

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.

May 9th Meeting:

At this time, we plan to meet in person at the ABC building for our regular May meeting. We will abide by safe practices including taking temperatures at the door, wearing masks and keeping some distance between families. The room will be sanitized. Although we are still limited by some of the things we can do, we will be together to share our children.

We understand that there are many reasons why some will be unable to join us in person. Therefore, we have scheduled a Zoom meeting for May as an option on the THIRD Sunday (May 16) at 3:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please send an email to TCFNashville@yahoo.com. We will email the link a few days before the meeting. A link will also be available on our Facebook page.

We hope these two meeting options will provide everyone who needs an opportunity to connect in May. Any changes will be posted on Facebook and our website www.tcfnashville.org.

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

I Never Believed...

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness. I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears. I never expected to actually laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face. I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die. I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise. I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return. But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you too will come to understand that life goes on...that it can still have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

Don Hackett
 TCF Hingham, MA

*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—



Christopher Jay Bradley May 31 Son of Lamar and Joy Bradley	John Mark Knabe May 27 Son of Bob and June Knabe	Lauren O'Donnell May 8 Daughter of Denny and Shirley O'Donnell Sister of Sean and Katie	Ed Pyle (Stobie) May 17 Son of Ed and Dorothy Pyle
Robert Jason Heflin (Jason) May 30 Son of Eddie and Kay Heflin	Joseph V. Ladd, III (Joey) May 14 Son of Joe and Melanie Ladd	Adam Nicholas Pappas May 19 Son of Gust and Jane Pappas Brother of Andrew, Alex, and Erin	Matthew H. Woods May 14 Son of Vaughn Woods and Mickie Woods
	Stetson Taylor McFarland May 27 Son of Nathan and Alisha McFarland		Joseph Tanner Wray May 19 Son of Bobby and Amy Schisler and Keith Wray



And in the month of their deaths

Login Stratton Brumit May 14 Son of Charles and Kathy Brumit	Laura Paige Gibson May 15 Daughter of David and Peggy Gibson Sister of Kay and Claire	Jeremy Seth Lunceford May 12 Son of Jane Lunceford Brother of Aubrey, Shelby, and Brittney	Sheila Rochelle May 20 Daughter of Jennie Reeves Sister of Charity Collins Aunt of Kristanna
John Roaten Cheadle, III (Ro) May 16 Son of John R. and Nancy Cheadle	Heidi Kathleen Hedstrom May 16 Daughter of Charlie and Kris Foust	Jacob Allen Mathis May 26 Son of Mark and Debora Mathis	Scotty Lee Rumble May 15 Son of Kimberly Rumble
Toby H. Daniel May 22 Son of Christy Daniel	Sherry Hooten May 31 Daughter of Ann Flatt	Lauren Paige Moore May 3 Daughter of Mac and Polly Moore Sister of Darrell and Paul	Tony Scott May 26 Son of Eldon and Margi Scott
Marieke de Jager May 7 Daughter of Jan and Betsy de Jager	John Mark Knabe May 13 Son of Bob and June Knabe	Dynasty Brooks Parks May 20 Daughter of Dennis and Sherry Parks and Tonya Trout	Drane Smallwood, III May 22 Son of William and Alana Smallwood
Kevin L. Duke, Jr. May 6 Son of Kevin and Lisa Duke	Stacy Leigh Kraft May 18 Daughter of Keith and Meryl Kraft and Terry Kornman	Nigel Randolph Phill May 14 Son of Jennifer Phill	Shannon Nicole Smith May 23 Daughter of Sylvia Smith
Jeffrey Glenn Eakes May 13 Son of Don and Sherry Eakes	Baillie Ann Fudge Locke May 26 Daughter of Kile and Debbie Fudge	David Pringle May 17 Son of Jim and Margaret Pringle	Ryan James Tropauer May 9 Son of David and Debbie Tropauer
Charles Courtney Edwards May 3 Son of Charles and Ruth Edwards		Ed Pyle (Stobie) May 31 Son of Ed and Dorothy Pyle	Steven Williams (Buck) May 22 Son of Ricky and Cherri Williams

My Perennial Love

Every summer my son gives me flowers. He planted them 17 years ago ... the summer before he died. I remember the day he planted them. Not the exact date, but standing there talking to him as he poked holes in the ground and carefully placed each one. I remember thanking him and thinking how very sweet of him to do that for me.

