



# ***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.*

## **JUNE 2020**

### **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

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

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

**This month's meeting is canceled do to the Covid-19 virus**

**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 step 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.



## *Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered*

### **JUNE BIRTHDAYS**

1990 - Megan Kathleen Ratcliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratcliff  
1990 - BreAnna Brashear, Daughter of Julie Jones  
1976 - Adrian Jay, Son of Helen Jay  
2010 - Alexandra Kenley Newhart, Granddaughter of Dave & Carol Bell  
2008 - Keegan Dade Coggon, Son of Kellie & Gavin Coggon  
1982 - Robbie Hill, Son of Ann Hill  
1990 - Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird  
1990 - Ryan Kirby, Son of Cherlynnne Kirby  
1988 - Meredith Iris Wheelock, Daughter of Carey Wheelock  
1991 - Cody Ryan, Son of Christy Welch  
2008 - Leah Elizabeth Davis, Daughter of Ron & Laura Davis  
1973 - Christopher Birken, Son of Elizabeth Birken  
1985 - Sloan Nagy, Son of Tammy Johnson  
1990 - Alan James Stokes, Son of Kellie Harris  
2004 - Aaron Fontaine, Son of Doug & Tina Fontaine  
1989 - Danielle Spivey, Daughter of Mark and Donna Spivey  
2013 - Judah Levi Brown, Son of Mark and Christi Brown  
1987 - Corey Cole, Son of Tim and Cheryl Cole  
1999 - Austin Balogun, Son of Yokima Whittake

### **JUNE ANGEL DATES**

2009 - Samantha Campos, Daughter of Amy Arrant  
2008 - Robert Elizeus, Son of Joanne Wycoff  
1998 - Molly Long, Daughter of Carolyn Long  
2010 - Joselito C. M. Boquilon, Son of Raulito & Kim Boquilon  
2004 - Felipe Danny Sanchez, Son of Lupe Sanchez  
2010 - Tristen D. Hopkins, Son of Howard & Denise Hopkins  
1993 - Robbie Hill, Son of Ann Hill  
2009 - Maxwell B. Heath, Son of Carrie & Dirk Heath  
2010 - Alexandra Kenley Newhart, Granddaughter of Dave & Carol Bell  
2004 - "Bo" Jared Valdez, Son of Irma & James Valdez  
2009 - Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police  
2011 - Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson  
2011 - Meredith Iris Wheelock, Daughter of Carey Wheelock  
Sister of Mariah Moon  
1995 - Cody Ryan, Son of Christy Welch  
2013 - Matthew Allen, Son of Jay and Linda Allen  
2013 - Lhwhyh Yhshrrhal, Son of Taneshia Carey  
2012 - Crystal Garza, Daughter of Marta Garza  
2015 - Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen  
2016 - Brandon LaFavre, Son of Tersi Kobs  
2017 - Sean Michael Gonzalez, Son of Rick and Jazmin Gonzalez  
2018 - Elijah James Knight, Son of Stephen and Courtney Knight  
2018 - Justin Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our monthly meeting has been canceled amid the Covid-19 Virus. We anticipate being back in the Church in July.**

### TCF Board Election

TCF's Board of Directors and I are very pleased to announce our newly elected Board Members. Elected to 3-year terms are:

