



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 2024

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 12, 2024

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.

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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 Yhshrhal, 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
1978- Nicole Speir, Daughter of Sue Speir
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
1977- Wes, Son of Darlene McGhee
1993- Michael Jansen, Son of Mike and Linda Jansen
1987- Jacob Hamburg, Son of Faith Hamburg
1978- Matthew Lopez, Son of Rick Lopez
1972- Bruce Young, Son of Barbara Young
1991- Julian Karim, Son of Reshad & Rosanna Karim

***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
2019- Bonnie Baszkiewicz, Daughter of Eve Baszkiewicz
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
2016- Galencia Symone, Daughter of Titilayo Traylor

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***

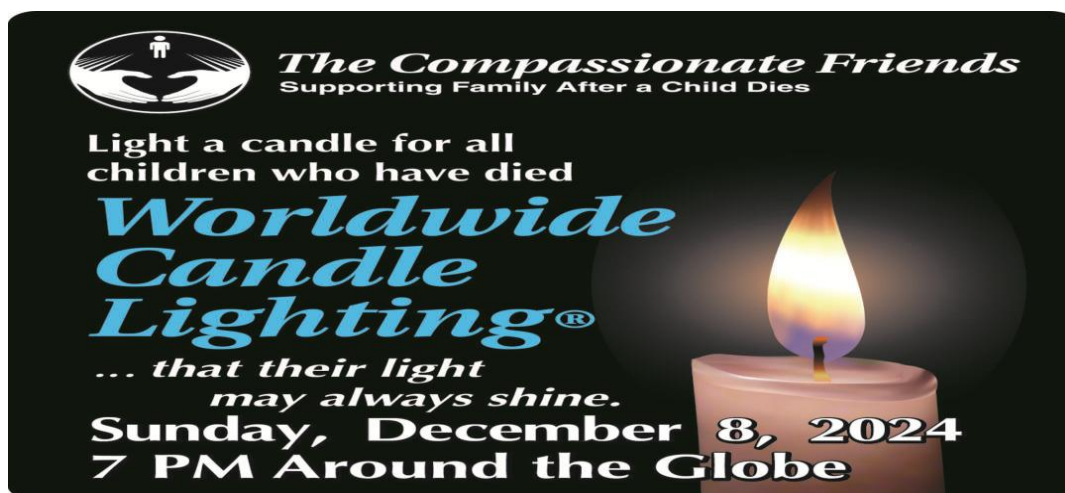
CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 12th at 7pm.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members, **Troy Skinner and Marjorie Hunter lost their son Hunter Skinner in September last year; Karen Macaulay lost her son Taylor July of this year; Juan Lesarri, lost his son Ignacio in June 2024.** 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.

As our TCF Credo says, *"We come from different walks of life..."*, but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!



The Houston Northwest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends
Candle Lighting Service will be held
Sunday, December 8, 2024
Time: 6:30
Trinity Lutheran Church
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, TX 77379

There will be presentations by Klein Collins and Lone Star College theater students. Food and drinks will be provided by the chapter. We will have a remembrance slide show of our children. Email 3 or 4 pictures of your child

along with their name, birth and angel dates to Darryl Heino (darrylheino@gmail.com). Please have them sent in by December 4th to allow time to construct the video.



Looking Back on a Difficult Time

July 29th was the seventh anniversary of Chad's, death. I am writing to share my thoughts and actions, as I once again pondered life, without my third born son.

I knew, when I turned over the page of the calendar, that July held tragic memories for our family, but wasn't thinking "sad" because we have all reinvested in life and have once again felt joy and laughter. Therefore, it surprised me as the 29th grew closer and closer that feelings of fragility crept back into my body and my eyes burned with held back tears. I grew "grouchy" and found fault with my husband at the slightest infraction. I was constantly exhausted even though my schedule wasn't overly stressful. It wasn't until one of my Compassionate Friends invited Roger and me to a movie with her and her husband, that I realized how hard I was fighting against what my body and subconscious was experiencing.

We went to see a show whose plot allowed me, and half of the audience, to cry openly. It was there that I set free the deep feelings that I had been trying to stuff down all month. There in the dark, with my husband, my friend and her husband, I didn't have to hold back any more. As I cried for those dying on the screen, I cried for my son, cried for the children he didn't have, for the fiancée he left behind, for his brothers, sister, and father who miss him so, and I cried for me and all mothers who have had sons and daughters die.

This experience allowed me to bring front and center what I had been holding inside all month. I decided to ask my prof for the day off, Roger decided to take the day off of work, and we made plans to take care of ourselves on Chad's anniversary.

