



# *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.*

## MARCH 2016

### HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

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

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

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

**(Our next meeting is Tuesday, March 8th)**

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our 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*

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS**

- 1983- Aaron James O'Neil, Son of Lisa Thompson
- 1990- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth
- 1993- Alex John Piniewski, Son of Bob & Christi Piniewski
- 1981- Hugo Alberto DeLeon, Son of Lupita DeLeon
- 1989- Todd Perotka II, Son of Todd & Tonya Perotka
- 1998- Liam Young, Son of Jill Young
- 1974- Heather Ann Varosky, Daughter of Edward & Ann Varosky
- 1988- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Bronstein
- 1994- Samantha Campos, Daughter of Amy Arrant
- 2011- Landyn Elizabeth Tickle, Daughter of Matthew & Shelby Tickle  
Granddaughter of Brenda Strahan
- 1983- Rikki Ashley Brown, Daughter of Mike & Gwen Williams
- 2012 – Annabelle Opal, Daughter of Pearl Fisher
- 2003 - Austin Haecker, Son of Debbie Haecker, Grandson of Carolyn Cooper
- 1952 - Gene Ware, Son of Roberta Ware
- 1994 - Joshua Pham, Son of Tony & Peach Pham, grandson of Susan Endaluz
- 1995 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Josette & Doug Tharp
- 1979 - Kyla, Daughter of Ron O'Farrell

**MARCH ANGEL DATES**

- 1993- Richard Allen Ginn, Son of Barbara & Richard Ginn
- 2008- Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra
- 2002- Brittany Idabell Miller, Daughter of George & Kathy Miller
- 2001- Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain
- 2010- Kelsey Buzzanco, Son of Jane Winter
- 2008- Syrina Snow Salazar, Daughter of April R. Torres
- 2009- Todd Perotka II, Son of Todd & Tonya Perotka
- 2007- Heather Ann Varosky, Daughter of Edward & Ann Varosky
- 2008- Amanda Cristina Ramirez-Velazquez, Daughter of Cynthia Cruz
- 2010- Jason Allen Denbo, Son of Donna J. Denbo
- 1999- Cheyenne Crocker, Daughter of Beth & Nick Crocker
- 2001- Jason R. Kramberger, Son of Nancy & Ken Thornton
- 2008- Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso
- 2010- Julee Ann Serna, Daughter of Virginia Serna
- 1980-2006 Gregory Lynn Meier, Son of Gary Meier
- 2008- Chance Wilcox, Son of Shelli Ralls
- 1992- Kylar Shotwell, Daughter of Tracy Bradley
- 2012 – Annabelle Opal, Daughter of Pearl Fisher
- 2013 – Ryan Bennett, Son of Dan & Cindy Bennett
- 2014 - Julie Less, Daughter of Jim Less, Sister of Susan Less
- 2015 - Moriah Clay, Daughter of Kim Clay

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, March, 8th at 7pm. Mark your calendars for our annual Balloon Release on May 10th. (more information to come).**

**A recent member of our group, Julie Joiner has come forward to start a sub chapter for parents that have lost an infant child, toddler or have had a stillbirth. Julie has lost two infants, Kacie and Korie and felt there was a need for a group of this nature. The new group will meet the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7pm. same location as ours. If you would like more information feel free to contact Julie her email address is [dtjb19@gmail.com](mailto:dtjb19@gmail.com)**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members, **David & Ann May lost their son Sean; Beth Shelton, lost her daughter Lindie; Bill & Joanne Cook, lost their son Mark; and Rosemary Dizona, lost her son Tony.** 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.

### **Love Gifts – A Way to Remember**

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

### **Volunteers**

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



The Compassionate Friends' 39th Annual National Conference will be in Scottsdale, Arizona on July 8-10, 2016. The Conference will be held at The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess at 7575 East Princess Drive, Scottsdale, AZ, 85255. Room reservations will open on January 4th, and the room rate will be \$129.00 per night. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. If your group needs to reserve a larger block of rooms, please contact the National Office to make arrangements for your reservations. Conference registration will open on February 1, 2016. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

*If you have questions please call the National Office at 877.969.0010.*

## Conference Registration

*Adult Registration (ages 18 +) \$90.00 each*

*Child Registration (ages 9-17) \$40.00 each*

*Full-Time College Student (student ID required at check-in) \$40.00 each*

## Miscarriage—The Unrecognized Tragedy

Though it's been almost three years since I experienced a miscarriage, it still evokes painful memories. My husband and I had two healthy daughters at the time and were eagerly anticipating the arrival of our third child. The little one was to complete our family.

But at 18 weeks gestation, things went awry, and we lost our wee son. I remember experiencing an overwhelming feeling of emptiness as I left the hospital without our baby. Denial, then shock, sadness and anger caused anguish over the "whys?" and "what ifs?" It wasn't long before I found out how miscarriage may be trivialized as an insignificant occurrence.

