

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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

## June 8 Meeting:

### *All Outdoor Balloon Release And Picnic – Centennial Park*

**D**ue to the tremendous response to the Balloon Release last year at the Events Pavilion in Centennial Park, we decided to combine our regular Balloon Release with our picnic. This year we will be holding a combined event on Sunday, June 8, in lieu of our regular TCF meeting. This is a very popular event each year with bereaved parents and we invite you to bring your family members. All ages are invited to come to remember and celebrate the life of your child. *Please see details on page 4.*



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

## **ATTENTION! WE'RE MOVING!**

Beginning in August 2014 the Nashville Chapter will meet in a new location.

## **WE WILL NO LONGER MEET AT HCA.**

As soon as our new meeting facility is determined, we will announce it in the newsletter and post the location on our website.

## For Dads

What I can't understand is how we men will run to someone else to get a small splinter out of our finger but will refuse to ask directions when we are driving and will drive and swear for hours before asking for assistance. The biggest splinter I ever had was when my daughter died. I needed help. Ministers, funeral directors, friends, fellow workers, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists couldn't help—they didn't know what I was going through. One friend, whose son had been murdered said, "Go to a Compassionate Friends meeting." He knew! I went to a TCF meeting. No one took the splinter out. No one offered any "how to's." No one told me "You should...." No one could, or tried to take away all the pain. But they had been there. They knew, and because they knew, and I knew that they knew, it helped. What I had gone through and will go through in my grief, someone had been there before me. This knowledge has assisted me in my travel through pain. I still have that big hole in my gut. My eyes still fill with tears at odd times. But I know that I'm not crazy. I know that I am not alone. I know that others have gone through these same things—and for some dumb reason, this helps.

Tom Crouthamel  
TCF, Sarasota, FL



**37<sup>th</sup> National Conference**  
Chicago, Illinois  
July 11-13, 2014

Registration is now open for this year's TCF National Conference.  
Go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) for more information.

### Funding for National Conference July 11-13 in Chicago:

One of the best experiences a bereaved parent can have is to attend a TCF national conference. This year the 36th National Conference/6th International Gathering will be held July 11-13 near Chicago, Illinois. Anyone associated with the Nashville Chapter, either bereaved parent, grandparent, or sibling, is eligible to receive a predetermined refund to help with part of their conference expenses. Please contact Lamar or Joy Bradley at (615) 889-1387, email: [lamar.bradley@comcast.net](mailto:lamar.bradley@comcast.net) for further information.

## June 8 Meeting: *Balloon Release And Picnic – Centennial Park*

We will gather at the large Centennial Park Event Pavilion near the HCA building. It is near the old locomotive and the jet airplane and there is plenty of parking nearby. Plan to arrive before 3:00 pm. We will distribute papers for notes to be written at the Pavilion and we will have a balloon for everyone. Adjacent to the Pavilion we will have a short ceremony when we will release our balloons with notes for or about our children, then return to the Pavilion for our picnic. This is a beautiful and moving ceremony as well as a time to get to know one another better.

We ask that each family bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

A-G: A Main dish, other than barbeque (Chapter members will be providing some barbeque)

H-M: Cole slaw, baked beans, salad or other side dish

N-Z: Dessert or chips

Soft drinks and paper goods will be provided by the chapter. Picnic tables are under a large shelter in case of a shower. Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket if you wish, and outdoor games. Restroom facilities are nearby. Please dress for the weather and plan to stay as long as you like. We hope to see you there!



### A Balloon Tribute

A balloon is a symbol,  
A reminder of our own childhood past,  
A reminder that we were all children once.

A balloon changes and grows as it is blown up.  
Childhood is also a time for change and growth,  
Although for us, part of that time is a frozen memory.

A balloon suspended in air between heaven and earth,  
Kept here only by the ribbon in our hand.  
Another reminder that life is the ribbon  
that binds our spirits to earth.  
How tightly we cling to that ribbon at times.

The time we hold the balloon is short.  
Painfully, we remember the time we held our children  
was too short.

The balloon will be gone before we really have time  
To enjoy it.  
And for some of our children,  
life was over before it really began.

The act of letting the balloon go is symbolic, too.  
This time, a deliberate and conscious act.  
Quite unlike those circumstances past  
That made us struggle with letting go  
of our precious children.

As the balloon rises swiftly and sails out of sight,  
Another reminder that one day, we too, like the  
balloon  
Will pass to another place—our new destination.  
A place more beautiful and perfect than any of us  
can imagine.  
And that hope gives us courage to face a new day.

So, from outstretched arms that ache to hold you  
once again  
And a broken heart that knows this side of heaven,  
they never will  
We send you this symbol of our undying love and  
affection.  
Because you were, and will always be  
Our precious children.

Lamar Bradley  
TCF Nashville, TN

## The Father's Grief

At my second meeting of The Compassionate Friends about three years ago, one of the mothers said how nice it was to see a man attending, since "men grieve differently from women."

Her remark was no doubt meant to help put me at ease. I hadn't said a thing so far, and might have been intimidating in my silence. But it caught me off guard. What I was feeling after George's death was so absolute, so awful, how could it possibly come with any "differences"? Would one grieve differently for an infant than for an adolescent? For a son than for a daughter? Surely, grief was absolute for both mothers and fathers.

