**May 2015 The Compassionate Friends Volume 29● Number 4**

***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 activities room of Blakemore United Methodist Church, 3601 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37205. Enter on the Bowling Avenue side. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

**May 10 Meeting: Honoring Our Memories**

**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

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he May meeting is an especially poignant one because it always

falls on Mother’s Day, and since the June meeting is not on

Father’s Day, we like to give special attention to the role of both

mothers and fathers in the lives of their children. If you have a special

memory of a particular Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, we hope you will

come prepared to share it with the group. We will honor all mothers

with special readings and there will be a picture board to display your

child’s photo. (Please bring a photo 5”x7” or smaller.)

This has always proved to be a very meaningful meeting—a safe

place to be on a day filled with memories. We’d like to share it

with you.

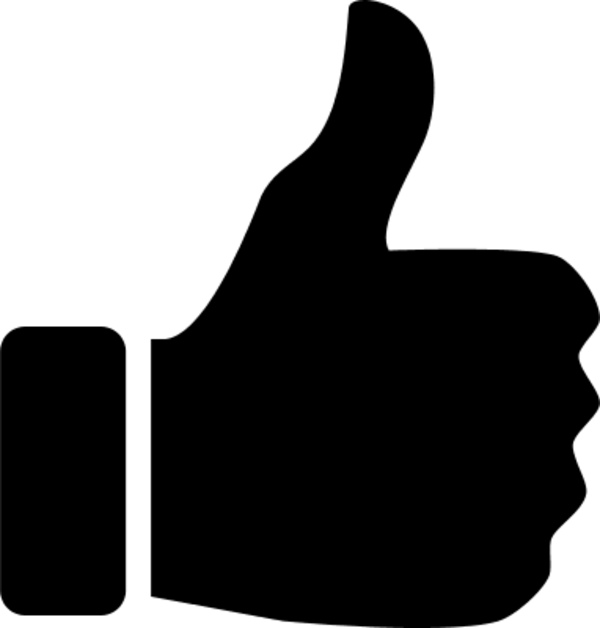
Keeping our tradition, each person in attendance will be given a

mini-carnation to wear in memory of their children.

Regular sharing groups will follow.



*Join The Compassionate Friends, Nashville, TN on Facebook. Let’s support each other there too.*



*The*[*carnation*](http://www.proflowers.com/carnations-car)*’s scientific name is Dianthus.*

*‘Dianthus’, roughly translated, means “flower of love”*

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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**The Significance of Mother’s Day**

I

don’t think I really appreciated the significance of Mother’s Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my own child, a love greater than any I had known before. So as Mother’s Day approaches, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood, I too, want to be remembered as a mother.

Ginny Smith

TCF, Charlottesville, VA

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**Mother’s Day Without You**

*Even in the fleeting time that the two of us were three,*

*You taught us of the purest form of love that there can be.*

*Of a mother for her baby, for the new life that she bore,*

*For the miracle love created;*

*how could anyone ask for more?*

*Short-lived was my chance at motherhood*

*because you could not stay,*

*And I would give almost anything to see you smile today.*

Sharon S. O’Keefe

TCF, Richmond, VA

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***Second Sunday of May***

*Many happy memories*

*Linger in our hearts this day*

*As we each remember our child*

*Who has left this earthly plane.*

*The day is bittersweet for us,*

*The mothers who have lost so much,*

*For to remove all pain could well*

*Erase the precious life we touched.*

*Tears will trace the memories of*

*Other, happier Mother’s Days,*

*As we dwell in a quiet reverie*

*This Second Sunday of May*

Annette Mennen Baldwin

TCF Katy, TX

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

**Mother’s Day is in the Heart**

M

other’s Day and Father’s Day, two very difficult days to get through when you are a bereaved parent. For some of us, our only child has died; for the rest of us our remaining children seem to remind us of the one we no longer have.

Our only son, Jason, died a few weeks before Mother’s Day last year. I remember dreading that holiday and wondering how I would survive all the reminders that I no longer had a child, was no longer a mother. I dreaded finding any cards in my mailbox, but I dreaded not finding any even more. That would be proof that I was no longer a mother.

When I picked up the mail, there was, indeed, a card from my mother-in-law. My first reaction was anger and hurt: “How could she be so cruel? How could she remind me of my loss this way?” when I finally calmed down and was able to read the card, I found a wonderful, warm message of love and concern. Mom realized how difficult that day would be and wanted to help in her own special way. She pointed out that once I had become a mother, it could never be taken away. Motherhood was in the heart and it was there to stay.

I still feel a little sad and nostalgic on Mother’s Day, but I know that what has happened can never be undone. Jason lived and made me a mother as surely as he died. I am still a mother and will be in my heart forever.

Connie Eddy

TCF, Concord, NH

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**Mother’s Day: A Father’s View**

I

n our house as in other bereaved parent households, Mother’s Day comes with mixed emotions. Setting aside a day to honor motherhood is only right; mothers do tend to be taken for granted. I remember as a child the joy of getting my mother a special gift, even if the gift was nothing more than a crayon drawing. As an adult, buying gifts and doing something special for my mother and the mother of my children brings back those happy memories. All that changed after Erin died.

