

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://www.tcfnashville.org)

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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 in the American Builders & Contractors (ABC) Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210. Park and enter at the rear of the building.

We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

## August 12 Meeting:

### *Reflections on the 41st Annual National Conference of The Compassionate Friends*

Several members of the Nashville Chapter attended the 41st TCF National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, July 27-29. A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference, providing fresh insights, informative and healing workshops, as well as new or renewed bonds with other bereaved parents. TCF Nashville members who attended will relate to us highlights of the conference as our program on August 12. They will tell about the banquet speakers, workshops, and other events they took part in. Following this time together, we will break up into our regular small sharing groups.



#### *What I Need*

*A lot of time!*

*A little space,*

*A kind of quiet*

*Resting place,*

*Are what I need*

*At times like these*

*A special spot*

*Where I can grieve.*

Beth Pinion  
TCF Andalusia, AL

#### **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 615-646-1333
<b>AIDS</b> .....	Joyce Soward 615-754-5210
<b>Illness</b> .....	David and Peggy Gibson 615-356-1351
<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>Small Child</b> .....	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley 615-237-9972
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle 615-712-3245

*We remember our children with love and gratitude. We miss their faces,  
their voices and their smiles. And we do not forget--*

*In the month of their births—*

**Nancy Louise Copeland**  
August 31  
Daughter of  
Tom and Jenny Copeland

**Joshua Lynn Finch**  
August 13  
Son of Debbie Smith

**Allie Johnson**  
August 12  
Daughter of Jill Neely

**Jeremy Russell Powers**  
August 4  
Son of Phillip and Linda  
King and  
Ricky Powers, Sr.

**Jamison Michael Duncan  
(Jamie)**  
August 27  
Son of Mike and Kay  
Duncan

**Eva Renee Hartman**  
August 6  
Daughter of  
Kay Hartman

**Wade Hampton Morgan**  
August 5  
Son of  
David and Barbara Morgan



*And in the month of their deaths—*

**Christopher Matthew  
Anderson**  
August 27  
Son of Suzy Anderson

**Mark Joseph Dinkel**  
August 10  
Son of Richard and Kathleen  
Dinkel  
Brother of Amy Dinkel

**James Austin Garcia**  
August 5  
Son of Danny and Sherri  
Garcia

**Stephanie Dawn Reeves**  
August 25  
Daughter of Barney and  
Patricia Raymond

**Preston Chauncey Birdsong**  
August 13  
Son of Preston Birdsong and  
Janice Birdsong



**Benjamin Bedell Koomen  
(Ben)**  
August 9  
Son of John and Betsy  
Koomen



**Nancy Louise Copeland**  
August 28  
Daughter of Tom and Jenny  
Copeland

**Garry Lee Durichek**  
August 6  
Son of Jimmy and Barbara  
Hayes



**Amanda Jo White**  
August 21  
Daughter of  
Jerry and Peggy Nolan

**Laura Abigail Czirr (Abby)**  
August 10  
Daughter of Steve and Paige  
Czirr  
Granddaughter of Bob and  
Cynthia Daugherty  
Williams  
Granddaughter of John and  
JoAnn Czirr

**Marvin Lee Edwards**  
August 3  
Son of Charles and Ruth  
Edwards

**Lauren O'Donnell**  
August 17  
Daughter of Denny and  
Shirley O'Donnell



**Matthew Denniston  
Williams**  
August 26  
Son of Brad and Kathleen

**Lauren Kristina O'Saile**  
August 28  
Daughter of Don Davenport  
Granddaughter of Martha  
Davenport



**G**rief over the death of a child is the hardest work that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve intensely because we loved intensely. It is unrealistic to expect the grief to ever totally go away because the love we have for our child will never go away. Our grief is an act of love and is nothing for which we should be ashamed.

