



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.

JANUARY 2020

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 14th)

at

**Cypress Creek Christian Church
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room #3
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located between the Courthouse and the Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the Church area parking. We meet in Room #3 which is down six steps off the main lobby of the Church on the library side. Follow the posted signs to the 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.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Eric Reiland, Son of Kimberly Crawford and Grandson of Janet Heilman
Anthony Boras, Son of Walter Boras
Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer
Patrick Williams, Son of Poppy & Steve Williams
Syrina Snow Salazar, Daughter of April R. Torres
Ronald Lee, Son of Ana Castellanos
Samantha Dawn Quesada, Daughter of Albert & Dawn Quesada
Amber Eileen Schulze, Daughter of Lisa Schulze
Patrick Noel Jernigan, Son of Juanice Jernigan
Amanda Jane Franklin, Daughter of Jane Draycott
Christy Wempe, Daughter of Ann & Lance Parks
Karen Crawford, Daughter of Kim Crawford
Shane Woodson, Son of Theresa Woodson
Lucy Gale, Daughter of Steve & Jackie Sanders
Braiden Mainor, Grandson of Barbara Herring
Christina, Granddaughter of Barbara Thomas
Kailey Massey, Daughter of Terry & Wendy Massey
Matthew Coers, Son of Michelle Guerrero
Mark Cook, Son of Bill and Joanne Cook
Sean Anthony May, Son of David & Ann May
Joshua Bell, Son of Steve and Donna Bell
Reagan Ottnat, Daughter of Stacy Ottnat
Elijah James Knight, Son of Stephen and Courtney Knight

JANUARY ANGEL DATES

Ryan David Dodson, Son of Diane & David Dodson
Alex John Piniewski, Son of Bob & Christi Piniewski
Hugo Alberto DeLeon, Son of Lupita DeLeon
Kenneth Ray Roberts, III, Son of Brenda Johnson
Darrell Wayne McSpadden, Son of Janet & Robert McSpadden
Brandon Miller Estes, Son of Holly Olive
Derek Johns, Son of Shauna & Jeff Cook
Devin Giblin, Son of Tanya Giblin
Tiffany Gower, Daughter of Brenda Whitworth
Patrick Burns, Son of Ray & Amanda Burns
Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry & Sara Kujawa
Kailey Massey, Daughter of Terry & Wendy Massey
Jasmins Potter Jr., Son of Jasmins & Erika Potter
Joel Sloan, Son of Jim & Glenna Sloan
Kathy Degen, Sister of Clare Watkins
Joshua Pham, Son of Tony & Peach Pham
Catherine Breeding, Daughter of Barbara Breeding
Sean Anthony May, Son of David and Ann May
Jared Mayfield, Son of Robbie Lampkins
Stephen Verdell Jr., Son of Stephen Verdell and Melinda Nagle
Jessica Nicole Driskell, Daughter of Patricia Ann Tull
Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby
Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, January 14th at 7pm.

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.

"A Special Remembrance"

If you would like to submit an article about your child for our newsletter please send them to me, Linda Brewer at llbrewer67@hotmail.com. It's a wonderful tribute to your child to share a writing about him or her so that everyone may get to know them. Tell us what he or she liked. Did they have siblings? What were their hobbies? Where did they go to school or worked? Please let us hear from you.

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.

In loving memory of Sean Weinstein we thank Steve and Sherry Weinstein for their generous gift to our TCF Chapter. Thanks Steve and Sherry.

***A new year brings time to reflect on the children we love,
those who remain with us and those for whom we grieve ~
Wayne Loder***

2019 Candle Lighting Service

For those who attended our Candle Lighting Service on December 8, 2019, you know what a special ceremony it was. It was held for the first time at Trinity Lutheran Church. A very special thank you goes out to Jean Smith with Trinity Lutheran, Darryl Heino and Beth Crocker of our chapter, the Jersey Village High School drama group, and all for making this the special ceremony it was. I do appreciate everyone's hard work that made this evening so memorable. Thanks David





Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!

