April 14  
Son of  
Chris Thompson

**Mark William Ryman**  
(Brutus)  
April 2  
Son of  
Charlie and Gay Ryman

**Ryan Lee Wiseman**  
April 18  
Son of  
Roger and Deborah Wiseman

**Logan Thomas Suggs**  
April 25  
Son of  
Marcus and Linda Suggs



**Don Bruce Winters**  
April 16  
Son of  
Jerry and Loretta Winters

***My Sister, My Friend***

*Within our hearts  
You will always be.  
Our minds will be filled  
With sweet memories.*

*Your spirit and love  
Will be never gone,  
For each life you touched  
Will carry them on.*

Catherine Hall  
TCF, Hinsdale, IL

***Rest, My Brother***

*Rest, my brother  
You now have peace.  
The wars within you  
All have ceased.  
And the rising sun  
Each day,  
Upon the heaven  
You will play.  
Until that day  
We meet again,  
Know I love you,  
My brother,  
My friend.*

Sandra Evens  
TCF, Kearsarge, NH



## And in the month of their deaths



**Ashleigh Nicole Blough**  
April 5  
Daughter of  
Deana Malone

**Christopher Jay Bradley**  
April 20  
Son of  
Lamar and Joy Bradley

**Taylor Martin Davies**  
April 16  
Son of  
Roy and Barbara Davies

**Chad Flatt**  
April 18  
Son of  
James Flatt and Ann  
Flatt

**Joshua Hovies**  
April 19  
Son of  
Alicia Hovies

**Michael Hunt**  
April 13  
Son of  
Robin Hunt

**Valerie Marie Magnan**  
April 29  
Daughter of  
Sheila Howarth

**Kevin Moncrief**  
April 5  
Son of  
Sandra Merkel

**Viktoria Nicks  
(Tori)**  
April 22  
Daughter of  
Brad and Amanda Nicks  
Sister of Braden and  
Austin

**Andrew Morris Pack**  
April 19  
Son of  
Wayne and Cassandra Pack

**Matthew Douglas Pate**  
April 30  
Son of  
Melanie Pate

**Bert Rich**  
April 7  
Son of  
Shirley Rich-Brinegar

**Brandon Allen Payne**  
April 10  
Son of  
Terry and Kimberly Payne



**Blake Thomas Steen**  
April 7  
Son of  
Jennifer Anderson

**Lindsay Ware**  
April 8  
Daughter of  
Scott Ware



**Laurie Lynn Shriver Robert**  
April 21  
Daughter of  
Warren and Donna Jones and George Shriver  
Sister of David, Bekki, and Bonnie



## Another Day

*Looks like I have another day  
Without you in my life.  
Another day to try again.  
To be the dad I wish I'd been for you.*

*One more day  
to find the ways  
that I've been blessed  
that you were in my life.*

*Another day to try to be  
The best that I can be  
Despite the grief to find the joy  
and love surrounding me.*

*To make things better than before  
To overcome the pain.  
To celebrate the time we had and all that lies ahead.*

Stephen Aud  
TCF Nashville, TN

*Unable are the loved to die, for love is immortality.*

Emily Dickinson

## **GIFTS OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE**

*We are deeply grateful for the voluntary gifts of love that make it possible for The Compassionate Friends to offer comfort to those families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.*

***Sandra Merkel  
in Loving Memory  
of her son,  
Kevin Moncrief***

***John and Mary Hodsdon  
in Loving Memory  
of their daughter,  
Mary Grace Hodsdon***

***Jerry and Loretta Winters  
in Loving Memory  
of their son,  
Don Bruce Winters***

***Shirley Rich-Brinegar  
in Loving Memory  
of her son,  
Bert Rich***



To benefit TCF, go to the [Kroger website](#) and click on “Community Rewards”; then follow the instructions on that page. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to TCF. It’s a free and easy way to support your chapter.

*Each month, Price Printing, 615.360.3339, donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family assemble, label, sort, and mail the newsletter in loving memory of her son, Marcus Dean Brown. We appreciate so much these people and their generosity to all of us.*

## **“Seasoned” Parent**

I use the word seasoned because I don’t like the word old. Seasoned sounds like I might have aged well and have some flavor. What I know I have is 35 years of thoughts, feelings, laughter, and tears since my son Michael died, on April 21, 1989. How can it be April already? One-fourth of 2024 has passed! Time keeps marching on.