My physician, who had not been present when I delivered the baby, confronted me a few hours later. "It was a boy," I sobbed. "Oh," she remarked in an offhanded way, "I didn't see it." I vividly remember my anger toward her nonchalant manner and the way she referred to him as an "it." *Don't you know that was our baby, our little son?,* I thought. *Please don't minimize our loss.*

"You have other children at home, don't you?" she continued. Yes, I was screaming inside, *but don't you realize that each child is unique and special in his or her own right? Having two at home doesn't in any way lessen the sorrow I feel for this baby.* "Go home and enjoy your summer," she added later. "You can start trying again in another three months." Enjoy my summer?! This miscarriage had literally knocked me off my feet. There I was, an adult mother of two, reduced to tears whenever I saw a pregnant woman or new baby. (They seemed to be everywhere I went!) There was no denying the intense emotions I felt. My husband and daughters, as well, were trying to deal with the loss in their individual ways. Even though I tried, it was not an enjoyable summer. Life didn't automatically revert back to normal.

Yet my heartache was misunderstood not only by my physician, but by others as well. I was given the impression that it was inappropriate and even abnormal to be mourning. There was a conflict between the way I actually felt and the way society expected me to feel. I began to think I must be losing it.

Fortunately, I had a deep need to find out all I could about miscarriage. I read avidly, attended support group meetings and talked to other women who had been through a similar experience. I was relieved to find out that my reactions were healthy and normal. Until then, I didn't know that I was going through the grieving process. The tears, along with the questioning, the heart-to-heart talks with my family and friends, and the memorial service to say goodbye to our baby all helped me to heal.

A loss is a loss. Just because it's named "miscarriage" doesn't mean that it's insignificant. Nothing has ever affected me so deeply.... Though the deep sorrow I felt has since subsided, I realize that I'll never completely "get over" him. There are still times that I long to hold our son, to watch him grow, to love him.... I know I'll never forget.

Sara Winslow, Bereavement Magazine,  
Colorado Springs, CO

*How quietly you tiptoed into our world, almost silently,  
only for a moment you stayed...but what an imprint your  
footprints have left upon our hearts.*

## WHY ME? - The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

Polly Moore  
TCF Nashville, TN

### SPRINGTIME

By Elaine Howlett In memory of her son, Craig Daniel Howlett  
Taken from "We Need Not Walk Alone", Winter 2002

The seed of love planted in my womb,  
Still grows in the fertile soil of my heart.  
Nourished by memories and warm Sunshine,  
Spring's promise giving it a brand-new start.

It took some time to plow the rocky ground,  
Weed and bug control has been quite a problem,  
But watered by cloudbursts of huge teardrops,  
It blossomed from deeper root and stronger stem.

Its color has become more intense and vivid,  
Its fragrance more pleasant and sweet,  
Its flower's petal is soft and rich like velvet,  
Its song made vibrant by sounds of past defeat.

A heart that once felt like barren wasteland,  
Grace-filled butterflies now feed on its nectar,  
Giving it wings to be all it was meant to be,  
Yearning for love's fresh air to breathe free.

## Life Can Be Good Again

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.
- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.
- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planning trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.

- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Don Hackett  
Kingston, MA

In Memory of my son, Olin

Reprinted with permission from issue of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of  
The Compassionate Friends.

*There are no easy paths to finding your way through your grief, but The Compassionate Friends organization and its members are here so that you will never have to feel alone in your journey.*



### Thought for the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word — **patience** — patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. **PATIENCE!**

Rose Moen  
TCF Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

**SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE**

**Jason Kramberger  
Son of Nancy Thornton  
Brother of Amy Kramberger**

March is a difficult month for me. My son, Jason, died 15 years ago on March 23, 2001 at age 26. As one of those people who is further along on the grief journey, I want to share a few thoughts.

Like so many of you, I never thought I would survive the pain of losing my son. His death was unexpected and I was the one who found him; he died in his sleep. We would later find out that he had a fatal reaction to a new medication he had been put on 10 days before. I vividly remember the pain in my heart feeling so physical that I wondered and, sometimes hoped, I wouldn't survive either. I just wanted to hold him again, hear his laughter, see his smile, touch him, be with him.

I was numb to everything and my mind filled with nothing but thoughts and memories of Jason. I couldn't remember everyday things, I would awake in the night with my pillow soaked from tears shed in my sleep. I lived in this fog for a very long time; though, I outwardly appeared to be functioning somewhat normally. I took a lot longer than most people - I didn't feel like myself or return to the world of the living for 5 years. My thoughts finally shifted from his death and my loss to his life and the memories and love we shared - the good times. My priorities were totally rearranged; and, though I feel I may be a better person in some ways, I also have less tolerance in certain situations. The hurt never goes away, I didn't "get over it" but time softened the pain as I found my "new normal" and I assimilated my loss into my life.

I look back now and cannot believe it has been 15 years. My fear that I would forget the little things about Jason was unfounded. I can lose myself in memories of him anytime I need a "Jason fix." Not a day goes by that I don't think of him, but these days, my memories bring a smile instead of tears. I think of the fun we had, his fantastic sense of humor, what a great person he was. Although his life was too brief, it mattered - he made a difference in this world. I was blessed to be his mom for 26 years and 23 days and I will miss him until the day I die.

