



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.

MAY 2023

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

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks
936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

Regional Coordinators:

Ghisilaine Thomsen

thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com

Gene Caligari

gcaligari7@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Linda Brewer 936-441-3840

llbrewer67@hotmail.com

National Headquarters, TCF

P.O. Box 3696

Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696

1-876-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

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

To the Newly Bereaved

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

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

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

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





*Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren
Remembered*

MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1993- Richard Allen Ginn, Son of Barbara & Richard Ginn
2008-Aaron Michael Wolf, son of Laura Wolf
2008-Bryan Russell Lewis, Son of Olga Lydia Lewis
2008- Alexander Gene Davis, Son of Janice Davis
2010- Tristen D. Hopkins, Son of Howard & Denise Hopkins
2008- Kayla C. Ladner, Daughter of Stephen Ladner
2003- Jeff Costin, Son of Carol & Richard Costin
2006- Marlinda Raschke, Daughter of Gloria Raschke Sister of Kevin Rasche
2000- Darrell Wayne McSpadden, Son of Janet & Robert McSpadden
2006- Michael Beshara, Son of Mike & Elaine Beshara
1983- Staci Kendall, Daughter of Larry & Tami Kendall
1990- Sewika Tekle, Daughter of Medhin Boakai
1976- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
1984- Nancy Lizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
1987- Cherelle Luter, Daughter of Sylvia Green
2005- Nevaeh Ramirez, Son of Amy Ramirez
1986- Allison Todd, Daughter of Ingrid Todd
1977- Misty, Daughter of Terri DeMontrond
1990- Traci Foehr, Daughter of Donna & Bubba Foehr
1982- Justin Ross Heino, Son of Darryl Heino
1986- Steven Jackman, son of Deborah Jackman
2011 - Jamie Leonard, son of Carrie Newman
1999 - James Ropp, Son of Janet Ropp
1989 - Victor Alberto Renteria Jr, Son of Carla Renteria
1985 - Aaron Kirby O'Neal, Son of Sylvia Ann Roushion
1983 - Bryan Pfluger, Son of Penny McElhaney
2002 - Elijah Tsafarides, Son of Gerri Tsafarides
1997 - Parker Coogan, Son of Tim and Amy Coogan
1991 - Eric Castelo, Son of Debbie Castelo
2008 - Jake Hickford, Son of Henry Hickford
2004 - Gabriella Grace Pena, Daughter of Servando & Jeanne Pena
1973 - Antonio Ramos Jr., Son of Rosie Aguirre
1990 - Joshua Bell, Son of Jamie Bell

**"A mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law,
no pity, it dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its
path." — Agatha Christie, "The Last Séance"**



MAY ANGEL DATES

- 2009-Brendon Chase Mooney, Son of Richard & Joan Mooney
2010-Shaun N. Finley, Son of Barbara Finley
2002- Braden Hughes Patton, Son of Sherill & Chase Patton
2006- Danny Ewing, Son of Steffani L. Ewing
2003- Ronald Lee, Son of Ana Castellanos
2009- Samantha Short, Daughter of Linda Short
1998- Fallon Ginther, Daughter of Lisa Ginther
2012- Hamzah Zubair, Son of Farah Zubair
2012- Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
2012- Danielle Basford, Daughter of Jerry & Laurie Basford
2013- Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull
2013- Alan James Stokes, Son of Kellie Harris
2014- Milana Ramirez, Daughter of Deann Ramirez
2014- Tremaine Robinson, Son of Toya Robinson
2014- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2015- Vanessa Whitford, Daughter of Russell & Nury Whitford
2017- Joshua Bell, Son of Steve & Donna Bell
2018 - Grace Sanders, Daughter of Mary Parker
2021 - Shawna Merchant, Daughter of Bitsy Hatch
2020 - Darryl Allen, Son of Sandra Allen
2021 - Matthew Benjamin, Son of Nikki Jolivette
2020 - Eric Garcia, Son of John and Louise Garcia