I remember well our first TCF meeting. Shannon came with Ted and me. It was Mother’s Day. When we broke into sharing groups, Ted joined a men’s table. In a few minutes, Shannon tugged on my arm. She pointed to the men’s table. Ted was actually talking with the others. He had not been doing a lot of that at home. We were encouraged.

Ted and I were pretty faithful in attendance for several years. As our hearts healed, we dropped off a bit, but always made it for the December Candlelight and the Balloon Release meetings. After Ted died, I became a regular again, as I really needed to be around my friends. I’m at almost every meeting these days. How amazingly wonderful that some of these folks I’ve known for 25-30 years and more. True friends! I will never forget all of the kindness, understanding, and love we received in the early years of our grief journey. It truly helped us to not fall completely apart.

It is an honor and privilege to talk with new parents in our group. I’m so sorry we had to meet, but I thank you for trusting me, and the others, with your child’s story. So, don’t be concerned when you hear that some of us in our chapter have been members for 25 + years. We’re still around because others were there for us in our beginning. You need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

Robin Hunt  
TCF Nashville, TN

## Daffodil Time

Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, and rush, never stopping to “smell the roses.” We are afraid that if we stop, or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we’ll drop down to that black hole of grief again—so we don’t stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade, we had to memorize some poetry. I still remember lines from the poem “Daffodils”: “*When oft upon my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye, Which is the bliss of solitude.*” For a couple of years after my daughter’s death, I could not, I would not allow myself to get into a vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn’t daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye, it was always my daughter who was there—and there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw open wound. Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant or pensive moods, and I can see the daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more bitter than sweet, usually more sweet than bitter, but it is bliss as those memories flash upon my inward eye. I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do NOT like it; I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in a vacant or pensive mood, I am careful that those memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones, not the unhappy ones. They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns that hide just below the beauty. But I can do it now. I can take time to “smell the roses.” And so can you. Try it. In small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself—and your family—and your child.

Tom Crouthamel  
TCF, Sarasota, FL




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## Choices

*The issue, finally distilled to its essence,  
is revealed as not so much who you were  
as who your example inspired us to be.*

*Because we walked beside you in life,  
we grew strong enough to handle grief,  
determined enough to endure emptiness,  
wise enough to cry when hurting,  
brave enough to start over every day.*

*We are different people from the ones  
who accompanied you on your journey.  
We don’t think the same or look the same  
and we certainly don’t feel the same.  
Every event plowed and furrowed our souls,  
shaping us into fields of unconditional love  
capable of bearing an inexhaustible harvest  
that will always and forever exceed our needs.*

*Our choices in the new world thrust upon us  
are whether we shall limit our experience  
to daily memories of grief, pain, and sorrow,  
or opt for deliberate expansion of heart and mind.  
Whether we shall define your passing as the ending  
of all that we cherished and sought and dreamed,  
or lean into the loss to reveal an opening  
we never thought possible or let ourselves see.*

*An opening that beckons and promises  
a transcending, a separation from the grief  
everywhere-present like the fine dust of an explosion.  
A hidden place where tears give way to freedom,  
hearts recover and songs begin to play again.  
A shelter where your legacy of victory heals,  
revealing the power of seeking joy in sorrow  
and the bliss of finding peace in what is.*

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TCF, Lawrenceville, GA

## 47TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE: JULY 12 – 14, 2024



We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 47th Annual National Conference in New Orleans! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey. Every person comes for the same reason—a child has died. It is a place where “friendship, understanding, and hope” are more than just words. We often say that those at the conference are friends you simply have not yet met.

At each conference, there are many activities, but you decide what is right for you. There are nearly 100 workshops (but don't think these are work—they're a time for learning and sharing). You'll also find a hospitality room, Healing Haven reflection room, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. There are very interesting and well-known speakers who address the Opening Session, the Friday afternoon banquet, the Saturday evening banquet, and the Sunday closing. You'll marvel at the quality of entertainment geared for those attending. There's also a special candle-lighting ceremony to conclude the Saturday evening banquet. If you like a more intimate time with others, join in the evening sharing sessions of your choice.

