

# ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

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

Chapter Leaders: Roy and Barbara Davies, (615) 863-2052, email: [tcfroyandbarbara@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfroyandbarbara@yahoo.com)

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 513-5913, email: [melanierladd@gmail.com](mailto:melanierladd@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Mike Childers, (615) 646-1333, email: [michaelc1333@gmail.com](mailto:michaelc1333@gmail.com)

Outreach: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: [davidg14@bellsouth.net](mailto:davidg14@bellsouth.net)

Regional Coordinator: Polly Moore, (931) 962-0458, email: [lolly39@aol.com](mailto:lolly39@aol.com)



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

## **February Meeting Place!**

**Our February meeting will take place at**

**Blakemore United Methodist Church**

**3601 West End Avenue, Nashville 37205**

**Please join us there at 3:00 on February 8.**

### **February 8 Meeting Topic:**

#### **Helpful book reviews**

A panel of our TCF members will be reviewing books from our chapter library pertaining to grief.

The Nashville TCF Chapter has a wonderful selection of materials, so please join us as we explore a few of the titles available.

We will have our regular small sharing groups following this program.



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.

## *A Thought for the Day*

*The melody that the loved one played upon the  
piano of your life will never be played quite that way again,  
but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust.  
We must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends  
who gradually will help us to find the road to life again, who will walk that road with us.*

Rabbi Joshua Liebman  
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

## The Greatest Grief

A sudden accident killed **your** child. That terrible phone call changed your life with no warning—you didn't get to say goodbye—this has to be the most terrible loss of all.

**Your** child died by suicide—you feel you should have been able to prevent it. Your guilt is devastating. How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

**You** only had one child—now you have none and your focus in life is gone. What's the point of living? What could be more devastating?

**You've** experienced the deaths of more than one of your children—will it happen again? How does one survive this pain again?

When **your** baby died, your dreams died—you have few memories and you're too young to be suffering like this—this loss is the most unfair.

Someone murdered **your** child—an unbelievable violation—you're angry and your frustration with the legal system feeds your anger. This must be the very worst.

**You're** a single parent—your child has died and you have no one to lean on, no one to share your grief—surely your suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened—**your** adult child died—you had invested so much in that child—now who's going to care for you in your old age?

**You** had to watch your child suffer bravely through a long illness—you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death—how do you erase those horrible images?—Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss, regardless of the cause, regardless of the age. Our own experience is far more painful than we had ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly comprehend what others have undergone? To make comparisons between our own suffering and the pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others. To say that one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than another tends to place different values on the children who have died. Each child is worthy of 100% of our grief, each person's sorrow is 100%, and each loss is 100% of our being. I can't imagine wanting to walk in the shoes of any other bereaved parent, can you?

Peggy Gibson  
TCF, Nashville, TN

## 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> .....	Ron and Darlene Henson 615-789-3613
<b>Small Child</b> .....	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley 615-237-9972
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle 615-712-3245

## February

When February comes, there is finally an end in sight to the long winter. Sometimes melting snow reveals the green tips of an early crocus or even an exquisite blossom itself, a soft flower of hope invading a harsh landscape of graying snow, biting wind and an ominous sky – a small promise of new life to come.

My heart, grieving for my son who died was like that image of winter. For somehow, even during the darkest, coldest moments, an unexpected sign of hope would intrude. And as the hours, days and months dragged on, my heart finally learned once again to be open to the promise of new life.

Painful memories melted into loving ones. Life that seemed forever dormant was once again sprung forth from my heart. In living hopefully and lovingly, the seasons of the heart can change. The living memories of your special child, like the flower in the snow, can be the beginning of the end of winter.

Maryann Kramer  
TCF Arlington Heights, IL

## Daydreams

*Once a day and sometimes more  
You knock upon my daydream door  
And I say warmly come right in  
I'm glad you're here with me again.*

*Then we sit down and have a chat  
Recalling this, discussing that  
Until some task that I must do  
Forces me away from you.*

*Reluctantly I say good-by  
Smiling with a little sigh  
For though my daydreams bring you near  
I wish that you were really here.*

*But what reality cannot change  
My dreams and wishes can arrange  
And through my wishing you'll be brought  
To me each day; A happy thought.*

Stephen A. Wright  
TCF, Champaign-Urbana, IL

## One-Sided Dialogue

I'm tired. Too tired to dress. Too tired to bathe. Too tired to eat. Exhaustion is my middle name since you have left me here to live without you. My own reserve of energy is not equal to the tasks of normal living. I use it up just trying not to cry, just trying to convince myself that life is good, that God still holds the world in his strong hands. I'm filled with questions now for which I have no answers. I've not the energy to think! It seems that life's a sham—like an endurance test and nothing more. I know my heart still pumps, my lungs still fill with air, my blood still circulates, my eyes and ears still funnel their impression to my brain. Yet I am filled with pain, unshakeable and heavily compressed within my soul. But when I talk to you, a crazy one-sided dialogue, I realize a miracle: and, even in the midst of grief, with gratitude! These two—unending love and gratitude—are harbingers of hope. I pray these two sustain me until mourning ends, and I am once again re-energized with joy.

