

# 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: Lamar and Joy Bradley, (615) 889-1387, email: [lbradley1@mindspring.com](mailto:lbradley1@mindspring.com)

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 513-5913, email: [joeandmel622@att.net](mailto:joeandmel622@att.net)

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

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 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.*

## TCF Video to Be Shown

### January 13 Meeting

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.

<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

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.

## This is Another Year Just Beginning

This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, this is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadnesses we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.

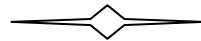
Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small one at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort, and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilts, our failures and our pain.

We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

Whenever that "New Year" begins for you, I celebrate with you that marvelous accomplishment, and wish you great peace, courage, and comfort

Alice Weening  
TCF, Cincinnati, OH

Mary Cleckley  
TCF, Atlanta, GA



## For The New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

1. Let's not try to image the future. Take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share the difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be a perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it; don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body only compounds your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type multivitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell – a very healthy sign.

I know following these won't be easy, but what has been? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Mary Ehmann  
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

Where grief is still very fresh, the most important resolution made may be the dedication to survive each new day.

Bruce H. Conley

## A Letter of Gratitude

Dear TCF Family,

*As this year begins, I have ambivalent feelings that we may well share. Hating to see the seasons change and time pass because it takes me farther from my dear one, I also look afresh, though askance, at new beginnings and hope for the new year. I enter this new year with deep gratitude for you and all the love and acceptance you have poured on me since Joe died last March. His death was so sudden and hard to accept but your courage in facing and learning to live with your grief gives me great hope for healing and balance once more. I know if you have faced your grief and learned to live with it, as Joe did when his son, Joey, died, then I too can somehow walk on and live my life with love and peace.*

*Your compassion has manifested itself in many ways. With great graciousness, Lamar and Joy Bradley stepped back into the role of Chapter Leaders that Joe and I had been holding. They have also committed to continue as Chapter Leaders one more year to give our chapter continuity. If you are fairly new to our group, you may not know that the Bradleys held this position for four years prior to the three years and three months that Joe and I served in that capacity.*

*I was so touched by the Steering Committee's decision to sponsor the Registration Area for the National Walk to Remember at the 2012 TCF National Conference last July in memory of Joe and in my honor. This walk is a major part of the conference with hundreds of parents and family members walking in memory of their children and to think that this sponsorship was done in our names is almost overwhelming, but truly warms my heart.*

*Giving me the chance to start our Sibling Sharing Groups is another way you have shown your love and support of me. This was a dream Joe and I held for TCF Nashville and I am honored to help begin this group. It gives me purpose in the chapter again, and I pray that it will help our siblings in their unique grief journeys.*

*Our chapter's remembrance of Joe at the December Memorial Service is another memory I cherish. It is so evident that he is missed and will always be remembered by the people to whom he was so dedicated.*

*Finally, and most importantly, your love and acceptance along with the sharing of your grief journeys with me is more than encouraging to me. More than ever, I truly understand the power of the words, "We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends."*

*With love and appreciation,  
Melanie Ladd*

### January Warmth

Like a tree in winter which has lost its leaves, we look ahead to Spring for new growth and the warmth of the sun to heal the pain in our hearts. Let us make January a time to reach out to each other and give that warmth from our hearts, and in return, we will all show new growth.

Pat Dodge  
TCF Sacramento Valley, CA

### Another Year

*Old year has gone away  
with gift and candle—  
Old year has gone away  
with thought and song.*

*Old year has given light  
and dark and season.  
Old year has been too short  
and been too long.*

*Old year has given joy  
and disappointment  
Old year has given grief  
and strength to cope.  
Old year was memory  
and was forgetting—*

*Another year is come:  
give it your hope.*

Sascha

### Windows

*The breath of winter  
painted fragile stars  
on all the windows  
of my quiet house.*

*And there I found  
your face,  
more fragile even  
than the season's art,  
a wonder to my eyes.*

*How can it be  
that winter paints  
such secret things  
in white-and-silver sheen  
for those who cry alone  
at frosted windows?*

Sascha

## The Death of the Young

People ask: “Why do children or young people die, when they have lived so little? How do you know that they have lived so little? This crude measure of yours is time, but life is not measured in time. This is just the same as to say, “Why is this saying, this poem, this picture, this piece of music so short, why was it broken off and not drawn out to the size of the longest speech or piece of music, the largest picture?” As the measure of length is inapplicable to the meaning (or greatness) of productions of wisdom or poetry, so—even more evidently—it is inapplicable to life. How do you know what inner growth this soul accomplished in its short span, and what influence it had upon others?”

from *Spiritual Life Cannot  
be Measured* by Tolstoy

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## Names

Our names mark our presence on the planet. They give credence to the reality of our existence. One of the great joys of becoming a parent is that we get to select the name for our child. We know that these little ones will be identified by their names all through their lives—and after they have died.

