**April 2015 The Compassionate Friends Volume 29● Number 4**

***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 activities room of Blakemore United Methodist Church, 3601 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37205. Enter on the Bowling Avenue side. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

**April 12 Meeting**

**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**…….……………….Ron and Darlene Henson

615-789-3613

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

615-237-9972

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

615-712-3245

**April 12 Meeting Topic:**

**A Father’s Perspective**

Men often handle things much differently than women. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with the immense grief and pain of losing a child. Our April program will be presented by Brad Bulla who will share one man’s perspective on coping with the dark night of the soul he has personally experienced with the loss of his son and the landmarks he encounters on his journey.

At the age of 17, Brad’s son, Jed was a champion fiddle player who started playing his instrument when just five years old. However, in a tragic turn of events, his life was cut short when he took a ride with an underage drunk driver and died on August 3, 2005.

While grieving his son’s death, Brad began working with Mothers Against Drunk Driving and has been a frequent speaker at victim impact panels, school assemblies, prison classes, law enforcement cadet training classes, civic meetings, attorneys conferences, victim advocate training seminars and was a keynote speaker at the National Life Savers Conference in 2009. Brad is a force for stronger drunk driving laws - such as lobbying the state legislature to pass Ignition Interlock Legislation - in Tennessee.

Brad currently serves on the MADD Executive Committee and serves as the Governance Board Chairman and on the Board of Directors for Tennessee Voices for Victims - an advocacy organization for the victims of violent crime.

Join us to hear Brad speak to us on his perspective as a grieving father and stay for our regular sharing groups.



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.

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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 Parents to present at the National Conference in Dallas**

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e are proud to announce that two sets of TCF Nashville parents were chosen to present workshops at this summer’s TCF National Conference in Dallas, Texas. Roy and Barbara Davies, our Nashville Chapter leaders, are presenting a workshop titled, "Step-Parents--Behind the Scenes Grievers." There are so many different situations where step-parents can feel invisible or not entitled to experience grief like the biological parent. This workshop will help step-parents feel included and to better understand some of the complex issues that arise when a step-child dies. Steve and Paige Czirr are presenting "Pregnancy after the Death of a Child," and Steve will also present a workshop addressing sudden death (non-vehicular). These topics are situations the Davies and the Czirrs know first-hand, and their workshops will be a further step toward healing for those who attend.



**The Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference, July 10-12, 2015.**

**Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of $129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you. Register online at www.compassionatefriends.org**

***Plan to be a part of this year’s heartwarming experience***

**Vulnerable**

**I**

**have found** in the years that have passed that I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance.The word "anniversary" no longer holds a promise of celebration. Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be so emotionally devastating.

**You'll excuse me** if the bounce is gone from my step. Or the depth of my laughter has changed. Issues that were once monumental, now seem insignificant. Please excuse me if I don't commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed.

**You'll excuse me** if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days "to bear," rather than days to share and enjoy.

**You'll pardon me** if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and **I'll pardon you** for not understanding that my life will never be the same; that although I'll survive, there will always be sorrow.

Joan Fischer  
TCF Nassau County Chapter, NY

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**What Do I Do With My Child's Room?**

I

guess I put this off as long as I could. I am one of those bereaved parents who has never touched their child's room after they died. I have added things, but never subtracted. Basically, everything is in its place as she left it 6+ years ago. Everything that a normal 15-year-old would possess: posters and pictures of friends held to the wall by thumb tacks, playbills from the school musical she was in, dried corsages from school dances, stuffed animals won at the fair thrown haphazardly on her bed, teen magazines and CD's scattered here and there...my remaining links to the past, flashbacks before the loss of our innocence. One that really hurt was the note that she had left to herself that said, "Work at Perkins. May 14th from 7 - 3." Rather than my Nina excitedly, yet apprehensively going off to the second day of her first "real" job, my family and I were at the funeral home making the final arrangements for her funeral. Surreal and so sad...

I can remember the first year or two when I would peer into her room and look at all the glorious clutter of her active life. I swore I would never touch a thing, never throw anything out...it would be left intact forever. The times I did spend in her room were usually spent wrapped in her afghan on top of her bed, practically curled in the fetal position with a box of Kleenex, and sobbing my heart out. "I will never change this room, never!" was my mindset back then.

But things have changed. Due to some family issues, we have to make room for more people residing in our house. The time had come to face it...I had no choice. It is a long involved process. My sweet Nina was a pack rat, to say the least! She saved everything! I have sifted through page after page of her school work. I have squelched the urge to look through the shoebox that says on the outside, "Notes from Friends, 8th grade." instead choosing to not invade her privacy, even after death. I have gone through her closet, and studied her clothing, remembering what she looked like in each outfit. She was so tiny! Size 3-4 jeans and the teeniest little shirts you can ever imagine. It reminded me why we always said she was "Petite but powerful!"...though tiny she was a giant of a human being...loving, considerate, and so full of good ideas.

I have had my moments of intense sadness, such as when I have come across her "Book about Me" that she made in school, the part that asks who is the most important person in your life, to which she answers in her grade school handwriting, "My Mommy, of course." I cry for the loss of that love and our close relationship, even something that carried over into her teens, what are supposed to be the "rebellious years." Even in her confirmation book she wrote

the same identical thing when asked who was the most important in her life. God, I miss her so.

