



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 2022

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

at

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

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

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.



Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered

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 Cherlynn 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
1985 - Rachel Livingston, daughter of Beth Rosler
1985 - Darryl Allen, Son of Sandra Allen
2000 - Lucy Schaefer, Daughter of Amy Croston

*I'm beginning to know your children
From the things I've heard you tell,
From the pictures that you've brought here
I think I know them well
Our hurt and sorrow are immense
I'm not sure where to start.
Compassion after all is
Your pain in my heart.
My thanks to you for listening
To words wrung from my soul.
We are The Compassionate Friends
That's all I need to know.*

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 Yhshrhah, Son of Taneshia Carey
2012 - Crystal Garza, Daughter of Marta Garza
2015 - Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen
2016 - Brandon LaFavre, Son of Tersa 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
2021 - Elijah Tsaftarides, Son of Gerri Tsaftarides
2019 - Brittany Swan, Daughter of Kimberly Swan



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, June 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, **Brian and Lyndi Tuschl, they lost their son Gabriel in February.** If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

If you have recently attended your first meeting, you may have left feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you may feel that you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared in meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return.

These feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least three tries before you decide if these meetings are for you.

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the support which will help you travel this journey of grief, and we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.



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

**Join us at The Compassionate Friends National Conference this
Summer August 5-7, 2022**

Alongside our grief for the recent shooting tragedies, spring is also a reminder of loss for many bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. During this time of the year, grieving families struggle with painful holidays including Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Memorial Day. There are also family celebrations, graduations, and weddings. While these occasions are important and significant, they can also be painful and isolating. We invite you to come to The Compassionate Friends annual conference to be with people who truly understand what you're going through. Come to our conference and find friendship, comfort, and support.

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

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



Wish You Were Here

You'd be nineteen if you were here
But why you're gone still isn't clear.
Your things are still all in your room
As if you'd be returning soon.
Spongebob waits there by the door.
Your shoes are still there on the floor.

Your friends are all young women now.
They're working jobs or college bound.
Sometimes we see them and they say
We miss her so, wish she had stayed.

Your boyfriend's in the Army too
And by the way, he still loves you.
You thought his love was not so true
And that some other girl he'd choose.
But near two years have passed on by
Still to your grave he goes to cry.

Your niece and nephews miss you too,
And talk of the things you used to do.
Your Mother's going to be alright
And doesn't cry so much at night.
She puts the flowers on your grave,
And scrapbook pictures tries to save.

And me, I'm still the same old Dad,
The same old routine like I had.
I work real hard to make a way
To pay some bills and pass the day.

I'm not as funny as before
My world's not happy anymore.
I don't let on the pain I feel
But deep inside the hurt is real.

Time passes by year after year,
Life goes on with seldom a tear.
One wish I have, a wish so clear
My wish most of all, I wish you were here.

~Dad

Steve Tutt
TCF Tyler, TX

My Best Father's Day ever!

Our son Sean spent most of his life playing tennis. He started recreationally, then did tennis drills, tennis lessons and played tennis tournaments. It was his passion in his younger years. My wife and I happily hit tennis balls with him and watched his progression until he finally became better than us in his later years. He graduated to the championship level by age 12. He played in one to two tournaments a month and that is how we would happily spend our weekends watching him.

Sean had the ability to lose to kids he shouldn't but also beat kids he shouldn't. One of his worst losses was to a good kid and Sean did not win a game. So, a few months later, Sean won several rounds in the consolation draw and found himself in the finals. His opponent was the same boy he did not win 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 because it was also on Father's Day. I was beaming with pride and thought life could not be better than this.

Although he is no longer with us we still have this wonderful memory.



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



Father's Day Is Still a Time for Celebrating . . .

A long time has passed since I've enjoyed a holiday—or for that matter any special occasion.

With Father's Day coming up shortly, I've decided that this year I'm celebrating.

The kids used to love when special occasions came along. I can still remember Stef's eighth birthday, only three months before her death, and how proud she was when we told her she could invite her best friends over for a birthday party. She wore her prettiest blue trimmed party dress with the lace ruffles.

The games they played still stick in my mind. There was "pin the tail on the donkey" and then "Simon Says." I remember clothes flying everywhere in a contest to see which child could put on a complete set of clothes fastest over her party clothes. I remember the hotdogs, punch and cake, the party favors. I remember Stef's giggles.