When I look at the *Our Children Remembered* pages each month, I often think about the children, how dearly they were wanted, how carefully they were named. I can imagine the discussions about the names, the choices, the final decision. Then the welcoming of the baby into the world. I am touched by the words of parents who write so movingly about their children, wanting so much to hear their beautiful names. Our fear is that these beloved names will be silenced and forgotten.

My parents' first child, a nine pound boy, died at birth. My mother decided not to name him; she wanted to save the name for a hoped-for future son. (My dad left the decision to her.) The baby was buried in an unmarked grave in a family cemetery. I have wondered, in the years since my own son died, if not naming the baby was an effort to stem the horrible pain of his death. My parents told my brother and me about the first baby, but, like most people of their generation, they did not discuss their feelings about his death.

The baby was present in our family, however, even though unnamed. For years in my childhood, I daydreamed about my older brother and what my life would have been like had he lived. It felt odd that he had no name. I made up names for him, gave him adventures, let him be a hero in my life. He may have been unnamed, he may never have breathed, but he influenced my life.

I think my mother erred in refusing to name the baby. I have the deepest respect and understanding of her decision and her pain, and I think much of it was due to her shock at the baby's death and the tenor of society those long years ago. But, oh! how important are our children's names. They are our songs, our music. We love their names; we love the souls who bear those names. We meet a baby with our child's name, and we feel connected. We compare spellings. We look at their hair, their coloring, their wonderful eyes. We remember....

Kitty Reeve  
TCF, Marin and San Francisco, CA

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*Hope is like the sun  
which, as we journey toward it,  
casts the shadow of our burden  
behind us.*

TCF, Pikes Peak, CO

*The children  
who were with us  
in the rush of life,  
let them now be with us  
in the peace of spirit.*

*Memories are a legacy  
of hope and courage,  
left to help us go on  
when the giver is gone.*

From *WINTERSUN*  
by Sascha

## Wintersong

*Season of lights, season of love and peace  
Season of shadow, season of memories  
Season of warmth and joy, season of secret tears:  
Give us the courage to laugh again  
Give us the vision to hope again  
Give us the power to love again  
For all our new seasons  
And all our new years*

From *WINTERSUN*  
by Sascha

## **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**

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, 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. 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](http://www.alivealone.org).

### **TCF Web site —A Treasure for You**

When you log onto the TCF Web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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.

## Hello, Did I hear a Big Sigh?

The holidays are finally over, and we can put our hurt and pain back in the boxes along with the Christmas decorations. Oh, how easy that would be, if that were so.

Dealing with the anticipation of the holidays without our loved ones early on in our grief is devastating. We find ourselves not wanting to cope and wishing away the oncoming celebration. This is a natural reaction, of course, and one we must fight to overcome. Memories and the thought of celebrations without our children are fraught with tears and heartache.

We can only hope that the next time we must encounter a specific holiday, we will find it less painful to cope with because we have put one more year behind us. Time does have a way of helping to soften our grief, but the road can be very bumpy along the way to recovery.

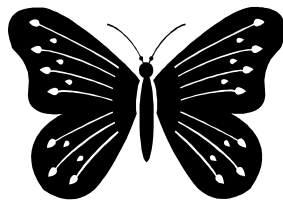
Our children were our reason for life, and their memories are our reason to go on living.

Because of my sons, my affiliation with TCF has given me many treasured friends whom I can sympathize with and have empathy for.

Let's all start the New Year with the promise of mending our bodies; holding the memories of our children, so loved, in our hearts, and helping each newly bereaved parent and sibling to better cope with the difficult task of their loss. By supporting one another in our grief, we find the comfort and understanding we so sorely need.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Mary Senbertrand  
TCF Cape May, NJ



*A thousand words can't bring you back*

*I know because I tried.*

*And neither can a million tears*

*I know because I cried.*

Sarah Ratliff