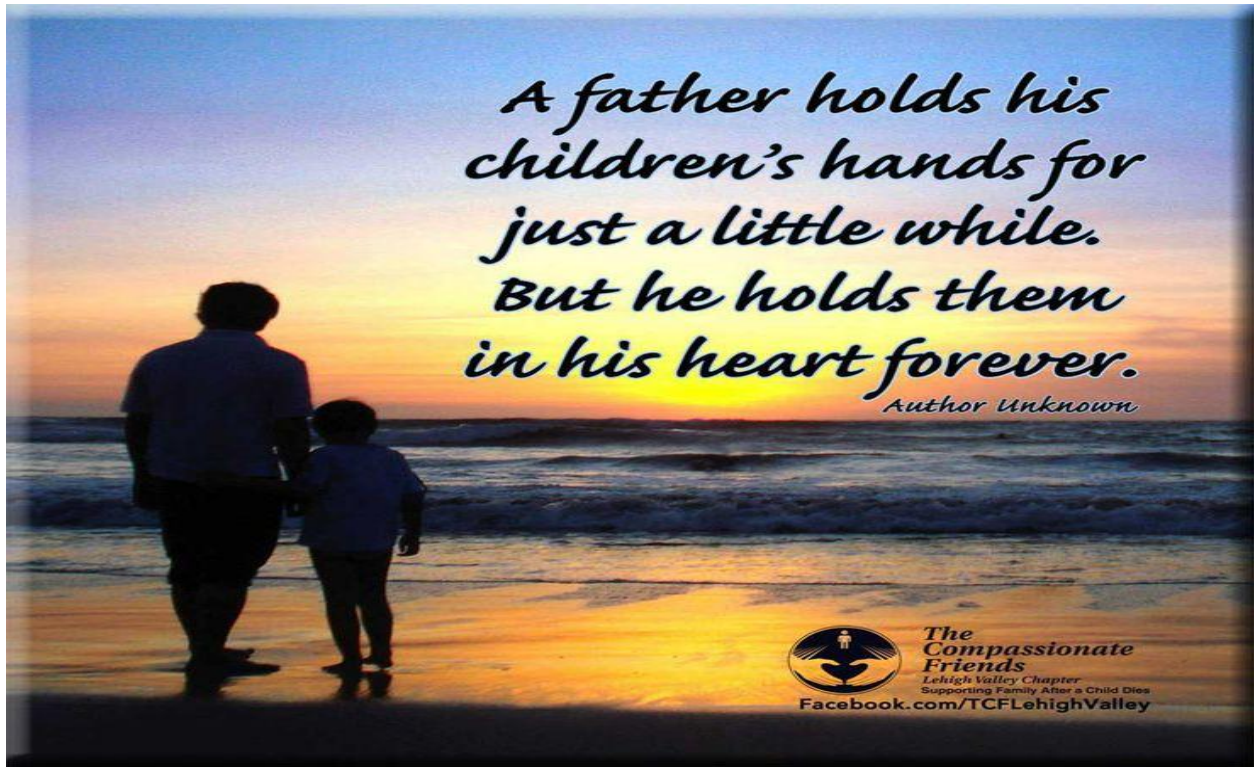
Roy Davies  
Dennis Gravelle  
Chris Lourenco  
Cindy Tart  
Ann Walsh

Elected to fulfill the remaining board term of Allie Sims Franklin and effective immediately:  
Ghislaine Thomsen

Board Members elected for 3-year terms will be installed at TCF's Annual Meeting. The date of our annual meeting will be determined given that we will not be able to gather in-person this year for our national conference.

Congratulations to our new Board Members!

Shari O'Loughlin  
CEO, *The Compassionate Friends*



**Daddy's Love"**  
**By: David Hendricks**  
**In loving memory of my son David B. Hendricks II**

I may not always be there to catch you when you fall  
But I'll always be there when I can  
There will be moments when we don't see eye to eye  
One day I know you'll understand

**Chorus**

**DADDY'S LOVE**  
**IS HIGHER THAN A MOUNTAIN**  
**DADDY'S LOVE**  
**IS DEEPER THAN THE SEA**  
**IT'S ONE THING I CAN GIVE YOU...UNCONDITIONALLY**  
**DADDY'S LOVE IS A WHOLE LOT STRONGER**  
**THAN A HUNDRED YEAR OLD OAK TREE**  
**THE LOVE I HAVE TO GIVE YOU**  
**IS THE LOVE MY DADDY GAVE TO ME**

When you were a baby, and I would hold you in my arms  
What a joy it was to watch you grow  
As the years pass by, I still hold you in my heart  
And if I haven't told you lately  
I want you to know

**Chorus**

When I'm there to help you in times when troubles come  
Don't be surprised to know I really care  
I can't solve all your problems  
But I can give you what you need  
Cause you and I have such a love to share

**Chorus**

Knowing you're a part of me has been my biggest thrill  
And when you have children of your own  
You will know just how I feel