Pat Akery
TCF, Medford, OR
December 30, 2001



New Year a Time to Search for 'Ray of Hope'

*Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter.
Be my song to sing that guides me on my way.
Be the arms that hold me.
Be the love that enfolds me, be my light,
Be my ray of hope today.
...Paul Alexander, songwriter*

Snowflakes drift silently to earth.

A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended

As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for "recovery" in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life—a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Time Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does *this* new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

Can we be kind to ourselves? Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say 'NO!'

Can we enjoy life again? Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago? By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

*Inside of me are all the answers.
Everything I need to know
Lives inside of me.
Come behold my miracle,
Come and hear my story.
Come and paint a memory with me.
. . . P. Alexander*

Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area, MI

"Ray of Hope" by Paul Alexander on the CD "The Best of Paul" at www.griefsong.com (Paul wrote LIGHT A CANDLE which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs). Permission to use excerpts from "Ray of Hope" granted by Paul Alexander.



The New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to

withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

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

*The journey of grief can seem bleak and lonely
Look in front of you...
there are others encouraging and guiding you
Look beside you...
there are others on the same journey
Look behind you...
there are others encouraged by you
We are not alone on this journey.*

Possibilities

The New Year is upon us and with its arrival are the usual concerns surrounding New Year's Resolutions. It has become popular over the years to take inventory, and consequently make a list of those things that we are going to finally try to accomplish during the new year. The list invariably includes all those intentions we have never been successful in keeping in the

past before but somehow feel we might have more resolve this time around. Resolutions are tough and often too harsh. When we look at the list of "never done" and try to muster up a me list of "to do", the attempts seem discouraging and downright overwhelming. Should we really try again? The loss of our child has surrounded us with a grief that is encompassing, and draining. Do we really care about well-intentioned resolutions?

This year I decided to try a new approach. Instead of resolutions, I am going to take a serious look at possibilities. The more I thought about it the more attractive a list of possibilities became. Possibilities are neither harsh nor burdensome, but rather they have an air of lightheartedness about them. On some level they present an invitation to open a door to wishful, even wistful thinking while at the same time weaving a thread of reality. Possibilities captivate the spirit. They could be a real winner.

With possibilities there are no deadlines-no voice of doom to shout our lack of effort and accomplishment. Possibilities can be very simple with few demands but with amazing results and satisfaction. Defy normal convention and allow your imagination to wander. You might even want to be a little daring. Take a walk in the rain, soak up sunshine, take up painting, cook up a storm, renew a forgotten friendship, lie in bed till noon, stay awake until midnight and laugh with the late-night talk show hosts, to name but a few. The list is as long or as short as you wish it to be. Most important of all, possibilities are not threatening. They invite us to consider and then explore. This is only a beginning. Be childlike. Jump right in. In this New Year I wish you Happy Possibilities.

Rosemari Clogher
TCF Shoreline Chapter, Northford, CT.



If we choose to move forward
Acknowledging the sorrow and sadness
But also the love and laughter
Then hope travels with us



Without HOPE

The memories will only bring pain

Without HOPE

The pain will never soften

Without HOPE

The heart will not mend

HOPE

Is found in

What was

What is and

What will be

A New Year's Wish

*A New Year's wish of peace and love
As we honor those above
To hear of them can make us smile
Please say their names once in a while
We need to speak of them to you
And know that you remember too
They're gone from sight, but not from heart
And for this time that we're apart;
We'll always miss them, always care
It helps when memories you share
To speak of them does not bring pain
It brings them close to us again.
So if you have a memory
A thought that you can share with me
I'd love to hear it if you could
Please speak their name, I wish you would*

*kp©2013
Out of the Ashes/FB*

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.

Laura Hengel
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Pat Morgan
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angeltrack@aol.com
Adult Child

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Auto Accident/Fire

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Substance Abuse

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Infant Child