

# 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 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.

## Our May 13 Meeting: *Honoring Mothers and Fathers*

The May meeting is an especially poignant one because it always falls on Mother’s Day, and since the June meeting is not on Father’s day, we like to give special attention to the role of both mothers and fathers in the lives of their children. If you have a special memory of a particular Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, please come prepared to share it with the group. There will be special readings and a picture board to display your child’s photo. (Please bring a photo 5”x7” or smaller.) Keeping our tradition, each person in attendance will be given a carnation to wear in memory of their children. Regular sharing groups will follow. This is a very meaningful meeting—a safe place on a day filled with memories. We’d like to share it with you.



### JOE LADD

*Members of the Nashville Chapter of The Compassionate Friends were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of our chapter leader, Joe Ladd, Thursday, March 22. Everyone who has met Joe will always remember his ready smile and his friendly easygoing manner.*

*Joe will be deeply missed by his TCF family, but even more so by Melanie, his beloved wife and co-chapter leader, his sons, step-son, and immediate family. Please remember this family during their time of deep sorrow and grief.*

Lamar and Joy Bradley  
Interim Chapter Leaders

### 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.....Ruth Edwards  
615 353-8547
- Small Child.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley  
615 237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose.....Ed Pyle  
615 712-3245



## Remembrance

*I see your smile in the brightness of the summer sun.  
A gentle breeze is the touch of your hand on mine.  
A wave breaks softly on the shore and I hear you whisper,  
"Remember me."*

*A winged bird begins its flight into the distant sky.  
The sound of children's laughter fills the air.  
The evening stars become your eyes, and I reply ...  
"You are ever near."*

Priscilla Kenney  
TCF, Kennebunk, ME

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## Mother's Day

**I**t's here again! The time of year when children pay homage to their mothers.

What a poignant day for bereaved parents. What used to be a joyous occasion has become another day to get through and "grin and bear it."

We, who have other living children, don't want to burden them with our feelings of depression and sadness, so we put on our happy faces and try to enjoy the day.

We do enjoy parts of this annual tribute to mothers. We do get pleasure from living children. The gifts, cards, and remembrances they heap upon us are appreciated.

But what we all, in our secret hearts and souls, yearn for is the presence of our beloved children who are no longer here to share our day. Nothing will bring them back.

The first Mother's Day that came after my children's death I went to the cemetery. My sister questioned whether it would be "good" for me to go. I responded that, since they couldn't come to me on this day, I would go to them.

How many of us have longed to "go to them"? How many of us have missed and wanted our children, not only on Mother's Day, but also on every other day—in one way or another?

I know that all the bereaved fathers feel as we the mothers do. Next month in June will come their trying time—Father's Day. My heart goes out to them.

Again I wonder about the inequities in this drama called life. I observe some people living until their 70's or 80's and never losing a child. Their Mother's Day and Father's Day must be wonderful! I envy them.

I can't end this without paying my own personal tribute to all the bereaved parents who have lost either an only child or all their living children. I salute their courage; I cry for them, and most of all, I send a silent prayer to them for their strength to continue. The parents I've met through Compassionate Friends—I consider—a privilege to know.

Anita Weinstein  
TCF Penn Wynn, Bala Cynwyd, PA

## Mother's Day Thoughts

**T**hat first Mother's Day after Raymond died was a dark day. I had not only lost my son, but in losing him I was no longer a mother. The telephone didn't ring; I felt very much alone. I let the tears fall and fell asleep lying on Raymond's bed.

While I was sleeping a neighbor came by with a small pot of miniature white mums with a note attached. "Now everyone in heaven knows what a great mom you are." That simple message lifted me, and I was able to smile.

Now, I don't think I'm a great mom, but a pretty good mom I am—and I'll always be Raymond's mom, no matter what! Nothing can take that away. Rather simplistic you say? Yes, but sometimes we need to think in simplistic terms to experience the joy hidden within the sorrow.

Joan Azra  
TCF Cleveland, OH

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## Mother's Day

*It's time again to celebrate  
another Mother's Day,  
A reminder that it's spring  
and the merry month of May.*

*But, oh, the sadness  
this day imparts  
For the child that is missing  
bringing an ache within our hearts.*

*But wouldn't it be sadder yet  
had not that child been born.  
Our life being unfulfilled  
as a rose without a thorn.*

*So remember only funny times  
that bring a happy smile ...  
And be grateful that we had them  
if only for a while.*

*For if we had not had them,  
mothers we would not be,  
So fill your hearts with gladness  
and treasure each memory*

Myrna Kruse  
TCF, Sioux City, Iowa

### WE REMEMBER THEM

*In the rising of the sun and in its going down,  
We remember them.*

*In the blowing of the wind and in the  
chill of winter,  
We remember them.*

*In the opening of the buds and in the warmth  
of summer,  
We remember them*

*In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty  
of autumn,  
We remember them.*

*In the beginning of the year and when it ends,  
We remember them.*

*When we are weary and in need of strength,  
We remember them.*

*When we are lost and sick of heart,  
We remember them.*

*When we have joys we yearn to share,  
We remember them.*

*So long as we live, they too shall live,  
For they are now a part of us,  
As we remember them.*

From *The Gates of Prayer*

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## Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt—we feel regret.

