



# ***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 2019**

### **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

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

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

**(Our next meeting is Tuesday, March 12th)**

at

**Cypress Creek Christian Church**

**6823 Cypresswood Drive**

**Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located between Stuebner Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles north of FM 1960 West. We meet in the Forum (center building) of the Church between the Courthouse and the Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the Church area parking. 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.





## 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  
1973 - Amy Lynn Kramberger, Daughter of Nancy & Ken Thornton  
1966 - Jeffrey Scott Byers, Son of Deanna Young  
1999 - Evelyn Sweat, Daughter of Nathan & Anna Sweat  
1984 - Brian Smith, Son of Cindy Smith  
2001 - Grace Sanders, Daughter of Mary Parker

"Throughout our lives we are sent  
precious souls...  
meant to share our journey,  
however brief or lasting their stay  
they remind us why we are here.

To learn...to Teach...to Nurture...to love."

-"Some People" by Flavia Weedn

## 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  
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  
2015 - Nathan Waldron, Son of Dan Waldron  
2017 - Jerret Macias, Son of Betty Macias  
2018 - Zach Doss, Son of Susan Doss

*When the links of life are broken and a child has to part,  
there is nothing that will ever heal a parents' broken  
heart.*

*Grief does not ever expire.*



## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, March, 12th at 7pm. Mark your calendars for our annual Balloon Release on Tuesday, May 7th. (more information to come).**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to **Mary Parker, she lost her daughter Grace Sanders in May of 2018, and Rebecca Borel, she lost her daughter Jacquelynn in August 2017.** 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.

### **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES**

Our chapter welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send your articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to: David Hendricks at: **dbhhendricks@hotmail.com** The deadline for submitting your articles is the 5th of each month. Errors and Omissions: We try very hard to be sure that all of the names and dates of our children are correct. If you see an error in the newsletter, please contact me.

***Always end your day with a positive thought.  
No matter how bad things are,  
tomorrow is another chance to make things better.***





The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more great National Conference experiences. We'll keep you updated with details, on the national website as well as on the [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

### **Pre-registration Rates**

Adult – \$125.00  
Senior (65+) – \$115.00  
Active Military – \$75.00  
Full-time College Students (with ID) – \$60.00  
Child – \$60.00

### **HOTEL RESERVATIONS**

Philadelphia 201 Hotel  
201 N. 17th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

## RELATIONSHIPS

*"Death ends a life, but not a relationship, which struggles on in the survivor's mind toward some resolution it may never find" playwright -Robert Anderson*

The above sentence very well summarizes what we parents are going through. Of course, it matters how your child died, at what age your child died, what kind of support network you have, and other factors. We are drawn to The Compassionate Friends by the death. But here our paths diverge in how we grieve and how our relationship with the deceased plays out.

In my case, I've written about my loss,

You'll be forever that age  
with the same great smile  
I'm growing old without you  
can life be worth while

The answer is life can definitely be worthwhile. And we are given many redemptive possibilities.

And how can I sing  
when I feel such sorrow  
Is God here and  
will He be here tomorrow.

Some of us find comfort in our faith, while others question our faith.

I've also written about my one way conversations:

I still talk to you at times  
and I wonder what you say  
a father shouldn't lose a son  
it's not supposed to be that way

And I still talk to him. I don't know if he doesn't hear or is just too busy to answer. I don't give up; I pray every night. It's only been 22 years.

And I go back to the beginning:

You were taken so young  
Where are you my child  
I long for your touch  
Just to hold you awhile  
My heart fills with anguish  
Despair is my friend  
My journey is lonely  
My thoughts never end

How could I have changed things. Does the guilt go on forever? But I can't change things. I can only keep traveling down that long, unfamiliar road from which there is no return. There are no directions and no time table for that journey.

My spirit is crushed  
Grief took it away  
I'm alone in my thoughts  
It is quiet all day  
And I have this  
unanswered question of why  
Why did this happen  
And why did you die.

But the relationship with our child takes on a life of its own as we seek to remember our child, honor our child, exist with others as we emerge into that being that formed after the death.

Would David be married, would he have children, where would he live, and what would he do? How can I relate to what I don't know. I can only relate to what I know. Or is it ok to imagine?

I can remember our relationship and what happened. I can't remember those things that didn't happen, or is it ok to imagine.

The struggle between what's real and what could have been sometimes rushes in and is overwhelming. At first, I worried I would forget about him. But that was a silly thought of course, we don't forget. Maybe it would be easier if we could. Be we can't. We can just go on remembering what the relationship was, what it could have been, and what we imagine it to be now.

The journey doesn't end. The finality is real. Maybe what changes over time is us. I don't think there is a final resolution; and maybe, just maybe that is a good thing.

David B. Hendricks  
Chapter Leader

TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



### **Heeding the Call of Life**

There is tremendous wisdom that is accumulated in one's encounter with grief, and it needs to be shared. Healing takes place when we turn our pain into a positive experience and we realize that helping others is the key to helping ourselves. When that happens, our problems don't look so big. We expand on newfound strengths and we discover that as one door closed, many others have opened. The road to recovery from grief, therefore, is to take time to do things which will enable us to give new meaning to our lives.

That's when our journey through grief becomes a journey of discovering ourselves, our potential, and our resources in the encounter with life. That's when we become BETTER people, rather than BITTER people. In grief, no one can take away our pain because no one can take away our love.

That call to life is to learn to love . . . again.



## SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

On March 23, 2001, my son, Jason died from a reaction to a medication given to him by his doctor less than 10 days prior. His autopsy showed that he died from Myocarditis, an inflammation of his heart. Jason was 26 years old. Needless to say, I was devastated. I read many books on the death of a child and then found my way to my first Compassionate Friends meeting. We were living in Maryland at the time and that first meeting is still burned into my memory, there were over 100 people in attendance! I left the meeting in tears and my husband questioned whether it was the right place for me. I told him I was crying because I had never experienced so much pain from so many people at one time. Continuing to go to meetings was one of the best decisions I ever made. We continued with that group until we moved back to The Woodlands and I attended the Northwest Houston Chapter. From there, we moved to Dallas for 2 years, then back to Spring. During all of this time, it didn't matter where we were, The Compassionate Friends was my lifeline to sanity.

I had support from my family and friends but unless you have lost a child, it is impossible to relate to what we go through. Everyone grieves differently and in their own way and in their own time. Quite frankly, it took me 5 years before I felt like my old self, until I achieved my "new normal." To this day, nearly 16 years later, I still think about and cherish the memories of my son every day.

I learned so much from sharing with other members of TCF and attribute my ability to cope with the tools I learned from the "old timers." Genuine love and compassion from the family of TCF is beyond measure.

In 2010, I had surgery to remove a brain tumor, leaving me legally blind and unable to drive. Unfortunately, I have been unable to attend meetings since.

About 4 years ago, my only surviving child, Amy was diagnosed with Vasculitis. She had obtained 2 Master's Degrees and started on her PhD when she got sick. Her life as she knew it, all of her hopes and dreams, came to a screeching halt. The past 2 years she was in excruciating pain and suffered many severe infections. She spent 70 days in the hospital during that time. Thankfully, as a retired Paramedic, I was able to care for her at home, giving her the IV medications she needed. In September of last year, her doctors basically told us there was nothing more they could do for her and suggested she enter hospice. Amy made the decision to do so, and after 10 days in home hospice care, she died on October 12, 2016.

So here I am again, grieving the loss of a child, my last child. Amy was 43 years old, my best friend and, truly, the only other person who had shared all of the memories of her little brother, Jason.

