

# 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 at 2501 Park Plaza 37203, 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 12

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.



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.

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

## New Year's Wishes for Bereaved Parents

### **To the newly bereaved:**

We wish you patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

### **To the bereaved sibling:**

We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.

### **To those who are single parents:**

We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.

### **To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child:**

We wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

### **To those who have suffered the death of more than one child:**

We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

### **To those of you who have suffered the death of an only child or of all your children:**

We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

### **To those of you who are plagued with guilt:**

We wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that.

### **To those of you who are deeply depressed:**

We wish you the first steps out of the "valley of the shadows."

### **To all fathers and those of you unable to cry:**

We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

### **To those of you who are exhausted from grieving:**

We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

### **To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned:**

We wish you the understanding you need and the reassurance that you are loved.

Joe Rousseau  
Former TCF President




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## Thoughts on Winter

January...February...so-cold, so crisp, so leafless. Beginning a year...a new year...A NEW BEGINNING. You never lived in this year, and that is new. Sometimes new is painful. January is also the month of resolutions and the only resolution we must make is that we must learn to live without our child. What a profound sadness that is! To love them so deeply, so passionately, so completely...only to have us part.

My child, did I ever tell you enough how much I loved you? I've wondered. Do we tell those we love how very much their life has meant to us? Probably we do not. Somehow we just arrogantly believe that time goes on forever. It does. It's just the people do not. We fail to recognize how entirely too brief some lives can be. You were not supposed to die. Death is reserved for others. How could you have disappointed me? Didn't you know that I had such plans for you? I didn't want to face my own mortality. How cruel life was...using you to prove to me that we do indeed come to an end.

I don't want to accept your death...but what choice have I left? Have you any idea how angry that makes me? Oh, I'll mend...although mending sometimes means forgetting. I cannot put you aside, but already memories of you are fading. You know what I like best? When I'm given little tidbits of your life by those that knew you. What a bittersweet delight! Each piece of my jigsaw puzzle life will eventually fit together. You will be the only missing piece.

Dorothy Worrel  
TCF, Palo Alto, CA

## Just an Idea

As you sit and ponder about what the New Year will bring for you and your family, try this: take a note pad and pen, and at the top of the page, write, “This year I hope I can...” or, “This year I hope to do...” or, another “hope” you wish to concentrate on. Then make a list of what you hope will take place during the year. Later, go a step further and number each “hope” in order of preference or importance. Then work on it...one thing at a time. And mark it off your list as it’s accomplished or a goal is reached. Then you can look at your progress. And please remember, each and every time you accomplish something you set out to do—no matter how small or trivial it may seem at the time—that it IS PROGRESS.

TCF, Anniston, AL

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### *The Promise*

*Cold winds blow across the frozen pond.  
Snow lies deep upon the fields.  
But the change has begun.*

*Daylight hours increase slowly.  
With each passing day later sunsets are more  
apparent  
Winter is ending.*

*For bereaved parents  
The change is awfully slow  
The progress is not always apparent  
But the promise is the same.*

*Winter will end.  
Spring will return.*

Betty Stevens,  
TCF, Baltimore, MD

### *Seasons Pass*

*At least a month before the seasons changed  
We saw a leaf from the maple fall  
Fluttering down for no apparent reason  
On a still day when it seemed nothing moved at all.*

*We reached down to touch it, to hold it, to know it  
When a gust of wind wrest it from our grasp  
Leaving us wondering why nature, instead of sharing it  
Chose to steal the leaf away so fast.*

*Seasons will pass; the maple will surely spawn other  
offerings  
Over which nature will longer dwell  
But always will we remember that silent spring day  
And the tiny green leaf that fell.*

Roshann Parris  
TCF, Kansas City, MO

The measure of life after all is not its duration,  
but its donation.