## 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.

*John and Nancy Cheadle  
In loving memory of their son,  
John R. Cheadle, III (Ro)*

*Greenbrier United Methodist Church  
In loving memory of Roy James Davies  
And  
Taylor Davies  
Sons of Roy and Barbara Davies*



*Barbara Davies  
In loving memory of  
Roy James Davies and  
Taylor Davies*

*Kroger Plus  
Community Rewards Program  
(See note below)*

*Note: Kroger Rewards—To create an account to benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click On "Community Rewards," then follow the instructions on that page. After that, all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe your Plus Card. Kroger will donate dollars to TCF every time you shop there. It's an easy way to support your chapter.*

*Each month, Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Then 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.*

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### *Grief, You and Me*

*Grief, you are my mate  
my constant companion.  
wrapped around me,  
close as a lover  
limbs entangled  
heaps of appendages  
interwoven in intimacy*

*Some days  
I try to disentangle,  
disengage from you  
in irritation, picking and plucking you from me  
like fleas on a cat's fur.*

*Some days  
I try to push you away  
shut you out  
slam shut the cellar door  
and walk away into the kitchen  
and cook a big meal  
only to notice you sitting at the dinner table*

*Sometimes  
I just let go completely  
and fall into you  
head first, heart first,  
defenseless before your gigantic tsunami of ache.  
Pummeled and tumbling in directionless white water  
I cry out  
Grief, you are much bigger than me  
taller, stronger, fiercer,  
you will outlive me, exhaust me, overpower me!  
Will I ever find my way back to up?  
where is the air?  
which way is air, and sun, and life?*

*Sometimes  
I wonder  
will we someday merge  
as old married couples do  
no longer having distinct identities, you and me.  
Maybe you will seep into my bones  
and we will just grow older and sweeter  
together*

## And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of “self help” were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April’s meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother’s Day and my son’s birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I sat at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child’s story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son’s death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be “cured”. As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged

the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child’s story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.



Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF, Katy, TX

You have to make your own music, sing your own song, feel your own joy and excitement, love your own peace and create your own harmony. Happy days, happy thoughts, happy feelings are decisions made by you. All that you see and feel and think is decided by you. Happiness can happen in the middle of difficulty, in the storm of life and in moments when going on is a real strain. It is a personal decision not to let disappointments whip you, not to let other people’s decisions break your heart. There will be tunnels others will make for you to walk through, but if you hang on and decide everything is going to be all right, it will.

Joyce Sequichie Hifler  
TCF, Fort Wayne, IN

## In Nancy's Garden



*I know a place where Beauty lives  
If you happen upon it, what peace it gives  
I traveled there down a river of tears  
On the back of a dragon called "Rage and Fear"*

*Its walls are made from iron-will parts  
But its gate is fashioned from a tender heart  
And there at that gate a voice in my ear  
Bid me to enter, "I'm so glad you are here"*



*The rich scent of roses filled the air  
A riot of color was everywhere  
"Come and lie down on the soft, green grass  
In a moment all your confusion will pass"*

*Then I heard her laugh, a small choir of bells  
Light silver notes that rose and fell  
I could almost see each one as it danced  
And I followed along like one in a trance*

*As I lay down on the grass as she'd asked  
I sensed a shift in the air as near me she passed  
Felt the silk of her hair as it brushed cross my cheek  
And the warmth of her breath as she started to speak*

*"I was a spirit in human attire  
And now I've come home and laid rest desire  
It's unfulfilled yearnings that steal away peace  
But here in this place, I've found release"*

*"In your time you will join me, not early or late  
At just the right moment the eternal awaits"  
The sky there was dazzling, brilliant and white  
Tho no sun seemed to cast its light*

*Then just for an instant in that magical place  
I caught a glimpse of her sweet, lovely face  
And she said, "From your grief, let your soul take pardon  
For I am so happy here inside my garden"*

*Then she kissed me farewell, as I closed my eyes  
And when I awoke, to my surprise  
On the pillow on which I had been crying  
A single red rose was now lying.*



Janna Jewel  
TCF Nashville, TN  
In Memory of Nancy Conway,  
Daughter of Mike and Mary Conway

## Uncharacteristic Behaviors

When Junior, the National Zoo's resident ape went on his escape travels a few months ago, the story was recorded in the local papers. This was probably because he came close to hopping over his barrier and into the laps of his human observers, many of them children. The press called this "uncharacteristic behavior" and, in a side note, added that his longtime mate, Pensy had recently died.