Looking through all the cards at the gift shop only reminds me of the irony. Cute, humorous and sentimental cards await the bereaved father shopping for his bereaved wife. I can’t find the card that will comfort my wife on this day, or worse, I’m afraid I’ll buy a card that will bring back only painful memories of the child she lost.

I realize this day can, even years later, take my wife back to grieving she thought she was “through with.” I can never do enough on Mother’s Day; maybe I try to do too much. I know cards, gifts, flowers and messy breakfasts can’t make up for the loss of our child. Still I do these things because she deserves them.

The unfairness of our daughter’s death will always be there. I know I can’t change that. But I can remind her she is a great mother, a loving mom and most importantly, she is still the mother of the child we lost.

If she’s happy on Mother’s Day, I will try to do my best to keep her there. If she’s depressed, I’ll try to cheer her up as best I can, even though I feel I’m not very good at it. This, then, is the wish I have for all other bereaved mothers today: Please be as happy (and proud) as every other mother today; no one can dispute the fact you brought your child into the world. Although that child is no longer with you, the love you had for her or him remains and can never be taken away from you. If you should be depressed, may there be family and friends to remind you of this and to comfort you.

Al Bots

TCF, Cleveland, OH

#### Mother’s Day…Father’s Day…

#### Graduations…Proms

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pring comes—and with it comes the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead. For those who are still going through all the “firsts” without your child, we share with you some special ways other parents have coped and managed. Mother’s Day…Father’s Day…graduations…vacations…these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories of young lives cut short. It does get better! And you can make these special days better with some planning and with encouragement from those who have already been there. Whatever the “special day” that lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your child. Share as a family thoughts and suggestions about planting a tree or starting a rose garden, donating a book to the library or school, putting flowers on the altar, lighting a special candle or taking that long talked-of vacation. Tears and moments of sadness are okay, for they are expressions of love.

Remember:

* Take one day at a time.
* Keep things simple by playing down the holidays and special days, while they are so painful.
* Change your routine from past years.
* Make plans to be “busy” during at least part of the day (go out to lunch or a movie or visit friends.)
* Give your older children some “space;” they not only feel your extreme sadness at these times, they also have their own feelings to deal with.

The anticipation is often worse than the day itself!

TCF, Fox Valley, Aurora, IL

*Happiness is like a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it eludes you.*

*But if you turn your attention to other things, it comes and sits softly on your shoulder.*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Beginning to Live Again

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he facts surrounding the death of my daughter are painful to recall. Early in my grief, my world was in a shambles. I lived with doubts, became careless about money, my general health. . . everything. I refused to make plans to improve my lot.

How long did this phase last? I think a change began about two years later. I began to see other things in the world and decided to try to pick up the pieces of my life. Would a move to new surroundings help? I proceeded slowly on this idea and yes, it did help. I busied myself with my new home. I began to have entire days or entire nights without that awful statement, “gunshot wound to the head,” echoing in my mind.

Last year a favorite sister died and that was after I had begun to enjoy life again. Sometimes I feel that I can’t take any more sadness, but as long as I live and care about people something painful will happen. Something else will happen. But here I am. I am a survivor. I try to roll with the punches, look for new experiences and search diligently for cheerful situations. People I know only casually may also have a pain, an agony, they have not shared with me. I try to avoid saying or doing anything that may hurt others.

Some days I am extremely depressed, but other days I am almost happy. Can this be? Is it possible for me to be happy? Yes. I must enjoy the moment: a delicious meal, the pleasure of conversation with friends, the joy of dancing, singing, walking, and traveling. I must, for I do not know what is in my tomorrow.

Florence Godfrey

TCF, Camden Co., NJ

***Letting Go***

*Tiny hands would hold on tight  
No matter what you'd do  
You took my hand so many times  
As through the years you grew*

*You reached for Mommy late at night  
When scary dreams awoke  
Seeking comfort and advice  
In every word I spoke*

*Decisions made in later years  
Would bring you home again  
A broken heart, A love renewed  
A quarrel with a friend*

*Wanting you to make your way  
Decisions all your own  
You'd need your hand held less and less  
I'd know you'd finally grown*

*Through the years I thought I knew  
And though I'd hate it so  
I hoped each time I held you tight  
It would help me to let go*

*Now all I have are memories  
Of every hug and touch  
You've gone to be with God, my son  
And I miss you oh so much*

*Fate's reversed what I must do  
And that's the saddest part  
For now I have to let you go   
To keep you in my heart*

Donna Gerrior  
TCF Pasco County, FL  
In Memory of Rob

***Far Beyond the Clouds***

*Far beyond the clouds above*

*A special garden grows with love.*

*Special flowers of many blends*

*Are the children of*

*The Compassionate Friends*

Sam Rosenberg

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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, will 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.

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**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.

**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](tel:615%20963-4732) 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.

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**All-Outdoor Balloon Release and Picnic: June 14 – Two Rivers Park!**

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he afternoon of June 14, 2015 marks the date of our regular June meeting and will be the time of our annual balloon release in memory of our children. Family members and their 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. Watch for more details in the June newsletter!



**The Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference, July 10-12, 2015.**

**Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of $129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.**

**Register online at** [**www.compassionatefriends.org**](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

***Several friends from TCF Nashville will be in attendance.*** ***Plan to be a part of this year’s heartwarming experience.***