



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.

NOVEMBER 2017

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

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, Nov. 14th)

**Because of the flooding at Cypress Creek Christian Church our meeting this month will be held once again at the home of Mark and Debbie Rambis. Their address is:
3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr.
Spring, TX 77388**

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks
936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

South Texas Regional Coordinators:

Debbie Rambis (812-249-5452)

dsrambis@gmail.com

Mark Rambis (812-249-0086)

merambis@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.





Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1951-Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra
2005-Carson Hayes Gurgonus, Son of Amber Gurgonus
1976-Bryan Belveal , Son of Linda Belveal
1974-Michael Shrum , Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
1980-Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police
1984-Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
1968-Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain
1998-Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso
1985-Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2004-Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins
1978-Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
1985-Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
1988- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl
1991- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2004- Lhwhyh Yshrhah, Son of Taneshia Carey
1985- Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry and Sara Kujawa
2014 -Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1989- Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin



***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me
during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you.***

I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere.

I love you.

Today, in your honor,

I celebrate Life.



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

NOVEMBER ANGEL DATES

2010- Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
2007- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard
2009- Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
2005- Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer
2007- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Gallien
2008- Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird
2008- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth
2005- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews
11/19 Jonathon Kuta, Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
2009- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley
2009- Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
2007- Megan Kathleen Ratliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratliff
2011- Nancy Lizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
2010- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
2014 -Kristi Whitehorn Hill, Daughter of Susan Whitehorn
2014 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Doug & Josette Tharp
2015- Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neeley
2015- Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
2015- Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
2015- Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier
2014- Jamie Leonard, Son of Carrie Newman



My Angel Day

*Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day
From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon
But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory
Far beyond the moon*

*Today you'll perform your loving rituals
And do your best to keep my memory aware
Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us
For I am both here and there*

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 14th at 7pm. We will be meeting at Mark and Debbie Rambis home. The address: 3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr., Spring 77388

Our warmest welcome to our new members, **Ramsey Albaba, he lost his son Kahlid "Kal" in August this year; and Rick and Jazmin Gonzalez, they lost their son Sean in June of this year.** We understand how difficult it is to walk through the doors to a TCF meeting. We have all taken that first step and we reach out to you in friendship and support.

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting DECEMBER 10, 2017



Our Chapter will again celebrate our children's life by lighting a candle at 7:00pm as we join the wave of light that will cross the globe moving from one time zone to another. Bring your family for this sweet time of remembrance. Beth Crocker will again be our hostess. Beth and her husband Nick are twice bereaved parents and members of our chapter. Beth is also the Jersey Village Theater Director. For more information you can contact David Hendricks dbhhendricks@hotmail.com or Linda Brewer llbrewer67@hotmail.com or 936-441-3840.

**WHERE: Jersey Village High School
7600 Solomon
Houston, TX 77040
(The high school is at Beltway 8 and Hwy 290)**

**WHEN: Sunday, December 10, 2017
Starts at 6:45 pm (lighting of the candles at 7:00pm)**

Food, sodas, coffee will be provided. There will be readings, performances and the candle lighting. A message board for you to leave your child a message will also be available and there will also be a balloon release. Please bring a picture of your child to display, (you can take the picture home when the program is finished).

SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

Lhwhyh Yhshrhah

11/5/04 -6/4/13

Lhwhyh was my first born son of 4 children. He was 8 when he had an asthma attack that took his life. After relocating my family and moving to Houston I found The Compassionate Friends group. This group really helped me through some of my darkest times. Losing my son has been a struggle but I have found better days. In honor of my son and every other child not here anymore I make memory frames and books free of charge for bereaved parents. I started a nonprofit organization last year called Mothers of Angels. I am also in school pursuing a masters degree in professional counseling so I can offer services through my foundation Mothers of Angels. Losing a child is an emotional roller coaster and having support from someone who understands is that support you need to keep pushing. This journey has been hard but through it all I've found my purpose in life. My love to all of you on this journey.

Taneshia Carey
"Lhwhyhs Mom"



Taneshia first attended one of our meetings in February 2014. Her 8 year old son Lhwhyh, died of an asthma attack in June, 2013. Taneshia and her surviving three children regularly attended our meetings and I was always amazed how well her children behaved at the meetings. They have since moved back to St. Louis. She is looking into starting a TCF chapter near where she now lives.

If you would like to receive a memory book or frame, please contact her at missingmylhwhyh@gmail.com. This is another beautiful example of "Redemptive Possibilities" at work. Thank you Taneshia for sharing your journey. We wish you and your children well.

David

SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

Garrett Conrad Ford

12/18/80 - 11/2/07

David,

I am attaching the article that I promised you. I am hoping it has some meaning for other bereaved parents.

Today is Garrett's "Angel date.." I find it hard to believe that it has been over ten years since I hugged him (he had the best hugs), heard his laugh (he had a great one) or heard him play his guitar or cello. I have always told my children I love them OFTEN (much to the dismay of my two younger boys when they were teenagers.) One of them once told me it was "highly annoying." Garrett would just grin and say, " I know, I know you love me Mom."

