

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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

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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 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.

All-Outdoor Balloon Lift Event June 9 – Centennial Park

This year, our Balloon Lift event will take place solely at Centennial Park. Please gather at the large Centennial Park Event Pavilion near the HCA building. In the park it is near the old locomotive and the jet airplane. Plan to arrive before 3:00. We will distribute papers for notes to be written at the pavilion and our balloons will be ready there. From the pavilion we will walk over to our usual balloon lift area of the park, have the ceremony then return to the pavilion for refreshments.

Please dress for the weather and plan to stay as long as you like. Please bring your families...and some refreshments to share!

This is a beautiful and moving ceremony as well as a time to get to know one another better. We hope to see you there!



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.

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|------------------------------------|---|
| 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 |

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.

Liftoff

*Colorful, shimmering spheres,
We send you in tearful devotion
To fly with the music of always
Into the kingdom of hope.*

*Though death tried his best to divide us,
Life and love keep the children beside us.
Our hearts fly along to the place beyond
tears
With the colorful, shimmering spheres.*

*Rise gently, you glistening orbs—
You carry a precious freight—
All the love our hearts can command,
All the courage and hope that we can
own.
Drift onward, you radiant envoys—
You carry with you much grief,
But laughter also, and smiles
You carry the memories of parents
You carry the thanks of sad hearts
Who relished their child's life*

*For a while, not for long—
Not nearly for long enough*

*We send you to fly to the sky,
To rise like the magical sun—
Tell Heaven about our loss
Declare it again and forever:
Our love for the children lives on.
Shimmering spheres, be released*

*As a symbol of deep celebration
Helping us to remember again that we—
Our children and we—
Are together enfolded by Spirit.*

*Though death tried his best to divide us,
Life and love keep the children beside us.
Our hearts fly along to the place beyond
tears
With the colorful, shimmering spheres.*

Sascha

The Broken Pieces

“If I am what I do, and I don't, then I'm not.”

These words have been spinning around in my head ever since I heard someone comment on how we tend to define ourselves by what we do rather than by who we are. I thought about those words incessantly, almost to the point where they became nonsensical. But they weren't.

Until April 25, 1987, the day of my son Bryan's death, I'm afraid I was guilty of defining myself by my roles in life: computer marketer, husband, father, most often in that order, and without really being aware of it. I was caught up in “bringing home the bacon,” “making a name for myself,” and the tunnel vision that goes along with all of that. My sense of self-worth was wrapped up in these things. One of my colleagues used to call me “Rapid Robert” because of my pace in going places — or was I on a treadmill? I was a workaholic, and only too often by the time I got to family matters, I'd have run out of steam.

Then my son Bryan died. The superficiality of my life smashed headlong into a brick wall. For months I felt I was sitting in the middle of a field scattered with pieces of my life: job pieces askew here, family relationships trailing off there, dreams piled akimbo over here, hopes rent asunder over there.

As I listened to my son's friends at the two remembrances for him, it dawned on me that at nineteen, a young man doesn't have

a long list of credits and accomplishments. Bryan hadn't “made a name for himself.” Bryan was Bryan, no more, no less. His friends loved him for who he was, not what he was.

Strange the lessons
Fathers learn from sons—
To care
To share
To be there—

I wrote these words blinded by pain, and I could sense what it was that brought together people from all over in a common bond of shared grief—Bryan cared about them. I wonder if I were to die suddenly but after more than fifty years of life, how would I be eulogized? “A real professional, a true marketer, a dedicated employee...” I'd settle for two words: “He cared.” I've tried to put the pieces of my life back together again, but I've tried to be selective. I've left many pieces lying in that field because they don't fit anymore. And I've fashioned new pieces. As bereaved parents, we have a choice. We can fixate on the death or we can confirm life. I know which my son would have wanted for me.

Bob Rosenburger
TCF, Burke, VA

TCF 2013 National Conference

Save the date: July 5-7, 2013 in Boston, MA



Reflections from our Chapter Co-Leader, Lamar Bradley:

The 21st anniversary of the worst day of Joy's and my life recently passed. On April 20, 1992 we lost our 4 ½-year-old son, Christopher. I spent a little time reflecting.

If you had asked me all those years ago if I could have survived that experience, I'm not sure I could have given you an answer with any confidence at all. But I know this—I am forever grateful to TCF for providing an atmosphere of understanding, acceptance, and love for Joy and me in a way that was not matched by anything else. We are very grateful for the many friends, family, and our extended church family who wrapped their arms around us, prayed for us, and cared for us mightily during that time, but the folks who best understood our pain and what lay ahead of us were our TCF family.

Some of you were there when Joy and I attended our first TCF meeting. We did not want to be there, and we did not want to be a part of this group. But as we attended each meeting, we found that TCF met our needs in a way that our other support systems, as great as they were, did not. You were there for us and you were just what we needed. We didn't have to pretend that we were not hurting when we were at a TCF meeting, because you let us be ourselves. You understood us and you listened. You let us cry if we needed to cry and you cried with us. Above all, you gave us hope that we *could* survive this experience, because you were no different than we were. You had lost your precious child, and you were survivors. You showed us that you had survived, and gave us hope that we could too. That was a powerful thing for us to witness in our first years of our grief.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for the newly bereaved to witness survivors of grief, not healed, but healing from this loss. Healing from a loss of a child doesn't mean recovered as much as it means coping with, or adjusting to the loss. Little by little, day by day, this coping, adjusting process occurs. I would say after 21 years I'm still healing, and I'm not the same person I was 21 years ago.

