



# ***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 2022**

### **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

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

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.**

**at**

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Family Life Center #204  
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.  
Spring, TX 77379**

The Church is located on the corner of Spring Cypress Road and Klein Church Road. Please enter off Spring Cypress Road. The meetings are held in the Family Life Center, Room #204

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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  
1994 - Hunter Smith, Son of Lee Smith  
1995 - Brandon LaFavre, Son of Teresa Kobs  
1994 - Ryan Francis, Son of Greg and Anne Francis  
1991 - Bonnie, Daughter of Eve Baszkiewicz  
1992 - Brittany, Daughter of Kimberly Swan  
1989 - Christopher, Son of Margie Caswell

Your life was a blessing  
Your memory a treasure  
You are loved beyond words  
And missed beyond measure.

## 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- Samual 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  
2016 - Radley Moon, Son of Melissa and Daniel  
2021 - Dylan Guy, Son of Gavin & Rachel Wheeler  
2021 - Parker , Son of Tim & Amy Coogan

*Don't try to destroy a beautiful part of your life because remembering it hurts. As children of today and tomorrow, we are also children of yesterday. The past still travels with us and what it has been makes us what we are.*

*Rabbi Earl Grollman*

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 12th. at 7pm.**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members, **Margie Caswell, lost her son Christopher in September 2021; and Greta Champion lost her grandson Gabriel Lugo in November 2021.** 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 feeling 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.

### ***Mother's Day Special Remembrance***

Mother's Day is next month, please consider submitting a short story about your child for our newsletter. Tell us about your child's life, his/her hobbies, the school they went to or where they worked, did they have siblings. Include a picture of your child. Or you may consider sharing your grief journey so newly bereaved parents will know there is hope after the darkness. Email your articles to me at [llbrewer67@hotmail.com](mailto:llbrewer67@hotmail.com).

### **TCF "ONLINE SUPPORT COMMUNITY" OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR GRIEF SHARING**

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.



The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu.



TCF 45th National Conference  
Houston, TX • August 5-7, 2022

Conference Registration is now open for the 45th TCF National Conference August 5-7, 2022 in Houston, TX.

### ***Adult Registration:***

**Early Bird** (4/5/2022 - 5/31/2022) - \$220

**Pre-registration** (6/1/2022 - 8/3/2022) - \$250

**On-site registration** (8/4/2022 - 8/7/2022) - \$275

**Registration fee includes:**

- **Friday Luncheon Program and Banquet**
- **Saturday Evening Candle Lighting Program and Banquet**
- **All Keynote Sessions**
- **Workshops**
- **Special Performances**
- **Sibling Sunday**
- **All Activity Rooms**

*I have had the opportunity to attend The Compassionate Friends National Conference. There are several workshops that cater to circumstances of your loss that you can take part in. These workshops include, teenage car accidents, suicide, illness, infant death, murder etc., There are also workshops for Surviving Siblings and Grandparents. You will take away from the conference the knowledge that you will survive, and that one day you will even smile and laugh again. It is a wonderful uplifting experience. I hope you'll take the opportunity and attend the Conference. - David*

## What Is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow?

Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left. And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent, to one who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left.

You read books on bereavement scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the questions of what is left?

For me it does. The answer was 13 months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That's it! I *am* left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott's. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott's love with you.

Betty Stevens  
TCF Baltimore, MD  
In Memory of my son, Scott



Danny, our only child, passed away at the age of twelve. His death was unexpected, and the pain almost unbearable. Our pastor told us that yellow is the color of life. What then could be more fitting than yellow roses? To ensure these symbols of life for years to come, I bought a rose bush for my wife. After all, she was still Danny's mom and needed more than ever to be reminded of that. I planted the bush on Mother's Day. On the day before Father's Day, the roses bloomed - three of them, to be exact. They were arranged in size order, just as our family had been in life. When I bought the bush, there was no way to know that there were to be only three roses. I have no doubt this was a sign from Danny. He wanted us to know that he still lives, and that there are still three roses.

John W. Carlsen  
In memory of Danny

## Filling In Holes

Today, my husband and I went to the plant nursery and bought some flowers and bedding plants to go in our gardens. Spring is here, and the weather is beautiful. Not cold at all... but also not so hot that the thought of pattering in the garden brings a groan of dismay.

I remember my first spring in this house. We were so excited. Our family was nearly complete. Our third son was on his way, and we had just had a house built. We were at the plant nursery at least once a week. Our life was busy, bright, untainted by grief.

I remember our second spring in this house. How winter hung on, tenacious, unyielding, both outside, and in our hearts. I remember the first warm spring day. I came home from work early, determined to make SOMETHING grow in my life. Maybe I couldn't get my son to live, but I was going to make something live.

Grief was a raw, open wound then, and my anger was deep. I was angry at the world, at God...at everything. And so I approached my yard, shovel in hand. I decided I had to have a garden in the middle of my yard. I began furiously digging out the grass, making an oval in the center. It took me hours digging out that oval. But I wasn't through. I then decided I wanted a garden right by my doorway, so I dug out that area too. And then I made big holes, and tore out all the roots and stones and other junk.