Over time I came to acknowledge the differences the well-meaning mother had in mind:

\* Neither I nor the other men who occasionally attended talked much; the women talked freely.

\* I sensed I was better at compartmentalizing my grief than the mothers, better at keeping a lid on it socially and at work.

\* My male friends seemed less comfortable talking about George, bringing up his name or even looking at his pictures than female friends.

\* I came to see how intensely I felt I had let my son down as his protector, the father's primary role.

Shortly after becoming editor of my chapter newsletter, I sent a copy to my friend Jack Knebel in California. Jack and his wife, Linda, had been involved with a Compassionate Friends chapter after the death of their daughter, Hollis. He replied, "It's good to see that a man is taking an active role in the group." Then he went on to write movingly about those male-female grieving differences. The rest of his letter, which touched me deeply, follows:

*... Several years after Hollis died, Linda and I were being trained by Compassionate Friends to be 'buddies' for newly bereaved parents. One of the exercises was to list all the unhelpful things that others had said in trying to comfort us, so that we wouldn't make the same mistakes. The other trainees, all women, made long lists, and did it with*

*enthusiasm. When the lists were read aloud, they nodded knowingly at every entry and eventually hooted and howled with derision at the worst (some of which were pretty bad). When it came my turn, I held up an empty page and said:*

*"People may have said such things to me. I just don't recall.*

*"What I do remember is that people tried to tell me how sad they were for us. I remember being told how much they loved Hollis and how much they cared about us. I remember one of my partners hugging me in the halls of my very stiff and proper law firm. I remember men who had never told me anything more personal than their reactions to a Giants' loss crying at our loss and their fears.*

*"You women are used to talking to each other about your emotions and about personal things. I wasn't and my friends weren't either. So the fact that we could do so was a great gift, and it wasn't marred in the slightest by someone's choice of words."*

*Now, the shell has been broken and I find it easier to talk about my emotions, my hopes and fears, about those things that really are important. And that for me was one of Hollis' greatest gifts.*

*I know that even after George's death, he is a major part of your life. My guess is that you're becoming more open to the gifts that he and those who care about you are able to give.*

*Yours, with compassion and friendship,  
Jack*

David Pellegrin  
TCF Honolulu, HI  
Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*

## Yes, Grandparents Do Grieve!

Thank God, someone stepped up and said, "Hey! This child was and is my grandchild! And I hurt too!" Not looking for sympathy, but wanting the world to know that yes, the mother and father are hurting from the loss of their little angels, but Granny and Grandpa loved these children with their hearts and souls. Totally unconditionally!

I read these letters that are sent to me, every day. My heart hurts for these parents for the loss of their children. But, please, let us not forget any of the grandparents whose loss is twofold. One for their child who is hurting so badly and for the loss of their grandchildren.

I always thought my grandchildren would outlive me. At least that's the way it's supposed to be. It doesn't always work out that way. So yes, my heart hurts for the grandparents too.

Wanda Bryant  
TCF, Vidalia, GA

## ***Father's Day***

*As the day approaches, I wonder how I will react.*

*Am I still a father?*

*I will sit quietly, never allowing friends and family to see how I feel.*

*I miss my son, but I can't allow myself to "break."*

*I must remain strong and always be the "rock."*

*I wish I could just let someone know how much I miss my little angel.*

*How much I cry and how much I miss hearing, "Dad, I love you."*



*I am a father, but I wonder, "Will I just pretend, as usual, that it doesn't bother me?"*

*Remember me, for I hurt, too, on this special day.*

TCF, Tampa, FL

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## ***Sweet Baby Girl***

*It's been five long years,  
Yet it feels like only yesterday  
Since we held you and kissed you goodbye,  
That early Easter morning.*

*So few memories to hold onto,  
As we left the hospital with empty, aching arms.  
Gone were the hopes and dreams we had for you.  
Replaced with only the intense pain and tears of grief.*

*How could we say goodbye...  
When we never really had a chance to say hello?  
Your footprints will remain on our hearts forever,  
Time cannot diminish our love for you.*

Debbie and Clay Pearson  
TCF, Winnipeg, Manitoba

## ***Touched By Gold***

*I was thinking how different life is for me  
And about the things that will never be  
To watch you grow into that fine young man  
For me is now not part of the plan  
I realize my life will never be the same  
Even though I carry on with life's little game  
I can't go back to where I was before  
That part of my life is now a closed door  
But in spite of the pain I must endure  
I want you to know one thing for sure  
I wouldn't trade places with any other on earth  
And I'm proud to be the one who gave you birth  
I live with tragedy and sorrow, that's true  
But also a great love have I shared with you  
For you've touched my heart as no other could  
And in your memory there will come some good  
For you've left a purpose for your Mom and Dad  
To let others know of the son we had  
I want you to know your story will be told  
And others will know I've been touched by gold.*

Carolyn Bryan  
TCF, Orange Park/Jacksonville, FL

What the caterpillar thought was the end of life—



the butterfly knew was just the beginning...

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **The “Children Remembered” Listings**

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 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 Sharing Groups.

## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **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).

### **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.

### **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](http://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.