

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 HCA building on Park Plaza just north of Centennial Park off of 25th Avenue, North. Inside, you will see our sign and someone will greet you. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

Meaningful Music – April 10 Program

Our April program will explore music in several forms and its powerful capacity to comfort and help with healing after the death of a child. A variety of musical selections will be played (in part) and discussed briefly, after which others will be asked to share what role music has played in their own grief journey. Our own Nashville members and former chapter leaders, Mike and Paula Childers developed this program for the 2008 National TCF Conference and are gracious to share it with us. Be sure 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**.....Kris Thompson
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
- Murder**.....Joe Ladd
615-727-3284

If you suppress grief too much, it can well redouble.

Moliere

One

It was only *one* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this *one*. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying.

I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend. I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being – I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity – for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone.

I knew my brother because he left so much of himself in me. I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this *one* decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that *one* moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that *one* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that *one* moment be the only *one*.

Michele Mallory

Spring Comes

*The spring came and went
Summer lasted only so long
The fall visited briefly
And soon winter too was gone*

*The flowers came
The daffodils bloomed
The world was alive
Except for you*

*Then we were back at start
A year already gone by
How quickly months pass us
How fast time can fly*

*Empty skies
Watching over empty hearts
As spring comes
And we're re-winded back to start*

*You were here
I remember, I know
Hugging me goodbye
Not so long ago*

Alex Bloom
sibling of Jessica Bloom
TCF Nashville, TN

You Are Not Going Crazy

One of the most common things we hear from bereaved parents is that they think that they are going crazy. If you feel this way, let us assure you that you are not. Grief and the resultant depression, fits of crying, and the feeling you are going to pieces may lead you to these feelings or often to the feeling you no longer want to continue living. It is not uncommon to have these feelings.

But most grief-stricken people do not go crazy or commit suicide. It is most important at these times for you to have someone to talk to – to share your feelings – and for you to be able to verbalize your pain. We of The Compassionate Friends want to help. We encourage you to call on us. We have all been where you are now, and we understand your pain.

Fay Harden
TCF, Tuscaloosa, FL

Time for Spring Cleaning

The smell of spring is in the air. At your house it's probably lilacs, lilies and hollyhocks, but at my house, it's Lysol, Lemon Pledge and Clorox. These fragrances are the harbingers of my favorite secular celebration, spring cleaning. I admit it, friends; I love to clean.

I learned the joys of tidiness at my mother's (housemaid's) knee. She is Norwegian, and for centuries the women in her family have dedicated their lives to cleanliness. Early in my indoctrination, my mother taught me the old Norwegian expression "Ingen kysten skogen mogen!" which loosely translated means, "When in doubt, toss it out."

I'm pretty sentimental myself but, until recently, I was never a saver of things. That changed when Blake died. I found that I could not part with anything that his little hands might have touched, from his childish scribbles to lucky rocks to plastic dinosaurs.

Shortly after he died, I went through all of Blake's clothes and gave away his newest and Sunday best. The things I saved were his play clothes—the shorts and shirts with mud and pizza stains that never quite came out, his favorite pajamas, his Charlie Brown underwear. My mother and I gently packed them away in tissue paper as if they were the finest silks and linens. Sometimes when I open that drawer, I think I catch a sniff of Blake's musky little-boy scent. The yearning it awakens in me is almost more than I can bear.

This spring, in conjunction with my usual cleaning frenzy, I'm thinking of getting rid of some of the junk I've accumulated since Blake died, stuff I've lugged around but really don't need anymore. I'm going to call my favorite helpful hardware man and ask him to bring the biggest box in his warehouse. Into that box I'm going to chuck the following:

- That residual bitterness toward those who said or did the wrong thing, or worse, nothing.
- Vestiges of anger that surprise me when they still crop up from time to time.
- That awful anxiety about my surviving children and other loved ones.
- That old bugaboo, guilt, for all I should have said or done or been.

Friends, this is going to have to be a gigantic box! I'm probably going to need a dolly to get it out to the street so the garbage man can pick it up. Maybe I'll just let it sit in the garage for a while so I can look in it from time to time and think about how far I've come. Better yet, perhaps I'll just dump everything into the recycling bin. Who knows? Something valuable might emerge from all that pain.

Pat Dyson
TCF, Beaumont, TX

Winter into Spring in Grief's Garden

*February's rainy days –
March's lions and lambs-
spring's new beginnings
dance across the land.*

*And how are you doing?
Is your heart full and sad?
How much of life's renewal
is your soul allowed to have?*

*As spring comes creeping towards you
does the darkness sweep in too?
Does pain engulf the beauty
with its bleakness and the ruin*

*of your life – now in shambles
of your future – so much lost
of your dreams – lifeless, empty things
of toys covered in dust?*

*But all around you life is growing.
Can you feel it too?
Do you know that inside you
there is growth? Yes – in you.*

*Your child's death has left a hole in you
so deep that you feel hollow.
But this growth will fill it with new life,
new dreams amidst the sorrow.*

*And within that new and growing life,
is your ever living child –
with all the love and memories –
that laugh and that smile!*

