

# 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.*

## October 9 Meeting

### Handling the Holidays

The holidays are coming. How do you deal with this special time of the year when you're hurting so badly? Your child has died, and all the traditions of the past seem impossible to navigate. Some members of our chapter who have managed to memorialize their child or children during the holidays, as well as make these days special for their other family members, will share with us solutions they have found to be helpful.

We would especially like for our old timers to come with their experiences and suggestions for handling the holidays. Our newly bereaved friends need you. We're hoping to help make this a gentle season for all bereaved parents—a time for remembering the love and blessings our children brought us rather than the anguish of losing them.

Our regular sharing groups will follow. We hope you will be with us.



## Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 12 in HCA Auditorium

The December memorial service will be here before we know it. It is important that **everyone** wishing to have their child's photo in the memorial service follow very carefully the instructions on page 2 of this newsletter. There is a submission deadline that **MUST** be strictly adhered to. We invite all of you to enjoy this opportunity to see your child on the big screen! If you have not attended the candlelight memorial service, we encourage you to do so. This is a very moving and powerful program. All family members, siblings and friends are invited.

### 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> .....	Ruth Edwards
	615-353-8547
<b>Small Child</b> .....	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
	615-237-9972
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle
	615-712-3245
<b>Murder</b> .....	Joe Ladd
	615-727-3284

## CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 11, 2011

**R**egardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 3, 2011. Do not send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

**Mail to:  
Steve & Paige Czirr  
1623 Fair House Road  
Spring Hill, TN 37174**

**Instructions:** A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year.

**Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

**Child's name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

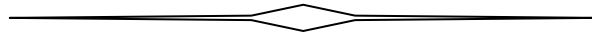
\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

**Your name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

You may alternatively e-mail your child's picture to Steve Czirr at [sczirr@att.net](mailto:sczirr@att.net).  
Be sure to include your child's name in the e-



### Wearing a Mask

**H**alloween is a great time to pretend to be someone else. You can be mean and nasty even though you're usually a pretty nice person, or you can be scary when you usually are the one that gets scared. You can pretend to be strong and powerful or beautiful or mysterious or famous. You can pretend to be anything on Halloween. It isn't fun, though, to try to always wear a mask. Sometimes for a person who is grieving, it seems like you need to always pretend to be your old happy self. Your friends and others may want you to forget about your loss and go on as if nothing much has changed. But it is really hard to mask your true feelings all the time. It is much better for you if you can "take off your mask" and just be yourself sometimes. If you let your feelings out, then you are being honest with yourself and others. By taking off your mask and revealing your true self, you will be a much more REAL person. It's better to save masks for Halloween.

From the Inside Fernside Newsletter

## A Word About Closure

**I don't use the word closure anymore.** For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I don't think there are any magic moments in grief. *Grief is a process — a long, slow process.* There are events that are memorable but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts gone.

We don't have closure; we have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of real but not real. We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awake. Reality develops gradually through many experiences. It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping, they are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

Doug Manning  
Oklahoma City, OK

*(Doug Manning is the author of twenty books, including his first, Please Don't Take My Grief Away. This article first appeared in We Need Not Walk Alone, Spring, 1999, ©The Compassionate Friends)*

## Waiting for Answers

**Y**ears ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared *were* true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said. "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too."

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

Mary Clark  
TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

## Findings

*The greatest comfort  
at time of grieving  
comes, quietly,  
from the love that lives  
within ourselves.*

Sascha

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing, but you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there.

Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow. One day — one glorious day, you wake up and feel your skin tingle again and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken — and it's a beginning.

Susan Borrowman  
TCF, Kingston, Canada

## *Suicide*

*Once you were rich with life,  
you were self-confident  
and filled with beauty.*

*Until a darkness came  
to seize your mind,  
a force from out of silence,  
an ache without a reason,  
a pain without a name.*

*What was this darkness that  
would not be conquered?  
What force,  
what reason,  
what pain without a name  
would use your hands  
to take your life away?*

*Once you were rich with life,  
you were self-confident  
and filled with beauty.  
Now we are left alone  
without an answer.*

Sascha

## *Rest, My Brother*

*Rest, my brother  
You now have peace.  
The wars within you  
All have ceased.  
And the rising sun  
Each day,  
Upon the heaven  
You will play.  
Until that day  
We meet again,  
Know I love you,  
My brother,  
My friend.*

Sandra Evens  
TCF, Kearsarge, NH




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## **Having Another Baby**

**W**hen you plan for the first baby, you wonder if you'll be a good parent, what he or she will look like, if you will deliver before or after your due date, even what color to paint the nursery.

