

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NEW MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. Box 8283 • Hermitage, TN 37076 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) •

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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 at the ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Tennessee) Building, 560 Royal Parkway, Nashville, TN 37214 (**SEE NEW MAILING ADDRESS ABOVE**). We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

March 10th Meeting: Preserving Tangible Connections to Our Children

The prediction of the January snowstorm resulted in low attendance. Therefore, we are lucky to have April Ellis return for our March 10 meeting to repeat this program so that more may benefit. April will bring us many ideas on Preserving Memories such as photos and tangible objects. These treasured connections to our children can never be replaced and help keep the memory of our children, grandchildren and siblings. This program will present information on how to preserve these precious mementos and share them with others, such as creating a scrapbook (electronically or old fashioned) and will provide tips on writing about photos. She will bring us ideas of what to do with personal items and bring several examples including collages, a page of her son's signatures, and both digital and standard scrapbooks. April's presentation goal is to inspire us to create lasting formats for our treasures.

April asks that each person bring a photo taken of their child (not a school picture). She will engage us in a short exercise using our photos.

Bring your questions on this topic too. Our regular sharing groups will follow the program. Come join us and support one another on this long journey.



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 615-294-4959
AIDS	Joyce Soward 615-754-5210
Illness	David and Peggy Gibson 615-308-2520 or 615-504-4307
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

*All things grow with time,
except grief.*
Jewish proverb

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—

Savannah Dawn Brown

March 28
Daughter of
Angel Hargrove

Bonnita Brown

(Nee Nee)
March 18
Daughter of
Elaine Frey

LaTorra Fayne

March 18
Daughter of
Helen Fayne

Marvin Lee Edwards

March 23
Son of
Charles and Ruth Edwards

Nicholas Ghassan DaaBoul

March 17
Son of
Laurie and Georges
DaaBoul

Kevin Moncrief

March 17
Son of
Sandra Merkel

Samuel James Moore

March 28
Son of
Darrell and Dianne Moore
Grandson of
Mac and Polly Moore

Alexander Nicholas Parkes

March 3
Son of Gary Parkes

**Danny Wayne Phillips, Jr.
(Red)**

March 18
Son of
Janie Totty

Michael Reeves

March 16
Son of Jennie Reeves
Brother of
Sheila, Michael,
and Mark

Trinity Rhodes Steagall

March 18
Son of
Rose Steagall

Sheila Rochelle

March 17
Daughter of
Jennie Reeves
Sister of Charity Collins
Aunt of Kristanna



Mary Catherine Elizabeth Ricketts

March 22
Daughter of
John and Connie Ricketts



And in the month of their deaths—

Matthew Johnson Brooks

March 5
Son of
Mike and Sherry Brooks

Savannah Dawn Brown

March 7
Daughter of
Angel Hargrove

Kenneth Elberson

March 15
Son of
Harry and Winnie Elberson

Morgan Priscilla Graves

March 6
Daughter of
Ginger Graves

Justin Bruce Hensley

March 1
Son of Denise Jones

Mary Grace Hodsdon

March 14
Daughter of John and
Mary Hodsdon

David Benton Lowe

March 5
Son of
Charles and Teresa Lowe

Samuel James Moore

March 28
Son of
Darrell and Dianne Moore
Grandson of
Mac and Polly Moore

Wade Hampton Morgan

March 3
Son of
David and Barbara Morgan

Adam Nicholas Pappas

March 2
Son of
Gust and Jane Pappas
Brother of
Andrew, Alex, and Erin

David George Shriver

March 2
Son of
Warren and Donna Jones
and George Shriver
Brother of
Bekki, Bonnie, and Laurie

Tristan Walker

March 11
Son of
Tamara Brown

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.

GIFTS OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

*Eldon and Margi Scott
in Loving Memory
of their son,
Tony Bruce Scott*

*Don and Sherry Eakes
in Loving Memory
of their grandson,
Taylor Christian Brewer,
Son of
Justin and Tracy Brewer*

*Deanie Gregory
in Loving Memory
of her son,
Darby Felts
and her nephew,
Phillip Sanders*

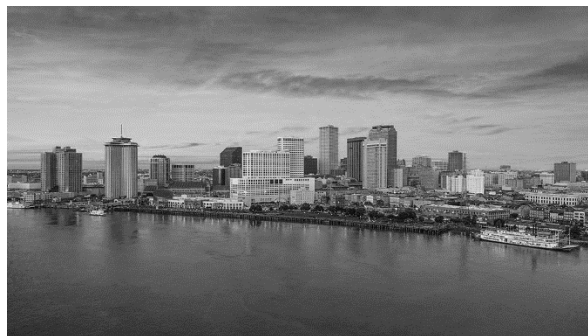


To benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click on "Community Rewards"; then follow the instructions on that page. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to TCF. It's a free and easy way to support your chapter.

Each month, Allegra Print & Imaging, 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.