The memories also wander back to the party our family threw for Stephen's fifth birthday, only three days before the accident which also claimed his life. I still have the picture in my mind of that goofy orange cap someone had given Steve. He loved it, but it was at least two sizes too small. When he tried to put it on, the bill of the cap was up and Stephen flashed us one of those impish grins that reminds you of Spanky and Our Gang.

As I'm writing this, the tears are flowing down my cheeks remembering the good times we had together.

A lot of things changed when the kids died. Christmas, Easter, birthdays all became days other people celebrated. But not us.

I've done a lot of thinking since then. I know Stef and Steve are in a better place than I could ever imagine and that every day is a holiday for them. In my mind, I think Stef and Stephen would be sad if they felt their Mom and Dad couldn't celebrate life anymore.

Pat and I now have another son, Christopher, plus we have our fourth child on the way. We're trying to rebuild our lives and I feel we have been blessed along the way. Of course, Christopher is too young to understand Father's Day, but even without him here, I would still consider celebrating Father's Day.

I can still remember the Father's Day a couple of years before Stef and Stephen died. With their mom, they had searched all over for something special for me, finally


deciding on a T-Shirt that said "World's Coolest Dad." I still wear that now faded shirt occasionally despite the many grass stains and grease marks.

When Father's Day arrives, I think I'm going to pull out that old T-Shirt and wear it.

I'm going to lay down out in the grass, letting the warm breeze hit me. And I'm going to pretend I'm being caressed by Stef and Steve. I'm going to remember . . . and I'm going to celebrate!!!

Wayne Loder

TCF Lakes Area, MI
In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder



Lost love is still love...
It just takes a different form, that's all.
You can't hold their hand...
You can't tousle their hair...
But when those senses weaken
another one comes to life...
Memory...
Memory becomes your partner.
You hold it... you dance with it...
Life has to end... Love doesn't.
— Mitch Albom

Thinking about all the dads who are remembering a child on Father's Day
From all of us at RowanTreeFoundation.org

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

How Dad Copes

It will be four years on May 31 this year since our son Nicholas passed away. Wow. I never imagined in a million years this would happen to us. It is difficult to deal with the aching pain I still feel in my heart. Nicholas's friends are getting married and having children. Though we are happy for them, our sadness deepens with the thought of how different it could be if he were still here.

The anxiety that begins to build in the latter part of April in preparation for the anniversary of Nicholas's passing gets stronger and stronger as the day comes near.

Past years were shock years. I couldn't figure out how to deal with it all. I would listen to other parents that are further along in their grief for coping strategies, but it did not seem to help. How could anyone help me heal my heart after it was broken into a trillion pieces?

I have found that speaking about Nicholas to friends, family, and new acquaintances helps me tremendously. At first it was difficult to do because it does make some people uncomfortable. The more I do it, the easier it gets, and the better I feel. Talking about my son has been like a pressure relief valve for me.

I also make time to think about Nicholas and release my emotions. This time alone to reflect and weep brings overwhelming, though temporary, relief. Dads tend to hold back tears and feelings. We like to think we can maintain control. My advice is don't try. Instead, let your feelings go in private at a time and place of your choosing.

Thinking back to the beginning of this tragic event in our lives, I should have sought counseling from a grief therapist. My wife and I both should have done this. I truly believe this would have helped us develop better coping skills. At that time I didn't think private counseling would help. I was wrong.

Finally, The Compassionate Friends (TCF) volunteers are available to us all. TCF volunteers understand your loss and the dual problem of "maintaining control" for the sake of our family. Our chapter newsletter lists names and telephone numbers of other fathers and mothers ready and willing to assist us. I am one of the parents who volunteers to talk with grieving fathers. I have even become active in the administrative aspects of our chapter. Now, I tell parents, "we sincerely regret the circumstance that has brought you to this group." This is a club none of us dreamed we would ever join. I thank TCF for helping my family and me and for allowing me to help others.

Albert Tapia
TCF Katy Chapter,
In Memory of my son, Nicholas Albert Tapia

*What do we live for if not to make life less difficult
for each other? ~ George Eliot*



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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