

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

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

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

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

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

Regional Coordinator: Polly Moore, (931) 962-0458, email: 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.

WE'RE MOVING...AGAIN!

Our January meeting will take place at

Blakemore United Methodist Church

3601 West End Avenue, Nashville 37205 (see map on page 6)

Please join us there at 3:00 on January 11.

January 11 Meeting Topic:

A Video with Darcie Sims

The topic in January will be portions of a video featuring noted grief counselor and bereaved parent, Darcie Sims. Darcie was scheduled to be a featured speaker at the 2014 National Conference, however she passed away unexpectedly in February. She was an internationally recognized public speaker on the topic of Grief and Bereavement. Darcie taught thousands of people all over the world how to cope with their grief. She was awarded a lifetime achievement award, "The Voice of The Compassionate Friends" for her tireless efforts supporting families who cope with the death of a child. She worked with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, TAPS, since 1999, helping military families cope with the losses experienced by military families.



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.

TCF . . . Unconditional Caring

My Son Philip died in August 1994, when he was 26 years-old. He died by suicide, influenced by a genetic illness, bipolar mood disorder (manic depression). I well remember how I flinched inwardly when people began referring to Philip's having "committed suicide." It seemed to diminish my wonderful son, to make him into what he never was: a kind of criminal. I wanted people to remember the beauty of his soul, yet what they focused on was the shocking way in which he died.

So it has been personally important to me to learn that TCF has made a change in the language it uses related to suicide. TCF now uses the terms "died of suicide" or "died by suicide" in all publications and presentations. The new, emotionally neutral language helps to lift the burden of stigma from all of us whose children or siblings died by suicide. It gives us strength and helps us heal.

If your child or sibling has died in one of society's less "acceptable" ways-by suicide, murder, alcoholism, from a drug overdose, AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases or in prison—do know that TCF does not accept society's stigmas. There is no room for blame or condemnation when all our hearts are aching for the children we no longer have. We honor your child and your grief, no matter the cause of death.

Similarly, if you are a parent or sibling who may feel "other" in our oft-judgmental society, please know that you will not be "other" in TCF. We welcome you with understanding and compassion, whatever your age, your race, your ethnicity, whether you are rich or poor, married or single, gay or straight, whatever your religion or lack of religion. We welcome you.

And if you have endured the most terrible tragedy, if you have had more than one child or sibling die or have lost all your children or siblings, you are welcome. Many people are terrified that we are "contagious" because the worst nightmare has become a reality in our lives. They don't want to believe what we know: that neither we, nor they, can keep our children safe and alive. So they avoid us. And they especially may avoid you who have had more than one child or sibling or all your children die, because the horror of what has happened in your lives terrifies them. We welcome you, and we honor your courage and want to be helpful to you in your healing. We offer our compassion and understanding to all parents and siblings and other family members who are on this very difficult journey into healing. May the unconditional acceptance one finds in TCF someday be mirrored in a wiser and more tolerant society.

Kitty Reeve
TCF Marin and San Francisco Chapters, CA
In Memory of my son, Philip

For the New Year

Where there is pain,

Let there be softening

Where there is bitterness,

Let there be acceptance

Where there is silence,

Let there be communication

Where there is loneliness,

Let there be friendships

Where there is despair,

Let there be hope.



Ruth Eiseman
TCF Louisville, KY

With much appreciation to Lamar and Joy Bradley for their time of service as our Chapter Leaders and to Roy and Barbara Davies for taking the helm of Nashville TCF! Thank you all for your leadership and your compassion for grieving families.

A note from Lamar:

As Joy and I finish our second tenure as Leaders of the Nashville Chapter, we want to thank everyone for their support, especially our capable and tireless Steering Committee, and the many volunteers who serve as unsung heroes behind the scenes to do the jobs that make the Chapter work as well as it does. It requires an unbelievable amount of work to make the Nashville Chapter function seamlessly.

We would also like to thank the Steering Committee for their confidence in asking us to return as Chapter Leaders almost three years ago. It is a personal honor for us to be asked to lead such a wonderful team of dedicated individuals who embrace the idea of helping as part of their own healing process.

Finally we want to welcome Barbara and Roy Davies as new Leaders of the Nashville Chapter. It is a big responsibility, but they have prepared for leading the Nashville Chapter. Get to know them- they are capable people and have a heart to help and serve you. They will make a few mistakes and they will learn from them. We made mistakes along the way, too. I know you will give them the same level of love and support that you gave us.

Nashville is privileged to have one of the finest TCF Chapters in the country and it is a honor to be associated with such a wonderful organization that is making a difference in the lives of so many people whose lives will never be the same since losing a child. May all who find us be able to say that their lives were somehow better for having met us. That is our reason for being- that is our mission.

Lamar Bradley

A letter from our new Chapter Leaders: Roy and Barbara Davies

As your incoming TCF Chapter Leaders, we are grateful that you have put your faith in us. We are committed to continue the work of our past leaders in seeking those who need us and bringing hope. We have all walked that walk and we know how difficult not only the first days and months can be but how much strength is needed to continue on.

