



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.

FEBRUARY 2018

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 13th)

Because of the ongoing renovations at Cypress Creek Christian Church our meeting this month will be held once again at the home of Mark and Debbie Rambis. Their address is: 3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr. Spring, TX 77388

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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

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Natalia Lopez - Daughter of Melissa Lopez
Devin Giblin - Son of Tanya Giblin
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Jonathon Kuta - Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
Jeff Shinsky - Son of Margaret Butler
Jason Allen Denbo - Son of Donna J. Denbo
Jason Lucher - Brother of Kerri Lucher
Ryder & Levi Wagner - Sons of Susan & R.J. Wagner
Jason Robert Kramberger, Son of Nancy & Ken Thornton
Charlotte Caldwell, Daughter of Jason & Rebecca Caldwell
Colton Alderson, Son of Jimmy Alderson and Julia Ware
Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull
Christopher Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Moriah Clay, Daughter of Kim Clay
Amelia Tayloe, Daughter of Matthew & Misty Tayloe
Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen
Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Anthony Pietrzak, Son of Joshua Pietrzak



A Solitary Journey

By: Helen Steiner Rice

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.



FEBRUARY ANGEL DATES

Lisa Renee Sanders - Daughter of Jim & Peggy Holland
Gregory Whitney Vinson, Son of Lance & Marilyn Vinson
Travis Walden, Son of Janet Walden
Jeff Walker - Brother of Stephanie Thrift
Matthew Brown - Son of Cathy Brown
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Michael Shrum, Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
Jerry Dwight Tanksley, Jr., Son of Virginia Tanksley
Christy Wempe, Daughter of Ann & Lance Parks
David Morgan - Son of Brent & Martina Morgan
Emily Crocker, Daughter of Nick & Beth Crocker
David Hendricks II, Son of David Hendricks
Leah Elizabeth Davis - Daughter of Ron & Laura Davis
Logan Xavier Venegas, Son of Rochelle Snyder
Ryder & Levi Wagner, Sons of R.J. & Susan Wagner
Amber Eileen Schulze, Daughter of Lisa Schulze
Joshua Hucklebridge, Son of Elaine White
Sloan Nagy, Son of Tammy Johnson
Tiffany Driscoll, Daughter of Dan & Cindy Driscoll
Ryan Moody, Son of Gloria Moody
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Wesley Hundl, Son of Sharon Mondrik
Athena Suniga, Daughter of Selena Suniga
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Danielle Spivey, Daughter of Mark & Donna Spivey



Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer. The secret to redemption lies in remembrance. - Richard von Weizsaecker

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next regular meeting is Tuesday, February, 13th at 7pm. I hope you will join us. I would like to extend a special invitation to our old members. Please join us and share your grief journey with our newly bereaved members. Come and share your wisdom and give back to those in need of your support.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members. 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.

As our TCF Credo says, *"We come from different walks of life..."*, but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

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 hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child, who has died, or a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help support our Chapter. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.

Volunteers

We are always in need of volunteers that can help set up before the meeting, greet people at the door, make coffee, bring light refreshments, etc. If you are interested and would like to help please email me, Linda Brewer at llbrewer67@hotmail.com or see David Hendricks after the meeting.

SAVE THE DATE

The Compassionate Friends 41st. National Conference will be held this year in St. Louis, Missouri July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of this year's Conference. Mark your calendars and safe the date.

Viva McComb

1894 - 2005

By: Shari Edwards as told to David Hendricks

Viva and I both attended the Longmire Road Church of Christ in Conroe Texas. She was 81 when I was born, but still active in the Church for the remainder of her life. I just didn't know how active.

As a sophomore attending Abilene Christian University and taking a "World Bible Study" class, the professor emphasized how one didn't need to travel to evangelize. He told of a lady who corresponded with a large number of people around the world over a long period of time to bring them to Christ. The more he described her, I realized it was Viva McComb, that sweet lady at our church.

Viva was descended from a grandfather who fought at the battle of San Jacinto, and a grandfather who helped found the University of Texas. Her contributions are too numerous to mention.

She gave up her driver's license at 104 and remarked she still had her own teeth. At her 105th birthday party at the church, she was interviewed by the preacher. When asked about her childhood, she remarked there were no cars, planes or paved roads, but her family was very blessed because they had a good wagon and a good horse to pull it.

When asked what was the most difficult thing she had done in her life, she stated empathically it was burying her three children and two grandchildren, and then she added, it's not supposed to happen in that order. There's nothing worse than burying your child.

Viva passed away less than a month short of her 111th birthday and one day before being officially named the oldest living Texan.