Now you and I would put all of this into proper perspective and agree, "Of course!" And then we would reflect upon our own "uncharacteristic behaviors" following the death of our beloved (grand) child (ren). Many times these behaviors confound and confuse those close to us. How far will we go beyond our barriers? And will we return and be "ourselves" again? I was amazed at emotions I had never felt so strongly before. I thought that anger would become a permanent part of my reactions and I welcomed any kind of release from it. Confronting it and dealing with it was difficult. Sadness settled upon me like a soggy fleece and I thought that I might never shrug it off! And the apathy with which I met each day was very concerning, indeed! Junior's escapade brought all of my own "uncharacteristic behaviors" up from the not so distant past. Amusing?...a little; but more than that I wanted to shout with the children who watched him that late summer day, and encourage him to run and run, shaking off the grief and sadness of losing his beloved Pensy.

Lorie Hartsig  
TCF St. Mary's County, MD



## Tomorrow Will Be Better

When my son died, I felt like there would be no tomorrow. I didn't want a tomorrow. I wanted yesterday with its promise of joy and perfection. I wanted my son to be alive. But he was gone.

Now, when life gets me down, I remember the joys of yesterday, think of all that I was given, take measure of all that still needs to be done, and I promise myself that tomorrow will be better because I will work very hard to make it better.

My grandmother often told me, "If you think you can, you're right. If you think you can't, you're right. What do you think?" As a child I thought this was strange. As an adult, I know it to be true.

Tomorrow *will* be better. Tomorrow I will, once again, tell my mind to stop the negative thoughts. And my mind will do exactly that, as I command my ship of grief.



Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF Katy, TX

*Tomorrow is hope.  
Today is getting from one to the  
other as best we can.*

John M. Henry

## A Box of Coins

**M**y husband Bruce and my stepdaughter Jess drove to our son's apartment to retrieve his things shortly after his death. They returned with clothing, bed linens, lots of CD's, his backpack, and a computer desk that he and I assembled together at his new apartment. They brought back the computer, kitchen items, and a New Balance shoebox.

I recognized the box. We gave him shoes as a parting gift as he left for college that fall. His college expenses stressed our budget. I second guessed most purchases but not the shoes. He needed them. I wondered why he had kept the box.

It was filled with coins and a red cup. Jess said the cup had been on his desk. Apparently at day's end our son Art emptied his pockets of loose change into the cup. Eventually Arthur poured the contents of the cup into the shoebox. The boy had a savings plan.

I saved the box of coins. I could not toss them into a change counter. He had touched each one. I stored the box under a bed that he had used as a youngster.

After four years, I pulled out the box and spent a quiet evening counting coins. \$74.14. I wrote a note from Art to an anticipated nephew or niece that he would never meet and slipped it in the box. "Use these coins for college." From Art.

The box slid under the bed again. I would find the right place for those coins—maybe a charity, maybe the scholarship initiated in memory of Arthur. Not now.

Last month Jess called me with a funny story about her toddler son, my first grandchild. Jess and Brandon had taught their young son to drop coins into a big red piggybank. They were scrounging for coins because their son liked the game so much.

Perfect! Those shoebox coins just found a new home! That weekend I delivered the box of coins to them. The next time I babysat, I pulled a few coins from the shoebox and handed them to my grandson, one by one. Mason giggled as he touched each one and dropped it squarely into the piggybank. We both smiled at each other.

The boy has a savings plan. Must be genetic!