Start Planning Now for TCF National Conference:

New Orleans, LA July 12 – 14, 2024



For more information, go to www.compassionatefriends.org

*In times of grief and sorrow I will hold you and rock you and take your grief and make it my own.
When you cry, I cry and when you hurt, I hurt.
And together we will try to hold back the floods of tears and despair
and make it through the potholed street of life.*

Nicholas Sparks

Forever Entwined

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable, yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear, the stuff of nightmares, cold sweats and anxiety. But when our children die, the anxiety of that possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of the reality. At first, we freeze in time as our focus is on the primal...breathe, drink water. After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died? I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward; the pain is too intense. Death would be a mercy. Life is no longer a joy. My heart is broken. I will never see my child again.

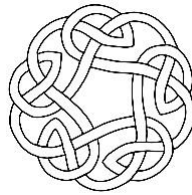
If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey...and survived. Our first meeting is the most difficult. At my first meeting the only word I could say was my son's name. Later, we tell our story to those who have experienced the death of their child and find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others and smile at the memories of their child, we begin the healing process.

Now our lives are forever entwined with those of other parents who have lost a child to death. Like the Celtic knot, we are now part of an eternal paradigm: we are strands in the knot, weaving our stories into each other's lives. This interlace of our lives is a permanent and beautiful blending of souls seeking comfort from one another. Our reality is shared by others; we lean on them and they lean on us. We give, we receive.

Many friends from our lives before the death of our child hesitate to mention our child's name and even fear talking about our child's life and listening to our memories. But we don't want to forget our child as that would be the worst betrayal. We want to talk about our child's life and keep their spirit with us always. Those in our lives who do not share this feeling are not part of our eternal paradigm; they will never be entwined with us as we complete our journey on this earth.

The Celtic knot, the symbol of eternity, is symbolic of the relationships we have found at Compassionate Friends. These lives are forever woven into ours. We accept each other's perspectives and share their sorrow and the joy of their memories. There is a place in our Celtic knot for all parents who have lost a child. As other parents join us, they are enfolded forever into the eternal paradigm of healing and compassion.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF, Katy, TX



Sometimes

*Sometimes something clicks
and with a tear, remembrance of the pain
and the loneliness floods the heart.*

*Sometimes something clicks
and with a smile, remembrance of the love
and the laughter floods the senses.*

*And there are times when nothing clicks at all
and a voice echoes through the emptiness and numbness
never finding the person who used to fill that space.*

*And sometimes
the most special times of all
a feeling ripples through your body, heart and soul
that tells you that person never left you, and he is
right there with you, through it all.*

Kristen Hansen
Bereaved Sibling
TCF, Kentfield, CA

Hold Me

*I want to cry,
Just sometime, let me cry.
Do not demand
that constant smile from me.*

*I know you are
uneasy with my tears.
I need to cry.
Please, do not turn away.*

*I promise you
that I will smile again.
Tomorrow I
will be as light as air.*

*But hold me now
and let my sorrow be.
Just for today,
this moment, let me cry.*

Sascha Wagner

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago, I sold my old, rusty, yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: *For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—as is \$450. Call.*

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away — all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it, but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF newsletter, the ad would have read:

For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm for his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations pre-selected. Ashtray clean except for old bank

receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been eighteen months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things — even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring
TCF, Penn, MD

Night Agonies

*In the deepest part of the night,
when I am alone with my blackest grief,
I reach deep inside myself and measure
the depth of my love for my child.*

*I focus on these feelings,
now made unequivocal by death,
and realize that an emotion so strong, so pure
cannot be obliterated by the physical act of dying.
My love lives on.*

*This link to my child remains, unbroken, unaltered.
This bond, the strongest two people can share.*

But how can it remain, if my child does not?

*A solid bridge must have a secure footing
on either side.*

*The strength of the love that flows to my child
from the deepest part of my being
remains as it was in her life.*

*I must conclude it is still anchored in the very fiber
of my child's soul — on the other side of death.*

*With the reawakened awareness
of the connection of our love
I find proof of her continuance, a soothing reassurance
that though she is no longer with me,
she still IS.*

Sally Migliaccio
TCF, Babylon, NY

Beautiful People Don't Just Happen

The ultimate goal of the grief work is to be able to remember without emotional pain and to be able to reinvest emotional surpluses. While the experience of grief work is difficult and slow, it is also enriching and fulfilling.

The most beautiful people we know are those who have known defeat, suffering, struggle and loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity and understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Hoops

*Upon this bench I sit and watch,
And hear the sounds of glee.
The squeaks, rebounds
Yo! Box'em out!
Ref! Call the foul!*

You'd think it matters so.

*But not for me.
For here I sit.
And watch without delight.
Another game in your school gym
Without you.*

Stephen Aud
TCF Nashville, TN

The Death of an Only Child or All Children

The following are some of the ways that the grief after the death of an only child or all children differs from the grief of those who have surviving children.

