

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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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. (See Mailing address above.) 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.

TCF Video to be shown

January 12

The Compassionate Friends helps us to cope with the death of a child. It is a place where one can turn for support when the devastation of the loss seems overwhelming. The Compassionate Friends has produced a short video in which members of the National TCF Board, chapter leaders, bereaved parents, and siblings discuss their own grief experiences and what helped them. This video will be shown at this month's meeting, and regular sharing groups will follow. Please join us.



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**.....Kris Thompson
931-486-9088
- Suicide**.....Ron Henson
615-789-3613
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245

And can it be that in a world so full and busy the loss of one weak creature makes a void in any heart, so wide and deep that nothing but the width and depth of vast eternity can fill it up.

Charles Dickens

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.

*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—



Lisa Allgood January 14 Daughter of Harold and Betty Allgood	Carvelle Conley, Jr. January 4 Grandson of Carol Thomas	Matthew Kent Hensley January 13 Son of Kenneth and Kathy Hensley	Lauren Kristena O'Saile January 23 Daughter of Don Davenport Granddaughter of Martha Davenport
Misty Whitney Ambrose January 14 Daughter of Michael and Treva Ambrose	Kaitlyn Kimberly Cook January 30 Daughter of Jim Cook and Sylvia Bosma	James Edwin Hinesley January 7 Son of Steven and Sue Hinesley	David Pringle January 13 Son of Jim and Margaret Pringle
Matthew Johnson Brooks January 14 Son of Mike and Sherry Brooks	Cam Mantle Davis January 9 Daughter of Jack Mantle and Vicki Little	Mary Grace Hodsdon January 14 Daughter of John and Mary Hodsdon	Laurie Lynn Shriver Robert January 15 Daughter of Warren and Donna Jones and George Shriver Sister of David, Bekki, and Bonnie
Pamella Sue Chaiken January 17 Daughter of Lionel and Sandra Chaiken	James Wesley Evans (Snowman) January 31 Son of Brenda L. Nelson Brother of Heather	Shawn Patrick Martin January 4 Son of Michael and Annie Martin	Paul Edward Townsend January 5 Son of Gerald and Jackie Townsend
Jeremy Wilson Christy January 20 Son of Wilson and Jenny Christy	Samuel Christopher Hagens January 14 Son of Christopher and Pamela Hagens Brother of Luke and Caleb	Kensley Caroline Miller January 11 Daughter of Jason and Cindy Miller	Gavin Garrett Vaughn January 8 Son of Linda Vaughn
Jonathan Lee Collins January 12 Son of Charity Collins Grandson of Jenny Reeves Brother of Kristanna		Adrin B. Ohaekwe January 3 Son of Tamera Hawkins	



And in the month of their deaths

Brock Wyatt Blick January 8 Son of Mark and Jeri Kay Blick Grandson of Jerry and Bonnie Buckner	Jeremy Wilson Christy January 4 Son of Wilson and Jenny Chisty	Stetson Taylor McFarland January 30 Son of Nathan and Alisha McFarland	Gerald Randall Townsend January 14 Son of Gerald and Jackie Townsend
Juri Austin Bunetta January 9 Son of Al and Dawn Bunetta	Roy James Davies January 13 Son of Roy and Barbara Davies	John Robert Miller January 29 Son of Trish Merelo	Joe Vick (Joey) January 10 Son of Kay Bogle Brother of Angie
Matthew Lance Chitwood January 1 Son of Jim and Connie Chitwood Grandson of Margaret Chitwood-Watkins Brother of Clayton Lee Chitwood	Cam Mantle Davis January 25 Daughter of Jack Mantle and Vicki Little	Adrin B. Ohaekwe January 3 Son of Tamera Hawkins	Jason Brandon Warf January 21 Son of Ronald and Clada Warf
	Joseph V. Ladd (Joey) January 9 Son of Joe and Melanie Ladd	Trinity Rhodes Steagall January 1 Son of Rose Steagall	James Donald Warren (Donnie) January 24 Son of John and Georgia Warren Brother of John David
	Vontrekus Keon Lockett January 15 Son of Willie Sails and Bernita Lockett	Stephanie Hardy Stephens January 10 Son of George and Thelma Hardy Sister of Jeremy	

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.

