

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.

Candlelight Memorial to be held December 11 at 3 p.m.

On December 11 our beloved children will be honored at our annual Candlelight Memorial Service to be held in the auditorium of the HCA building where we meet each month. Families and friends are all invited to this very special event.

During the ceremony, you will see the children's picture displayed upon the large screen. Please bring a 5x7 or smaller framed photo or very small memento of your child to be placed on the stage in front of the screen. In respect for our limited space, mementoes should not take up much more space than a small framed photo. As the children's names are spoken, families may come forward to place a candle with their photo or memento.

Be sure to send in the form on page 7 to have your child's picture shown in this service.

We ask that families bring a dish of small pick-up foods to share following the service.

May the memories of this season come on gentle wings to bring you peace and love.

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



Also on December 11, join The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting that unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries. Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone.

As We Near the Special Season

As we near the special season that stirs up feelings of heritage, patriotism, thanksgiving, and our relationship with God, we are instantly reminded that it doesn't seem to fit together for us; our personal sense of well-being is suffering. Our hearts and spirits are undergoing the trauma of painfully fresh wounds in some cases, while others are coping with the scar tissue of older grief that refuses to heal or restore comfort to their lives. This season reminds me we are living with extra stress that must be resolved. I offer a few thoughts to each of you, along with my love, in the hope that feelings of peace and purpose will return to bring you comfort.

First, be careful in agreeing to take on the traditional extra work that goes with holidays. You are coping with grief that will take much of your usable energy.

Second, be especially kind and patient with yourself. The need for physiological rest is vital at this time; regular sleep and rest hours will help.

Third, be aware that holidays and alcohol have become traditional companions; extra caution may be necessary to prevent the depressant effects of alcohol from further aggravating your grief anxiety.

Fourth, it's okay to change past practices that are especially painful reminders of what can be no more; do something different if you have to.

Finally, allow yourself private time as you need to, but also remember it's important to allow others to try to bring you comfort and give you extra help during the holidays. Loved ones need feedback that says: "I'm trying to recover, and I appreciate your help."

Peace be with you.

Ann Frost
TCF Middle Georgia Chapter

Hanukah

*Hanukah
is our Festival of Lights.
Let your light shine,
so that their light
may shine.*

Sascha



Season's Greeting

*Leave your life open
to the memories
and to the promises
of Christmas.*

Sascha

The Angel Tree

Last December I went into a store and saw beautiful china angels to be placed on Christmas trees. I thought for a minute whether I should buy a few and put them on Michael's tree at the cemetery. Michael was 5 when he died from complications associated with open heart surgery. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that they would probably be stolen and decided against buying them. Later that same afternoon and while at my office, I looked out the window through the winter air and thought silently of our precious little boy and those china angels. I then began to write:

"As Christmas approaches, many of us forget that the true meaning of this holiday is to give.

We know that Michael would have given his last toy to a child without one.

In remembrance of our child; those of you who come to visit Michael may take an angel from his tree and hang it in your home to keep Michael's spirit alive."

I left my office that evening and went immediately back to the store and bought every single china angel they had. Last year, we went through 200 angels. We could not keep them on the tree long enough. We received notes and gifts at the cemetery from strangers who said they could not take something without leaving something in return. And how special our child must have been. Even six months later a stranger approached me at the cemetery and asked if I would be putting the angels up again this year because every time she got to the tree they were gone.

The joy we received in giving the angels was insurmountable. We know that there is a part of our son in so many homes and every time these people look at their angels, they will think of Michael.

Lori and Mike Devanney
TCF East Haddam, Connecticut

HOPE

HOPE can stand for many things. Hope is like a scout that goes out ahead into that unknown territory known as grief. That scout lets you know that you can travel there, you can survive this “landscape without gravity.” Let’s take a brief look at some of the possibilities of what TCF members offer when they lend us some hope.

H—

- 1) TCF offers us **help** in learning how to **heal** when we don’t know where to begin.
- 2) TCF offers us a **hand to hold** when we feel lost and a reassuring **hug** when times are tough.
- 3) TCF offers us an opportunity to be **honest** about our feelings without fear of judgment or censure.
- 4) TCF shows us that **happiness** can again be possible as we move once again into life **honoring** our child’s memory as we go.



