



# *The Compassionate Friends* *of Northwest Houston* Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.*

**APRIL 2016**

**HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

[www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org](http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org)

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.  
(Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 12th)**

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center  
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20  
Spring, Texas 77379

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our meeting room.

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# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

## **To the Newly Bereaved**

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.



*Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered*

**APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

- 1980-Gregory Lynn Meier, Son of Gary Meier
- 1983- Justin Fletcher, Son of Karen Fletcher
- 1985- Chance Williams Son of Lynn Williams
- 1987- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews
- 1990- Derek Ford, Son of Jackie Ford
- 1988- Stephen Cage, Son of Melanie Cage
- 2005- Sanai Caden Johnson, Daughter of Octavia Johnson
- 2012- Hamzah Zubair, Son of Farah Zubair
- 1979- Tracey, Daughter of Anita Sutphin
- 1988- Travis George, Son of Kathy George
- 1990- Kayanna, Daughter of Shari Lancaster
- 1991- Iman Had, Daughter of Naila Qureshi
- 1982- Joshua Hucklebridge, Son of Elaine White
- 2010- Zy'Air Stovall, Son of Jerome & Dora Stovall
- 1983- Crystal Garza, Daughter of Marta Garza
- 1982- Tiffany Driscoll, Daughter of Dan & Cindy Driscoll
- 2014 - Giavanna Calista, Daughter of Nicole Kelley
- 2014 - Korie Joiner, Daughter of Julie Joiner
- 1989 - Lindie, Daughter of Beth Shelton

**APRIL ANGEL DATES**

- 2005 - Chance Williams, Son of Lynn Williams
- 2008- Samantha Dawn Quesada, Daughter of Albert & Dawn Quesada
- 2009- Sandra ReNae Southerland, Daughter of Vivian Southerland
- 1993- Karen Crawford, Daughter of Kim Crawford
- 2010- Keegan Dade Coggon, Son of Kellie & Gavin Coggon
- 2007- Andrew Rininger, Son of Philip & Ellen Rininger
- 2009- Nicole Berrow, Daughter of Rosie Berrow
- 2009- Anthony R. Boras, Son of Walter A. Boras
- 2005- Dillon R. Howland, Jr., Son of Rachel Howland
- 2010- Alex Flood, Son of John & Alice Flood
- 2009- Matthew Peterson, Son of Sharon Peterson
- 2009- Bryan Belveal, Son of Linda Belveal
- 2006- Michael Beshara, Son of Mike & Elaine Beshara
- 2006- Shannon Stovall, Daughter of Charlie & Liz Stovall
- 2008- Eric Reiland, Son of Kimberly Crawford
- 2010- Staci Kendall, Daughter of Larry & Tami Kendall
- 2011- Iman Had, Daughter of Naila Qureshi
- 2012- Samuel Johnson, Son of Tim Johnson
- 2012- Lauren Ovelgonne Tenney, Daughter of Steve & Carol Ovelgonne
- 2012- Tracey, Daughter of Anita Sutphin
- 2011 - Justin McHan, Son of Ronnie & Linda McHan
- 2014 - Angel Joseph Vasquez, Son of Mary Vasquez
- 2014 - Kyla, Daughter of Ron O'Farrell and Monica Reynolds
- 2013 - Wolfgang Jones, Son of Phillip Jones

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next regular meeting is Tuesday, April, 12th at 7pm. Hope you will join us. Also, don't forget our new sub-chapter group for parents that have lost infants and toddlers will meet Thursday, April 14th at 7pm.**

### Balloon Release

On Tuesday May 10<sup>th</sup> we will hold our annual Balloon Release. We'll have a brief meeting in our normal room and then we'll head outside to the children's fountain located on the eastside of the Church. If you would like to volunteer to bring balloons please let me know.

### A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members, **Sharon Mondrik, lost her son Wesley in February this year; Barry and Kris Heslop, lost their son Creighton in November last year.** If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

If you have recently attended your first meeting, you may have left feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you may feel that you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared in meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return.

These feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least three tries before you decide if these meetings are for you.