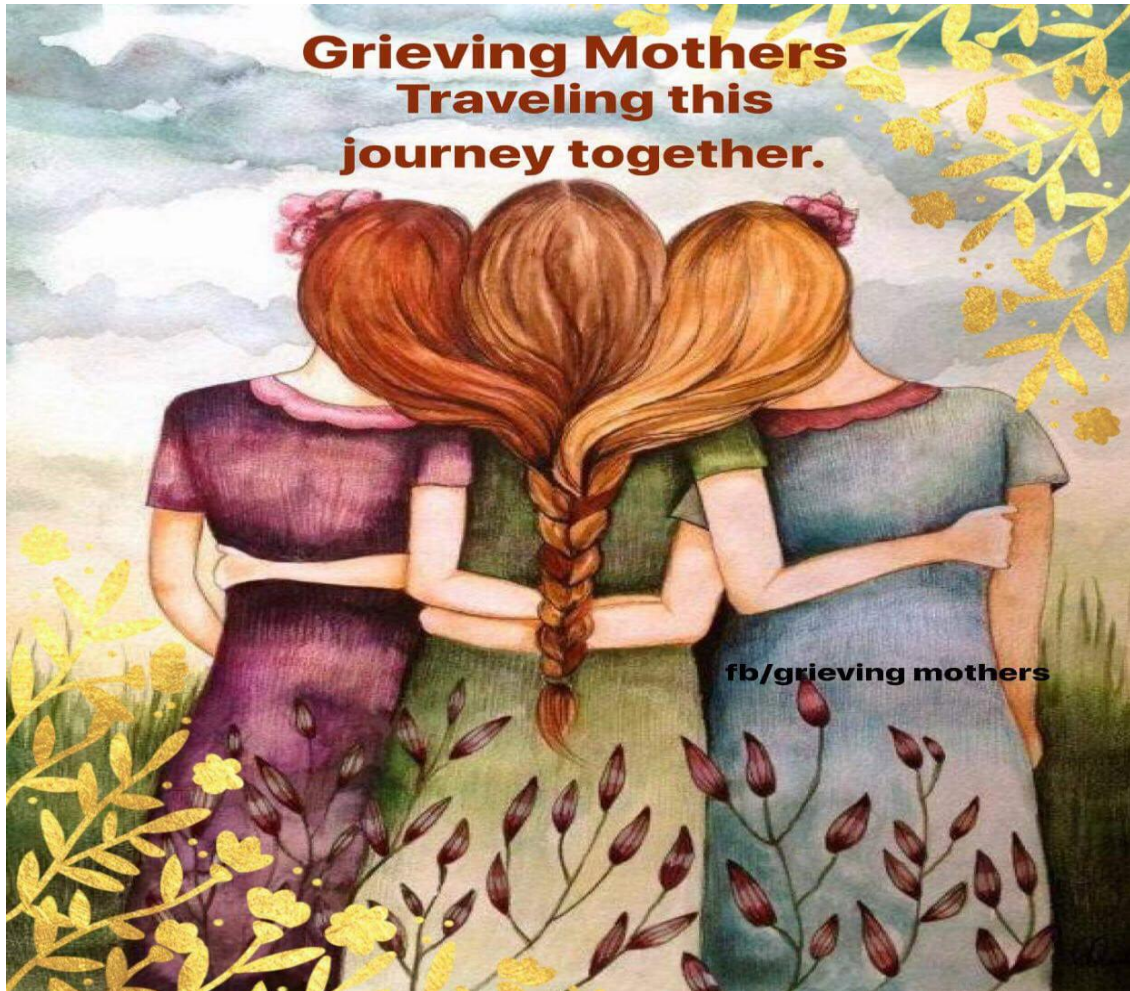
*You left us so quickly;
there were no goodbyes.
How long this forever,
your death and our lives.
The sadness, the anger,
the loneliness of three,
preferring four always,
how small, this new we.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From *Stars in the Deepest Night—After the Death of a Child*

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday May 9th. 7pm. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 5201 Spring Cypress Rd. 77379.

This is a special Mother's Day issue of our newsletter. Happy Mother's Day to all moms.



The strongest person in the world is the grieving mother that wakes up and keeps going every morning.



**In Loving Memory of my Son Wesley on Mother's
Day**

8/23/97 – 2/13/16

Of all the Special gifts in life
However great or small,
To have you as my Son
Was the Greatest Gift of all.

A special time
A special face,
A Special Son
I can't replace.

With aching heart
I whisper low,
"I miss you Wesley
And I love you so."

Forever Wesley's Mom,
Sharon Mondrik Cash

"I loved you your whole life..... I'll miss you for the rest of mine."



A Letter to My Son
Christian Aguirre Carr
From your Mom
Ivonne Aquirre

Dear Christian,

You would be 26 now if you had survived cancer but instead you died too soon at 24 years 8 months and 3 weeks of age. We shared many tender moments, and said our goodbyes in those last months of your life. It was a gift many are denied, the opportunity to say farewell. I cherish your final words to me, "Mama, I love you." I miss and love you deeply as well Son as another Mother's Day approaches without your physical body here with me to celebrate, but celebrate I will. I may have lost you my beautiful boy, but I am grateful to be alive to appreciate how blessed I was to have had such a remarkable, talented, lovely young man for the short time of 24 years, 8 months and 3 weeks.

Your loving Mom

Jennifer Bryson Story

It was Jennifer's last birthday on earth. None of us knew that on 9/12/2021. We had celebrated the day before due to schedules. Jennifer took her dog, Finn, out that morning early and a baby squirrel fell out of a tree nest right at her feet. Jennifer thought it was dead but on closer inspection found it was alive. She took Finn inside and googled what to do. She made a soft nest in a box, duct taped it to the tree trunk where the nest was and placed the little guy there hoping mom would retrieve it, watching and waiting all day. No luck. The wildlife rehab wouldn't open till Monday so she brought the box into the garage and gave the little guy droppers of pedialight all through Sunday night, warming towels in the dryer and placing them around him. The next day Jennifer's Dad and she took him to wildlife rehab. They declared him a survivor and said he would do well. We treasure this story for many reasons, but mostly because it showed her heart. Jennifer couldn't leave a defenseless creature without offering aid and love.

Bless her and keep her safe in Your love and light, please God.

Your Loving Parents
Donna and Jim Bryson

International Bereaved Mother's Day May 7, 2023:

International Bereaved Mother's Day is observed annually on the first Sunday of May, which is May 7 this year. It is comprehensible that the majority of people have never heard of it, given that the mainstream media does not cover it. The [world](#) is typically busy preparing for Mother's Day at the same time each year. Corporate entities and marketers bombard our inboxes, displays, and messages with Mother's Day reminders. Imagine, however, how devastating this must be for mothers and guardians who have lost a child. International Bereaved Mother's Day honors mothers who have lost a child. A chance to communicate or discuss all that they may have endured. Women experiencing child loss are also mothers, even if their offspring have passed away.

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL BEREAVED MOTHER'S DAY

International Bereaved Mother's Day was founded by Carly Marie Dudley in Australia. Since then, women across the globe have embraced and greeted the day. It speaks volumes about the significance of the day. Today, we honor parents who have lost children, especially mothers who may have endured stillbirth, SIDS, miscarriages, or other forms of infant loss.

Motherhood is difficult even under normal conditions. Therefore, the anguish of losing a child is almost incomprehensible. The grief endures for months, years, or even a lifetime. Even later-in-life parenthood can be fraught with anguish and remorse. Mother's Day is always difficult for bereaved mothers who struggle on multiple fronts. The world does not recognize them as mothers, despite the fact that maternity permeates their very being. Family and friends are hesitant to bring it up. Will discussing it make it more distressing? Should we spare them from suffering? All valid dilemmas and compelling arguments for why International Bereaved Mother's Day is a boon for numerous mothers worldwide.