### *Workshop topics include:*

- Parent's Grief
- Sibling Loss
- Grandparent's Grief
- Loss of Only/All Children
- Workshops specific to the type of loss such as
- suicide, homicide, miscarriage, substance-related causes, and more
- Creativity in grief
- Early grief experiences as well as long-term grief
- Grief with or without spiritual or religious beliefs

This year's conference will be held at the New Orleans Marriott. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated reservation link. Our discounted room rate with the Marriott is \$144 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. Make your plans to attend soon.

**For more information, go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).  
Registration is open and hotel reservations are now available  
by clicking the 'News and Events' tab on the homepage.**

*Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.*

Helen Keller

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, we pay to retrieve it to find out where you've moved; then we pay again to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

### **The “Children Remembered” Listings**

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 3 in The Children Remembered list, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. Drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 8283, Hermitage, TN 37076. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once unless any of your information changes.

### **Corporate Donations to TCF**

To benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click on “Community Rewards”; then follow the instructions on that page and designate The Compassionate Friends Nashville Chapter. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to our chapter.

### **How You Can Help**

Most people who attend TCF meetings never heard of TCF before they lost a child, and many bereaved parents still have not heard that there is an organization that exists to help them navigate their grief journey. If you know a family in the middle Tennessee area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you think they would benefit from finding out about TCF and possibly attending a TCF meeting, we will be happy to send you some information that you may share with them about what TCF is and what we do to support bereaved parents. If you have attended a TCF meeting, it might be helpful if you would invite them to attend their first TCF meeting with you. We also have a monthly newsletter that they can receive free of charge simply by asking for it.



## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **Alive Alone**

Alive Alone is an organization to benefit parents whose only child or all children have died. Visit their website at [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org).

### **Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents**

For general information about grief support services and groups at Alive, please call the Grief Line at: 615-963-4732 or email [griefsupport@alivehospice.org](mailto:griefsupport@alivehospice.org). They offer eight-week groups, ongoing monthly groups, family group and Little Hearts Club for children who have experienced the death of a sibling. Services are in Franklin, Nashville, Hendersonville, Lebanon, and Murfreesboro.

### **Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization for parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of an infant. The website is [sharingmiddletn.org](http://sharingmiddletn.org).

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call (615) 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at [TSPN.org](http://TSPN.org), and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

### **TCF Website —A Treasure for You**

When you log onto the TCF Website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) you will find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter Web sites and numerous other resources.

# *The Compassionate Friends*

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**April 2024**

## **Filling Holes**

**T**oday my husband and I went to the plant nursery and bought some flowers and bedding plants to go in our gardens. Spring is here and the weather is beautiful. Not cold at all...but also not so hot that the thought of puttering in the garden brings a groan of dismay.

I remember my first spring in this house. We were so excited. Our family was nearly complete. Our third son was on his way and we had just had a house built. We were at the plant nursery at least once a week. Our life was busy, bright, untainted by grief.

I remember our second spring in this house. How winter hung on, tenacious, unyielding, both outside and in our hearts. I remember the first warm spring day. I came home from work early determined to make SOMETHING grow in my life. Maybe I couldn't get my son to live, but I was going to make something live.

Grief was a raw, open wound then and my anger was deep. I was angry at the world, at God...at everything. And so I approached my yard, shovel in hand. I decided I had to have a garden in the middle of my yard. I began furiously digging out the grass, making an oval in the center. It took me hours digging out that oval. But I wasn't through. I then decided I wanted a garden right by my doorway, so I dug out that area too. And then I made big holes and tore out all the roots and stones and other junk.

I made big holes in my yard that day. And in the weeks to come I DID fill them with things. Funny thing, as I dug those holes and pulled on the grass, my anger drained away. My salty tears mixed with the sweat of exertion and the dirt and ran off my arms undetected to the outside world. Digging those holes provided an outlet for my anger and my hurt.

Today I dug some more holes. But this time my holes were smaller. And I filled them...with small, delicate flowers, purple and white. I put bulbs in the ground, too, filling other small holes. And I reflected back on another hole...the hole in my heart. No, I can't ever fill it with what "should" be there...my son "should" be almost seven now, full of energy and wanting to plant flowers with Mom. But I have filled that hole with other things...with love and healing and memories and with the lessons and the gifts my son gave me. I never saw those gifts that spring as I was digging out holes in my yard. And though I would rather have that hole filled with my son's presence, I am grateful for the gifts he gave. And so I will go on, filling holes.

Lisa Sculley  
TCF/Jacksonville/Orange Park, FL