



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 2019

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 12th)

at

Cypress Creek Christian Church

6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room #3

Spring, Texas 77379

The Church is located between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church parking area. We meet in Room #3 which is down six steps off the main lobby of the Church on the Library side. 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.

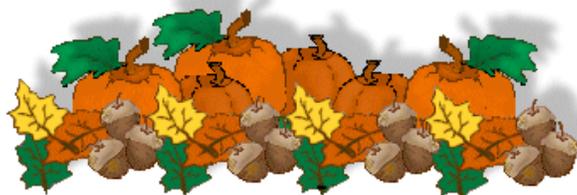
To the Newly Bereaved

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.





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 Yhshrhah, 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
1979- Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby



***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 Elizabeth 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
2018- Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen



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 12th at 7pm.

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting Sunday, December 8, 2019



**The Northwest Houston Chapter of The Compassionate Friends
invites you to join us on December 8, 2019 at
Trinity Lutheran Church @ 5201 Spring Cypress Road Spring Texas 77379**

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Candles, food, drinks and lanterns provided. Please arrive at 6:30 for Fellowship and a light buffet dinner. Bring your favorite dish to share.

There will be readings and performances by the Jersey Village High School drama youth. If you wish to include your child in the video remembrance, please email picture and child's information to Darryl Heino - darrylheino@gmail.com

You may also bring a framed picture of your child to place next to their candle.

All friends and family are welcome to attend The Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting.

For more information, please contact Beth Crocker 281-923-5196
thecrockers3@comcast.net

SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

Sean Weinstein

February 1997-November 2015

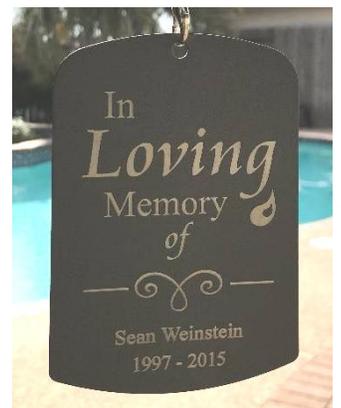
We all get discouraged as the days pass, as more and more people either forget that our child is forever a part of our lives and they do not talk of them or celebrate them except when we bring them up. Some of us may have a great support system, but I am sure that all of us are desperate that our child's memory has not been forgotten. We do not hear much from the people that we would expect to hear from. It is very depressing and becomes a great source of frustration at times. This has occurred to us over the 2 years since we lost our precious child Sean. One of Steve's co-workers has checked up on us every three to four months and we meet for lunch and talk freely about Sean. This is more than we get to talk about him to just about everyone we know, except for parents who have also lost their children. This last time we met for lunch we were touched beyond belief when she gave us a beautiful and precious gift. She also shared with us some words she found on Facebook which she found to be very appropriate for everyone. For all of us who share the same daily frustrations that we do, it only takes one person to make a difference and we hope you all experience this at some time. We are honored to be able to show you this precious gift and the profound words that she also found and shared with us.

Steve & Sherry Weinstein

TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

On each tube of the wind chime is written:

*Memories,
They remind us of people and things we hold dear.
They bring smiles, laughter and sometimes tears.
No matter what others may do or say,
Nothing will ever take these memories away.
Memories are more than just a link to the past,
Sometimes they're all we have that will last.*



GRIEF

I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was the sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.
And grief is not something you complete,
But rather, you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish and move on,
But an element of yourself
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.



Lone Star Circle of Life

In Memory of Christopher "Cole" Knight Son of Ken and Jan Knight

Ken Knight describes his son Cole as a “gentle giant.” Cole was a lineman on the Jersey Village High School football team and later attended Blinn College with dreams of attending Texas A&M University and becoming a youth minister.

“He was always best friends with everybody, and he had a mission in life, a Christian mission,” Ken said. “He went on a lot of missions and did a lot of help for a lot of people.”

Cole was one of several organ, stem cell and blood donors and recipients honored in the 2019 Lone Star Circle of Life Bike Tour. Fewer than 12 cyclists are chosen to participate in the biennial event, which lasts about a week. The tour stretched from Tyler to Waco to College Station to Katy to Victoria before ending in Corpus Christi. This was my first year attending an event, and I was overwhelmed by the love and compassion between these cyclists and the families and individuals they honored.

“These riders do this because it’s a labor of love,” said Debbie Mabry, who helps organize the event. “They do this because they have an overwhelming desire to put more people on the registry, have more transplants happen, have more people give blood.”

Rolling into College Station on Sept. 24 were 10 riders, each one riding for an honoree and with his or her own message to share. Each one arrived with cheers and fanfare after a long trip. Rider Tim Dixon was a funeral director in Corpus Christi who found a disconnect between his colleagues and the organ and tissue center.