Very briefly, we lost our 20 year old son, Roy James, in 2008 from a heart condition. We lost our 15 year old son, Taylor Martin, in 2012 from a blood disorder. Neither of them ever had any serious health problems and both losses were completely unexpected. Through our journey, we have seen that no loss is the same and that there are as many ways to grieve as there are people who grieve. We have also learned that hope can eventually return and having the Compassionate Friends by your side to lean on can be a tremendous support.

The sad truth is that there are parents, siblings and grandparents out there right now who have no idea they will need our support. Our goal is to reach as many of them as we can.

We can be contacted directly through our personal email, TCFRoyandBarbara@yahoo.com. All comments and ideas are welcome.

We are privileged to have the opportunity to commit our time and efforts to this organization in honor of our sons, Roy and Taylor.

Roy and Barbara Davies

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.

Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

Albert Schweitzer

Do Real Men Attend TCF Meetings?

It has often bothered me that more men and persons of cultural minorities don't attend TCF meetings. I know there are societal and cultural restraints which inhibit many bereaved persons from seeking outside help or support. Being both a man and a member of an ethnic group, I know very well the false pride which often restrains us from admitting we are not as self-sufficient as we want others to believe. We are taught (men in particular) at a young age not to reveal when we are hurt. We must be strong and brave and silent.

Stoic endurance is really not unique in any culture. The British call it "keeping a stiff upper lip." The Japanese call it *gaman*. Hispanics pride themselves on their ability to *aguantar*. In the U.S. it is embodied in the Puritan ethic.

When I began attending TCF meetings regularly, I wondered for a long time whether I was a "real man." Was I less macho than my peers? Couldn't I handle my grief in solitary dignity? The answers, I finally decided, were yes, no, and maybe. Maybe I could have adjusted to my son's death all by myself. Maybe I could have shunned the possibilities of self-destructive behavior, drunkenness, drug abuse, wild living, or the unraveling of my family life without TCF. Maybe I could have dealt alone with all the anger, despair, and depression. Fortunately I didn't have to.

I readily admit I wasn't very enthusiastic about going to my first TCF meeting. I imagined a group of people sitting around crying on each other's shoulders, bemoaning their cruel fate. Instead, I found people who were hurting as much as I; who, like me, were angry, who also often felt depressed—but who were working very hard to mend the tattered fabric of their lives! I soon discovered that this was a place where I could talk about my grief and still feel safe about it. Nobody was going to think me less of a man for not getting over my son's death in a few months.

TCF doesn't promise or offer any quick fixes. There are no magic words or formulas to take away your grief. Whatever "magic" takes place, I know now, happens slowly. I don't believe it is possible for a bereaved parent to "forget," but I think TCF's support and understanding help make it easier for us to go on with our lives. We need not become lifelong emotional cripples.

To all of you hurting people who have never attended a TCF meeting, I urge you to give it a try. Attend two or three meetings and see if some of the "magic" doesn't rub off on you. What have you got to lose? You can't hurt any worse than you already have. TCF is for any and all bereaved parents—men and women, minorities and gringos, people of any or no religious faith. The one thing everyone at TCF has in common is the death of a child—and how it feels.

Steve Perez
TCF Denver, CO

Pictures From The Heart

Since we have lost our children, part of what remains of them are pictures from the heart, which are those mental images we hold so dear. For some of us these pictures are memories of what had been, and for others these pictures are dreams of what might have been. And for some of us these pictures are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are really the same. It is the dimension where our children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories of the future, because we remember our children by the dreams we had for them; and memories are nothing more than dreams of the past, because to remember them is certainly to dream of them. I believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not hurt as much because they only had their child for a little while or to think that someone will not hurt as much because their child had the chance to grow up. In these dreams and memories, these pictures from the heart, all of our children are infants and all of our children have grown up. The sadness and pain comes from the broken heart, the memories and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

Kenneth Hensley
TCF Nashville, TN

Missing You

*I sometimes talk to your pictures
When no one else is around.
They listen patiently to my ramblings
They smile and never make a sound.*

*There's one picture in particular
Your eyes right in my line of sight
The smile on your face reflects the joy
On one of the happiest days of your life.*

*That picture has been my whipping post
Many heavy conversations in the past six years
It's witnessed the gamut of my emotions
It's seen me laugh, it's seen countless tears*

*There have even been some times
When that picture almost seemed to smirk
After I sincerely apologized
For all the times I was a jerk.*

*Of all the pictures that we have of you,
It would be impossible to pick just one.
There's just something about your smile
I didn't see it until you were gone.*

*So many things you never got to do
Your time ran out before your dreams came true.
I'll look into your eyes and talk to that picture
I'll see you again someday. I miss you.*

Tom Murphy
Greater Cincinnati TCF - East Chapter, OH
In Memory of my son, Brennan Murphy

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 pages 2 and 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.

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.



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 615 963-4674. 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. Visit www.nationalshare.org

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 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.

January 11 Meeting Place:
Blakemore United Methodist Church
3601 West End Ave, Nashville 37205