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the support which will help you travel this journey of grief, and we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

### *"A Special Remembrance"*

Chapter members please consider submitting a short story about your child for our newsletter. Tell us about the happy times of your child's life, their hobbies, the school they went to or where they worked. Did they have siblings. Or you may consider sharing your grief journey with others so they will come know there is hope after the darkness. Send your articles to me, Linda Brewer at [llbrewer67@hotmail.com](mailto:llbrewer67@hotmail.com).



## National Conference News

The Compassionate Friends' 39th Annual National Conference is in Scottsdale, Arizona on July 8-10, 2016. The Conference will be held at The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess at 7575 East Princess Drive, Scottsdale, AZ, 85255. Room reservations are now open and rates are \$129.00 per night. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. If your group needs to reserve a larger block of rooms, please contact the National Office to make arrangements for your reservations. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

*Adult Registration (ages 18 +) \$90.00 each*

*Child Registration (ages 9-17) \$40.00 each*

*Full-Time College Student (student ID required at check-in) \$40.00 each*

[Conference Schedule](#)

[Workshop Choices](#)

[Keynote Speakers](#)

[Registration Booklet](#) to print out registration form and mail to The Compassionate Friends, Inc., PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 or email to [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org).

### Sample comments from past conference attendees :

*"Attending the conference was the best thing I have done for myself. It's a vacation with my son that I will take every year!!"*

*"I attended my first conference and it was one of the best things I have ever done. The friends I made were incredible and the feeling throughout the whole weekend was so healing. I never thought I would have to belong to such a club, but am grateful it is there to help. Thank you TCF!"*

## Painting for a Cause



Julie Joiner, the facilitator of our new sub-chapter group will be hosting a painting fundraiser for her non-profit foundation the Korie and Kacie Foundation. The Foundation helps support parents that have lost an infant, or toddler child. She is inviting everyone to come out to Merlot 2 Masterpiece and paint (the above) with her on April 19th, at 7:00pm. The cost is \$40.00. You're welcome to invite family and friends to paint as well. If you can't make it out to paint and would like to support her foundation please visit her website.

[www.korieandkacie.org](http://www.korieandkacie.org)

Painting info:

Go to website [Merlot2Masterpiece.com](http://Merlot2Masterpiece.com) to register for painting.

Address is:

Merlot 2 Masterpiece  
Spring/Champions location  
7135 Louetta Rd. Suite B (Behind China Wok)  
Spring TX, 77379  
(832) 767-0855

## Special Remembrance

### In Memory of Tiffany Driscoll Barboza

By : Dan Driscoll  
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

Tiffany Driscoll Barboza (born Tiffany Melissa Driscoll) entered the world on April 16, 1982 in Adak, Alaska. In kindergarten, Tiffany determined that she was a genius, and it turns out that she was right. Tiffany was always highly motivated and excelled in school. When it came time for college, she earned an appointment to the prestigious United States Military Academy at West Point, though she was ultimately unable to attend.

Tiffany began her undergraduate studies at Baylor University, where she also started playing water polo competitively. She transferred to the University of Houston to pursue better opportunities and better apply her genius within the field of physics; this decision paid off when she was selected to present for NASA's World Space Congress in 2002. While at U of H, Tiffany continued playing water polo, earning a spot on the Houston All-Star team, eventually graduating in 2004 with a Bachelor of Science in both physics and math.

As a rare woman within her field, Tiffany was recruited by the top schools in the country for her graduate studies, including Cal Tech, but chose the more student-focused Louisiana State University. At LSU, she studied computational fluid dynamics, receiving her Masters of Science in Physics as well as an unofficial Masters in Tiger Football. She continued her studies, pursuing a PhD, and while also working as a research assistant and instructor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

After her diagnosis with Crohn's Disease, Tiffany shifted the focus of her research to medical physics, hoping to eventually attend medical school (in addition to the PhD) in order to help find a cure for Crohn's and Colitis. She was working on her dissertation in discrete hydrodynamics, but Tiffany ultimately got too sick to complete her PhD and had to leave the program. This was probably the toughest decision of her life.

At LSU, Tiffany met the love of her life, Carlos. The two were married on February 16, 2012 in Baton Rouge, LA, and had a spectacular ceremony and reception on their first anniversary in Houston, TX. Tiffany and Carlos built a loving family together that included three papillons who were always adoring and always deeply adored.

