**June 2017 The Compassionate Friends Volume 31● Number 6**

 ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

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

Chapter Leaders: Roy and Barbara Davies, 615) 604-2087, email: tcfroyandbarbara@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 513-5913, email: melanierladd@gmail.com Treasurer: Mike Childers, (615) 646-1333, email: michaelc1333@gmail.com

Outreach: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: davidg14@bellsouth.net

Regional Coordinator: Polly Moore, (931) 962-0458, email: lolly39@aol.com

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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.*

**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

**June 11 Meeting:**

***Balloon Release and Picnic***

 ***Location: American Legion Pavilion***

O

ur June gathering is a very special time—our

Annual Balloon Release and Picnic. At 3:00 p.m. we

will meet at the American Legion Pavilion, 2864 Elm Hill Pike, 37214, just 3.3 miles beyond our regular meeting location.

This is a very popular event each year and we invite you to bring your family members. All ages are invited to come to remember and celebrate the life of your child.

 *Please see details on page 4.*

*The tears are fewer*

*The sadness less often*

*But the memories are strong*

Georgina Kuwalek

TCF, Livonia, MI

A

ttending 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

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# PLAN NOW TO ATTEND:


# THE 40TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

T

he Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. “Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope” is the theme of this year’s event. The 2017 Conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. Details will be updated on the national website, www.compassionatefriends.org, as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page as they become available.

Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

**As I Remember Him**

W

henever I answer an email from a newly bereaved sibling I say “My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25th 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him."

The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40. As the ninth anniversary approached last year I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August, our birthday month, but last year was worse.

As my birthday neared I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me it would be easier than being with all of the family, all except Alan. I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan for nine years I now realized that I couldn't continue without help. Twice a week for the two weeks before my

birthday I received counseling. I had decided I would have a birthday party if I could make the guest list. It turns out everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan but they could see his picture button while speaking to me. Thoughts of Alan were never far and as I walked the last friend to his car I realized that it was an enjoyable day but each milestone would be an adjustment.

As I approach my 41st birthday, the tenth without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car’s license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal; each new state I visit I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, created an AIDS quilt, web page and a backyard garden. I devoted a room, “Alan’s room”, with posters and articles by and about him. I donate items for AIDS & TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan’s memory. As long as I live I will continue to find ways to honor his memory as I remember him.

Daniel Yoffee

In Memory of my brother, Alan

**June 2017 TCF Nashville, TN 3**

**All-Outdoor Balloon Release and Picnic: June 11**

**New Location: American Legion Pavilion**

*The afternoon of June 11, 2017marks the date of our regular annual*

*balloon release and picnic in memory of our children.*

*Location:* ***American Legion Pavilion, 2864 Elm Hill Pike, 37214*** *(Plenty of parking)*

The Pavilion is about one and a half blocks east of Donelson Pike,

just 3.3 miles east of our regular meeting location at 1604 Elm Hill Pike.

Plan to arrive before 3:00 PM. Family members of all ages and friends are invited to participate. Each person will be given a bio-degradable helium-filled balloon to which you may attach a handwritten message (paper will be provided.) Following a few moments of remembrance, the balloons will be released. It is really quite beautiful as they drift away together. The group will then gather for barbecue and covered dish picnic under the pavilion. This is a moving ceremony as well as a time to get to know one another better.

Each family is asked to bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

**A-G Main dish (other than barbecue, which will be provided)**

**H-M Cole slaw, baked beans, salad or other side dish**

**N-Z Dessert or chips**

Soft drinks and paper goods will be provided by the chapter. Picnic tables are under a large shelter in case of a shower. Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket if you wish, and outdoor games. Restroom facilities are nearby. Please dress for the weather and plan to stay as long as you like. Please, no pets. We hope to see you there!

***To My Miscarried Baby***

*Out of our love you came,*

*Planned, wanted, welcomed.*

*Your announcement created excitement, joy.*

*Friends and family inquired,*

*Do you want a girl or boy?*

*Will you take Lamaze?*

*What colors for the nursery?*

*Then suddenly you're gone — and silence.*

*No one talks about a baby that won't be.*

*Were you real or a dream?*

*I feel alone and empty.*

*Where can I put my love that was for you?*

*Now what does it mean?*

 Betty Ruder

 TCF North Shore, IL

***Silent Stories***

No one ever told me that grief

felt so like fear.
 [C.S. Lewis](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1069006.C_S_Lewis)

 [A Grief Observed](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/894384)

