



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.

JULY 2019

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

<http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org>

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, July 9th)

at

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

The Church is located between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church parking area. 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.

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks

936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

South Texas Regional Coordinators:

Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen

thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Linda Brewer 936-441-3840

llbrewer67@hotmail.com

National Headquarters, TCF

P.O. Box 3696

Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696

1-876-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

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

JULY BIRTHDAYS

- 1983 - Nicole Berrow, Daughter of Rosie Berrow
- 1971 - Amy Wells, Daughter of Kerry & J.R. Wells
- 2010 - Delaney Womack, Daughter of Carrie & Eric Womack
- 1984 - Kristine Ashley Bergaila, Daughter of Kathleen Livingston
- 1968 - Van Holland, Son of James & Olivia Holland
- 1985 - Sean Hengel, Son of Laura Hengel
- 1972 - Gregory Whitney Vinson, Son of Lance & Marilyn Vinson
- 1960 - Evanna Johnson, Daughter of Nelwyn Heath and Sister In Law of Christal Janis
- 1980 - Andrew Rininger, Son of Philip & Ellen Rininger
- 1982 - Geoffrey Lynn Meier, Son of Gary Meier
- 1989 - Kylar Shotwell, Daughter of Tracy Bradley
- 1982 - Chance Wilcox, Son of Shelli Ralls
- 1967 - John Steven Sims, Son of Marilyn Sims
- 1999 - Ahjzanae Adore Triplett, Daughter of Alesia Abbott
- 1993 - Patrick Burns, Son of Ray & Amanda Burns
- 1991 - David Kerpchar, Son of Sally Kerpchar
- 1971 - Joel Sloan, Son of Jim & Glenna Sloan
- 1982 - Adam Brown, Son of Greg & Debbie Brown
- 1979 - James (Jimi) Nicholas, Son of Fred & Linda Nicholas
- 2015 - Kacie Joiner, Daughter of Julie Joiner
- 1999 - Jared Mayfield, Son of Robbie Lampkins
- 1986 - Kristina O'Masters Palmer, Daughter of Laurie Martin
- 1997 - Ethan Tyler Brown, Son of Erica Poorbaugh
- 2018 - Kingston Bowen, Son of Lakisha Washington
- 1984 - Justin Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer
- 1986 - Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer



You are rooted deep
within my soul.
A part of me forever
In the deepest parts
of my heart
there you are.

JULY ANGEL DATES

- 2008 - Aaron Michael Wolf, Son of Laura Wolf
2006 - Chasen Sean Shirley, Son of Debbie Shirley
2008 - DeAndria Sharee Anderson, Daughter of Rawn & Loretta Stephens
2010 - Evanna Johnson, Daughter of Nelwyn Heath and
Sister In Law of Christal Janis
2008 - Lloyd Ross (Rossi) Moore, Jr., Son of Carolyn Moore
2010 – Sanai Caden Johnson, Daughter of Octavia Johnson
2012 – Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins
2010 – Ahjzanae Adore Triplett, Daughter of Alesia Abbott
2011 – Christopher Birken, Son of Elizabeth Birken
2013 – Zy-Air Stoval, Son of Jerome & Dora Stovall
2010 – Austin Haecker, Son of Debbie Haecker and
Grandson of Carolyn Cooper
2013 - Jacob Landon, Son of Brenda Landon
2016 - Matthew Coers, son of Michelle Guerrero
2015 - Brian Smith, Son of Cindy Smith
2005 - Patrick O'Masters, Son of Laurie Martin
2017 - Kristina O'Masters Palmer, Daughter of Laurie Martin
2018 - Kingston Bowen, Son of Lakisha Washington
2018 - Austin Balogun, Son of Yokima Whittaker

You Are Not Forgotten

You are not forgotten, loved one
Nor will you ever be,
As long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.
We miss you now.
As time goes by
We'll miss you more.
Your loving smile, your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place.

Written by the family of Odessa Anne Box

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, July 9th at 7pm.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new member. 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.

Articles & Poems for Our Newsletter

Please submit your poems, writings or a brief article about your child or your grief journey for our newsletter. Email them to me, Linda Brewer at lbrewer67@hotmail.com. I will be happy to include it in the next newsletter.

There is still time!

42st TCF National Conference

July 19 - July 21, 2019

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia"



Reflections from a Chapter Leader
David Hendricks
Chapter Leader
TCF Houston Northwest

It's been over 22 years since my son David died in an automobile accident at age 35. It's been over 19 years since I became chapter leader and facilitator at our TCF Chapter. Over these many years at our meetings I have witnessed bereaved parents who could barely come through the door, barely breathe, whose emotions were at the surface and who needed to be with other parents who had lost children.

These same parents who could not imagine life without pain or having fun or even laughing, somehow can make it to a different place where there is joy and where the good memories dominate the bad ones. This transition takes between 3 and 6 years, but the new normal usually comes about in years 4 and 5. That's when they quit coming to TCF meetings because the pain of the meetings is greater than the good they get out of the meetings.