*All that you grow
from now to your death
will contain seeds of their life,
will hold their love's breath.*

*You may feel that this growing
would be a betrayal,
but the bond with your child
will get stronger, not fail.*

*As their spirit surrounds you
or their love soaks you through,
you try new ways of living
honoring them, honoring, you.*

*And where once only ruin
covered all that you knew,
you will find new life budding,
new meanings for you.*

*It may take many years
before you see it as gain,
but know it is happening
even now, midst the pain.*

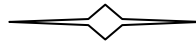
*You. You, will spring upward
growing tall towards the sun
and within your new beauty
is your daughter or your son.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From *Catching the Light*



Reserve Rooms Now for 2011 TCF National Conference in Minneapolis, MN

Room reservations can now be made for TCF's 34th national conference, this year in Minneapolis, Minnesota July 15-17. The conference, which has the theme "Shining Stars-Guiding Hope" is being held at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South, only about 10 minutes from the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport (shuttles will be available to and from the hotel—as well as the hotel and the [Mall of America](#)). Special room rates are \$129 per night for King or Double Bed. Reservations can be made online or by telephone. Go to TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and click on "TCF 2011 National Conference – Minnesota" under "News and Events" for instructions to reserve a room and for latest up-to-date information on the conference.



In This Place

*Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.
In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few days as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.
In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story can be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.
Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.*

*Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,
for the long and winding road we see ahead.
And those we love are pleased we are together,
smile down on us, and bless these days,
glad for every tiny step we are taking
as they send their light to guide us on our ways.
Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters -
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
The 2004 Compassionate Friends National Conference
written 23 July 2004 for the First Timers

Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its 630 chapters. Published once a month (as well as occasional special editions), the e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance. Each e-newsletter also includes a story specially selected from a past edition of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. For the siblings, the e-newsletter features a past question and answer column by Dr. Mary Paulson.

To receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org. and click on e-newsletter at the top of the Home page.

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.

Updated 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.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may call the Crisis Center at 615 244-7444.

Sharing

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. SHARING meets the second and fourth Thursday evenings of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave). Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times.

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

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 and click on chapter locator.



Dove With A Broken Wing

*While walking down a usual path
to welcome in the spring
I chanced upon a graceful dove
who had a broken wing.
She looked so out of place to me,
helpless on the ground;
And as I moved to where she lay,
I heard her mournful sound.
My heart was burdened by the thought
that I could do no good;
She seemed to sense that I would help,
if I only could.
I gently held her to my breast
as minutes turned to hours;
And knew her life was slipping past
as we sat among the flowers.*

*I begged her to forgive me
for the things I could not do;
And promised her that "If I could,
I'd give my wings to you."
I glanced above and found her friends
that circled in the skies;
Then noticed that my wounded dove
had closed her gentle eyes.
One cannot change the way of things,
I thought as I made her grave;
Nor is a single moment yours
to stop the clock and save.
Then as I walked away from her,
I heard an angel sing;
And knew someday I'd meet again
my dove with the broken wing.*

Larry Wood
TCF, Edmond, OK

TCF National Conference Needs Silent Auction/Raffle Items

Do you have new items worth at least \$40 that you might like to donate to support The Compassionate Friends 2011 National Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota July 15-17? The conference committee is seeking donations such as: artwork, photography, prints; gift certificates for online and national retail and food chains; gift baskets with a theme; needlework, quilts; pottery, stained glass, sculpture; jewelry; sports memorabilia.

These are just some examples of items often found in the Silent Auction or the raffle at TCF National Conferences. If you are uncertain about a particular item you may wish to donate, feel free to contact the co-chairs for the Silent Auction/Fundraiser: Kim & Don Bodeau at kimshereel@gmail.com or Gloria Jordan at floglojo@comcast.net.

The monies received from the Silent Auction and the Raffle will be used to offset the enormous costs associated with sponsoring the TCF's National Conference, where 1200 are expected to attend. Donors will be acknowledged in the conference program, provided information is received by June 1. For more information on the conference, please visit TCF's National Website at www.compassionatefriends.org>News&Events>TCF2011NationalConference-Minneapolis. You can also download further information on the Silent Auction/Raffle donation process.

TCF Adds New Spanish Facebook Page: Los Amigos Compasivos/USA

The Compassionate Friends has added a new Facebook Page, Los Amigos Compasivos/USA, for our Spanish language members grieving the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild.

"We want to thank all those who have helped us to make this dream a reality," says TCF Executive Director Patricia Loder. "We anticipate many of our Spanish language members will take advantage of this valuable new resource."

A number of TCF chapters already offer some form of Spanish language support and the national organization also provides support via six Spanish language brochures, a Spanish language website located on TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org., and now the new Facebook Page. The Spanish language Facebook site will have many of the same features of TCF's national Facebook Page, which now has reached approximately 20,000 members. There will be posts related to grief, discussion boards, an area for photographs to be placed in memory of our children, and much more. To reach this new site, go to Facebook and search for "Los Amigos Compasivos/USA."