*For three years after David died, in 1997, I worked on a project that included a music CD and an elaborate photo album. It kept me busy, and I felt like I was honoring David with all the effort. When it was over, there was a definite void for a while, but as veterans of this process know, you work through it.*

*The music CD included original songs like "Daddy's Love". It was professionally produced with musicians, singers and technicians. "Daddy's Love" was my attempt to show a father's unconditional love over*

*time for his child. It was also my way of being the man in the middle between my father and my child. Thus the line in the song, "The love I have to give you is the love my Daddy gave to me".*

*I hope all you Dads have a gentle Father's Day, with a little laughter, some joy and lots of good memories. I hope someone says your child's name and tells you a story about your child. Be easy on yourself, and keep your love ones close.*



**Father & Son 1993**

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**HOPE**

**Momentarily hidden by grief's agony**

**HOPE**

**Not the absence of pain and sorrow**

**HOPE**

**The belief in joy and laughter's return**

**HOPE**

**Whispers the promise of tomorrow**

**Hope** changes as we do and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found in the moments of our memories - Darcie Sims

## Justin Ross Heino

Father's Day has rolled around again. It was such a wonderful holiday when I did not know what loss truly was, but this day has changed over the years.

The picture of the young man is our 1<sup>st</sup> child, our only son, Justin Ross Heino. This was taken on vacation when he got to meet his grandparents, great grandparents and lots of aunts, uncles and cousins for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. If you look closely in the picture, he is blowing his grandma a raspberry, as she was showing him pictures of me as a baby in a photo album.



This is the last picture we have of him.

He died the day after we returned home. His death was ruled SUDC (Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood) which means no physical cause was ever found. He was perfectly healthy and just died while taking his afternoon nap.

This caused much confusion and loss of understanding of what is even possible in our world. If this could happen, nothing else I knew could be true.

The birth of our next child just 6 months later showed that life does move on, even when we don't understand why.

The joy that we knew with him was also there with our daughter, but in a much more profound way.

His birthday just passed; it is on Cinco de Mayo. He turned 37. So much time has passed with having only a year and a half of memories with him. These memories have sustained my love of him through all of these years.

I can remember that raspberry as it happened minutes ago. I remember the joy of his love as he is still beside me or in my arms. These things not even time can erase or destroy. I hold him in my heart as I always have and I don't think that will ever change. I refuse to let time or distance take that away. I am and will always be his father, his love fills me with the same pride as any other parent.

We have shared many great loves and losses over time. Our lovely daughter has given us a granddaughter that loves as no one else can. She is a true joy!

We lost our youngest daughter, before she was to be born. Being a parent has some of the greatest moments in it. Some of those moments are sheer love. Some of them are sheer pain and brokenness. But being a father includes all of this. On Father's Day, I remember both the love and the loss, but it is what makes me the father I am.

My heart goes out to all the fathers who are struggling on Father's Day and all of the other days of the year. Please allow your child's love be the best part of your memories.

Darryl Heino  
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

## FATHERS DAY

By: Charlie Stovall  
Father of Shannon Stovall

When our daughter, Shannon, was 15 years old, she was killed by an elderly driver at her school. She was a beautiful young lady, full of life, love, and compassion for others. She had a big Heart, and to my wife Liz, her brother Colin and me, the Heart has special meaning. To us it is a symbol of Shannon and of her love. She never signed her name without drawing a heart. The logo designed for her fundraiser is comprised of a Heart, Wings, and Flip flops. "The Heart Remembers" is on her memorial. We testified in Austin for the law that restricted elderly drivers . . . on Valentine's Day. I could go on . . .

Well, on Father's Day a few years ago, Liz and I went fishing in Port A with my old friend, Brian, from Dallas. Father's Day for me, just like Mother's Day for Liz, is a bittersweet day - Proud to be a father, proud of our son, Colin, yet missing our beautiful Shannon so much. My first fish that day was a very large redfish, just under the limit of 28 inches. Not paying much attention to anything but the length and girth of that bad boy, we threw it in the cooler. . . . but not before Brian snapped a picture of me holding that fish, the largest redfish I had ever caught.