Terry died the following February. After months of crying and grieving, summer came and with it his flowers bloomed! Of course it made me miss him even more, but how I loved seeing them and knowing that he had put them there the year before. I know nothing about flowers so I was astounded when my mother told me that what he had planted was an annual and not a perennial and that they should not have come back.

A few weeks ago, our neighbor who moved in last summer, commented on my impatiens. She said she was surprised to see them come back from last year. I told her that they have been coming back every year now for 16 years. Just saying it aloud made me realize how extraordinary that really is!

There is something else I have come to realize. My love for my son did not end when he died. My love for him is indefinite; it is enduring. It is perennial.

Maureen Harman
TCF Tidewater Chapter, VA



Good memories are the perennials that bloom again after the hard winter of grief begins to yield hope.

Sascha

Allegra Marketing (615 360-3339) 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.

Catching Butterflies

*It often hurts to come upon
reminders of my son.
Tho' often since I lost him
I would search around for one*

*Which always brought on sadness
And the tears that I would shed
Were caused by names or faces,
All things that I would dread.*

*But then one day I came upon
A man who'd lost his son.
I found that things I ran from,
He wouldn't even shun.*

*But rather he would treasure
And I said I wondered why
He told me that he called them
"Catching Butterflies."*



*This view of his intrigued me;
I wanted to hear more
And learned that he took all of them
And carefully would store*

*All of the reminders
That I chose to push away
He would tuck deep down inside
His heart each and every day.*

*Now a name or likeness
When catching me off guard
Does not upset me as it did
And I don't find it hard.*

*For now instead I see these times
As opportunities
To see my son awakened
In these new fresh memories.*

Dottie Williams
TCF Pittsburgh PA

The Second Blessing

The Buddhists have a concept called “The Second Arrow of Suffering.” This occurs when negative thoughts and feelings return to our consciousness with additional suffering and drama added onto the original pain of a past event, like losing a child. I’ve been grieving my son Jacob’s death for about a year and a half now. It took me awhile to distinguish between what I call “Pure Grief,” that is, my grief of losing Jacob without the drama of guilt, regret, anger, or blame, and the second arrow, with its added misery. Thankfully I’ve come up with a way to help me through the additional drama of these dramatic, strong feelings that can get embedded in our thinking. An arrow is a good image, because the thought of stabbing ourselves needlessly with guilt or blame is very powerful.

When I just miss Jacob because of my profound love for him, pure grief, I let the feelings in and nurse my pain, like when I held Jacob as a baby to calm him when he was crying. I acknowledge my pain of losing him, take a long breath, and say to myself, “I know,” like a best friend, and with or without a good cry the grief eventually goes away. And I always tell him how much I still love him and miss him. This mutual loving kindness we shared, and still share in spirit, is my main source of healing. I know about the second arrow of grieving with guilt because when I left my father’s business years ago, and he died shortly after, I had sub-conscious guilt that my leaving caused his passing. It increased and lengthened my

suffering for years, until finally he came to me in a dream and assured me it wasn’t my fault. That it was just the biology of diabetes and heart disease. Praise God, I stopped stabbing myself with the second arrow of guilt. Now his memory just brings smiles!

I believe we can get better at healing a loss after we’ve survived a number of griefs throughout our lives. And while grieving Jake I thought, “But what about the warm, happy thoughts of Jake that put joy into my heart? Are these past thoughts like the second arrow ones?” I then realized no, these were sweet memories of the mutual loving kindness and compassion we shared with each other, and that these thoughts are spiritual, much greater. And I started calling them “Second Blessings” instead of second arrows.

So, I’ve learned how to acknowledge and release the needless “Second Arrows” that arise occasionally. And I’ve also learned how to acknowledge my “Pure Grief” for him and let my healing griefwork handle it. And the good news is, more and more I am renewed, healed, and joy-stricken with these “Second Blessings,” that simply bring back Jacob with love and acceptance. Thank God for Second Blessings!