It really doesn't matter what your age is or your child's age is when you have to bury your child. We are "hard wired" in that relationship, and our great love becomes our great anguish.



LOVE IS IMMORTAL

Many of us will resent the lengthening of time between our child's life and our own present. Others may welcome the increasing distance in the hope that time itself will be a balm to pain. Yet, all of us perceive, beyond all the hype and expectations, that new years and seasons are merely calendar events.

Whatever problems we have had in the past will follow us into the present. There is no inner demarcation with hurting behind and joy ahead.

Each of us has the same opportunities now as we had before. We can permit time to simply pass, or we can work to mold its passage into constructive growth.

In the deaths of our children we have discovered with certainty that we lack the means to control the most cherished elements of our lives. But we also know that within each of us is the potential to rise above the debilitating anguish we have experienced.

Time continues to move forward and most of us have been too damaged to even play the games of resolutions and dance the rites of spring. We are beyond the futility of such exercises. But, let us each confront this moment and time with an inward commitment to recovery, to living the hours which comprise our existence with the fullness and love of which we are capable.

Hurting will ultimately lessen. Pain will slowly become more bearable. Fears and guilt will gradually pass away. But love, that inner dance of the heart which leaps to our child's name or the memory of an especially close experience that bears only the mantle of endless joy, will not pass away. All else, fame, fortune, distress and dismay, wealth and power, even ourselves, will at last be done.

But love...Love is immortal...May the immortality of love grow secure and healthy again within each of us.

Don Hackett
Plymouth, MA
From ALIVE ALONE



**As long as I live, you will
live.
As long as I live, you will be
remembered.
As long as I live, you will be
loved.**

--Unknown

A First Love for Eternity

Most moms remember their child's first love as a sweet child, maybe in kindergarten, who stole their heart for just a little while. I remember my son's first love: the Pontiac GTO. The first GTO was a model. Todd carefully assembled that model over a period of a few days one summer. Then, after an extensive search, he found the perfect teal color for the model. I still have that model on a special shelf. Each time I look at it, I marvel at the amount of time he dedicated to that one tiny car model.

When Todd was 16, he bought a 1967 blue GTO. He worked on it, touched up the paint, kept it in pristine condition. He loved that car. But this wasn't his true love. His true love was always a 1965 GTO.

He and I talked about how he would find a GTO to restore. I suggested buying the mailing list of GTO owners in southeast Texas and sending out a postcard which is exactly what Todd did. For a week he heard nothing. Then one afternoon, a gentleman from rural east Texas called him and asked if he was interested in his 1965 GTO. Todd and my husband were on the way to the man's home within an hour. Todd came home with a 1965 GTO that evening. And the restoration began.

For 12 years Todd invested any extra money he had in his GTO. The ground up restoration started the fall that he entered college. It ended three years after he finished graduate school. Piece by piece, part by part, Todd restored that beautiful car to its original glory. He was so very proud of the finished product. His dream had always been to show his 1965 GTO at Autorama which he did at Thanksgiving. He joined the Gulf Coast GTO Club, and participated in their events and always tried to show his car with them. He won second place in the National GTO show one year in Dallas. He won first place at Autorama in his class. He had so many trophies....he would line them up for the car show displays in an ever growing row.

Life had moved on: a wife, four children, a new home, another new home and finally the home of his dreams which he built in a lovely neighborhood west of Austin, took a great deal of time. But he always made time for his GTO. He kept his GTO spotless and drove it occasionally. He died five years after he completed his GTO restoration.

Last weekend we changed the oil in Todd's GTO, and I turned the key to make sure all was right. When I heard the sound of the engine, I could sense Todd sitting right next to me, smiling that big, happy GTO smile. If Todd is ever with me, it is when I sit in his GTO and listen to those three deuces purr as I glide through the four speeds. Unbidden tears ran down my cheek as I gradually increased the RPGs and reached over to touch the seat where I could feel Todd's presence. I whispered, "I miss you so much, Todd." I could hear him say, "I miss you, too, Mom." Peace comes to us in our beautiful memories.

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



LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

“Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren’t so crushing.” Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouchies” can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so...we are stuck with this pain, this grief and what do we do with it? Surely we can’t live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable...some day.