A transparent expression of sorrow aids in the healing process. Mothers may freely discuss their experiences during pregnancy. Perhaps share photographs of their children. Today, mothers can reminisce, shed tears, and even discuss their hopes for their offspring. The day serves two purposes: honoring mothers and remembering children who passed away too soon. The discomfort associated with thoughts of mortality can be suffocating. The majority of individuals would rather avoid pain and flee from it. The purpose of International Bereaved Mother's Day is to eliminate the stigma. Families can progressively transform pain into acceptance and ultimately a measure of peace through the sharing of stories and grief.

You think the first year is bad?

The second year is when you realize how long forever is.



The Red Guitar
By Laura Hengel
In Memory of Sean
July 14, 1985 – October 10, 2010

The old red guitar sits mutely on the black metal stand. Silence from the instrument resembles the quiet found on cold winter mornings after snow has noiselessly fallen and blanketed the ground during the dark night. A mother tenderly picks up the guitar and brushes away any dust that has accumulated since it was stilled. With tears flowing down her cheeks, she lovingly holds the guitar tightly to her chest, right in front of her broken heart. And she remembers.

This guitar once belonged to a boy, an explorer of life with a sharp mind, quick wit, and a deep love of music. He especially enjoyed listening to “oldies” that his father would play on their stereo. *Led Zeppelin*, *Crosby Stills Nash and Young*, and *The Allman Brothers* gave cause for him to smile, dance and twitch his fingers as though he were strumming his own musical instrument. He longed to “jam” like the great ones of rock and roll.

“If only I had a guitar!” he would dream as he imagined himself on stage with Eric Clapton or Stevie Ray Vaughn.

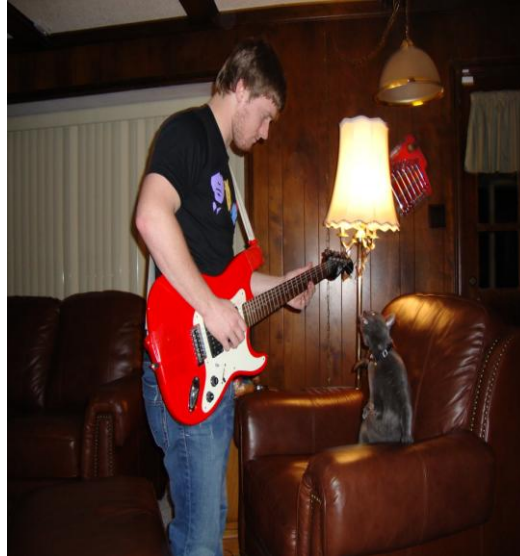
In second grade only one wish appeared on his Christmas list, a guitar. He knew exactly which stringed instrument he wanted. Electric, shiny, and red, it stood erect and proud in the front window of The Guitar Shop. After much urging and pleading with his father, they went inside where he held the guitar in his small hands. He stroked the long neck feeling the tension of the silver strings through his fingers. He just knew this would be the guitar for him. And it was.

The guitar and the boy were forever friends. When young, he and the guitar would go to lessons together. Hours were spent practicing chords they had learned. This task was difficult for him as his young fingers were not quite long enough to reach the strings just the way the teacher had shown. But they persevered; the boy and his guitar. Soon melodious sounds were heard coming from this twosome. Not yet the music of the “great rock and rollers”, but they were on their way.

As the years passed, the boy grew, into a teenager and finally a young adult. He never lost his love for his guitar and the music they made together. Sometimes they performed for family or friends. Other times, they played alone, just the two of them. The boy drew great solace as he became enveloped with tunes that came to life as he strummed his fingers over the nickel-plated steel strings on the red guitar. They had a wonderful life full of rhythm and harmony.

But that all ended on a fateful day in October. Train. Tracks. Explosion. Fire. Darkness. Nothing. That day the boy and the music died.

Now the guitar only gives comfort that comes from the silence of memories. It sits hushed on the black metal stand and waits for me—the boy's mother— to pick up the guitar that once belonged to the boy, my son, Sean, and hold it tightly over my chest, right in front of my broken heart.



And I remember.



GIFTS FROM MY SON

I lost my son, Garrett, to a drug overdose just a few weeks prior to his twenty-seventh birthday. He was a loving son, a gifted musician, a caring friend, and one of the kindest people I have ever known. He had a special gift for loving people and accepting them—just as they were. It took me some time to understand that he was not oblivious to the faults and limitations of others. On the contrary, he loved others (including me) in spite of their faults. After fifteen years, I still miss him—every day.

My son's life was such a gift to me. He was the oldest of my three sons, and we shared all those wonderful things a mother shares with a first child. He brought music to my life—both literally and figuratively. He left me with many gifts, but some of the greatest gifts he left to me were the words he spoke. I carry them with me, and I am sharing them now in the hope that they may resonate with other parents who have lost children under similar circumstances:

“It's not your fault”

I became aware that my son had a drug problem at the age of nineteen. He spent several years in and out of recovery. Since addiction is a problem that effects the entire family, this also meant that I spent substantial amounts of time in family counseling, family meetings, educational seminars and twelve step programs. In one of those early family meetings I expressed my regret that I had not seen the warning signs of addiction sooner. Garrett's response was simple. He

said, "This was not the example you set for me. You taught me right from wrong, and I knew better. This was my decision, and I was pretty good at hiding all of this from you. I knew I could come to you for help. Mom, it's not your fault."

"Take care of yourself"

Once when attending individual counseling, Garrett invited me to a session with his counselor. He said he needed my help, which I was anxious to provide. However, his request caught me off-guard. He said, "Every time I look in your eyes, I see the worry and concern that I have caused. I am worried about you. In order for me to take care of myself and my recovery, I need you to take care of yourself. Please go to counseling, attend a meeting, or do whatever you need to do to take care of yourself." Every now and then, when I am not to heeding his request, I hear his voice.

"That's what my Mom does—she helps people"

Garrett was hospitalized and had just been moved from intensive care the preceding day. The roommate in his semi-private hospital room was blind, and the gentleman was having difficulty contacting his daughter, who was in labor in another hospital across town (he wasn't sure which one.) We managed to find her and contact her by telephone. He was relieved to learn that both his daughter and new grandchild were doing well. When he thanked me, Garrett smiled a crooked smile and said, "That's what my Mom does – she helps people." I have worked as a health care professional for many years. When in the midst of grief, I have become discouraged and questioned whether my life still has meaning and purpose. I have remembered Garrett's simple statement and it has helped me to move forward.

