

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://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.

*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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.*

## Ask-It Basket Scheduled for Meeting April 8

Bereaved parents are often plagued with questions regarding their grief. If there is something bothering you, bring your questions for the basket. This meeting will provide an especially good opportunity for those of us who are farther along in our grief to give the benefit of our experience to those who are just beginning their sad journey. We invite our old-timers to come and lend a hand.

Yes, April 8 is Easter, Passover is April 6-14, and yes, we will be meeting as usual—we ALWAYS meet on the second Sunday, and many bereaved parents feel the need to be here at these special times.



*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.*

## 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.

<b>Accidental Death</b> .....	Mike and Paula Childers	615-646-1333
<b>AIDS</b> .....	Joyce Soward	615-754-5210
<b>Illness</b> .....	David and Peggy Gibson	615-356-1351
<b>Infant</b> .....	Jayne Head	615-264-8184
<b>SIDS</b> .....	Kris Thompson	931-486-9088
<b>Suicide</b> .....	Ruth Edwards	615-353-8547
<b>Small Child</b> .....	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley	615-237-9972
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle	615-712-3245
<b>Murder</b> .....	David and Peggy Gibson	615-356-1351



## Double Grief

*The death of my grandchild  
and the grief of my son  
Pull on my heartstrings  
and I am undone.*

*In secret I mourn beyond relief  
For I have been given a double grief.  
God, help me to deal with  
the pain and sorrow  
Of living without the hope of tomorrow.*



Andd Cipriano  
TCF, Tallahassee, FL

## The Child Who Wasn't Perfect

I cannot say, as I have heard other parents say, "My child has always been a joy and a pleasure; never gave me a minute's trouble." I cannot say that.

I had a son who was always trouble. He was born cross and irritable, a real trial from the word "go." He seemed to be in protest at having been born, from his very first breath and outcry, through the rest of his life. His thirty-seven years of life were one long outcry of protest, misery and unhappiness.

He expressed his tormented spirit through music, poetry and a beautiful American Indian spirituality. But in spite of the pain that was in his heart, he had a wide smile and a hearty, big laugh that belied the torment that raged inside him. He had a strange, mysterious wild charm, to which all who met him fell victim.

He seemed to be born in the wrong time, the wrong culture, with a crippled spirit, and a body that carried a fatal flaw: addiction. He put himself and his family through the agony of the damned. Step by step he destroyed himself, as we watched with grieving hearts. He rejected every effort to save him.

Then came that fateful week.

Some mystery reached out for him. His body, his spirit defied every weapon at science's disposal to diagnose and save him—one by one his vital functions failed—and he was GONE.

The word "forever" suddenly had a new and terrible meaning.

So, he was hard to love. BUT WE LOVED HIM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

We had him because we wanted him and we loved him every minute of his life. Our grief has been no less because he was not a perfect child. It has just been an extension of the grief we lived with all those years, as we watched him destroy himself; an extension of the agony that we were helpless against—the "MONSTER" called addiction that destroyed him.

Yesterday was his birthday. I longed for the sight and sound of him, and that wild melancholy that vanished a year and a half ago.

My heart stays full of tears, they are always just beneath the surface. I struggle daily to keep them out of sight of my fellow man, who does not want to share my pain.

So I come home and sit on my porch in the dark, listen to the rain or the night sounds and stare into space. And I cry—and I cry—and I cry for my CHILD WHO WASN'T PERFECT.

Jane Miller  
TCF, Atlanta, GA

## Another Choice

*"I don't know how you do it,  
I couldn't have done the same."  
These sometimes are the words I hear  
As I say my daughter's name.*

*"I had no other choice,"  
Is often my reply.  
I must learn to live without her,  
Or shrivel up and die.*

*It's way down on the inside  
Where one can never see  
Way deep within—  
Is the missing part of me.*

*It's when you do not see me  
That I cry my silent tear,  
Or feel the empty hurt inside,  
Because she is not here.*

*I would choose it to be different,  
I would choose to feel no pain,  
I would choose to only smile,  
As I say my daughter's name.*

*So if you wonder how I do it,  
I will quietly raise my voice,  
"I wouldn't have done it this way,  
If I had another choice."*

LeAnn Olson  
TCF, Coquille, OR

## Daffodil Time

Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, rush, never stopping to “smell the roses.” We are afraid that if we stop, or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we’ll drop down to that black hole of grief again – so we don’t stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade, we had to memorize some poetry. I still remember lines from the poem *Daffodils*: “*When oft upon my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, they flash upon that inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude.*” For a couple of years after my daughter’s death I could not, I would not, allow myself to get into a vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn’t daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye. It was always my daughter who was there...and then there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw, open wound.

Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant and pensive moods, I can see the daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more than bittersweet, but it is bliss as those memories flash upon my inward eye. I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do not like it, but I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in vacant or in pensive mood, I am careful that the memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones and not the sad ones. They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns that hide just below the beauty. But I can do it now; I can take the time to “smell the roses.” So can you. Try it. Try in small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself, to your family, and to your child. Take time to smell the roses. Slow down and let your memory take over. That helps you heal.

Tom Crouthamel  
TCF Sarasota, FL



### *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 one life can hold.  
Your life, my friend.*

Sascha

## The Carousel

My eyes once again began to focus through this vale of sorrow as the carousel circled around me. My attention was drawn to a small child staring in my direction. He had a kindly, bright and cheerful visage and was riding all alone. He gestured to me to join him. “Come with me on the merry-go-round,” he shouted. “Join me and let’s have fun. Don’t let us pass you again before the ride stops and it’s too late to get on.”

For a brief instant I stood frozen in space, unable to move. Then as if a huge magnet were attached to me, I was drawn to him, finding myself at his side. “Take my hand,” he said. I reached out and held his hand as he gently guided me closer to him. An infusion of warm energy surged through my body and soul as the child held on to me. He smiled at me as if to say, “Everything will be alright.”

I looked into the boy’s soft smiling eyes and was overcome by a feeling of calmness and serenity. I looked around at the others enjoying themselves and for the first time in a very long time I was able to clearly see what was happening. I, too, felt the joy and happiness as we rode that carousel together. I turned back to the child as he rode up and down on his horse with my arms tightly embracing him, once again looking at his smiling face. It was then that I clearly understood that his feeling of joy was meant for me, now knowing that I, too, was ready to join the others riding up and down on the carousel.

Nathan S. Berman  
TCF Rockland County, NY

### *I’ll Never Forget You*

*Looking down at you,  
I see how beautiful you are,  
And knowing that you are my daughter,  
I sit back and wonder, would I have been a good mother?*

*I think of your cry, I never got to hear,  
Nor your smile did I get to see.  
Every day I think of you and  
I know that my love for you is more precious than gold.*

*Remembering your tiny little body  
And looking at your beautiful face, with those tiny brown eyes,  
Holding you close to me,  
Not understanding why you had to die.*

*I loved your soft skin  
And your tiny hand in mine  
Now that you’re not here  
It’s hard to say I’m fine.*

*I’d give anything to see you  
And hold your body close  
Out of everything I’ve lost  
I miss you the very most.*

Zonda Berry  
TCF Missoula, MT

## TCF NEWS AND EVENTS

### TCF 2012 National/International Conference:

Register now for 35th TCF/USA National Conference/ 5th International Gathering in Costa Mesa, California July 20-22! Go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on News and Events to learn more and to access the registration form.

### TCF Regional Conference:

The 9th Annual Western Pennsylvania Regional, themed "Treasured Memories," will be held April 20-21 in Meadville, PA. Keynote speakers include TCF Executive Director Patricia Loder; Carla Blowey, author of *Dreaming Kevin: The Path to Healing*; and Lillian Meyers, PhD, FT, a bereaved parent and licensed clinical psychologist, certified grief counselor, and a Fellow in Thanatology. Planned are eight sharing sessions and 12 workshops. There will be pictures boards, a butterfly table with a variety of items available for purchase. Registration fee for the conference is \$50 which includes all materials, entrance to all workshops, sharing sessions, break time refreshments, and a buffet luncheon. Special rates will be available at the host Days Inn. To register, fill out and return the registration form contained within the Conference Information and Registration Form available at <http://www.compassionatefriends.org> and click on News and Events then Regional Conferences. For more information, contact Ralph and Norma Mc Clay [atrcorvette@windstream.net](mailto:atrcorvette@windstream.net).

### Compassionate Friends Offers Grief Related Webinar Series:

The Compassionate Friends is expanding its outreach to bereaved families by offering a series of free online grief related seminars. The webinars, to be held once per month, are on various grief topics and guests are well-known experts in the field. Webinars so far have included the topics "Handling Grief Through the Holidays," "Getting 'Stuck' and 'Unstuck,'" and "Caring for Your Health While Grieving." These webinars were recorded and are available to view on demand on TCF's national website. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)>News & Events>Special Events>Webinars. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.

### TCF National Organization On Facebook:

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the Facebook icon from TCF's national website home page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Or, you can find it by going to [www.facebook.com/TCFUSA](http://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA). On Facebook you can connect with others who understand to find comfort and to share your grief and healing journey.

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

Albert Schweitzer

## **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.



## **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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on chapter locator.

The Nashville Chapter of the Compassionate Friends were deeply shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of our Chapter Leader, Joe Ladd, last Thursday, March 22. Joe was a familiar and regular face at Chapter Meetings, and everyone who met Joe will always remember his smile and his friendly easygoing manner. Joe will be deeply missed by his TCF family, but more importantly Joe will be missed by his wife Melanie, and members of Joe's immediate family. Please remember these individuals during this time of deep sorrow and grief.