I made big holes in my yard that day. And in the weeks to come I DID fill them with things. Funny thing, as I dug those holes and pulled on the grass, my anger drained away. My salty tears mixed with the sweat of exertion and the dirt, and ran off my arms undetected to the outside world. Digging those holes provided an outlet for my anger and my hurt.

Today I dug some more holes. But this time, my holes were smaller. And I filled them. With small, delicate flowers, purple and white. I put bulbs in the ground too, filling other small holes. And I reflected back on another hole. The hole in my heart. No, I can't ever fill it with what "should" be there... my son "should" be almost seven now, full of energy, and wanting to plant flowers with Mom. But I have filled that hole with other things. With love and healing and memories. And with the lessons and the gifts my son gave me. I never saw those gifts that spring, as I was digging out holes in my yard. And though I would rather have that hole filled with my son's presence, I am grateful for the gifts he gave. And so I will go on, filling holes.

Lisa Sculley, March, 1999  
TCF Jacksonville, FL



**GOOD MEMORIES  
ARE THE PERENNIALS  
THAT BLOOM AGAIN  
AFTER THE HARD  
WINTER OF GRIEF  
BEGINS TO YIELD TO HOPE.**





## The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . **IT** happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Well's time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

Pat Loder  
TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI  
In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder  
Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, 2003.

## SPRINGTIME

By Elaine Howlett  
In memory of her son, Craig Daniel Howlett  
Taken from "We Need Not Walk Alone", Winter 2002

The seed of love planted in my womb,  
Still grows in the fertile soil of my heart.  
Nourished by memories and warm Sunshine,  
Spring's promise giving it a brand-new start.

It took some time to plow the rocky ground,  
Weed and bug control has been quite a problem,  
But watered by cloudbursts of huge teardrops,  
It blossomed from deeper root and stronger stem.

Its color has become more intense and vivid,  
Its fragrance more pleasant and sweet,  
Its flower's petal is soft and rich like velvet,  
Its song made vibrant by sounds of past defeat.

A heart that once felt like barren wasteland,  
Grace-filled butterflies now feed on its nectar,  
Giving it wings to be all it was meant to be,  
Yearning for love's fresh air to breathe free.

## My April Child

When our daughters were growing up the arrival of springtime was a favorite time of the year, filled with anticipation of the coming of special days of family fun. The freshness of the air, the brilliant colors of spring time trees and flowers, and the song of the birds returned from their winter retreat resounded the message of hope and that life was good. We had survived another cold, snowy Michigan winter and were soon to be rewarded with blue sky, sunshine and temperatures well above freezing!

Birthdays in our family were a time of celebration together. Each year Larry, Anna, Debbie and I, and perhaps a friend or two, would celebrate Anna's April birthday by dining at her favorite Mexican restaurant. There would be lots of silliness and laughter. During her teenage years, Anna would always forewarn us not to have the staff come to our table to sing their crazy birthday song. Of course, since we always insisted that our role as parents was to embarrass our children, her threats and warnings could not stop our tomfoolery. I believe she secretly enjoyed the attention.

As Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories... That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. My April child died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away on her birthday. For several years we did just that. With hearts filled with the numbness of fresh grief, our restructured family of three would hop in the car and head out-of-town. We would spend the day busying ourselves with whatever it took to survive. We would laugh half-heartedly, share memories, or cry together as we struggled to discover our new identity as a family without Anna's physical presence.

As always, only a few short weeks following Anna's birthday Mother's Day would arrive right on schedule. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

It seems impossible that it has been nine birthdays and nine Mothers' Days since Anna died. In my heart it was only yesterday. I can still see her smile and hear her laugh. I can feel the warmth of a quick hug as she heads out the door. With each passing year comes a new reality of what it means to be a bereaved parent, of what it means to find a new normal for our lives. The pain continues to occasionally catch me off guard, but it is softer now. The tears still come, but less frequently. Warm memories bring joyful moments to the emptiness. I smile quietly to



myself, reassured that Anna lives on in our hearts and lives, as well as in the hearts and lives of those around us. Once again each April we celebrate the day of her birth, for her life has been a gift of unimaginable joy. Our traditional Mother's day rituals have changed to new ones. There is more laughter now, fewer painful tears. I rejoice that I can celebrate that I am Debbie's Mom, and now Scott's mother-in-law, as well! Life is good.

The winter has been long and cold, as has been the winter of our grief. Springtime has arrived. The sunshine and blue sky, the purple crocus and yellow daffodils pushing through the warming earth bring hope of renewal and reassurance that life continues. Although there is an irreparable hole in my soul and an emptiness in my heart that will never leave, I am forever grateful that Anna lived with us for 23 years. I am eternally thankful that I am and I always will be Anna's Mom. May the warmth and brilliance of springtime fill your hearts with times of peace and hope and love.

Paula Funk  
TCF Safe Harbor Chapter, MI  
In loving memory of my daughter, Anna



*Don't let death rob you of the moments of joy still to be remembered, and found. Don't let grief rob you of those spring places where love and joy live forever in the heart. Somewhere it is Spring...Deal with the anger, the guilt, the depression as it comes and then let it go as you can...so there is room for joy to come again. Let hope come in...it's Spring.*

*Darcie Sims*

### Thought for the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word — **patience** — patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. **PATIENCE!**

Rose Moen  
TCF Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

## Phone Friends

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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