I feel an emptiness like no other. I will never hear anyone call me "mom" for the rest of my life. I question my purpose. I ask "why?" I think the word "miss" is so inadequate. I am angry. I am jealous of those with children and grandchildren. But I am grateful for the time we had, the memories, the love we shared,

I am grateful for all that I learned from TCF. I don't judge how I feel, I don't surround myself with people that don't support me and let me grieve in my own way. I will survive. My husband, my kids' stepfather is amazing. He understands and supports me and gives me the space I need. I know I'm allowed to do this my way and that's what I'm doing. I know it takes time. The world goes on, but for me, there is and always will be a void that can never be filled. My only consolation is that my two beautiful children, that loved each other so much, are together again. I have two Guardian Angels looking out for me, I will survive.

So, bless you all, the surviving parents, grandparents and siblings. We are all now members of an exclusive club - one no one wants to be a part of, but unfortunately, we don't get to choose our challenges, just how we handle them.

I pray for your peace.

**Nancy K. Thornton**

**TCF Houston Northwest Chapter**

**Mother of:**

**Amy Lynn Kramberger 3/9/1973 - 10/12/2016**

**Jason Robert Kramberger 2/28/1975 - 3/23/2001**



### 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

## GRIEF IS LIKE A RIVER

My grief is like a river –  
I have to let it flow,  
But I myself determine  
Just where the banks will go.  
Some days the current takes me  
In waves of guilt and pain,  
But there are always quiet pools  
Where I can rest again.

I crash on rocks of anger –  
My faith seems faint indeed –  
But there are other swimmers  
Who know that what I need  
Are loving hands to hold me  
When the waters are too swift,  
And someone kind to listen  
When I just seem to drift.

Grief's river is like a process  
Of relinquishing the past.  
By swimming in Hope's channel,  
I'll reach the shore at last.

Cynthia G. Kelley  
TCF Cincinnati, OH



***“...a bear wedged in great tightness.”***

“In a tape called, ‘To Touch a Grieving Heart’ there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit’s hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can’t even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’ And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that ‘we need not walk alone.’ ”

Opening remarks of the late  
Richard Edler’s keynote speech at the  
1996 TCF National Conference

## The Robin's Song

It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back towards the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.

Before my daughter Lori died in the summer of 1991, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd misnamed its larger, boring, American cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was cheep!

Then one spring day in the year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! . . . Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so, while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our "boring" American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered the true harbinger of spring, singing "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily."

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily." I thought to myself, "Cheerily . . . No, that isn't what I hear." We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said "Cheerio!" to one another when we meant, "Goodbye" or "See you later!" There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say "hello"!

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that first spring song, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

March 4, 2010

TCF Marin & San Francisco, CA

In Memory of my daughter, Lori Gentry



## ***The Luck of the Irish??***

My name should have been O'Loder, for it seemed like I had the luck of the Irish. After all, I grew up in a great home with a wonderful family. I received an excellent education. I got a great job where I met a special person who became my life's partner. I began my own business, which became very successful.

And the greatest luck of all—my daughter was born. It wasn't planned, but God knew what was best. Three years later we were blessed with a son. Stef and Steve lived and played together with a special love.

I still remember the St. Patrick's Day assignment Stef brought home only days before the accident that took her life and that of her brother. Asked to tell why she was lucky, she wrote, *"because I have a brother!"*

A few days later my life lay in a shambles—the best part of my life gone. Stef was only eight and Stephen just five. They hadn't had a chance to really experience what life was all about. It was painfully obvious my name did not start with an O'.

Three years have now passed since that day. The shock of the moment has worn off. My wife and I have somehow survived the deaths and now have a new wonderful son and daughter with which to share our lives—and our love.

But, perhaps, the luckiest thing of all that happened to us since the accident is that we have made new, very special friends—Compassionate Friends who have helped us with our survival.

We have a new family of special people who have survived the unluckiest day of their lives and are able to share their loss with us. Isn't this really what "luck" is all about?

Wayne Loder

TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI

In Memory of my daughter and son, Stephanie and Stephen Loder

### ***\* Irish Blessing \****

May the road rise to meet you.  
May the wind always be at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
And rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.





## Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

Laura Hengel  
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Auto Accident

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### FOR FATHERS:

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