Dr. Peter Marshall

## *The Music is Forever*

*One life, like the song strummed softly on the strings,  
Makes music to the ears of those who hear it sing.  
Discordant notes and harmony, together make the sounds,  
But the space between the notes  
is where the meaning may be found.*

*A life, may be as brief as a note on a page,  
Or as long as a symphony with all the movements played.  
But long or short, the melody has its meaning though  
unfinished.  
And for those with ears to hear it, the meaning's not  
diminished.*

*Somewhere the song continues its sweetly singing phrase,  
The music is forever, not just for those days.  
One life, like a song, strummed softly on the strings,  
Makes music to the ears of those who hear it sing.*

Karen Howard  
TCF, Miami, FL

## *I Will Love You*

*As long as I can dream,  
As long as I can think,  
As long as I have a memory...  
I will love you.*

*As long as I have eyes to see  
and ears to hear  
and lips to speak...  
I will love you.*

*As long as I have a heart to feel,  
A soul stirring within me,  
An imagination to hold you...  
I will love you.*

*As long as there is time,  
As long as there is love,  
As long as I have a breath  
to speak your name...  
I will love you.*

*Because I love you more than anything in all the world.*

Daniel Haughian  
TCF, Massillon, OH



## Sunrises and Sunsets

Each life is lived in neat and tidy segments of time—weeks, months, years, sunrises and sunsets, births and death. There is nothing which happens to us that cannot be placed in a specific framework of organized time. Spring, summer, winter and fall not only measure the seasons of the year but the ages of our lives as well. The very young are in the springtime of their life, the very old are in the winter of their years. Sunrises are beginnings. Sunsets are endings. During the progression of time, we keep mental ledgers where we record the passing of time by our successes, mistakes made, love given and received, and if we are lucky, we live long and our sunsets are bright and beautiful and welcome when we are full of time and memories.

But there are sunsets which are not so fulfilled—when the evening comes prematurely to a child of ours, and we are plunged into darkness in the middle of our day. Then there is only night, pain and confusion to measure and only what-might-have-beens to tally. Every scrap of memory is salvaged to being a spark of warmth to the coldness of the night to come. Each failure in our ledger is magnified and mixed with guilt and unanswerable questions. When memories are painful, we may even replace them with a more acceptable unreality to armor our hearts and minds until the time when we can accept the harshness of what has been, and we're again strong enough to begin again—never the same, but sustained by our faith and the healing of time.

But when the child's sunrise and sunset have been compressed into a few minutes or hours, the lack of memories can be equally as hurtful. There are no memories of a beloved face, no remembered first or last, not even a remembrance of some irritating habit to tuck into our battered hearts—only the vacuum created when the mind has been geared to expect so much and is rewarded with only empty arms and blank pages in a baby book.

And so, if you should find yourself measuring your pain against another's, remember this: if you have memories and if your memories are beautiful, you have a gift that is the most worthy of all. For when your morning finally comes after the darkness has lifted, you can look back and see that the darkness was not as complete as you thought. For there in the darkness will wink and glimmer the light of your memories—like fireflies on a summer night.

Judy Dickey  
TCF, Greenwood, IN

## There is Life After Infant Death

Here I am, two years later, a normal functioning person. It must be a miracle. Two years ago, I wouldn't have believed it possible, yet here I am. I can smile, laugh and do the everyday menial tasks that two years ago seemed to overwhelm me. I feel pain, but not the driving, stabbing pain of the past that comes and goes when the memories of the past creep in to disturb my happier present.

Somewhere along the road, I found the strength hidden within me to go on without Sara. I know my life is less rich without her, but still very much worth living.

Does time heal all wounds? I don't feel healed, but time has given me a chance to learn to live and cope with the pain. I can now go on and live a good life with my husband and three wonderful daughters.

I hope for all those whose pain is new, that they can just hold on until their day comes as mine has today. When they can say, "It's a miracle. There is life after infant death."

Fran Downing  
Winchester HOPE newsletter

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## Can You Remember?

*With winter tumbling snow  
—the roses silent  
and the water ice...*

*with trees so barren  
that your mind refuses  
to picture leaves  
and green and even blossoms...*

*can you remember,  
can you feel again,  
that spring did come  
from winter, every year?*

Sascha

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 46 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay another 46 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. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [615 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.