There is no one to “parent.” There are no other children for whom to do the things we have been in training to do. There is acute frustration in not being able to do what we know we can do – parent.

The loss is complete for those who have no hope of other children, or for single parents who can never have the same mixture of a child with that child’s other parent.

We find we have a lot of time and energy and no direction for it. Our spouse, the dog, the cat, a foster child, baby sitting, or having the nieces and nephews over does not compensate for our loss of directed energies.

Our physical space – the house, the car, or perhaps the shopping cart – is not filled with anyone. It is quiet and sometimes the sound of that silence is deafening.

If we cannot have another child, we have lost our future. We may never have grandchildren and the questions arise, “Who will take care of me in my old age?” or “What do I have to look forward to?”

Reactions from other people may be different. Do they still regard me as a parent? Our place in life has changed and other people perceive that. When we are faced with the question of “How many children do you have?” it is more difficult for those of us who have no other living children. The question really becomes “Am I still a parent?”

We may have a tendency to idolize the lost child or children beyond what is natural for the grief process because we have no other children to remind us of what is normal for a child. We have no one else with whom to make a comparison.

As the years go by, concern increases that no one around us will ever have known our child or children and talking about them will become more difficult or unnatural in this company. How will we express ourselves in ten, fifteen, or twenty years? Who will want to know about our dead child or children when the people we know will probably be grandparents by that time? We question if after this length of time we are still a parent at all.

When children die at different times, it seems support diminishes with each loss. Generally, people seem to feel that by now we know how to handle the loss because we have been through it before...that perhaps losing all our children blurs the loss of an individual child.

The death of an only child may prompt a feeling of negating the usefulness of several years of the past and we might feel “What a waste of time, energy and love to have it taken away.” Sometimes we feel “Was it really worth it?”

What we have worked to accomplish and accumulate in our lives can no longer be left as an inheritance for our children.

We have all heard that time will heal all wounds. I believe we need to take control of that time and change the passive waiting into active doing.

We need to seek new outlets for the energy we formerly put into parenting. We might find it helpful to use others who have never been parents as role models or resource guides for building our future. We need to keep a growing edge on life as we reluctantly turn our eyes from the past to the future. We can do it more easily if we seek new interests, new knowledge, new friendships, and, most of all, if we seek new life. Piece by piece we can put the puzzle back together, finding the completeness which comes with total reinvestment and redirection of our energies and love.

Edie Kaplan
TCF, Broward Co./Greater Ft. Lauderdale, FL



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

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 8283, Hermitage, TN 37076. 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.

How You Can Help

Most people who attend TCF meetings never heard of TCF before they lost a child, and many bereaved parents still have not heard that there is an organization that exists to help them navigate their grief journey. If you know a family in the middle Tennessee area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you think they would benefit from finding out about TCF and possibly attending a TCF meeting, we will be happy to send you some information that you may share with them about what TCF is and what we do to support bereaved parents. If you have attended a TCF meeting, it might be helpful if you would invite them to attend their first TCF meeting with you. We also have a monthly newsletter that they can receive free of charge simply by asking for it.



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, 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.

The Compassionate Friends

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March 2024

An Employment Agency Named Grief

Did you know that the minute your child died, you immediately joined the ranks of the employed? Never mind that you already had a job, or that your every moment was taken up by your role as wife/mother or husband/father, or that you had more than you could handle on a volunteer basis. You now have another job that carries with it no title of importance, but it is important nonetheless.

This new job involves the sad, but necessary task of creating a new life that does not include your dead child, and you don't even want to do it. For most, it is full time employment for the next couple of years, if you are newly bereaved. It seems impossible in the beginning when your every waking moment is filled with thoughts of your old life with your child, but even the reliving of memories is a start toward the rebuilding of your life. You can't move forward until you have revisited these old memories enough times. Eventually, you learn by the process of experiencing all those special family times how it is you get on with the business of surviving without your child, how to start new traditions.

The job description for your new position calls for abilities you may not feel you qualify for at this time, things such as:

an ability to be consumed by anger, and yet you let go of it once you have dealt with it honestly, An ability to acknowledge feelings of guilt and yet be able to eventually forgive yourself because you did the best you could under the circumstances, and a capacity for inordinate amounts of patience with yourself and others around you as you make your way through pain-filled days. You also learn to maintain some hope for better days ahead. All of these are prerequisites to succeeding at your new job. By bravely reaching out in the days and months ahead, you'll find that you are slowly learning how to build one day upon the other until finally you realize you are maintaining a balance you once thought impossible.

You'll look back and discover you're going on with life and that a new life does go on without your lost child. You will note that I did not say a better life—just a new life. Then you'll find you need not continue full time at your job of grief. Maintaining the status quo of your new life will require some attention from time to time. That's when you become employed on a part-time basis. Look forward to that time.



Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA