**February 2016 The Compassionate Friends Volume 30● Number 2**

 ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

 **P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) •Nashville Website: 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.

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*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.*

**February 14 Meeting—Book Share**

**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.

**Accidental Death** ………...Mike and Paula Childers

615-646-1333

**AIDS**………………….….…….….......Joyce Soward

615-754-5210

**Illness**………….…………..David and Peggy Gibson

615-356-1351

**Infant**…………………..……………..…Jayne Head

 615-264-8184

**SIDS**………….…………..…….……KrisThompson

 931-486-9088

**Suicide**…….……………….Ron and Darlene Henson

 615-789-3613

**Small Child**….……........Kenneth and Kathy Hensley

 615-237-9972

**Alcohol/Drug Overdose**......…...............……Ed Pyle

 615-712-3245

A

 few of our TCF members will be reviewing books from

our chapter library pertaining to grief. The Nashville TCF

Chapter has a wonderful selection of materials, so please join

us as we explore a few of the titles available. We will have our

regular small sharing groups following this program.

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Sorrow makes us all children again - destroys all differences of intellect. The wisest know nothing.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

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.

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010

TCF Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) National Office email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org**2**

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**A PhD in Pain**

I didn’t take an entrance examination. I didn’t apply for admission. I didn’t register for classes.

I never completed any assignments. I didn’t write or defend a dissertation.

I didn’t wear a cap, gown, or hood at graduation. I didn’t walk to “Pomp & Circumstance.”

I don’t have this diploma framed on my wall. I don’t have letters I use after my name.

But my son died five years ago.

So, I have a PhD in Pain.

I never wanted one.

Peggi Johnson

TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

**From My Heart . . . To Yours**

E

leven years after he died, Danny Rusher helped save my daughter's life. How do we know how the death of our child might affect someone else?

Because a 16-year-old driver told his passengers they could not ride in his car unless they put on seatbelts, four young people were not injured when he lost control and the car rolled and landed upside down.

The driver's mom insisted on the seatbelt rule because she was the driver of the vehicle that could not avoid hitting the car Danny was riding in eleven years earlier when it pulled out in front of her. Danny did not survive, even with a seatbelt, and I can't help but think his death contributed to the saving of my daughter when she was 14 years old.

We have to learn from tragedy. A death has no meaning if we do not learn from it, even if others simply learn to hug their children more and to never take each day for granted.

Sometimes we are told that our child's death made a profound difference in someone's life. But mostly we will never know how the death touched other people, and many times it is because it happens many years after the loss.

Recently, a 2-year-old darling girl died, and because I want her death to have meaning, I encouraged my children and their spouses to take a CPR class. We don't know how that might ever make a difference, but at least we will do something in her honor.

Because my dear friend's son received a donor heart recently, I tell my children we all need to realize the difference organ donation can make in someone's life. I have witnessed it firsthand, and wonder why I never thought much about it before. A young woman died but my friend's son would live now. What a gift.

Our children stay alive in our hearts, and continue to make a difference in others' lives, even when we don't know it. How meaningful!

Cathy Heider

TCF North Central Iowa Chapter

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***Tiny Little Footprints***

*Little footprints on a paper,*

*Tiny footprints stamped on white.*

*No smiling pictures of your bath time,*

*No running or flying a kite.*

*Such sparse memories I have of you,*

*Sweet, beautiful, babies mine.*

*No keepsake rattles or no bronzed shoes,*

*No treasures for me to find.*

*Just tiny little footprints,*

*That I look at every day,*

*My memories of two little boys,*

*That the Angels took away.*

*We will make a million memories,*

*When Daddy and I get there,*

*Oh wait, we’ll make it two million,*

*After all, you are a pair.*

Marilyn Rollins

TCF Lake-Porter County, IN

In Memory of Reece and Andersen, sons of Mike and Kathy Williams

***Little Baby***

*Little baby who was not to be,*

*You were a person . . . at least to me.*

*Would your eyes be blue?*

*Or hazel and dark?*

*Would you caw like the crow?*

*Or sing like a lark?*

*Would you have ten little fingers and ten tiny toes?*

*A rosebud mouth, a turned up nose?*

*Would you be laughing and happy,*

*Or somber and quiet?*

*Would you run and jump or rather be still?*

*Would you like to read, or prefer to play?*

*None of my questions will have an answer.*

*Your chance to live will never be.*

*The only thing I truly know . . .*

*Little baby,*

*We would have loved you so!*

Joan D. Schmidt
TCF Spotswood, NJ

**The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost an Infant**

T

o experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should the child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

**1. Shame and Guilt** - Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

**2. No Memories** - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

**3. Loneliness in Grief** - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily, they hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

**4. Neglected Fathers** - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.

**5. Mothers vs. Fathers** - Since the mother has bonded with her child during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

Claire McGaughey and Sue Shelley

TCF St. Louis, MO

If love could have saved you, you would have lived forever.

[David Ellsworth](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7325210.David_Ellsworth_from_The_Serenity_of_Selfism)

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***Valentine's Day 2012***

*This day*

*set aside*

*to celebrate love.*

*Just another time*

*to feel the loss*

*the emptiness*

*every day*

*you being gone.*

*The hollow place*

*that is now.*

*A part of me*

*an inner scar*

*crafted*

*by the death of*

*my child.*

Melissa Anne Schroeter
TCF Rockland County, NY
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to reprint granted by the author ***Valentine Message***

*I send this message to my child*

*Who no longer walks this plane,*

*A message filled with love*

*Yet also filled with pain.*

*My heart continues to skip a beat*

*When I ponder your early death*

*As I think of times we’ll never share*

*I must stop to catch my breath.*

*Valentine’s Day is for those who love*

*And for those who receive love, too*

*For a parent the perfect love in life*

*Is the love I’ve given you.*

*I’m thinking of you this day, my child,*

*With a sadness that is unspoken*

*As I mark another Valentine’s Day*

*With a heart that is forever broken.*

Annette Mennen Baldwin

TCF Katy, TX

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

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**Broken Heart Syndrome**

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ne afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna’s 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, “Broken Heart Syndrome.” It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *takotsubo cardiomyopathy*. Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart’s normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It effects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge of stress hormones.

After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as my child’s birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with you physician.

Let us all take care of our own hearts this Valentine’s Day.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

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***Wanting***

*I see him standing at the cross walk*

*books under his left arm*

*blue jeans, white Element T-shirt*

*white DC ball cap.*

*But it’s not.*

*I see him walking
tall thin young man*

*with short almost shaved head.*

*But it’s not.*

*I call his cell.*

*I hear his voice.*

*I wish his outgoing message was longer.*

*But it’s not.*

*I sift through a black trash bag*

*of his unwashed laundry*

*wanting to smell his essence.*

*But it’s not.*

*It never will be.*

*And I want.*

Wendy Richardson
TCF Santa Cruz, CA
In Memory of my son, Tyler

***A Tear Fell***

*I rode by your school by chance today
And I just happened to look that way.
The boys all had their ball caps on;
then I remembered my son was gone.
Just when I thought I was doing so well,
Before I knew it - a tear fell.
Then on Sunday as I sat in church
I looked around and missed you so much.
I saw other boys in their Sunday suits
And I remembered you were just as cute.
People all think I'm doing so well;
They don't know today - a tear fell.
When I'm reminded of what might have been
It gets too hard to hold it in.
When life will catch me off my guard,
That's when I seem to be hit so hard.
It seems all roads lead back to you
As I take each day and try to get through.
They say time makes it better, but I cannot tell.
I only know today - a tear fell.*

Carolyn Bryan

TCF Orange Park, FL

**Brothers**

N

ever ever did we think that 25 years would pass since our youngest son Thomas was killed on April 24, 1987 at the age of 19. In the beginning time stood still and we went second by second, minute by minute and hour by hour and then day by day. Looking back some of the pain has lessened and the giant hole in our hearts has grown somewhat smaller, but we still miss him so much. We miss his smile, and his love of life. He was taken way too young.

Little did we know that our hearts would be heavy with pain a second time. On September 10 of last year our son Michael died suddenly at the age of 48, leaving behind his wife and best friend of almost 25 years, a son 17 and a daughter 15. Michael was an outstanding father and a super great husband. Our hearts are broken for our daughter-in-law and our grandchildren. Grief is so hard to deal with, and we again face the long path to some healing. Life sure has something in mind--we are just not sure what that would be.

To lose two sons suddenly sure does not seem fair, and again we are back at square one. Each day grief takes over and we wonder why, but we go on. We are in our seventies now and the days drag on forever again just like the past. We have learned to love the beauty of the butterflies and birds as they are so free spirited and each day while we watch they seem to take away a small part of our pain. Now that we are in spring of 2012 we know that they will help us mend our broken hearts.

When Thomas was killed we went to our first TCF meeting about six months into our grieving process. For many years we went each month and after each meeting we felt as if a little bit of the pain was taken away. Many years have gone by and we still stay in contact with our TCF friends by receiving the monthly newsletter.

We know we have a long road to travel but we will take baby steps for now. We loved our sons and sure miss their smiles and the love they generated to everyone. They will live in our hearts forever and we will look back on all the great things they did in life.

Bill and Terry Bruggemann

TCF Morris Area Chapter, NJ

In Memory of our sons, Thomas and Michael

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**CHAPTER INFORMATION**

**Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 46 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you’ve moved; then we pay another 46 cents 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**

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the We Remember Them list on pages 2 and 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, 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. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net, We’ll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

**We Need Your Help**

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child’s name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. Our outreach chairperson will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.

**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.

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**BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

**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 or email 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.

**Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times of meetings. Visit www.nationalshare.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.

**TCF Web site —A Treasure for You**

When you log onto the TCF Web site 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. Check it out.

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The Long View

A

 few weeks after my son Arthur died I met a nurse. She conducted an assessment for me for a procedure that I had scheduled months ahead of time. She ran down her list of routine questions.  One of them was “Are you in pain now?”  Jess, my stepdaughter, was with me because she was my ride home after the procedure. We just looked at each other.

I hesitated and answered honestly, “Well, emotional pain,” and then explained it. The nurse stopped and looked at both of us. She said soothing things that I don’t remember. Then she said, “Someday, you will smile again, just not now.”

She was right. That’s the long view of it. At the time Jess and I had no idea that would happen again. Our fresh grief was way too huge and painful to imagine smiling again.

To the tender newer members of TCF I wish you a someday when you will smile again. You will feel a spark of joy. This will come again.

The Compassionate Friends support group anchored me from one month to the next. I met people who were further down the road than me who had experienced child loss. They smiled, even laughed and they were authentic. They were my role models.

Now as a TCF chapter co-leader, when I see a newer member spontaneously reach out to someone who is at their first or second TCF meeting, I breathe a sigh of relief for both of them. One is helping the other and both will feel that healing on their grief journeys. This is how we work and it works very well.

Monica Colberg

TCF Minneapolis, MN
In Memory of my son Art