Mike Bell
TCF, Nashville, TN

Love is Immortal

Many of us will resent the lengthening of time between our child's life and our own present. Others may welcome the increasing distance in the hope that time itself will be a balm to pain. Yet, all of us perceive, beyond all the hype and expectations, that new years and seasons are merely calendar events.

Whatever problems we have had in the past will follow us into the present. There is no inner demarcation with hurting behind and joy ahead.

Each of us has the same opportunities now as we had before. We can permit time to simply pass, or we can work to mold its passage into constructive growth.

In the deaths of our children we have discovered with certainty that we lack the means to control the most cherished elements of our lives. But we also know that within each of us is the potential to rise above the debilitating anguish we have experienced.

Time continues to move forward and most of us have been too damaged to even play the games of resolutions and dance the rites of spring. We are beyond the futility of such exercises. But, let us each confront this moment and time with an inward commitment to recovery, to living the hours which comprise our existence with the fullness and love of which we are capable.

Hurting will ultimately lessen. Pain will slowly become more bearable. Fears and guilt will gradually pass away. But love, that inner dance of the heart which leaps to our child's name or the memory of an especially close experience that bears only the mantle of endless joy, will not pass away. All else, fame, fortune, distress and dismay, wealth and power, even ourselves, will at last be done.

But love...Love is immortal...May the immortality of love grow secure and healthy again within each of us.

Don Hackett
Plymouth, MA



The True Meaning of the Meeting

A misty, cloudy Thursday night in March found me, once again, driving to The Compassionate Friends meeting. Tonight a friend would meet me; she lost her 21 year old son seven years ago in an automobile accident. She has never sought counseling or attended a group meeting. She was always an introvert; the death of her son increased that tendency.

Together we walk to the meeting room. She's asking a few questions, but I'm doing much of the talking. A mom whose only child has been dead for 63 weeks is explaining to this woman who has endured so much for so long about coping with unimaginable loss. There's an irony here. There's also a reason.

Attending my first TCF meeting one year ago was not easy. The pain was brutally raw. The loss was unimaginable. I was reliving the death of my son in my mind, over and over and over and over. I wasn't angry. I was devastated. I wasn't blaming anyone but myself. Could I have done something differently and changed the course of events? This was my big question. My soul was an empty void, my heart broken, as another friend pushed me along into that first meeting. I'm glad she did. It made all the difference.

So tonight my friend signs in for the first time and makes a nametag. We look at the books and brochures. We talk. Melinda greets us: as always, welcoming the newcomer, extending her sincere, sweet and pure condolences to my friend. Other parents talk with us and soon the meeting begins. Tonight's topic, ironically, is "letting go of the if only's." We all talk about our regrets, how we dwelled on them. Some are still dwelling. Others are moving away from the darkness of regret into the light of affirmation: affirmation of our love for our child, affirmation of the decision to go on and make the best life possible, affirmation to remember the life of our child and honor our child's memory.

My friend joins in, hesitant at first, but soon contributing. Talking of death, of loss, of going forward, of focusing on the positive, of not dwelling on the horror, of eliminating the negative (including people) from her life. I begin to think about her losses (there are many) and her classically introverted personality. Yet here she is openly talking about private pain. And then it hits me. She is among kindred souls in this room tonight. Each of us has had losses of a magnitude that cannot ever be measured. She is comfortable with these gentle people who weep for their dead children, whose voices break in mid-sentence, whose silences often say more than any words could possibly convey.

The meeting goes by quickly. My friend has to leave to pick up a toddler grandchild. We say quick goodbyes to the others and walk quietly to the parking lot. I mention the Mothers' Retreat, but I know she has made commitments to care for grandchildren while her daughters work. Getting here tonight required a lot of juggling, but I am glad she did it. Her lonely, private struggle has come to an end. Now she knows she is not alone, there are others just like her: kindred souls who need her as much as she needs them. We go our separate ways in the parking lot and she shouts, "I love you." I love you, too, Sherri, my kindred soul.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX

Their Song of Love

*Remembering on this Mother's Day
the melody your child etched
in your heart.
The sweet song of love
that only your child could place there.*