I am grateful for the gift of time with my son's possessions. TCF monthly meetings taught me to be patient with myself until I found my new balance. It took almost seven years. I gave away my son's coins with no regrets.

Monica Colberg  
TCF Minneapolis, MN

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## *What of the One Who comes After?*

*What of the one who comes after,  
The one who's born at the last?  
What does he know of your presence?  
What does he know of your past?*

*He knows not of your place in this world.  
He knows not of our heart's home for you.  
He simply knows your name's spoken  
Among tears, if now only a few.*

*We'll tell him of days in your midst  
When joy was the order of the day.  
We'll tell him of your short life here.  
We'll love him the very same way.*

*Although you two shall not meet  
In this life or where I can see.  
Your bond, though invisible, is strong.  
And brothers you always will be.*

*What of the one who comes after,  
The one who's born at the last?  
Now he shall know of your presence.  
Now he shall know of your past.*

Janie French  
TCF, Carrollton-Farmers, TX



## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **The Birthday Table**

In the month of your child's birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child's favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you'd like to bring. 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.

### **What is the Yellow Slip?**

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After a year on the newsletter mailing list, those names that were added in that month of a previous year, may receive a yellow half-sheet asking that their subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do not send the yellow slip back, we must assume that you no longer want the newsletter. Although you are given an opportunity to make a voluntary donation, there is no cost involved in your subscription. The newsletter is our gift to you for as long as you wish to receive it. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 615-356-4TCF (4823).

### **Religion and TCF**

The Principles of The Compassionate Friends state that TCF reaches out to all bereaved parents across the artificial barriers of religion, race, economic class, or ethnic group. Further, TCF espouses no specific religious or philosophical ideology. Despite our nondenominational status, many writers indicate that they have found comfort in their faith, and some have shared their anger and loss of faith. The opinions and beliefs expressed in letters, articles and poetry are those of the contributors.

### **Newsletter Deadline**

In order to meet printing deadlines, all donations and original poems or articles must be received by the meeting day of the preceding month to be published in the next issue of the TCF Nashville newsletter. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.



## **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).

### **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, and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

### **Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization for parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. They meet at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the Administrative Board Room on the first floor at Tri-Star Centennial Women's and Children's Hospital, 2221 Murphy Avenue in Nashville. The meetings are "open" and free. You can drop by as often as you like. The website is [sharingmiddletn.org](http://sharingmiddletn.org). Their informative brochure is found under "Contact Us."

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

For general information about Grief Support Services at Alive Hospice, please call the main number: [615 963-4732](tel:6159634732) or email [griefsupport@alivehospice.org](mailto:griefsupport@alivehospice.org). Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at 615-346-8554. Contact John Baker at 615-346-8364 for bereaved parent support or individual counseling.

### **Other TCF Chapters**

There are several other chapters of The Compassionate Friends you might want to know about. Anytime you are in their vicinity or feel the need to talk with other bereaved parents, feel free to attend their meetings. Also, when you personally know a newly bereaved family in one of these towns, please call the chapter number and give them the information so they can make contact with the family. To locate a chapter, you may call the TCF National Office at 1-877 969-0010, or go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on chapter locator.

# *The Compassionate Friends*

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**August 2018**

## *In This Place*

*Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled  
a dreadful distance. You have come,  
seeking solace, understanding, hope,  
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.*

*In this place you can relax and breathe . . .  
the coats of others' expectations taken off.  
Walk into these few hours as into an oasis  
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.*

*In this place all names can be spoken;  
in this place each one's story may be told.  
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;  
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.*

*Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;  
we do not count how many tears are shed.  
Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,  
for the long and winding road that is ahead.*

*And those we love are pleased we are together.  
They smile down on us, and bless this day,  
glad for every tiny step we're taking  
and send their light to guide us on our way.*

*Traveling with us as we journey onward,  
sending strength for what the miles may bring,  
they are a part of everything we do that matters -  
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.*



Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
from *Catching the Light -  
Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child*

Written for TCF Meeting or Conference First Timers