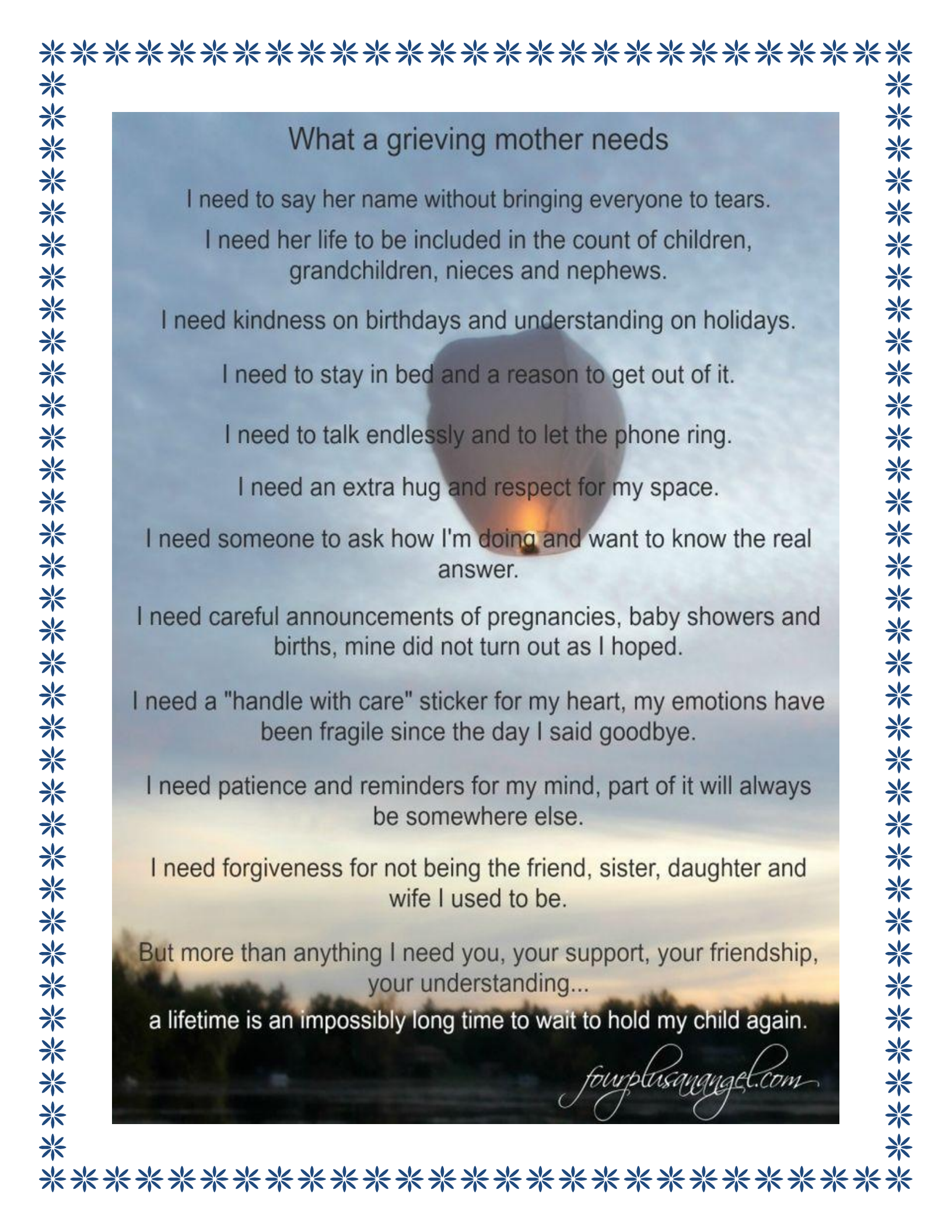
"I have THE BEST Mom"

Garrett spent almost two sober years in a Christian discipleship program for people with drug and alcohol addiction. He started as a student, later served as an intern, and eventually joined the staff. Whenever I would visit or attend a service the choir was leading, Garrett would come and take me by the arm, and lead me across the room to someone he knew. He would always say, "Hey, I want you to meet my mom. I have THE BEST mom." Since losing a child to addiction, there have been many days when I have felt that I failed as a parent. When the guilt creeps in, I have to remind myself that my son had a different opinion. At the end of the day, perhaps it is his opinion that matters most.

In loving memory of my son Garrett
Leigh Heard Boyer
Houston Northwest Chapter TCF

Leigh has been my faithful right hand helper at TCF meetings (although she sits to my left) for a number of years. She knows what to say and is particularly helpful to parents whose child has been involved with drugs. Leigh is a caring, loving friend and special mom who has blessed my life. It's hard to write about your child, but Leigh has shared her heartfelt story.

Thanks Leigh



What a grieving mother needs

I need to say her name without bringing everyone to tears.

I need her life to be included in the count of children,
grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

I need kindness on birthdays and understanding on holidays.

I need to stay in bed and a reason to get out of it.

I need to talk endlessly and to let the phone ring.

I need an extra hug and respect for my space.

I need someone to ask how I'm doing and want to know the real
answer.

I need careful announcements of pregnancies, baby showers and
births, mine did not turn out as I hoped.

I need a "handle with care" sticker for my heart, my emotions have
been fragile since the day I said goodbye.

I need patience and reminders for my mind, part of it will always
be somewhere else.

I need forgiveness for not being the friend, sister, daughter and
wife I used to be.

But more than anything I need you, your support, your friendship,
your understanding...

a lifetime is an impossibly long time to wait to hold my child again.

fourplusanangel.com

Phone Friends

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lisa Thompson
713-376-5593
lisalou862@yahoo.com
Auto Accident/Fire

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

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

FOR FATHERS:

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

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

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