Despite all that the disease took from her, Tiffany's indomitable spirit pushed her to use it as a vehicle to help others. She conducted research on colon cancer stem cells and other topics with a team at Oschner Health System in New Orleans under Dr. David Margolin, that was eventually published in medical journals; she started her own website/business ([nosolidsdiet.com](http://nosolidsdiet.com)) to provide healthy and delicious recipes for those suffering from severe gastrointestinal disorders; she actively participated in blogs and online forums for those suffering from inflammatory bowel disease, and reached out and developed an international network of "crohnies" and other disease sufferers; she acted as a counselor for Camp Oasis, a summer camp for kids afflicted by Crohn's and Colitis; and she continually supported the work of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA).

Tiff also enjoyed baking, and habitually made beautifully designed cakes and cupcakes for her friends.

Tiffany was probably the strongest person any of us will ever know. She has been described as a “force of nature”. She was brilliant, quick-witted, and hilarious, with a gift for finding the humor in everything, even poop... especially poop. She would often put the needs of others above her own. After an eight-year long battle with Crohn’s Disease, Tiffany died in her home on February 10, 2014 with her beloved husband Carlos by her side. She was 31 years old.

Tiffany is survived by her husband Carlos Eduardo Barboza; their babies, Sassy, Isis, and Callie; her parents, Daniel and Cynthia Driscoll; her sister, Nicole Driscoll; her maternal grandmother, Roberta Keating; and her paternal grandmother, Alta Woodhouse; she was preceded in death by her doting ‘Papa’, William Keating.

Tiffany’s brilliance and fighting spirit will live on through all those whose lives she touched as well as through the continued research of the CCFA ([ccfa.org](http://ccfa.org)).



## The Process

Recently we faced the second anniversary of my son’s death. Quietly, at home, no friends, no phone calls, no plans, just personal thoughts and reflections. That is how we chose to honor Todd Mennen on this saddest of days.

My husband said he woke up during the night; he had been dreaming about the accident and Todd’s death. I slept throughout the night, but when I awoke in the morning I was still in that place between awake and asleep; I was “in a dream”. Todd and I were having a conversation; it felt nice. I didn’t feel the usual jolt of reality when I awoke—the jolt each of us feels when we awaken to remember our child is gone. The conversation was comforting.

We miss him so much. His laugh, his sincere, sparkling eyes will never grace us again. His deep concern about others, his love of life, his gifts of analyzing, listening, gently suggesting....those have gone with him. In their place is a deep void.

The process of grieving is a strange one. Each day is different. Throughout each day my child is in my mind....in the forefront or in the background....but in my mind. I shed tears unexpectedly, my voice breaks when I remember truly special events in Todd’s life. Sometimes I get angry over little things. Sometimes I don’t react to anything. Sometimes I seem normal to everyone, but it doesn’t matter.

Normal, of course, is what others want to see in me. What is normal for a mother whose only child is dead? Who has that answer? Everyone has an opinion, but in truth, there is no normal, there is no answer.

And so, as we continue to travel this highway of life, our grief is in us and around us. Sometimes our grief is all we have. Still we travel this empty road.

We understand. We’re all different, yet, we are all the same. Our child is dead. We are Compassionate Friends.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX  
January 2005



## To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart,  
Mine flow down my cheeks.

Your anger lies with thoughts and movements.  
Mine gallops forward for all to see.

Your despair shows in your now dull eyes.  
Mine shows in line after written line.

You grieve over the death of your son,  
I grieve over the death of my baby.

But we're still the same, still one,  
Only we grieve at different times,

Over different memories,  
and at different lengths.

Yet we both realize the death of our child.

Pam Burden  
TCF, Augusta, GA



## COME SIT WITH ME

Come sit with me awhile and let me  
Hold your hand, I understand your  
Sorrow and know you need a friend.

I understand the pain that lies within your heart,  
I have felt the silent screams that tear you all apart

I know about the sleepless nights that last so very long,  
I understand the emptiness when you hear that special song.

Come share with me your memories and let me be  
Your friend, you can cry, laugh or say nothing at all,  
And I will understand.

Come sit with me my friend, I'll try to help you through.  
I understand my friend, for I have been there too.