Shirley C. Ottman  
TCF of North Texas

## *It is a Time for Love*

February has fewer days than most months, and that may be of special significance to us, as our children had fewer days than most. When we think of this month, the most outstanding day, perhaps, is St. Valentine's Day. It is a time for love. When we were school aged, we had a special chance to give and receive cards in those decorated boxes in our primary classrooms. Perhaps it is the one holiday that children can really do something for everyone.

Addressing a card to each and every classmate made you think of how you felt about each one and wonder about how they felt about you. Love is found in every day of every year, but February and Valentine's Day is very special. I wish I could remember just how it felt to get a "nicer" Valentine from someone I had sent a "nicer" one to.

It is so long ago, and there have been so many much more significant happenings in my life. But sometimes, I'd like to remember just how it felt. I am sending along this Valentine Love Note to each of you right now, and hope that you know it is one of the "nicer" ones, because each of you is very special to me. Somehow I don't wonder how you feel, somehow, I know!

As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's, we begin to find a different kind of love than we ever expected to experience.

Rosalie Baker  
TCF, Rochester, NY

### *Life is Like a Butterfly*

*Life is like a butterfly.  
Softly, softly...  
One never knows why...  
It touches your cheek,  
Then says, "Goodbye."  
Fragile and sweet, like blooming flowers  
Life's loves and trials  
Last only the hours  
That they touch your heart,  
Then say, "Goodbye."  
Life is like a butterfly.*

Geraldine Reeves  
Food for the Soul

*A lot of Time,  
A little Space,  
A kind of quiet  
Resting place,  
Are what I need  
At times like these.  
A special spot  
Where I can grieve.*

Beth Pinion  
TCF, Andalusia, AL

### **A Beginning**

One day you wake up and realize that you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow.

One day—one glorious day—you wake up and feel your skin tingle again, and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken...and it is a beginning.

Susan Borrowman  
TCF, Kingston, Ontario

## To Our Surviving Children

*And you were with us  
when the darkness came.*

*You stood and grieved  
and kept yourself alive.*

### WE THANK YOU NOW

*We have not always  
honored who you are  
and often did not tend  
your hidden sorrows.*

### FORGIVE US NOW

*Because you loved us  
well enough to wait  
until we could  
return to you and know  
with joy and hope and love:  
you are tomorrow.*

### WE CELEBRATE YOUR LIFE

*And while we will remember  
always, always the one,  
the many souls who did not live,  
we see you once again  
for what you are:  
the wealth you are,  
the comfort  
and the promise.*

### WE THANK YOU NOW

Sascha Wagner  
TCF, Des Moines, IA

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## There is a Place

*There is a place that we call memory...  
A province by itself which, though unseen,  
Is home and haven to the heart...  
And there, in peace and beauty, waiting,  
Are those with whom we shared our yesterdays.*

Nancy Cassell  
TCF, Monmouth County, NJ

## Now I Know

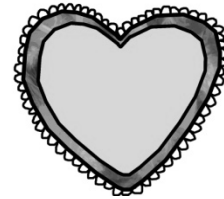
*I never knew, when you lost your child.  
What you were going through.  
I wasn't there. I stayed away.  
I just deserted you.*

*I didn't know the words to say.  
I didn't know the things to do.  
I think your pain so frightened me.  
I didn't know how to comfort you.*

*And then one day my child died.  
You were the first one there.  
You quietly stayed by my side.  
Listened, and held me as I cried.*

*You didn't leave,  
you didn't go.  
The lesson learned is...  
Now I know.*

Alice Kerr  
TCF, Lovers Bucks, PA



## A Valentine Waiting for You

*There's a valentine waiting for you  
That's different from all the others.  
It's there every month at our meetings  
For fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers.*

*Its envelope is made of caring,  
The glue of understanding seals it tight.  
This nonjudgmental group who've been there,  
Help to take away your fear and fright.*

*So, come join with us together,  
Read your loving message printed clear,  
In not only this month's valentine,  
But all those throughout the year.*

Mary Cleckley  
TCF, Atlanta, GA

## **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, you may call 615 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at [TSPN.org](http://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.

### **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. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [\(615\) 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

### **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 Role Model

I watch with wonderment as you go about your daily tasks. I see determination, the quiet confidence, and wonder if you were always like that or did your child's death touch you deep inside and soften your soul?

Did your priorities change? Did your pace slow?

Am I seeing the new you or the old?

I see you laughing and talking with friends and wonder if you still cry when you're alone and remember your child with death memories too bitter to own?

Or have you traveled to a higher plane, another phase beyond the tears and grief and fears and untold sorrows that trap me in their maze? I don't know.

I know only that I look to you and hold on tightly with hope in my heart that someday I, too, can gather strength and find my new start.

TCF, Montgomery, AL



*When one day at a time seems too long, try just one minute at a time.*

Kristin Thompson  
TCF Nashville, TN

## *The Compassionate Friends*