*Somehow they press*

*against the windowpane of your mind.*

*Tales of wanting*

*Tales of longing*

*Tales of grief.*

*A drumbeat,*

*Heartbeat,*

*Calling out loss.*

*But*

*We remember.*

*But*

*We still love.*

*We will not be silent*

*We will speak their names,*

*Always,*

*We will love them,*

*Forever.*

Melissa Anne Schroeter
TCF Rockland County, NY

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**“*For Crying Out Loud”***

***Life has been presented to men in demanding ways***

***And accepted with the expectation of fatherly praise***

***Men don’t Cry!***

***Lest eyebrows be raised!***

***Men Don’t Cry***

***Is the male teachings learned from boyhood***

***A teaching considered the abortion of weakness***

***And is deemed the challenge of manhood***

***Who could ever know how it would feel***

***To see inside***

***The soft feelings of men***

***Instead of their outside appearance of steel***

***There is a new place where I can remove my shroud***

***Where no shame of crying is ever held***

***We are “The Compassionate Friends”***

***“For Crying Out Loud”***

**Donald Moyers**

**TCF Galveston County, TX**

***When Fathers Weep at Graves***

*I see them weep*

*the fathers at the stones*

*taking off the brave armor*

*forced to wear in the work place*

*clearing away the debris*

*with gentle fingers*

*inhaling the sorrow*

*diminished by anguish*

*their hearts desiring*

*what they cannot have--*

*to walk hand in hand*

*with children no longer held--*

*to all the fathers who leave a part*

*of their hearts at the stones*

*may breezes underneath trees of time*

*ease their pain*

*as they receive healing tears*

*...the gift the children give.*

Alice J. Wisler

For David, in memory of our son Daniel

**Where Did the Laughter Go?**

O

ur son Tony died twenty years ago on May 26, 1997. Like all of you the date is engraved in my mind, and like all of you there was this sudden void in our life.

One of the first things we said to each other was there would be no more “Tony stories”. Tony stories could be anything from an adventure, a funny thing that had happened in his life or the life of a friend, or just a good joke.

Tony was 29 years old and lived in Virginia when he died. His job took him to many different countries so the adventures could be a story about that or almost any everyday occurrence in his life. Our family had a story telling gene that I can remember from my grandfather, my Mom, then me and on to our children. My husband is pretty good in that department too. When Tony left home he was of the computer generation and thought we should have one too. I refused stating I wanted to hear his voice. So every week we talked on the phone, and all week long the three of us collected adventures in our own lives which we would embellish to make them even more interesting. We also saved good jokes. I guess it became a bit of a contest.

After his death it seemed almost a travesty to consider anything funny. But after a couple of weeks of not hearing a joke or any story that would even cause a smile I stopped after work to buy a joke book. I told my husband I was going to read them aloud every evening until we found one that was funny. It was tough going for a while. Nothing was funny and I often read through tears. But then the most miraculous thing happened and we found smiles became easier. This was followed by chuckles and finally really out loud laughing.

Some of you will already understand that laughter will return. For those of you who have not reached this point I can only say be patient with yourselves. One day those smiles will return.

I still find times when I reach for the joke book and read aloud to my husband, for I also know there will be some sad times in my life without Tony. But the times are fewer, the laughter is more spontaneous and our world has become a happier one than 20 years ago.

Margie Scott

TCF, Indiana

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**What Are We Waiting For?**

M

y brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. "Jan bought it the first time we went to New York eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the special occasion."

 He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the funeral home. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment. He slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about all the things she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special.

 I still think about his words and how they've changed my life. I read more and dust less. I sit on the deck and admire the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden. I spend more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I try to recognize those moments now and cherish them. I don't save anything. We use our good china for every special event---such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped or discovering the first camellia blossom. I wear my good blazer to the market if I feel like it. I don't save my good perfume for special parties. "Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing, hearing or doing, I want to see, hear and do it now.

I am not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrows we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. It's these little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew my hours were limited---angry because I put off seeing good friends, angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write, angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I am trying not to put off, hold back or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. Every morning, when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it's a special day.

 Marcia Alig

 TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

***Missing Graduate***

*Parents’ happy faces all around me,*

*With a glow from within,*

*“Pomp and Circumstance” is playing,*

*Now the program will begin.*

*The graduates are lined up,*

*They are coming down the aisle.*

*Some have serious faces, yet*

*Some have a little smile.*

*I look down the aisle,*

*Hoping for your face to come into sight.*

*This is your class,*

*It was to be your graduation night.*

*All the graduates pass by,*

*But none of them is you.*

*A tug of my heart tells me,*

*You are not here, your death is true.*

*God called you home…*

*I wanted you here in such a bad way.*

*Looking into your classmates’ faces*

*Do they recall you, missing this day?*

*Memories, sweet memories,*

*Now fill my mind and heart.*

*There will be no golden tassel*

*This day for my sweetheart.*

*The class is oh! so happy.*

*This isn’t the time to be blue.*

*Now I must go shake a hand*

*And get a hug or two.*

Emma Valenteen

TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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**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 in their newsletter 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). or emailing davidg14@bellsouth.net.

**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**

All donations and original poems or articles for the TCF Nashville newsletter must be received by the meeting day of the month preceding the publication month. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.

**BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

**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 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. See www.nationalshare.org.

**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.

**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.