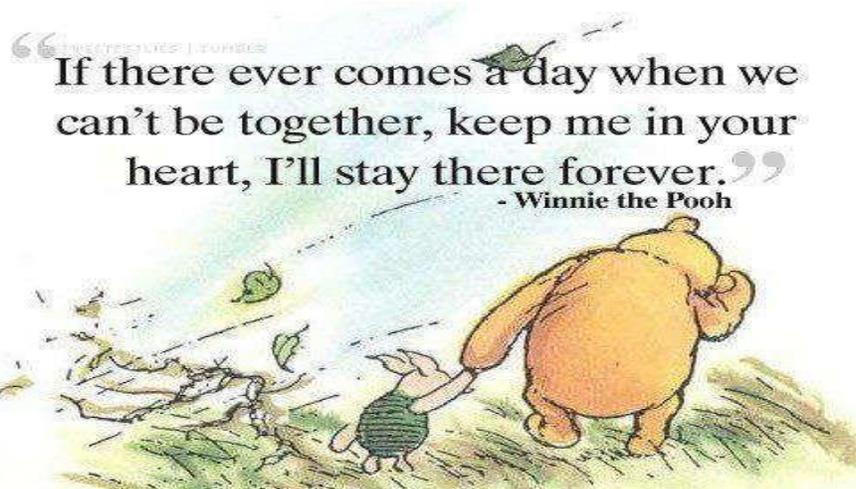
TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don’t have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don’t measure your progress through grief against anyone else’s. Be your own timekeeper.

Don’t push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments...but don’t expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don’t get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn’t lose our child...HE [SHE] DIED. We don’t lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn’t love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I’m very glad I loved. Don’t let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

Darcie D. Sims



SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

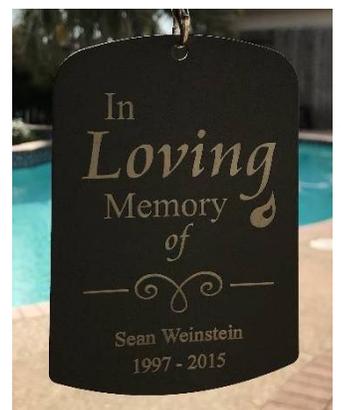
Sean Weinstein

We all get discouraged as the days pass, as more and more people either forget that our child is forever a part of our lives and they do not talk of them or celebrate them except when we bring them up. Some of us may have a great support system, but I am sure that all of us are desperate that our child's memory has not been forgotten. We do not hear much from the people that we would expect to hear from. It is very depressing and becomes a great source of frustration at times. This has occurred to us over the 2 years since we lost our precious child Sean. One of Steve's co-workers has checked up on us every three to four months and we meet for lunch and talk freely about Sean. This is more than we get to talk about him to just about everyone we know, except for parents who have also lost their children. This last time we met for lunch we were touched beyond belief when she gave us a beautiful and precious gift. She also shared with us some words she found on Facebook which she found to be very appropriate for everyone. For all of us who share the same daily frustrations that we do, it only takes one person to make a difference and we hope you all experience this at some time. We are honored to be able to show you this precious gift and the profound words that she also found and shared with us.

Steve & Sherry Weinstein
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

On each tube of the wind chime is written:

*Memories,
They remind us of people and things we hold dear.
They bring smiles, laughter and sometimes tears.
No matter what others may do or say,
Nothing will ever take these memories away.
Memories are more than just a link to the past,
Sometimes they're all we have that will last.*



I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was the sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.
And grief is not something you complete,
But rather, you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish and move on,
But an element of yourself
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.

*Thanks Steve and Sherry for sharing your thoughts and the wind
chimes with us. It is important that friends and family remember our
children and call them by their name. The memories of our children can
give us courage and hope to move forward with our life.*

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

One of the most precious things to a parent who has lost a child is the memories. Without them, it would be as if their child never was. With them, it is so bittersweet that it can make a parent laugh and cry, rejoice and anguish, touch the sweetness to the lips and taste the salt from the tears.

Memories keep the heart from crushing under the weight of sorrow. They give a parent the chance to be with their child again. They can walk through their memories like they were a movie. When the memories are so vivid, you can almost feel them, touch them, hug them, and kiss them. It is so bittersweet when the reality comes and you realize it is just a memory, a thought, and you are reminded of what you have lost.

If you asked a parent if they would give up the memories so they didn't have to feel the pain of knowing their child is gone, they would tell you no. As painful as it may be, not having the memories or feeling their presence, is just as unbearable as losing them.

There is no happy place to go to, but there is a place to be with your child. You know before you step into that realm that it will be painful, but you know that it will be joyful too.

So as we let the memories take us to a time that our child was safe with us, just rest a while until it is time to go and the next time try not to think of what is gone but what is still in your heart and will always be.

Vickie Van Antwerp, TCF Brevard, NC
In memory of my son Craig Van Antwerp

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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