**September 2015 The Compassionate Friends Volume 29● Number 9**

 ***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.*

**September 13 Meeting:**

***How to Create Digital Memories***

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CF Nashville parent, Kathy Beeler, Cole’s mom, will share with us her extensive knowledge of how to save, and use digital photos and other type of memories to produce slide shows and digital scrapbooks. You may have seen the Beelers’ slide show on their laptop with scenes of Cole from childhood to his young adulthood and noticed how vivid they are when shared this way. By saving photos and videos digitally, they will never deteriorate or fade and can be saved safely forever. Join us to enjoy Kathy’s presentation and stay for our regular small group sharing sessions.

***ATTENTION! TCF NASHVILLE HAS MOVED!***

***ALL MONTHLY TCF MEETINGS ARE NOW HELD AT OUR NEW HOME,***

***THE AMERICAN BUILDERS & CONTRACTORS (ABC) BUILDING,***

***1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 (see map on page 2)***

“Death has no scissors to cut the cords of love.”

Peter Marshall

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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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**TCF NASHVILLE HAS A NEW HOME !**

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CF Nashville is grateful to Associated Builders and Contractors for providing our new meeting home in their all-purpose room. The location is close to major streets and several interstate exits. TCF families will find this space welcoming for our chapter activities, so park and enter at the rear of the building and join us in our new home on September 13 at 3:00.

(Carefully note that the use of different exits is required from various routes.)

Briley Pkwy

Associated Builders & Contractors

1604 Elm Hill Pike, 37210

Enter in rear of the building

I-40

Spence Lane

ELM HILL PIKE

Fesslers Lane

Murfreesboro Road

I-40

I-24

**HEY…TCF Nashville! Let’s get together!**

New! Watch our website and Facebook for the location of upcoming Social Events.  We will have something different each month and will try to find locations all around middle Tennessee to accommodate everyone.

 ***Block your calendars for the 4th Sunday of each month, 3:00 to 5:00PM.***

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***Valley of the Butterflies***

*There is a green, sun-drenched valley—*

*Light with the scent of clover and lilacs—*

*Where the butterflies dance.*

*Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors*

*Of every hue and dimension.*

*There are monarchs and skippers,*

*Swallowtails and delicate spring azures.*

*Each dances its unique pattern*

*Of flits, circles and dives,*

*Stretching its fragile wings toward the clouds*

*Or brushing its feet on the succulent grass.*

*There are no roads, paths, or gates*

*To broach the valley’s entrance,*

*Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.*

*Every parent who has sent forth a child*

*And vainly waited for its return*

*Comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies*

*And there finds a beautiful spirit,*

*Stretching its wings to the clouds*

*And brushing its feet on the grass,*

*Dancing in swoops, flits and dives,*

*Drying its dewy wings in the warm sunshine of forever*

 *Marcia F. Alig*

*TCF, Highstown, NJ*

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**That First Compassionate Friends Meeting**

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his article is for those of you who are working up the courage to attend your first TCF meeting. Recently, some people who came talked about the effect their first meeting had on them and why they continue to attend. One couple said they felt so drained and unsettled they could hardly sleep and just dragged through work the next day. Another, a teacher, said that after her first meeting, she made arrangements to have a substitute teacher for her class the day following the second meeting she was going to attend. She knew she wouldn't feel up to teaching after coming to TCF. One man said he got up on the Tuesday morning of the week TCF met dreading having to go. He dreaded it all day, naming to himself many good reasons why he couldn't be there. Then he said he always felt better after the meetings and was glad he had made himself go. These examples show why we say, *"Try TCF two or three times before you give up on it."*

You may be asking yourself why someone would willingly attend a meeting that had such a seemingly bad effect and apparently left them more upset than when they came. Psychologists say we need to talk, feel and act in order to resolve grief in a positive way, so the lasting effects are beneficial to our functioning well and to our eventual healing. To heal we must have the courage to face reality and to change.

People continue to come to TCF, even if their first meeting turned them off, because they sense these things and they see a group of people who are individually coping and struggling to make peace with one of the worst traumas they will ever encounter. Initially they may feel worse because for two hours they've dealt with their grief in a concentrated way. They haven't been able to avoid it, push it to one side, be distracted by other things or deny the death of their child. They've told their story; they've listened to other people tell theirs; they've hurt for others, for themselves and for a world in which death has inverted the natural order of things. They've gotten a bucket load of grief all at once. No wonder they feel overwhelmed.