O—

- 1) TCF gives us an **opportunity** to be **open** and forthright in expressing our deepest emotions.
- 2) TCF gives us an **outlet** for our anger, frustration and guilt.
- 3) TCF provides ongoing **outreach** and support when those in our other support systems may have receded or disappeared altogether as our grief journey moves from days and weeks into months and years.
- 4) TCF offers us a sense of **optimism** that life can be good again and that the intense pain of early grief will not last forever.



P—

- 1) TCF helps us gain **perspective** on what we are experiencing, yet has the **patience** to listen to our story as many times as we need to tell it.
- 2) TCF offers us a **place** where we may feel safe and **protected** as we share our pain and our memories.
- 3) TCF offers us the **promise** of more inner **peace** as we move toward a **place** of remembering more about our child’s life and dwelling less on the circumstances of the death.
- 4) TCF helps us understand the need to **pardon** ourselves for any mistakes we may feel we made as **parents** and not to blame ourselves for our child’s death.



E—

- 1) TCF provides **education** about the grief process so we can better understand and cope with what is happening to us.
- 2) TCF offers **encouragement** that our pain will not always be so great and that we will survive.
- 3) TCF members provide the true **empathy** which only those who have walked our path can know.
- 4) TCF offers us a chance to **express** what is in our hearts and **embraces** us with understanding.

From the keynote address by Susan Chan at the Jefferson City, Missouri Regional TCF Conference, September 21, 2002

Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another’s pain, life is not in vain.

Helen Keller

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 2 in The Children Remembered, 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.



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.

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.

TCF Web site —A Treasure for You

When you log onto the TCF Web site 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. Check it out.

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 11, 2011

Regardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 3, 2011.

Do NOT send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Instructions: A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year. **Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

_____ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

_____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

_____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.

_____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name _____ Phone _____

You may alternatively e-mail your child's picture to Steve Czirr at sczirr@att.net.
Be sure to include your child's name in the e-mail.

Holiday Gifts for Children Needed

Each year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts to them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to help this year, you may participate by bringing new UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 12 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

Gifts:

CD Players
MP3 Players
Gameboy games (teen rated)
Playstation games (teen rated)
Costume Jewelry (like that found in the malls at Claire's)
Remote control cars and planes
Girly things like journals, gel pens and scrapbooking items
Model cars
Board Games
Baby and Barbie dolls and accessories
Lego sets
Trucks
Disney movies
Watches (boys and girls)
Gift cards

Stocking Stuffers:

Matchbox cars
Small notepads
Pens and pencils
Candy
Jewelry
Hygiene products
Billfolds and wallets
Cute little change purses for girls
Makeup items
Socks
Gift cards for fast food restaurants

Once again, remember, these items may be brought in gift bags with tissue paper, but DO NOT WRAP the gifts. Youth Villages staff does the wrapping as it helps them to more evenly distribute the donated items.

Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together — and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those “spirit gifts” are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I’ll hear his voice “Pay attention, Mom.” (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

Catharine (Kitty) Reeve
TCF Marin Co. & San Francisco, CA

Your Child—Gift or Possession?

I had a choice to either view Laura Lou from the vantage point of entitlement, and that is to say, “She was mine. I had a right to her. She was my child, and therefore her death is tantamount to theft”...or to look on her from the vantage point of grace and gift...that I’d ever had her for a single moment was more than I could claim was my “right.” I had a choice between which perspective I would put around her ten years as a part of my history, and I chose to regard her life as gift. I chose to regard her as someone whose very presence in my existence was utterly beyond anything I could have created. That did not take the sadness out of it. It did not in any way diminish the grief, but it did keep me from being angry and resentful at God...or at doctors who didn’t know how to save her, and I would say to you that

you, too, have the same choice — you can either regard the people you have loved as your rightful possession and therefore their death as a kind of stealing of what rightfully belongs to you; or...you can stop asking, “Why did she die?” and step back and ask a prior question, “Why did she live?”...When you ask that question, you’re getting back to that mystery of grace that any of us exists for a single day, and the kind of gratitude that you feel in the presence of something that you know is a gift, is something very different from what you feel when something that is rightfully yours has been stolen.

The Rev. Dr. John Claypool
excerpt from the Keynote Address
Twelfth Annual National TCF Conference

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal...I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others. It wasn’t until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time.

Barbara Bush, bereaved mother