Meanwhile, fellow rider Caleb’s parents, Becky and Joe Canal, had been riding with the tour since the early 2000s. This was Caleb’s second year. He described growing up with an older brother, Josh, who had a bad heart. Caleb and his family remain thankful a heart transplant at 17 gave Josh 13 more years with his family.

“Josh got a whole brand-new shot at life, and not just a continuation of the life he had before, which was incapacitated in a way, but he got a shot at being everything that he always wanted to be from the time that he was born,” Caleb said.

Both Tim and Caleb rode Sept. 24 in honor of Cole. Ken and Cole’s mom, Jan, had no idea their son had signed up to become an organ donor until he passed away in 2015. He did it on his own.

“He’s still on his mission, helping a lot of people,” Ken said.

Jan added that they’ve been notified of or communicated with eight of Cole’s recipients. They even met Michael, his liver recipient, who lives in Louisiana and continues to keep in touch with them still. That is what families do.

“He’s a great guy,” Jan said. “If Cole could have hand-picked him, he would have.”

Cole is still being honored each year at his high school by the Jersey Village Choir booster club with a college scholarship in the amount of \$1,061. You see, Cole’s football jersey was #61.

As Cole grew to love Christ at Grace Presbyterian Church here in Houston, he became part of and touched so many lives. He loved being a part of his church and relished the fellowship with his Grace family.

Cole truly exemplified "Living 2 Make Jesus Visible" , and still does. Grace Presbyterian is also honoring Cole with scholarships for students with the same servant heart as Cole, to attend youth missions in the US and around the world. To this date there have been 10 Cole Knight Missions Scholarship recipients.

Cole is still making his parents extremely proud. Love God !



SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

Garrett Conrad Ford

12/18/80 - 11/2/07

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



THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I'm thankful this Thanksgiving
That my grief is not so new.
Last year it was so painful
To think of losing you.
Death can't claim my love for you
Though we are far apart,
Sweet memories will always be
Engraved upon my heart.
Time can never bring you back.
But it can help me be
Thankful for the years of joy
You brought our family.
To all the parents with grief so new
I share your loss and sorrow.
I pray you find with faith and time
The blessings of each tomorrow.

Charlotte Irick
TCF, Idaho Falls, ID

To Our Family and Friends

The "Holiday Season" is a time of family – festive gatherings, worshiping together, sharing love and gifts, and cherished memories. For the bereaved parent, these aspects of the season are precisely what makes us dread its arrival.

The absence of our child when the "whole family" gathers seems to accentuate our incomplete family. We are sorely reminded of "how it used to be" and don't want to accept what is now. We need patience and understanding of our family and friends to help us through the holidays as best we can.

We may want to change the way we spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Hanukkah. If the family traditionally gathers at one house, perhaps the gathering place could be changed, especially if the gathering home is that of the bereaved. If we do prepare the meal, be aware that we may not have the energy we have had in the past and will need a lot of help.

Perhaps we'll try to avoid the holiday altogether by going away for a few days. Whatever our thoughts are for coping with the day, please take our feelings into consideration when you make your plans.

For some of us shopping for gifts is a painful experience. The stores' festive decorations and music belie our mood, as we feel forced into participating in the "season." We think longingly about that special gift we won't be buying this year. Again, our depression saps us of the energy to do the things we have done in the past, and we need your understanding for the things that remain undone.

Perhaps the single most helpful thing you can do for us is to include our child in the holidays. We want to hear his/her name, to have you recall fond memories of their lives, to know that you, too, are feeling their absence and remembering them with love.

Getting through the holidays is a rough task for bereaved parents. We need to handle them in a way that we feel is best for ourselves and our families. We ask for your love and support during this especially difficult time.

Marge Henning
TCF West Orange, NJ



“Our healing will eventually cause our pain to move out and make room for our loved ones memories. We learn to make a new life for ourselves. Holidays get better and we learn how to live again.” —Marie Hofmockel

GRATITUDE.... THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it's 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler
TCF South Bay/LA, CA
In Memory of my son Mark Edler
As published in We Need Not Walk Alone, 1999 Anniversary Issue

THE KEEPERS OF MEMORIES

You make friends because you have things in common.
We are friends because of our children.
The older ones, the younger ones,
the one who never even had a chance to breathe.

They are our reason for being.
Our heartbeat, our life's blood.
Whether we have lots of memories or only a few,
we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember
and carry the torch for those we remember so lovingly.
We are there for ourselves and each other.
Because we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those who unfortunately join our ranks.
Because we are the parent of lost children,
the bruised hearts,
the keepers of memories.

Cheryl Pelletier
TCF Concord NH



Phone Friends

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

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