It wasn't until the next day that Brian, while looking at all the pictures he had taken that weekend, sent me this picture and said, "check out the spot on that redfish".



My Father's Day gift from Shannon

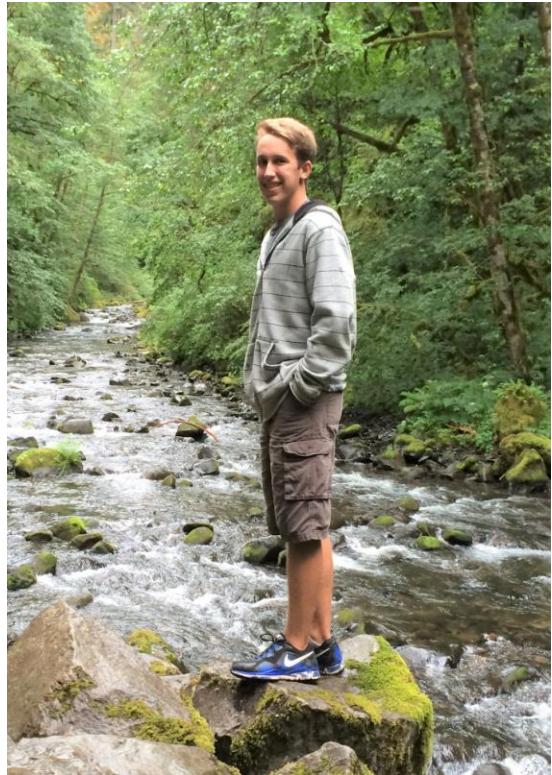
## Sean Weinstein

As Father's Day approaches, I am filled with so many thoughts about our precious son Sean. I reflect on the ritual of running around the kitchen table when he was eating baby food and he would open his mouth for the spoon. I remember him trying to walk for the first time, using the door handle as his aid. Sean was very animated when he was young and he needed a little extra to keep him calm and interested. We discovered the flying washcloth when he was taking a bath and the process of putting socks on the ceiling fan to keep him calm. One of the great joys I remember is when I got a call from day care and Sean slowly and excitedly said "Daddy, I made poopie in the potty"

It was evident Sean was gifted intellectually from a young age. He could count to 100 before age 3 and knew all the planets. Elementary school was easy for him and he always seemed to push the teachers with extra questions. I remember his third-grade teacher saying she couldn't wait to see what path he took when he grew up. We always did at least one fun thing over the weekend but his favorite was going to Mountasia to play putt putt and play the video games. I remember the smiles of other parents when Sean would jump up and down excitedly when he won in air hockey as I would "accidentally" miss the puck on the last point.

When Sean got to middle school, he was showing his athletic versatility in baseball, basketball and especially tennis. He had a love for the game and did not want to put his racquet down. He would take lessons, go to tennis drills and play in tournaments. He reached the championship level at age 12. My best Father's Day memory was when Sean won several rounds in the consolation draw and found himself in the finals. His opponent was a boy that Sean had not won a game from several months earlier. Sean played brilliantly and won pretty easily and won a medal. It was a thrill watching him play so well. This was so special on Father's Day and I was beaming with pride and thought life could not be better than this.

Sean acclimated to High School very well. He was pretty much a loner at times through middle school but got in with a good group of friends and had a few of the best summers of his life. He also appreciated high school as he put it "you can sleep in class in high school and the teacher won't wake you up, not like in Middle school". High school was challenging academically but Sean did well. He was at the point where we could not help him with homework. He played varsity tennis for 4 years and he was always happy when we could see his matches and also watch his tennis lessons. We also went on some nice vacations together and his maturity level was showing. Sean said that he realized that he was difficult at times earlier, and he acknowledged what we went through. Sean was easier over time and



the last 2 years of high school was like a dream. Sean started working, got a girlfriend and started playing golf. Sean and I would go out and play once a week and he was always so excited to play on a good course. It was so enjoyable watching him do so well in everything and his last year ended perfectly as his grades and ACT scores were good enough to get him into Texas A&M.