I call it graduation. Just when these parents are great contributors and valuable in our meetings, they quit coming. From a Chapter Leader and Facilitator point of view, I really miss these "graduates", but I am glad that their new normal allows them to not need TCF. But TCF still needs them.

Before our meetings start, there are smiles and sometimes laughter among some of the "veterans". This can be a shock to the newly bereaved. I point out to them that we are also bereaved parents and that the smiles and laughter that seems out of place, show that there is hope for a better future.

I emphasize to our group that it is important to manage your expectations.

I tell the newly bereaved that the grief journey is not measured in days, weeks or months. It is measured in years. The airlines tell you if the oxygen masks drop, put yours on first so you will be able to help others. In the same way, take care of yourself first. Do whatever it takes to deal with your loss. Only then will you be able to deal with the rest of your life.

The early time frame of grief comes with generally well intentioned comments from friends, relatives, co-workers and strangers: "are you feeling better", "have you recovered", "are you over it", "he's in a better place", "it's just God's will", "at least you have other children", "I know how you feel, I lost my dog last month", "I want the old person back".

Sometimes we ignore the questions and comments. Sometimes we try to explain our feelings. Sometimes we just explode, inwardly or outwardly. We face these questions, we face our grief, we face all of our relationships, and we face ourselves. Grief work is hard. We say our grief is so intense because the love of our child is so intense.

There are no short cuts on working through our grief. One of the benefits (if I can use that word) of coming to TCF meetings is "empathy". Most of our grief is focused inward. At a TCF meeting, we listen to other parents tell their story, and our grief is turned outward as we feel their pain. This empathy is physically and emotionally beneficial. It changes us from being totally inward focused to

being open to fellow travelers and to their stories and issues. Everyone listens and is attentive at a TCF meeting even if we've heard the story many times.

There are an abundance of tools to help us in our grief journey: TCF meetings, therapy and counseling, journaling, scrapbooking, TCF chat rooms, TCF facebook, articles, books, medication, meditation. As we work through our grief, we are often presented with "redemptive possibilities". These are things we can do now, that we probably would never thought of if our child were still alive. These include setting up a foundation, starting a scholarship, working with a group or activity your child was involved in, volunteering at a place to honor your child, special projects, special events, providing material goods where they are needed, and many other opportunities once our eyes are open. Don't expect to find redemptive possibilities when your grief is fresh. It takes time for our eyes to be open to them.

So it is possible, given enough time and enough work to find joy in your life, to laugh again, to be open to new things, and to not having your first thought of the day and the last thought at night to be of the loss of your child. I have seen it over and over again.

To the newly bereaved (and I mean for at least the first two years), the previous paragraph reads like fiction. But it is true. Nothing can compensate for your loss, but the "new you" will be able to navigate through life.

We never get over the loss of our child, and there is no such thing as closure. We just get through the loss and emerge as the "new you". Keep watching for the redemptive possibilities.

To all the "veterans" of this process, remember those who were there for you when your grief was new. Please consider coming back for a visit or two. Your experience and wisdom is very beneficial to our entire group.

So the message of these reflections is hope. Hope for a new you, as you feel your way along this grief journey. As you travel down that long, unfamiliar grief road from which there is no return, be gentle with yourself and work hard, and remember there is hope.

**"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all.
It comes with bittersweet agony.
Perfect relief is not possible, except with time.
You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better.
And yet this is a mistake.
You are sure to be happy again.
To know this, which is certainly true,
will make you somewhat less miserable now.
I have experienced enough to know what I say."**

Abraham Lincoln

When Will I **Want** to Be Here?

Years ago, I read a lovely novel, *The Magic of Ordinary Days*, by Ann Howard Creel. Back then, I truly did appreciate the magic of ordinary days. I did. I greeted each day with purpose and a very long "to do" list. I fixed breakfast for my family, packed school lunches, awakened grumpy children, went to the school bus stop, folded laundry, emptied the dishwasher, walked the dog, shopped for groceries, made PTA calls, scheduled doctor appointments, showed up for my volunteer shift in the library. Then, I greeted the school bus (or waited for the front door to open), and dealt with the chaos of after-school snacks, music lessons, sports practices, homework, family dinner, baths, and bedtime stories. I was so grateful to be a full time mom. Even navigating the challenges, the bumps in the road, the injuries and illnesses, the disappointments with the school system....it all felt so purposeful, so significant. It was magical.

So, now that I have no choice but to take on the cloak of bereaved parent, is it worse because once life held such promise, such hope? I know I can no longer bear to look often at Facebook; the accounts on my "wall" of ordinary days bring me to my knees. I loved ordinary. It makes me so sad that my ordinariness has vanished.