*Robert and Cynthia Daugherty
In loving memory of their
granddaughter,
Laura Abigail Czirr (Abby)
"Love you Abby"
Daughter of
Steve and Paige Czirr*



*Deanie Gregory
In loving memory of
her son,
Darby Felts
And her nephew,
Philip Sanders,
Son of Jean Porch*

*Warren and Donna Jones
In loving memory of
Her daughter and son,
Laurie Lynn Robert and
David George Shriver
His son, Michael Scott Jones,
And his niece,
Laura Paige Gibson,
Daughter of
David and Peggy Gibson*

*Barbara Davies
Through Nationwide
Workplace Giving Program
In loving memory of
her stepsons,
Roy James Davies
and
Taylor Davies
Sons of Roy Davies*

*John and Mary Hodsdon
In loving memory of
their daughter,
Mary Grace Hodsdon (Grace)*

*Vicki C. Little
In loving memory of
her daughter and best friend,
Cam Mantle Davis*

*Richard and Kathleen Dinkel
In loving memory of
their son,
Mark Joseph Kinkel*

*Debby Hood
In loving memory of
her son,
Cory N. Hood*



*Jennie Collins Reeves
In loving memory of
Her daughter Sheila,
Her son, Michael
And her grandson, Jonathan*

Each month, Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, 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.



Death is but a

MOMENT...

Love is

FOREVER !!

Darcie Sims
Footsteps Through The Valley

*A note to the newly bereaved...
(and a reminder to the rest of us)*

The first months and years after bereavement can be terrifying. It seems as if the pain stays at a monotonous peak; it seems as if one's mind will be lost at any moment. And although most of us "get better" after the first terror we usually do not realize that until we look back, years later. When we think about it: This state of affairs is almost "reasonable." After such an overwhelmingly traumatic experience, we can fall-as it were-to the end of the world. Coming back from there is bound to be slow beyond our imagination and fraught with reversals. So far, no one has found a method to avoid this painful journey back. But perhaps it will help to know you have already begun to travel... You will find it is a long journey, and desperately hard-and you may almost want to stay where you are. But you will realize later that the wind of tomorrow is already stretching your sails, and life awaits you across the sea. If you only knew...

Sascha



Choosing Life

It will never be the same. Never. As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same." This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens, TCF founder, calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose. The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day. Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley. Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed-even prayed-that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you. When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery. Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

Marcia F. Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey



Gentle Reminders

*With gentle reminders I am blest,
Soft surprises on me are pressed,
As when I, gazing at the moon,
Feel your presence as my guest.*

*When I hear the cry of a loon,
Or catch a brief snatch of a tune
That we once shared some time ago,
You seem so near, I'm not alone.*

*I sense your breath as breezes blow
And your soft kiss in flakes of snow.
In mists sometimes your form I see,
Or in the sunset's afterglow.*

*I often feel you here with me.
Your soul from body now set free
Has the welcome ability
Gentle reminders to bring to me*

From *Rachel's Cry*
By Richard A. Dew, M.D.
TCF, Knoxville, TN

Remember Me

*Remember me in quiet days
When raindrops whisper on your pane,
But in your memories have not grief
Let just the joy we know remain.*

*Remember me when evening stars
Look down on you with steadfast eyes;
And when your thoughts do turn to me,
Know that I would not have you cry;*

*But live for me and laugh for me—
When you are happy, so am I.*

*Remember an old joke we shared;
Remember me when spring walks by;
Think of me when you are glad,
And while you live, I shall not die.*

Lyn Bryant, Sibling
TCF, Baytown, TX



Courage

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and

important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me.

Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

Patricia Kelley
TCF Richmond VA

In loving memory of my brother, Sean 8/24/76 - 8/28/93

Is grief the price of love? No. But grief is an aspect of love.

Love doesn't have a price. It is given freely!

Mike Bell
TCF, Nashville

A Year Just Past

*There used to be a point to summing up a year just past
not as a personal accomplishment but as a reflection.
Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible
thing to do.
I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.
With new years clean and full of possibilities,
becoming another person seemed simple,
another chance at getting it right,
like a redemption, being forgiven for
having blundered or been found wanting.
But death changed everything, without permission.
Resolutions, made sincerely and broken quickly,
offended my need to hold on to the past,
to rewind life, fast backwards,
so I could capture what I had lost.
Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas.
And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must,
I understood there would be another future,
not the one I thought I had the right to expect
but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.*

Eva Lager
TCF, Perth, Western Australia

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Full Circle

*The year has gone again
From spring to winter –
And in this year,
Your memories may have found
A breath of calm between them,
Quiet respire – sometimes.

Then why must there be
Twice as many now –
These feelings, now,
These visions, songs and voices,
From Halloween to New Year's:
Twice memories and smiles
Twice memories and tears...

You know the answer,
Even while you cry:
The tears are
(like the smiles)
The season's face of love.*

Sascha

*Tears are the silent language of grief~
Voltaire*

This can be a constructive, if not happy, year

Happy New Year? How can it ever be again? How will I ever make it through another year of this torment? When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our new year, but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves, over and over again, that it is true.

Because it is! Many parents, whose children have died some years in the past, will attest to it. Remember, also, that no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering right now.

Secondly, we must face the new year with the knowledge that this year offers us a choice, whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year, or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to

be on the way to healing by the following year, then we must work to get there. And that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief—to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilts, to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Thirdly, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on, and we must accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back.

Most of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief, we can grow and become more understanding, loving and compassionate—more aware of the real values in life.

Let us not waste this new year!

Margaret Gerner
TCF, St. Louis, MO

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, we pay to retrieve it in order 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

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 615 308-2520, 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.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

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. 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 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. Their informative brochure is found under “Contact Us.”

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 Website —A Treasure for You

When you log onto the TCF Website at 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.

The Compassionate Friends

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January 2020

Just Beyond the Thawing Point

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. Trees bend under the ice, and long, lonely stretches of snow show no prints—no sign of human habitation. Power lines literally snap in the record-breaking freezing temperatures and we are without electricity—sometimes for seconds, sometimes for hours. Schools have been closed down, stores are closed...a state of emergency.

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember a feeling as desolate and lonely five years ago when our little girl died. Even though the world somehow seemed to go on around me, I did not. My life stopped for a while in a wintry grief-shocked silence, and I was only slightly conscious of the machinations of humankind. The schools did not close. The roads were still open. And after long periods of blankness, the TV shows were still the same. Even though my heart was frozen, the world seemed to revolve on its own accord, unaware of the tortured soul of one grieving mother.

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. This expanse of utter desolation will cease. There will come a thawing-out time when the world will go on, and the rhythm of life will pick up again. In the deep depths of grief I couldn't imagine a day of sunshine and warmth, but it happened. I fought it for a while, but I once again became a part of life. My thawing-out time came, and my eyes opened to the wonders of the world around us. My mind accepted the presence of other human beings who cared, others who were hurting. And after a long period of mourning, I even came to a certain acceptance of our daughter's death.

When we let grief do its work, we see a melting down of barriers and roadblocks that stand in the way of our healing. When we allow ourselves to feel the pain as well as the love, there will come a moment when we begin to realize that life does go on. Our life. Our new life. Hold on, dear friends. Life without that precious child does exist—just beyond the thawing point.

Dana Gensler
TCF, S. Central KY