College was a time when he thrived. He was finally appreciated for who he was versus the shallowness of high school. He was always smart but only truly applied himself in college. He was pulling a 4.0 his freshman year while making many friends. He and his friends would have long philosophical conversations. He also helped many people that had trouble acclimating to school. He took up a passion for racquetball and was soon dominant among his friends. He was majoring in chemistry with the thought of going to dental school. He joined the Dental club and the Red Cross club. When he came home from school over Thanksgiving, I was amazed by the level of intelligence in his conversations. I commented to Sherry, that he was not going to need our help much in the future. As he left to go back to school on Sunday, the weather was iffy and I told him to please be careful. I will always remember the last words I ever heard him speak. "Don't, worry dad, I got this".

It was evident that he made such an impression on so many of his dorm mates as more than 60 kids drove down from A&M for his service. Even the head of the Chemistry department drove down. We received so many written tributes which were so beautiful that we could only read a few a day as they were so emotional. We even got a letter from an academic counselor who said that when she met Sean, he was the type of student we always hope for. We are so proud of the young man Sean became and he is always in our hearts. Sean was truly my greatest accomplishment and while the pain may diminish, I will never feel whole again.

**Steve Weinstein**  
**Sean's Dad**  
**TCF Houston Northwest Chapter**

### **A Father's Day Poem**

Bittersweet is the word I would use  
Happy and sad both at once and confused  
That is the feeling I get every June  
On Father's Day and it's coming up soon  
I will do my best to partake in the fun  
Maybe barbeque and take in some sun  
But a part of me will be very sad  
Cause I won't hear you say  
Happy Father's Day dad

**Alan Pedersen, TCF/USA**

# Lone Star Circle of Life

Submitted by: Ken Knight

In Honor of his son Cole

Ken Knight describes his son Cole as a “gentle giant.” Cole was a lineman on the Jersey Village High School football team and later attended Blinn College with dreams of attending Texas A&M University and becoming a youth minister.

“He was always best friends with everybody, and he had a mission in life, a Christian mission,” Ken said. “He went on a lot of missions and did a lot of help for a lot of people.”

Cole was one of several organ, stem cell and blood donors and recipients honored in the 2019 Lone Star Circle of Life Bike Tour. Fewer than 12 cyclists are chosen to participate in the biennial event, which lasts about a week. The tour stretched from Tyler to Waco to College Station to Katy to Victoria before ending in Corpus Christi. This was my first year attending an event, and I was overwhelmed by the love and compassion between these cyclists and the families and individuals they honored.

“These riders do this because it’s a labor of love,” said Debbie Mabry, who helps organize the event. “They do this because they have an overwhelming desire to put more people on the registry, have more transplants happen, have more people give blood.”

Rolling into College Station on Sept. 24 were 10 riders, each one riding for an honoree and with his or her own message to share. Each one arrived with cheers and fanfare after a long trip. Rider Tim Dixon was a funeral director in Corpus Christi who found a disconnect between his colleagues and the organ and tissue center.

Meanwhile, fellow rider Caleb’s parents, Becky and Joe Canal, had been riding with the tour since the early 2000s. This was Caleb’s second year. He described growing up with an older brother, Josh, who had a bad heart. Caleb and his family remain thankful a heart transplant at 17 gave Josh 13 more years with his family.

“Josh got a whole brand-new shot at life, and not just a continuation of the life he had before, which was incapacitated in a way, but he got a shot at being everything that he always wanted to be from the time that he was born,” Caleb said.

Both Tim and Caleb rode Sept. 24 in honor of Cole. Ken and Cole’s mom, Jan, had no idea their son had signed up to become an organ donor until he passed away in 2015. He did it on his own.

“He’s still on his mission, helping a lot of people,” Ken said.

Jan added that they’ve been notified of or communicated with eight of Cole’s recipients. They even met Michael, his liver recipient, who lives in Louisiana and continues to keep in touch with them still. That is what families do.

“He’s a great guy,” Jan said. “If Cole could have hand-picked him, he would have.”

Cole is still being honored each year at his high school by the Jersey Village Choir booster club with a college scholarship in the amount of \$1,061. You see, Cole’s football jersey was #61.