*Nancy Thornton was a former Member, Newsletter Editor, and Co-Facilitator of our group for many years.*



**In grief, there is an urge to hide in a safe cocoon. The butterfly is symbolic of hope, of emerging from a cocoon of grief. Out of loss and death, new life can emerge.**

## LOSING YOUR CHILD

Losing your child changes the alignment of your world and threatens life as you knew it. Every single view or belief that personally defined you is transformed and reversed; back-to front, up-to down. The pain and grief of this unthinkable loss causes horrific disorientation. Your family unit (regardless of its size) and the role that each person played, or should have played, are off balance and very disorganized. You stand motionless, looking through shocked eyes of mist watching the world move along with bold audacity of "normality." You watch friends and relatives involved in daily chores and family activities. The radio continues to play music; the television keeps pounding away at local and global events. You hear comrades react to small occurrences as if they were a matter of life and death.

You just can't grasp the ordinariness of daily living after the derailing death of your child. All life becomes incredibly trivial in the gloom of the loss. You find yourself dissolving and escaping into a private, lonely, joyless existence; void of color; empty of emotion. You scramble and take cover.....if you can lose a child ... anything can happen.....when will the next axe fall? You simply exist; you are not living.

"What now?" you scream. "Where is the future? Who am I? Why my child taken, and not me? What is the meaning of this senseless death?" You don't want to go on! How can you? You were the one who was to keep your child alive.

These are just a few of the emotions and questions that plague parents after the death of their son or daughter. The haunting dark days are long and very lonely. The rippling effects are enormous!

I was absolutely certain I would never get through the disabling grief without becoming very ill, insane, or both. Yet, here I am, almost 8 years later ..... healthy, and most would say, reasonably sane.

How? It takes a great deal of courage to reach out and ask for help. I was one person who knew I could not walk this path alone. Once that choice was made, I began the arduous task of slowly embracing all the components of grief, one by one....getting to know them.....learning to cope with them....challenging them.....speaking to them.

Unconsciously, I think I knew I wanted more than an existence. Without a calendar, I began working very hard with grief. What I did with this experience became a personal mission.

I gradually stopped fearing the pain and running from it. I eventually faced that my sorrow would never go away. The experience of Adrian's' death was now a part of me and my family. We needed to rebuild and reinvent our lives. By allowing myself to befriend grief, sit with it, explore it, I moved slowly through it.... I reconciled. How could I do otherwise?

Upon reflection, I now know, Adrian's death has not cancelled the meaning of his life nor any personal relationship with him. He remains a son, brother, uncle, nephew, cousin, and friend. Wherever he is, wherever we are, our bond with him will forever continue. It can never be severed. He is carried daily in memory and heart.

Grief still visits on many occasions. . Those visits are kinder. They no longer derail me. I am comfortable with where I am; at peace with another shape of softer grief. It is as much a part of my life as enjoying a long hike or getting dressed every day. I once flatly rejected the possibility of any happiness, interests or productive future. I was wrong, and I'm so grateful I was. The great effort of re-emerging and moving toward "living" is well worth it. I now find joy in living. I now set goals and look forward to them. I am living. There is much to be said about love and hope.

By: Helen Jay (2010)

*Helen Jay came to several of our meetings a number of years ago. Besides being a bereaved mom, she is a mentor and trained facilitator working with parents thru an organization called Bereaved Families of Ontario Midwest Region (BFO). It is a not for profit organization offering support services to individuals and families that have experienced the death of a loved one. Thank you Helen for the article.*



### **A MOTHER'S LOVE**

A mother's love for her child may begin  
with the very dream of becoming a mother...  
A mother's love for her child may begin  
with the thought of maybe expecting the news...  
A mother's love for her child may begin  
with the verification of her expectations...  
A mother's love for her child may begin  
with the affirmation that the child lives within her...  
A mother's love for her child may begin  
with the first sight of the new life that she has delivered into the world...  
A mother's love for her child may begin  
But it may never end...  
Not even death can steal away a mother's love for her child  
A mother's love for her child knows no end!

Diana M. Rohrbaugh  
TCF Anne Arundel County, MD

## *Precious Little One*

*I'm just a precious little one  
who didn't make it there.  
I went straight to be with Jesus,  
but I'm waiting for you here.  
Many dwelling here where I live,  
waited years to enter in.  
Struggled through a world of sorrow  
a world marred with pain and sin.  
Thank you for the life you gave me,  
it was brief but don't complain.  
I have all Heaven's Glory,  
suffered none of earth's great pain.  
Thank you for the name you gave me.  
I'd have loved to bring it fame.  
But if I'd lingered in earth's shadows,  
I would have suffered just the same.  
So sweet family-don't you sorrow.  
Wipe those tears and chase the gloom.  
I went straight to Jesus' arms  
from my loving Mother's womb.*

*~Author Unknown*



*The only people who think there's a time limit for grief, have never lost a piece of their heart.*

*Take all the time you need.*

## Phone Friends

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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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