The challenge now is how to be on the planet when I don't want to be here. I am on the planet; I get out of bed, I function on some level. But I don't *want* to. It's the *wanting* to be here piece that I have lost. So, I keep reading the books, seeing the counselor, going to TCF conferences, and working to stay in relationships with people I care about. I am deliberately trying to not lose hope that maybe, one day; I'll *want* to be here.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA



One of my favorite poems by Emily Dickinson begins: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul." In the early years of my grief after my daughter Coty died, it was hard to imagine I would ever feel that flutter of hope again. Through The Compassionate Friends, I found others who had not only survived, but had built a new life in honor of their loved ones. I felt the rustling of those little feathers and knew that hope would live again in my soul.

Kathleen Willoughby, Coty's mom
Loss to Homicide moderator



July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was she
Having been, and left her mark.
A glorious incandescent life,
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of
my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
With love that never dies.

Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, Long Island, NY



Compassion:

Compassion is such an easy word, yet it is not at all easy to achieve. Compassion means suspending one's own critical and advisory inclinations to help someone. Compassion is leaving oneself outside. Compassion is not approval. What the other person may need is often not at all what the compassionate helper believes to be helpful. The helper may want to give advice, or talk about himself/herself. What the griever needs, however, may well be a listener, a focused attention on the griever and on the loss the griever sustained. Often, compassion means not doing something – listening rather than speaking, crying rather than comforting with words. Compassion is not an easy task, but it is among the greatest gifts we can give each other.

-Sascha

Borrowed Hope

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily.
Pain and confusion are my companions.
I know not where to turn.
Looking ahead to the future times
Does not bring forth images of renewed hope.
I see mirthless times, pain-filled days, and more tragedy.

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Hold my hand and hug me, Listen to all my ramblings.
I need to unleash the pain and let it tumble out.
Recovery seems so far and distant,
The road to healing, a long and lonely one.
Stand by me. Offer me your presence,
Your ears and your love.
Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present.
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts.

Lend me your hope for awhile.
A time will come when I will heal,
And I will lend my renewed hope to others.

— Eloise Cole, TCF Ireland Chapter



Vacation with Danny

For our monthly TCF meeting in June, one of our group facilitators suggested that we take our child who was no longer with us, on our summer vacation. This was a comforting idea, as well as quite an imaginary illusion, which I was a bit leery about. I thought, what the heck, I might as well do it. The anniversary of Danny's death was three years already, and I missed him just as much or more as I did the preceding 36 months. I really didn't know what to expect, but maybe I would sense his presence as I have numerous times since his death, at the age of 29.

We were on a planned group tour, with everything already prearranged. Our hotel was "The Embassy Suites", one that we had stayed with to celebrate a special occasion with Danny when he was 14. The first night we toured the Kennedy Center. Upon walking into the entrance, I could hear a Celtic group of singers. Of all the songs in the world that they could be singing, "Danny Boy" was the song!! I stood there in awe with tear-filled eyes, along with a smile. I was utterly ecstatic!!!

After that I noticed a street named Pennsylvania Avenue (the state where Danny had lived in the last two years of his life). Then we drove to Gettysburg where I noticed a marker with the name Daniel James (Danny's formal first and middle name). We also visited the Smithsonian air and Space Museum. I sauntered in and noticed a sign in big bright orange neon letters...Lockheed Martin...it was as bright as the sun!! Danny had worked for the company until his last breath.

At the Holocaust Museum, there were many pictures of children. One little blond boy, who looked like he was 5-years old was a spitting image of Danny at that age. I also came across a telegram that was sent from Poland (a country of Danny's ancestry) to Lancaster County, PA (the exact county Danny lived in). Upon exiting the museum, the word's "Daniel's Story" were shown crystal clear inside of a glass frame.

After our flight home and ride in the car, I asked the driver to turn up the volume on the radio, and a minister was reading a Bible passage from the book of Daniel. Of all the events and "signs" that took place, I was clearly aware that Danny had been with me the whole vacation. I was glowing in amazement and awe!!!

Thank you, Charles our facilitator, for reminding me to take Danny along on our trip, thanks Danny for coming along with me on a terrific trip!!!

Sue Kromer
TCF Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my son, Danny



Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertime's.

Sascha Wagner



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
281-908-5197
linnemanl@aol.com
Auto Accident

Pat Morgan
713-462-7405
angeltrack@aol.com
Adult Child

Connie Brandt
281-320-9973
clynncooper@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Beth Crocker
281-923-5196
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

Julie Joiner
832-724-4299
dtjb19@gmail.com
Multiple Loss
Infant Child

Loretta Stephens
281-782-8182
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net
Auto Accident

Lisa Thompson
281-257-6837
lisalou862@yahoo.com
Fire

Pat Gallien
281-732-6399
agmom03@aol.com
Organ Donor

Leigh Heard-Boyer
281-785-6170
boyerbetterhalf@yahoo.com
Substance Abuse

FOR FATHERS:

Nick Crocker
832-458-9224
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

David Hendricks
936-441-3840
dbhhendricks@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Glenn Wilkerson
832-878-7113
glennwilkerson@thearkgroup.org
Infant Child