

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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

Chapter Leaders: Joe and Melanie Ladd (615) 727-3284, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 513-5913, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Treasurer: Jayne Head, (615) 264-8184, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net

Regional Coordinator: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: davidg14@bellsouth.net

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.

TCF Video To Be Shown January 9

The Compassionate Friends helps us to cope with the death of a child. It is a place where one can turn for support when the devastation of the loss seems overwhelming. The Compassionate Friends has produced a short video in which bereaved parents and siblings discuss their own grief experiences and what helped them. Among those who speak are the TCF national executive director, members of the board, chapter leaders and siblings. This video will be shown at this month's meeting, and regular sharing groups will follow. Please join us.



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

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.

Know Your Chapter Volunteers

It is no accident that we have a smooth running chapter. Without the hard work of our volunteers, many things we take for granted would not be done. Take a minute to thank these people for giving their love and time to make the road a little easier for all our bereaved families.

The chapter leaders of the Nashville, TN chapter are **Joe and Melanie Ladd**. **Jayne Head** is our treasurer; our librarian is **Carole Renfro**; **Lamar Bradley**, our Web Master, also makes the beautiful photo nametags for all who attend meetings. **Bandy and Donna Wenning** and **Cheryl Potts** gather a supply of drinks, paper goods, and snacks and set up the refreshment area for everyone to enjoy. **Joy Bradley** is your warm and friendly greeter, seeing to it that the new members are well taken care of. She and **Sue Mather** also write notes to the parents for the first two years on the birthdays and death anniversaries of their children. **Jean Reischman** writes a warm note to each new parent after they attend their first meeting. **Melanie Ladd** creates this monthly newsletter, and **Peggy Gibson** proofreads the newsletter and prepares the pages listing the children remembered and donations received. She and her husband, **David Gibson**, check the mail, monitor the mailing list, and process donations and renewal slips. **Leslie Sinclair** sends letters and packets of helpful materials to the newly bereaved and to professionals. **Ann Lewis** and **Lynn Foster** set up our beautiful Birthday Table each month.

Each month, these volunteers are joined by other members of the TCF Nashville steering committee who come early to set up the room in preparation for the meeting, and stay late to return the cafeteria to its original set-up. They are **Julie Lyle**, **Ed Pyle**, **Donna Reagan**, **Mike** and **Paula Childers**, and **Terry** and **Ann Lewis**.

We have a fine telephone team who rotate on a weekly basis, checking the voice mail and returning calls from bereaved parents and professionals. They are **Lamar Bradley**, **Robin Hunt**, **Ed Pyle**, and **Donna Wenning**. The following people are our phone friends who are listed on page 1 of the newsletter: **Mike** and **Paula Childers**, **Joe Ladd**, **Joyce Soward**, **David** and **Peggy Gibson**, **Jayne Head**, **Kris Thompson**, **Ed Pyle**, **Ruth Edwards**, and **Kenneth** and **Kathy Hensley**. **Deanna Brown** and her family generously give several hours a month folding, labeling and sorting the newsletter; then taking it to the post office for bulk mailing.

The Sharing of Grief

I cannot carry this burden alone, the road is too steep and the pain too great. I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the reality of the feet which bear its weight. The sharing of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age. To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.

Rev. Dr. Simon Stevens
 Founder of The Compassionate Friends

If Only, One More Time

*To hear your voice loud and clear,
 To see your image as if you're here,
 To feel your warmth like you are near,
 If only, one more time...*

*To hear you call, "Mom, I'm home,"
 To keep me company when I'm alone,
 To watch you run and grab the phone,
 If only, one more time...*

*To watch you sit quietly and read,
 To buy you things you say you need,
 To see you do a thoughtful deed,
 If only, one more time...*

*To find a note written by you,
 To walk upstairs and trip over your shoe,
 To comfort you when you're feeling blue,
 If only, one more time...*

*To feel your arms in a soft embrace,
 To see the smile upon your face,
 To understand when you needed "space"
 If only, one more time....*

If only, one more time....

Vicki Richey
 TCF, Orange County Chapter, CA

Remember Me

*Remember me in quiet days
When raindrops whisper on your pane,
But in your memories have not grief
Let just the joy we know remain.*

*Remember me when evening stars
Look down on you with steadfast eyes;
And when your thoughts do turn to me,
Know that I would not have you cry;*

*But live for me and laugh for me —
When you are happy, so am I.*

*Remember an old joke we shared;
Remember me when spring walks by;
Think of me when you are glad,
And while you live, I shall not die.*

Lyn Bryant, Sibling
TCF, Baytown, TX

What Candice Would Say

*I'm sorry big sister, I can't play with you.
I'm sorry grandpa, I can't go to the zoo.
I'm sorry daddy, you can't kiss me goodnight.
I'm sorry mommy, you can't hold me tight.
No one knows why, no one can guess.
But I can't play right now,
I've gone to rest.*

Mary Lingle
TCF, Tyler, TX



COURAGE

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me.

Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

Patricia Kelley
TCF Richmond VA
In loving memory of my brother, Sean 8/24/76 - 8/28/93

A Year Just Past

*There used to be a point to summing up a year just past
not as a personal accomplishment but as a reflection.
Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible
thing to do.
I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.
With new years clean and full of possibilities,
becoming another person seemed simple,
another chance at getting it right,
like a redemption, being forgiven for
having blundered or been found wanting.
But death changed everything, without permission.
Resolutions, made sincerely and broken quickly,
offended my need to hold on to the past,
to rewind life, fast backwards,
so I could capture what I had lost.
Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas.
And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must,
I understood there would be another future,
not the one I thought I had the right to expect
but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.*

Eva Lager
TCF, Perth, Western Australia

© 1999 by Eva Lager

Full Circle

*The year has gone again
From spring to winter –
And in this year,
Your memories may have found
A breath of calm between them,
Quiet respite – sometimes.

Then why must there be
Twice as many now –
These feelings, now,
These visions, songs and voices,
From Halloween to New Year's:
Twice memories and smiles
Twice memories and tears...

You know the answer,
Even while you cry:
The tears are
(like the smiles)
The season's face of love.*

Sascha

*Tears are the silent language of grief~
Voltaire*

This can be a constructive, if not happy, year

Happy New Year? How can it ever be again? How will I ever make it through another year of this torment? When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our new year, but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves, over and over again, that it is true.

Because it is! Many parents, whose children have died some years in the past, will attest to it. Remember, also, that no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering right now.

Secondly, we must face the new year with the knowledge that this year offers us a choice, whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year, or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to

be on the way to healing by the following year, then we must work to get there. And that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief—to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilts, to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Thirdly, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on, and we must accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back.

Most of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief, we can grow and become more understanding, loving and compassionate—more aware of the real values in life.

Let us not waste this new year!

Margaret Gerner
TCF, St. Louis, MO

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 44 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay another 44 cents to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

The "Children Remembered" Listings

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the We Remember Them list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, 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.

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 harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

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

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). The phone number is 615 342-8899.

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may reach Kitty Sanders at one of the following: Write to SOS, PO Box 40752, Nashville, TN 37204; call (615) 244-7444; fax (615) 383-9714, or email nashsos@webtv.net

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.

Compassionate Friends Unveils "Create a Memorial Website" Program

When you ask bereaved parents their greatest fear, you're likely to hear that they're afraid their child will be forgotten. That fear can now be put to rest through The Compassionate Friends' new "Create a Memorial Website" program. In partnership with online memorial leader Legacy.com., the new Compassionate Friends program allows you to easily create an online memorial website so that your child, sibling, or grandchild will always be remembered. A portion of the proceeds from the memorial website you create will also go to support The Compassionate Friends and its many national programs designed to aid families going through the natural grieving process following the death of a child.

With these unique, easy-to-create memorial tributes, you can: customize the design, yet create a site in five minutes using Legacy.com's four-step process; include photos, videos, stories, and more; add music; invite family and friends to contribute and join in celebrating the life of the child you're remembering; and much more.

There is a 14 day free trial period and 25% discount off the first year's sponsorship. To learn more and to take advantage of these offers, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and under "Resources" click on "Create a Memorial Website."

Memorial websites make a great gift anytime!

Just Beyond the Thawing Point

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. Trees bend under the ice, and long, lonely stretches of snow show no prints—no sign of human habitation. Power lines literally snap in the record-breaking freezing temperatures and we are without electricity—sometimes for seconds, sometimes for hours. Schools have been closed down, stores are closed... a state of emergency.

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember: a feeling as desolate and lonely five years ago when our little girl died. Even though the world somehow seemed to go on around me, I did not. My life stopped for a while in a wintry grief-shocked silence, and I was only slightly conscious of the machinations of humankind. The schools did not close. The roads were still open. And after long periods of blankness, the TV shows were still the same. Even though my heart was frozen, the world seemed to revolve on its own accord, unaware of the tortured soul of one grieving mother.

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. This expanse of utter desolation will cease. There will come a thawing-out time when the world will go on, and the rhythm of life will pick up again. In the deep depths of grief I couldn't imagine a day of sunshine and warmth, but it happened. I fought it for awhile, but I once again became a part of life. My thawing-out time came, and my eyes opened to the wonders of the world around us. My mind accepted the presence of other human beings who cared, others who were hurting. And after a *long* period of mourning, I even came to a certain acceptance of our daughter's death.

When we let grief do its work, we see a melting down of barriers and roadblocks that stand in the way of our healing. When we allow ourselves to feel the pain as well as the love, there will come a moment when we begin to realize that life does go on. Our life. Our new life. Hold on, dear friends. Life without that precious child does exist—just beyond the thawing point.

Dana Gensler
TCF, S. Central KY