What I have been pleasantly surprised about, though, is that maybe the fact that I waited so long has made this an easier (for lack of a better word...there is nothing "easy" about any of this!) task. Bittersweet, I guess would describe it. I have found myself laughing more at these pictures and reminders of the past, and crying less. And the most amazing thing has happened. The past three nights I have slept in her bed. I am the first one to have slept there since Nina died over six years ago. After I turn off the lights and crawl into her bed, the glow-in-the-dark stars that she put into perfectly placed constellations, gleam and twinkle...it is the only thing that you can see. I feel like I am lying in her bed, protectively wrapped in her arms, and seeing a piece of heaven just as she does now, and what she used to see from her bed when she was alive. The closeness I feel to her at that moment is indescribable! I haven't slept as peacefully since Nina died as I have these past three nights!

I wanted to share this with you in case there are others out there like me...who haven't taken on the task of clearing out their child's room and wondered if they ever would be able to. And, also for those who have heard the comments, "You haven't cleaned out her/his room YET!?!?!" I know it isn't the right choice for everyone; as we all know, the ways we handle our grief and our ways of dealing with our child's possessions are all different, just as they should be. But for those who have waited, I want to reassure you that it has turned out to be a much more positive experience than I imagined. All part of seeing that you really ARE making progress and finding a little hope along the way...that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom forever

TCF St. Paul, MN

*What the caterpillar thought was the end of life,*

*the butterfly knew was just the beginning…*

Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable to the imagination of the unbereaved.

Iris Mudoch

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***A Few More Wishes***

*Wish I had known you longer*

*Wish I had more time to hear your dreams,*

*watch you grow, navigate life*

*Wish we had more summers together,*

*Experienced a few more rainbows after the rain*

*Wish you were here for a few more sunrises,*

*a few more winters*

*Wish I had more time to see your smile,*

*admire your crazy style,*

*To feel your warmth, hear your life song,*

*capture more beautiful melodies*

*Wish we had taken a few more runs together*

*Shared a few more adventures, a few more meals together,*

*a few more ping pong matches,*

*A few more heated discussions, a few more belly laughs*

*Wish I had more time to watch you, ride with you,*

*grow with you, learn from you*

*Wish I had more time to see you high jump a little longer, become stronger,*

*Stand taller, walk farther*

*Wish I could step into where you are*

*Give you one more hug, one more kiss, one more high-five*

*Wish your sunset had not come so soon*

*See you in our tomorrow my Love*

*See you in our sunrise*

*Tomorrow will be brighter. Together we will welcome the sun.*

Pamela Hagens

TCF Nashville, TN

***I Am Spring***

*I am the beginning.*

*I am budding promise.*

*I spill cleansing tears of life*

*from cloudy vessels*

*creating mud 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,*

*I 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.*

(written after attending a workshop presented by John Fox,

author of *Finding What You Didn’t Lose* and *Poetic Medicine.*)

Carol Clum

**bd06374_**

***This Can't Be***

*This is still such a shock to me*

*This really can't be!*

*I don't want to believe this is real*

*This is not something that I want to feel!*

*You just came back, you can't leave for good*

*If I could change this all…I would.*

*You were the one that was always there.*

*You were the one to always care.*

*Now a picture is the only way to see you.*

*I really don't know what to do.*

*You'll always be my big sister,*

*But life's not the same.*

*Life without you seems so lame.*

*No more car rides, no more late nights.*

*No more singing and no more play fights.*

*Where are you? You should still be here.*

*Where are you? I can't find you anywhere.*

*I need you still you just can't go away.*

*I need you here, please come back and stay!*

*Useless to pray you'll come back, you're gone.*

*God took you with Him to call his own.*

*But you'll always be present here in our hearts.*

*You always have been, right from the start.*

*This is still such a shock to me,*

*This really can't be!*

Lilli Pugh

TCF Houston Northwest, TX

In Memory of my sister, Mandi

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**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, may 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**

All donations and original poems or articles for the TCF Nashville newsletter must be received by the meeting day of the month preceding the publication month. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.

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**BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

**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.

**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.

**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](tel:615%20963-4732) or email [griefsupport@alivehospice.org](mailto: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 bereaved parent support or individual counseling.

**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.

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**The Loving Listener**

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ne day last month, seemingly out of nowhere, my dark and dreaded companion “grief” came roaring back in to my life. Just as I thought I was “doing all right,” grief came once again to wrench, rip, and tear at the thin delicate membrane of scar tissue that had formed over the wound in my heart, that I had foolishly believed allowed me to be normal again. I was in unbearable agony. I thought, “Oh my God, I can’t believe I ever hurt this bad. How did I ever survive this agony?” I finally pulled myself together as best I could and reached out to one of our beautiful angels of mercy. I called our “Loving Listener.” “Hi, do you have a minute?” She chirped “Absolutely!” I went on to pour out my heart to her. She listened patiently. She offered no quick fixes or advice, trite phrases, or empty platitudes. She just spiritually embraced me and suffered along with me, quietly offering her love, compassion and understanding.

When most of my pain and sorrow had finally emptied out, I realized it was coming up on the anniversary death date of my child. It would mark five years since the death of my beloved daughter Angela. This was the catalyst that had plunged me back into the abyss of grief. I could not bear the thought that my beautiful child had been dead for half a decade. As soon as I realized what had caused this awful digression, I began to feel a little better. If your chapter has a Loving Listener, please give them a call. They will give you solace, comfort and companionship. We Need Not Walk Alone.

Janet G. Reyes  
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

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When I grieve, when I stand by others as they grieve, even in the midst of seemingly unbearable sorrow, grief becomes a way to honor life — a way to cling to every fleeting, precious moment of joy. 

Cortney Davis, Nurse Practitioner