Kitty Sanders  
Nashville, TN Survivors of Suicide

## Wishes

*I thought I heard your laugh today,  
While watching children run and play.  
You chuckled in that special way.  
Then you were gone.*

*I thought I saw your gentle face,  
That look which time cannot erase.  
Then it was gone without a trace.  
I was alone.*

*I thought I heard your voice today,  
And suddenly my world was gay.  
I thought I heard you softly say,  
"I love you, Mom."*

Lily DeLauder  
TCF N. Hollywood, CA

## *Your Graduation Day*

*Your past school year seems to have ended so fast,  
And your "graduation day" is here at last.  
The day where there is always laughter and tears,  
As friends have memories of all their school years.*

*And although you're not here to remember those days,  
Our hearts will have the "memory" of you always.  
Amanda, I am so proud of you  
In all that you accomplished and tried to do.*

*So for me to have seen you walk down that aisle-  
With your beautiful face and happy smile-  
Would have been my dream come true,  
But instead it will be me walking for you*

*I'll be bursting inside with joy and pride,  
For you will be in my heart and at my side.  
We'll walk with your friends, my head held high,  
With me trying my best not to cry.*

*And when your name is called  
what an "honor" it will be  
To have your diploma handed to me.  
Honey, I know you'll be cheering me on  
in Heaven out loud  
Saying, "Mom, now it's me who's really so proud."*

*I love and miss you so very much.*



Peggy Wood Nolan  
TCF Nashville, TN

## **A Debt of Love**

**W**hen our children die we are caught in the quicksand of grief and we may struggle for years to find our way back to the place where we can cope with life again. Grief is so self-involving that we may not take time to wonder about those who have walked the road years before us, struggled through their own grief and left a heritage of compassion that was in place so we would not walk alone. You probably will not know about many of the children listed in this newsletter on the page for birth and death anniversaries in the month of May, but there is one you should know about. In the list you will find the name of Kenneth Lawley, born August 7, 1956, who died at the age of twelve on May 23, 1969. This boy's

death has meant that thousands upon thousands of grieving families around the world have found the help and support they needed when their own child died. His story is a story you should know because we owe him and his parents, Joe and Iris Lawley, a great debt of love.

Kenneth lived in a town in England, and on the way to school one spring morning in May, had stopped on his bicycle at an intersection to wait for traffic to pass. A car, turning the corner too sharply, hit Kenneth and knocked him down. He was rushed to the children's hospital in Coventry where he died. The young hospital chaplain, Rev. Simon Stephens, ministered to Joe and Iris and told them about another couple, the Hendersons, whose twelve-year-old son, Billy, was dying of cancer. After Billy's death the two couples would get together and talk about their children. Rev. Stephens, realizing that they were helping each other in this way, encouraged them to reach out to other bereaved parents and visit them, which they did. And so it was that the Society of Compassionate Friends was started in Coventry, England a few months later.

A group of bereaved parents helping one another was so unique that Time magazine published an article about the Society in May of 1971. In Miami that article was read by Arnold and Paula Shamres whose teenage daughter had been killed in an auto-train accident. They immediately contacted Rev. Stephens and urged him to come to America and help them start a similar group for grieving parents here. In November 1972 Rev. Stephens did come and stayed two weeks with the Shamres and started the first chapter of The Compassionate Friends in the United States. There are now more than 500 chapters across this country where bereaved parents meet every month to help one another through their grief.

On the second Sunday of December each year when thousands of members of The Compassionate Friends all around the world light candles at 7:00 PM in each time zone in memory of their children, I make a mental note of the hour when in England Joe and Iris Lawley would be lighting a candle for Kenneth. Because of Kenneth and Joe and Iris our family was able to survive the death of our daughter. Our family owes them a great debt of love. We all do.

David Gibson  
TCF Nashville, TN

*Note: Founder of The Compassionate Friends and bereaved sibling, the Reverend. Canon Simon Stephens will be a featured speaker at the TCF International Gathering and National Conference in Costa Mesa, California this July 20-22, 2012*

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **TCF 2012 National/International Conference:**

Register now for 35th TCF/USA National Conference/ 5th International Gathering in Costa Mesa, California July 20-22!  
Go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on News and Events to learn more and to access the registration form.

### **Newsletter Deadline**

In order to meet printing deadlines, all donations and original poems or articles must be received by the meeting day of the preceding month to be published in the next issue of the TCF Nashville newsletter. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.

### **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.

### **PLEASE NOTE: Children at TCF Meetings**

It is always painful for newly bereaved parents to be with babies and small children, but it is even more difficult to see them at a TCF meeting where grief is heightened. The presence of a baby can be very disturbing and distracting to others, especially to those who have themselves lost one, and a TCF meeting is not an appropriate place for youngsters where they see visible pain in their parents and other members. We want you to be with us, but since we promise each parent who has lost a child a safe place at our meetings, we urge you to make other arrangements for your little ones.

## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, 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. SHARING meets the second and fourth Thursday evenings of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave). 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.

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

## Reflections of a Mother Denied

**O**n this my first Mother's Day, I ask myself, "Do you have a right to celebrate Mother's Day? Have I truly been a mother this past year?" The answer is yes.

Each day I have cared for my child as every mother does, except differently. In every way possible, I have mothered him. I have mothered him with every tear shed; through the agony of longing to hold him. I have rocked him in my heart if not in my arms. I have kissed his little cheeks in my mind if not with my lips. I've smelled his sweetness with my hopes if not with my nose. I have felt his softness with my memory if not with my hands. And I have tickled him with my wishes if not with my fingers.

Am I a mother? I truly am. My physical mothering has been limited to lovingly tending is grave, but I am a mother just the same.

Michelle M. Parrish  
TCF Columbia Chapter  
Baltimore, MD