As Cole grew to love Christ at Grace Presbyterian Church here in Houston, he became part of and touched so many lives. He loved being a part of his church and relished the fellowship with his Grace family.

Cole truly exemplified "Living 2 Make Jesus Visible" , and still does. Grace Presbyterian is also honoring Cole with scholarships for students with the same servant heart as Cole, to attend youth missions in the US and around the world. To this date there have been 10 Cole Knight Missions Scholarship recipients.

Cole is still making his parents extremely proud. Love God



*Happy Fathers Day  
From Your Angel In Heaven*

*Oh, Dearest Daddy  
What can I say today  
To help mend your broken heart  
On this Fathers Day?*

*You know I would be there with you  
If only there was a way  
Although I am in Heaven now  
It's in your heart I will always stay.*

*Just like you where always there for me  
I will always be there for you  
Just look for a sign and you will see me  
In each sunrise and each sunset too.*

*Remember the game we used to play?  
"How much do I love you" you'd say with a smile  
But this time MY arms are outstretched so far  
For my love for you goes on for miles and miles.*

*My love for you daddy  
Will always be true  
You are the best daddy in the world  
And that includes the Heavens too!*

*So I'm sending all my love  
To you from Heaven today  
and remember I will be with you  
Just look for me on this Fathers Day.*

*I love you Daddy!  
From your angel in Heaven above*

## A Fathers Day Like No Other

In June, 2000 it was my third Fathers day without my son Christopher. He died in an industrial accident on September 28, 1997. This was such a lonely day for me as my only surviving child had been out of the country for over a year. I had no one to celebrate being a father with. It started as a very dark and dismal day indeed.

After trying to avoid the trip to the cemetery for most of the day, there was nothing left to keep me away. So my wife Robyn and I went to the cemetery to visit Chris' grave.

While deep in emotion and feeling like I had nothing to look forward to, we were sitting by Chris' headstone remembering how much fun he was and how terribly sad it was not to have him to hold and tell him that I loved him. I was wishing so badly that he could be here to spend the day with me.

I had put my head down to let the tears run off my face. I felt a small breeze come up; it was an unusual breeze in that it came from the northeast, which in June is not a common occurrence. I looked up and noticed this balloon with a lead weight dragging behind it, dancing ever so slowly towards me. We watched it dance across the grass and then the balloon bounced directly into my chest. The balloon had a message that I **know** was from my son Chris. It said "World's Greatest Dad". I was so surprised and happy to have received this "Father's Day Gift". I thanked him for the wonderful gift and for cheering me up. There was no one else around or near us; we were not sure where the balloon had come from. I did not notice it at the time but a woman and her 2-year-old son had come to visit her father's grave, which was about 150 yards away from Chris. Robyn and I sat around for another fifteen minutes or so and then decided to leave.

When we left to go to our car Robyn noticed that the lady visiting her Father was frantic and screaming that her son had locked himself in the car. We went over to see if we could help. The son had locked the doors to the vehicle, the windows were rolled all the way up and the mom had left the keys inside. The outside temperature was very warm and the little boy was starting to sweat. The police had been called to come and open the door but they were not sure that they could get there very soon. I was just about to break out the back window when Robyn said let's try to get him to open the door. She took the balloon and tried to coax the little boy to open the door. She told him through the glass that she would give him the balloon if he would just push the button. She kept pointing to the button that would release the door lock. Suddenly the lock popped open, we didn't notice it at the second the lock popped up, but later we realized that the boy's hand was no-where near the lock when it opened. We got the boy out and Robyn gave the little boy my Fathers day gift from Chris. The boy's mother looked at the balloon and asked where we had gotten that balloon because she had left a balloon just like it on her dad's grave the day before. We looked for his balloon and it was gone. It turned out to be the same balloon that had bounced across the grass and bumped into my chest earlier. The balloon was now in the hands of his grandson.

The events of that day have been with me ever since. First of all, I know that my son sent that balloon to me to help me through my sad and lonely Father's Day, and that he also helped to save that boys life.

Mark Kingery  
TCF Salt Lake City, UT  
In Memory of my son, Christopher

## 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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