*As this special day brings
their song to you,
may the warmth of their eternal love
fill your heart once again,
For their song is never ending.*

Patty Erdman
TCF Longview, WA



The Dream

*In my dream
your small hands
cradled my cheeks.
You looked into my eyes
and your sweet voice
whispered the words I needed to hear.*

*"Mommy loves me"
you said.
Mommy loves you
More than words can ever convey.*

Maria Kubitz
TCF, Contra Costa County, CA

I Am Spring

*I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.*

*I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth – life is change.*

*I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.*

Carol Clum
TCF Medford Oregon

From One Who Knows

*I promise you, my friend, I promise you
That you will feel the warmth of spring again
That you will touch the hands of children
And the lips of lovers and the tenderness again.*

*But here and now, my friend, I promise you
Small consolation:
Some morning you will see beauty in your sorrow,
Comfort in the wealth of love remembered,
Courage in the aching tide of days.*

*I promise you, my friend, I promise you
That you will understand someday
Someday this pain which taught you
what depth and height
and greatness and devotion on life can hold.
Your life, my friend.*

Sascha Wagner
TCF Des Moines, IA



Grief: Our Act of Love

I had a child who died. How simple these words are, yet how painful they are to say. The death of a child is the harshest blow life has to offer; it destroys our trust in the world at the most basic level. Grief is our total response to the death of a child; our body, mind, emotions and spirit all react to the loss. While many of us wish to stop the intense grief work we are doing, we find it impossible for many reasons.

First, grief is an act of love, not a lack of strength or faith. The more we loved our child, the greater will be our grief. The more integrated our lives were with the life of our child, the more we will miss his or her very presence. The intensity of our grief is often representative of our love.

Second, grief is a necessary process that we must go through in order to maintain our wholeness and sanity. If we do not grieve, we will not heal. One of the earliest and hardest lessons we bereaved parents learn is that men and women grieve differently; women, in general, grieve more openly than do men, and women, on the whole, are more comfortable verbally expressing their feelings of loss. While segments of our culture indicate it is more “manly” not to cry, we know this is not true.

Grief work also helps us to complete unfinished business with our child and close the past relationship that we had. We will never “get over” the loss of our child, nor would we ever really want to. We are who we are partly because of our relationship to that child. Our lives will always be influenced by our son or daughter, but most of us will eventually learn to live a meaningful life, despite our tragedy. Our child will always be with us in spirit and in love, and we often feel a need to hold on to tangible items, such as toys or clothes, to maintain that feeling of closeness. But intense grief work allows us to let go of the relationship we had and create a new relationship with our child. Our remembrances, love and feelings of oneness with our child can never be destroyed. I cannot see nor touch my Philip, but I vividly remember him. I have completed earthly mothering, but I still have an intense mother-child relationship with my son.

Grief 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 that 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.

Elaine Grier
TCF Atlanta, GA

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 3 in The Children Remembered list, 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. Drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

Corporate Donations to TCF

To benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click on “Community Rewards”; then follow the instructions on that page and designate The Compassionate Friends Nashville Chapter. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to our chapter. Also, when going to Amazon, type in “Amazon Smile” and designate The Compassionate Friends; then, each time you go on Amazon Smile a small contribution will be made by Amazon to our organization—It's a free and easy way to support TCF.

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. We do not phone the family and all information you provide is confidential.

TCF Nashville Sibling Support

We encourage siblings from teens to adults to come support one another at our monthly chapter meetings. Siblings face a unique and complicated grief journey and are finding hope and healing through our sharing groups.



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.

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 an infant. The website is sharingmiddletn.org.

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call [615 244-7444](tel:6152447444), 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 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.

The Compassionate Friends

**P.O. BOX 50833
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Anticipating Mother's Day

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children. With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the fifth Mother's Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself.... "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

While my first Mother's Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother's Days have been more subdued. The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their

child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just "go with the flow." Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth. The day itself is not nearly as overwhelming as the buildup of anxiety and sadness which precedes it. I have found this to be true of all holidays, birthdays, death anniversaries and special occasions. I am trying to live in the moment. When the moment of Mother's Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