For many, the idea of group grieving is uncomfortable. They've treated their grief as personal (and it is), they've been self-centered (most grievers are), they've wrapped themselves in a cocoon of not being understood and feeling different from normal people, and they've bought society's myth that the repression of feelings is a sign of strength. Then here they are in a group of strangers who're spilling their guts. If they continue to attend, they may find "those people" aren't really strangers. They share a common bond. They, too, may have been uncomfortable at first, but as time went on, they found that a TCF meeting is the one place where it is safe to crawl out of that cocoon and talk about those unusual, crazy thoughts and actions that plague them.

Another thing that may bother people is that some TCF members actually laugh and socialize. Laughter is a great balm for tension and indicates that a certain amount of healing is taking place. People at TCF are in all stages of grief. Their laughter and socializing means they're making progress. It shows that all bereaved parents may one day want to laugh again, that grief will not be all encompassing.

Because you are so raw and vulnerable since your child died, certain meetings may anger you or hit your most tender spots. TCF does have off-nights when nothing comes over as intended, the speaker isn't on target, the sharing groups don't jell, the vibes are all wrong. Don't judge the possible benefits by one attendance. Consider, too that it might have been an off-night for you, or maybe you are attending too soon after your child's death and need to wait a while before coming back.

Time alone will not heal the wounds of the bereaved. It will distance you from the event, but it will not make you well. Acknowledging the death and the possibility for positive change, actively working to resolve the upheaval caused by the death and finding new avenues and persons to invest in and love will produce healing. TCF attempts to help as you reshuffle your life and work through your pain.

Grief is hard work; that's what TCF is all about. If, after attending several meetings, you feel TCF isn't for you, stop coming. It truly isn't for everyone, but the group is there if you need them, whenever you need them.

Elizabeth B. Estes
from *We Need Not Walk Alone,*

*The national magazine of The Compassionate Friends*

*Copyright 1999-2010*

What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?

George Eliot

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**Two Viewpoints**

The following letter, signed "Sibling," appeared in the Louisville, KY newsletter. It is a poignant expression of love and pain that is typical of siblings' reactions. It is hoped that, for those of you with teenagers, it will offer clues leading to freer communications and sharing of feelings.

Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right. I also hold my emotions back from them. I always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents. I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back. I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him. Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them. I miss my brother a lost, more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more. Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Love,
Sibling

**Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief**

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of sibling are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

Jane Machado
TCF Tulare, CA

Reflections of an Anniversary

*Frozen in a hundred photographs, my son,*

*No more do you crash through the door*

*And throw your adventures at my feet*

*Or solve the non-workings of a music box.*

*Your rolling giggle echoes in your sister’s voice;*

*Your dimple somehow lodges on your brother’s face*

*And younger brother lives with your scientific thirst.*

*We said good-bye years ago*

*But you never left.*

*Memories, a thousand moonbeams of joy,*

*Not frozen, but active*

*A spirit filling in the corners and hollows of my life*

*A love expanding my capacity for living*

*Until in eternity—we meld again.*

 Marcia Alig

#  TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, NJ

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**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. 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.

**Picture Name Tags**

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child’s picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge.A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

**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 demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly 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.

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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](http://www.alivealone.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 a bereaved parent support group 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. See 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.

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***I Will Cry With You***

*I will listen closely, hold your hand,*

*or just sit with you.*

*As long as it brings comfort I will be near.*

*I will be silent.*

*I will cry with you.*

*I will silently pray for you*

*and quietly listen*

*as you share your unspoken thoughts.*

*I will not fill the space with questions,*

*words of wisdom,*

*well intentioned resolutions,*

*or small conversations.*

*There are no words for missing.*

*The heart kisses the thoughts*

*and dares remember happier moments.*

*In time, tender memories*

*will guide us through difficult seasons,*

*tender memories will be flowers a-bloom in spring,*

*the summer sun at dusk,*

*crisp leaves of fall,*

*the first snow of winter.*

*But for now, I will cry with you.*

*I will not tell you how to feel*

*or how to be.*

*I will not tell you stories*

*of others who have lost.*

*I will honor your moment.*

*I will honor your loss.*

*Please share your tears with me.*

*I will not hush them away, turn away,*

*or emotionally walk away.*

*I will be near.*

*I will hear your heart.*

*I will not have words,*

*but I will offer love.*

*I will be near.*

*I will cry with you.*

 Pamela Hagens

 TCF, Nashville, TN

**TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing**

**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**…….………………..……….…....Ruth Edwards

 615-353-8547

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

615-237-9972

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

 615-712-3245

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu.

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