Could I have survived 21 years without TCF? I don't know, but I would not want to try. Twenty one years from now, someone will be thankful that you were there for them when they attended their first TCF meeting, their own world shattered into a million pieces, wondering if they can somehow survive this. Let them see you have survived, and that you are healing, and give them hope they can survive also. That is a tremendous gift Joy and I were given 21 years ago, and one that we are privileged to be passing on to those who need it.

Thanks to all of you who are passing on the gift.

Lamar Bradley
TCF, Nashville, TN

“And can it be that in a world so full and busy the loss of one weak creature makes a void in any heart, so wide and deep that nothing but the width and depth of vast eternity can fill it up.”

Charles Dickens

Grief's Silent Battle

*As I lie here in the bed
I'm screaming, screaming in my head!
I want you back
Begging God to backtrack*

*What kind of man would you now be?
If only, if only I could see
What would you look like, long or short hair?*

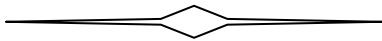
*Opening my eyes to find you smiling in your favorite chair
To clearly hear your sweet deep voice
Saying, "Sorry Mom, sorry for my choice!"*

*Why did I bury you at age 19? Always my baby...
God must want me to share your legacy
Worlds collided that fateful day on Highway 47
But I thank the good Lord, KNOWING you're in Heaven!*

*An exhausted calm finally mumbles around in my head
As I lay here, silent tears tumble onto the bed...*

*I love you, Cole Hansen Kilgore
Your Momma – Forever and Always*

Kathy Kilgore Beeler
TCF, Nashville, TN



Your Life

*Your life, so shiny and new,
A lot like your eyes, so shiny and blue.
You seemed to fly through each day,
Always so eager to run and play.
To find a new stone, yet untouched,
Waiting for a boy who loved rocks and such.
Your eyes would light up at any new toy,
Just waiting to be loved by a small boy.
You embraced each day as only you could do,
Through your eyes I always saw something new.
You flew through life with every flag unfurled,
Your life...
I wouldn't have missed it for the world.*

Jane Daulton
TCF, Tidewater, VA

One Voice Missing

I listen to the clamor of my children's voices, and I know I am blessed. I have two living, loving happy sons who never cease to amaze me. They are smart, sensitive, and funny. Watching them grow and learn is a joy. Each milestone brings me pleasure. I am proud of my boys, and they know it.

Yet in the midst of the entire clamor, I realize that something is missing. This is not how life should be for our family. As busy and bustling and loud as our house is, full of boys from all over the neighborhood at times, there is still an empty place in our hearts and in our lives.

Most people only see that we live comfortably and have some material things. They don't see that no amount of wealth or possessions can fill the hole that is in our lives. They see that we have two beautiful children, smart, healthy, happy. They don't see that there should be three children. They don't realize that one more mouth should be joining in on their raucous, icky-boy songs. They don't remember that we should have one more kid in the church play. They don't realize that every milestone our older children pass serves not only as a celebration of their lives, but also as a remembrance that ONE child will never see those milestones.

Don't get me wrong. I celebrate every single accomplishment, every performance, and every milestone, with zest. But in a corner of my heart, I still long to hear—I long to hold—I long to see—the little boy who is not here. He will forever be my infant son. He will never be a precocious, life-loving, mischief-filled seven-year-old. He will never play the trumpet in the band; he will never play Pop Warner football. He will never kiss a girl or go on a date. As each of his brothers grow and experience life, I will always remember that they should have a little brother that looks up to them with envy and adoration, and longs to be "just like them." I will always mourn for those moments that I am missing.

I think I miss the small, insignificant things more than the big moments. I miss the additional "distraction" in the car, trying to get from one place to another with a car full of kids. I miss him running in and out of the house, for Kool-Aid, for another ball or bat, or just a quick hug from Mom. I miss seeing him wrestle with his Dad. I miss so many little things. Most of all I miss his voice. I wonder what it would have sounded like. For now, that wondering cannot be satisfied. As long as I am living, he will always be that one voice missing.

Lisa Sculley
TCF, Orange Park, FL

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and "warm fuzzies" when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18 [Father's Day], and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes
TCF Cincinnati, OH
In Memory of my son, Alex

Graduation—A Time To Remember

I was driving down the road the other day, thinking of how the retail market makes any event an opportunity for revenue. Graduation seems to fall into that category, with cards and gifts for every Graduate. This time of year reminds me that my graduation from high school was a bittersweet time.

Really, it was the first time I had "surpassed" my older brother, David, in anything significant. I turned the age that he was when he died, 18, in the beginning of my senior year of high school. That year was difficult for me, as I felt that I was getting to move past where he had been cut short. Graduation day was no exception. I was happy to be getting out of high school, and looking forward to that coming August when I would go to college. But why was I getting to do these things, and not David? What made me so special that I got to stay here and experience these things? I still am not quite sure of the answer to those questions.

Graduation from high school was really just the first of many events which I have gotten to experience that David never will. College graduation, my wedding, and the birth of my two children are examples. And for me, each event has been a bit bittersweet.

The good news is this: that while time does make it easier to bear day-to-day activities without your sibling, each major event in your life presents itself as a new opportunity to remember your brother or sister, as well. For me, figuring that out was a huge relief, as it meant that my fear of forgetting David was not something I needed to worry about any more. His memory is just as alive for me today, 15-1/2 years later, as it was when I took that walk across the stage to accept my high school diploma.

Amy Baker Ferry
TCF Heart of Florida Chapter
In loving memory of my brother, David

What I Need

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

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 3 in The Children Remembered list, 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.

Picture Name Tags

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge. A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

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 demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.

TCF Nashville Sibling Support

We encourage siblings from teens to adults to come support one another at our monthly chapter meetings. Siblings face a unique and complicated grief journey and are finding hope and healing through our Sibling Sharing Groups.



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. 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 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.