The next pregnancy, after your baby has died, you don't plan. You wonder if he or she will live and whether to paint the nursery at all. That was the hardest part for me--never, even for a minute, really believing I was going to bring this baby home.

Though I won't be the one to tell you that subsequent pregnancies are good, I will tell you they are worth it. It's wonderful to have new life in the house, to have this tiny thing to hold and love. Oh-he smells so good, and he looks so cute when he gets mad!

There have been a lot of sad moments since Samuel's birth, looking at him and missing this time with Zachary. When Samuel was about a week old, if he slept just right, he looked a lot like Zachary. I could smooth back his face so his cheekbones weren't so full; it was almost magical. With a little imagination I was holding Zachary again.

Now Samuel is six weeks old and he is just Samuel--our wonderful new baby. I feel happy, more satisfied with life. There is still Zachary, we are still bereaved, but life is better, easier. He is a good thing and it's been a long time coming.

Laura House  
TCF, St. Louis, MO

## The Last Smile

Once upon a time there was a young boy who smiled all the time. When he was at school, he smiled when he played and he smiled when he worked. He smiled so much that one of the teachers nicknamed him “Smiley.” He continued to smile as he went through life attending college, marrying the woman of his dreams, watching the wonder of two new lives entering into this world.

One day he stopped smiling. His five-year-old Prince and eight-year-old Princess had both died in an auto accident. He couldn’t sleep, he couldn’t think, and worst of all, he couldn’t smile. Life continued on but the bereaved father remained in shock, unable to believe that the two children who had given him so much reason to smile had been taken from him.

As a year passed, the shock started to wear off and the father found the strength to work his way through the grief process. His wife gave birth to a new child — a son — and the father was there for the birth. Another year passed and he was blessed with another child — this time, a girl.

“It’s still so hard to smile,” he thought. “I love these children so much, but so many people think they erase the pain that I feel in my heart. Nothing can make the world right again.”

He watched as his new children started to grow. He observed as his new son and daughter learned to do the things his older children had done. There were so many similarities. The boy could give you a look with his eyes that sure reminded you of his brother. The daughter resembled her older sister so much that people would look at their pictures from the same age and swear they were the same person.

They continued to grow.

A short while ago the new son turned two and the daughter celebrated her first birthday. The pain of losing his older children will always be there with him — but you know what happened?

The father started to smile again — and not just on the outside, but also on the inside.

And you know what — it feels good! I know. I’m that person.

I’m the one who thought he would never smile again!

Wayne Loder  
TCF, Lake Area, MI

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## Halloween

This month is the time for the funny looking creatures appearing at our doors for a trick or treat. Halloween was never my favorite time of the year. I think it was because I could never come up with those cute original costumes for my girls like every other mother managed to do every year. It seemed like after answering the door and seeing 200 original costumes I’d always think to myself, “Why didn’t I think of that?” I’d tuck a few ideas away in my head for the next year, but when the time came to execute those ideas, I had tucked them so far away I couldn’t remember them. Once again we were scrambling around on October 31st trying to come up with ideas that both girls would be happy with.

There were six years’ difference between our two daughters. That wasn’t the only difference. Our oldest girl, Kirsten, could have her Halloween candy last until Easter and then we’d throw it out. JoAnn, our youngest, would eat her candy from house to house and would come home with a full stomach and empty bag. In the summer of 1978, JoAnn had her second open heart surgery. She died July 2, 1978 at age six. When October rolled around that fall, I dreaded that evening of seeing the little children coming to the door and remembering how JoAnn loved the candy and the enthusiasm of the evening. As the evening wore on, I realized that the doorbell wasn’t ringing very much. I went to the window and saw that there were plenty of children walking in little groups but they were walking past our house.

I realized then that the neighbors and people who knew us had, no doubt, told the children not to come to our house. My emotions were very mixed up. On one hand I knew the parents were trying to protect us from this first experience of not having JoAnn. It was very kind of them. On the other hand, it only reminded me of how different our home was now. When nine o’clock came it was a relief to know the first event was over. It has been five years now since JoAnn died. Halloween doesn’t bother me but we all know that the next day we turn the calendar and November is here with the holidays around the corner. For us as bereaved parents these are hard times whether you are a new bereaved parent or have had a number of years since your child died. We need not walk alone but reach out to each other. One of the greatest blessings to me now is the gift of memory and I cherish the happy memories that I have been blessed to remember JoAnn in all seasons of the year.

Cindy Holt  
TCF, Jamestown, NY

## **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, 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.



## **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.

### **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).

### **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.