There was one more thing he said that was just too personal for me to include in this article. Actually, it was something he said to his fiancé, Nikki, and she shared it with me at the hospital that awful week. He said, "Nikki, I love you more than I have ever loved anyone --- except maybe my Mom." I carry that with me too.

I want to thank you for all your love and support over the past ten years. I don't know how I would have made it through the grieving process without you and the other bereaved parents that I have met through Compassionate Friends.

Hugs,
Leigh

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 ten 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 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
David*



JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth B. Estes
TCF Augusta, GA
In Memory of Tricia



THANKSGIVING



You may ask, “What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?” After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 2 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I’m truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up.

There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, the Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life.

I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

Edie Kaplan
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL
In Memory of my son, Evan



As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy



HOLIDAY HOPE

I have now survived over a decade of Thanksgivings and Christmases since my daughter Nina's death in 1995. It feels surreal that it has been that long since my dark-haired angel has not been present to share her infectious enthusiasm for the holidays. Admittedly, if not for my journaling, I have little recollection of the first two. Writing allows me to see how far I have come since the bleakness of my soul those first early holidays. In the midst of a "grief storm", when I feel that I have taken one step forward and two steps back, I only need to read what I have written to see that I have made much progress, something that in early grief I did not believe was possible. When in such a dark abyss, it is almost impossible to imagine that there is even a glimmer of hope and light.

The first Thanksgiving is a blur. Whether we went out for dinner or spent it with family or nuked a frozen dinner, I haven't a clue. As no one else seems to remember, I would surmise that it was the same for everyone else as well. The first Christmas without Nina was spent trying desperately to make sure that nothing was going to change. The trees would be decorated, cards would be sent, gifts bought—I believed that my daughter would not want us to be sad and that the holiday should and would play out as usual. It almost worked. But the effort of trying to achieve such an impossible task took its toll; coming home from my parents' home Christmas Day evening, the sight from the rearview mirror of the empty spot in the back seat next to my son where Nina should have been playfully sparring with her brother, was too much to bear. I spent weeks recovering from such an exhausting charade.

I learned a lesson that first Christmas because the second Christmas "after" I gave into the emptiness and pain that I felt. The artificial tree sat forlornly unadorned right where it was assembled in the middle of the living room; it seemed to symbolize the somber mood of that second holiday season. I vocalized to my family and friends that year about what I could and could not do, would and would not do, I used what I called the "five-minute rule", which meant however I felt five minutes before a holiday happening would be the deciding factor whether I attended or not. The respect for my feelings they showed me that year was the best gift they could ever have given me.

However, Christmas #3 seemed to mark a turning point. The visible evidence involved my Christmas Village. Though an inexpensive Department 59 wannabe, it was loved by my children, especially Nina. From the time she was very young, she imaginatively played with the ceramic people for hours at a time. Even as a teenager, she wanted to know when I would be putting up the Village, as it was her favorite part of our holiday décor.

The first two Christmases, I made a decision to never put up our Christmas Village again. The memory of Nina's interactions with the Village was too painful to comprehend. However, that third Christmas, as I was unpacking the few holiday items that I would display, I came upon the boxes holding the Village. I slowly opened the containers of precious memories and one by one removed and unwrapped each piece. Visions of Christmases past raced through my mind. This year, the images of Nina's wide-eyed childlike wonder and excitement each time the Village came out of its yearlong resting place brought a genuine smile to my face.

I brought the Village upstairs and arranged it on the ledge of the bay window, where it always had been. I sat in the dark next to the lit village houses and watched the mechanical skaters on the make-believe pond twirl and glide on the mirrored “ice”. Even through my tears, I felt the warm glow of beautiful one-of-a-kind memories resurface. I realized at that moment that a corner had been turned. Whereas the first two Christmases I was unable to setup the Christmas Village because of the memories, I was now setting it up for the same reason—the memories! But with a twist this year—what I had once perceived as a painful memory, with time had become a precious memory as I remembered the delight and joy the Village brought to Nina each Christmas of her life.

Each holiday season following the third one has been gentler. We have gradually brought back some of our old traditions intermingled with the new. Though we are sadly aware that someone so loved is missing from our family gatherings, the beauty of the season can now overshadow some of the sorrow. We will never forget Nina and she will forever be included in our holiday celebrations. I put up a special little tree to exclusively hold the ornaments I bought each of the 15 years of her life; mixed in with the angel and butterfly ornaments I have since bought symbolizing her “eternal life”. We light a candle and set her picture beside it, and we speak freely of our memories of her. The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program our chapter has each year is an especially important time for us to step away from the hubbub of the season, to reflect, remember, and bring Nina’s spirit with us into the holidays.

Though the holidays can never be as they were, we who are further along in our grief journey can offer the gift of hope with the knowledge that with time, patience, support and compassionate friendship, you will find new ways (when you are ready) to bring a measure of joy and light back into the holiday season again. Wishing you peace, hope, solace and understanding...

With gentle thoughts,
Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina



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
281-923-5796
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@sbcglobal.net
Infant Child