Judy Peckinpaugh  
TCF Inland Empire, CA

## 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 no longer 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 that is 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 awaken. 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 of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

Doug Manning  
Author of "Please Don't Take my Grief Away"

*There's no way around grief and loss. You can dodge it all you want, but sooner or later you just have to go into it, through it, and hopefully come out the other side. The world you find there will never be the same as the world you left.*

## **No You Don't Need "Closure"**

**By: Stephen J. Forman**

There are few among us who have not experienced the loss of a friend or loved one. Often it comes without warning, in an accident or, as we've seen all too often recently, an act of terrorism. The experience of loss after a lingering illness like cancer, though more expected, is just as deeply felt. As time passes, we often hear how important it is to gain closure—a way of tidying up to help us move on with our own lives.

The reality is that closure is a myth. My personal and professional experience with those who have lost friends and family, including children, has taught me that going on with life is not the same as gaining closure. The wound of loss is a part of each person's life forever. We continue to think about those dear to us, though perhaps not every day or with the same intensity. Recollection is sometimes provoked by a date on a calendar or, less predictably, by a sight, sound, aroma, melody or place that evokes the missing person.

These personal moments, seemingly forever paused in time, can cause us to feel alone, especially during sentiment-filled holidays. The danger of the idea closure is that it heightens this aloneness, by giving us a false expectation that these experiences should and will at some point end. They won't.

No matter how much time has passed, memories remain. To deny them is to deny precious moments of love, fellowship, gratitude and inspiration. Grieving changes the experience of loss, but does not eliminate it, and is not intended to do so. To close the memory does not sustain the healing or help in proceeding with life. Such echoes from the past are voices in the present and are sometimes warmly felt.

As humans we all yearn to remember. Nearly every culture has its way of preserving the past. We build memorials to perpetuate collective memory, whether it is the Vietnam Memorial or Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the field of empty chairs in Oklahoma City, or the 9/11 Memorial in New York.

Cemeteries offer a communal "safe space" where grief is openly welcomed and expected, forever. Visitation rights to a plot do not suddenly expire six months after a burial, a time that some in the medical community suggest is the "normal" grieving period. In the Jewish tradition, the acknowledgement of the annual *yahrzeit*, the anniversary of the death of a family member, is always done in the presence of others, provoking a collective memory of the person.

These occasions sometimes formal, but more often spontaneous are not about closure. Rather they are about the fullness in each of our lives that came from our family, loved ones, and friends, as well as others who were touched by that person's presence.

In my work as a cancer physician, I often write to the family of a loved one who was under my care, months after the death. It is a time when most of the people who helped support them through the days and weeks immediately after have gone back to the busyness of their own lives. The bereaved are left alone with their own feelings and thoughts. The letters are a chance to remain connected, but also

a way to convey that their loved one is an important memory for us, too. These words of acknowledgement are always welcome, reassuring those whose lives have become interwoven with ours that their loved ones are alive within us, as they are in their own families.

A few months ago, I ran into a woman who many years ago had, at a very young age and early in her marriage, lost her husband to cancer. Since then she had moved away, met another man whom she adored, married him and had a family. Together they raised their children. She had built a successful career. Seemingly she had found closure from the tragedy of her early life. As we finished talking and she began to walk away, she turned around, and with eyes full, and said: "I think of him almost every day."

*Taken from the Wall Street Journal  
Dr. Forman leads the Hematologic Malignancies  
and Stem Cell Transplantation Institute at City of Hope.*



## My Perennial Love

Every summer my son gives me flowers. He planted them 17 years ago ... the summer before he died. I remember the day he planted them. Not the exact date, but standing there talking to him as he poked holes in the ground and carefully placed each one. I remember thanking him and thinking how very sweet of him to do that for me.

Terry died the following February. After months of crying and grieving, summer came and with it his flowers bloomed! Of course it made me miss him even more, but how I loved seeing them and knowing that he had put them there the year before. I know nothing about flowers so I was astounded when my mother told me that what he had planted was an annual and not a perennial and that they should not have come back.

A few weeks ago, our neighbor who moved in last summer, commented on my impatiens. She said she was surprised to see them come back from last year. I told her that they have been coming back every year now for 16 years. Just saying it aloud made me realize how extraordinary that really is!

There is something else I have come to realize. My love for my son did not end when he died. My love for him is indefinite; it is enduring. It is perennial.

Maureen Harman  
TCF Tidewater Chapter, VA  
In Memory of my son Terry

## Phone Friends

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All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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