The days preceding the anniversary, I was contacted by telephone and sent cards and gifts by my dear Compassionate Friends, and on July 29th my husband and I went to the cemetery and paid honor to our son through ritual, flowers, 'nilla candles, and tears. We then drove to Camano Island and spent the day on the beach gazing out into the azure blue sound, remembering stories about him, and looking for heart shaped rocks to place at the foot of the tree we planted in his memory.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because I am so thankful that Compassionate Friends was recommended to me when my Chad died. It was there that I learned about the grief process, where I learned it was okay to cry and cry and cry. It was there that I was given the opportunity to process what I was thinking and feeling at chapter meetings, where I began remembering Chad, and all children, in ritual. It was at TCF meetings where I got permission to go ahead and take as long as I needed, where I got loving support to grieve my son, and where I met the people who have traveled these long seven years with me and whom I know will be there seven, no seventy years in the future. These are my Compassionate Friends, bereaved parents, like myself, like yourself who will go the extra mile for another mom or dad, who will be there for the duration, and who will never question my tears and say, "Gee, I thought you'd be over it by now."

My hope is that you, too, have developed your own support system of Compassionate Friends and others who will be there for you. If this is not the case, I invite you with the utmost sincerity to come to a TCF meeting and meet the parents who attend. I realize support groups

are not for everyone, and I realize not everyone will bond with everyone. But I do know that The Compassionate Friends organization will be there for you as long as you desire and beyond.

Sue Anderson
TCF Seattle, WA
In Memory of my son, Chad



Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out – because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended."

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

Renee Little
TCF, Fort Collins, CO



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



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





THANKSGIVING

November: Cool days, chilly nights
autumn leaves changing colors,
football games, apple cider and
pumpkin pie. Ah. November! . . . Is it
November already? Oh, no! Make it go
away! Just let me sleep; wake me up in
January. November is here, the start of
the holiday season.

This is the time of year most bereaved
parents dread. This is the time of year
when thoughts turn to spending time
with family and friends and
celebrating. Holiday decorations start
popping up everywhere you turn and

holiday music begins to play at the malls and on the radio. People are busy
cleaning their home, and are all abuzz with getting ready for. . . Oh, no!
Thanksgiving!

Everyone is asking what are you doing for Thanksgiving?" For the bereaved
parent, especially the newly bereaved, this question can become daunting and
almost horrifying. What am I doing for Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving - giving thanks. But I don't feel very thankful.

How can I be thankful, when my child lives no more?

How can I be thankful, when he/she will never again walk through my front door?

How can I be thankful, when my eyes are filled with tears?

How can I be thankful, when he/she won't be here throughout the years?

How can I be thankful, when my heart will never mend?

How can I be thankful, when I've lost my dearest friend?

How can I be thankful, when his/her hugs and kisses have now ceased?

How can I be thankful, and sit down to a feast?

How can I be thankful, when my heart is filled with sorrow?

How can I be thankful, when I can hardly make it to tomorrow?

What do you answer? What will you do this year? For some, the choice is to keep
the same tradition they have in the past. Others choose to remain home and ignore
the holiday completely.

There are parents who go on vacation or go out to Thanksgiving dinner at a restaurant. Newly bereaved parents may question "what am I supposed to do?" There is no standard right or wrong answer. Whatever feels the most comforting is the right answer for you. Family members or friends might disagree with your decision and say you are wrong. This often happens if you decide to break tradition, want to be alone, or decide not to celebrate at all. People can become very insistent, and tell you that Thanksgiving is about being with others. I have found that my choice has varied over the years from choosing to be alone and not acknowledge the holiday at all; to going to friends' and family members' homes; to just having dinner at home and when asked, I say, "I know that you may not like my answer, but still. I need to do what is best for me."

However you decide to spend this Thanksgiving, please remember that for however short or long your precious, awesome, amazing, wonderful child was with you here on earth, you are blessed to be their parent. You have been given a most spectacular gift—a one of a kind, unique, extraordinary child to carry in your heart, thoughts, and soul for all eternity. And this is a reason to be forever thankful.

From my home and heart to yours may you have a blessed Thanksgiving and may it be filled with peace.

Bev Rosen Katowitz
TCF, Charlotte, NC



Butterflies in November

Thanksgiving was Chad's favorite holiday. He loved the food and the football games without the hassle of all the Christmas going ons. I have so many memories of Thanksgivings past. I remember the last Thanksgiving we were together. Chad called me from Alabama and said he and Mandy were on their way to Atlanta and to please save him something to eat. I said "of course I will save you something to eat, but I thought you were eating with Mandy's family?" Chad said "Mom, I think they make their stuffing with "GRITS"need I say more? Just save me some."

That really made me feel good. He loved my Southern Cornbread Dressing, Turkey, Ham, and all the fixins. We enjoyed so much just being together and preparing the dinner and enjoying the meal.

Chad died in September of 1996. Thanksgiving came way too fast. For those who have gone through their first Thanksgiving you know the feelings I am describing. Everything seems to go in slow motion with the inability to move forward....the heaviness and the physical and mental fatigue...the pain in your heart, the lump in your throat and the tears in your eyes. No, I did not want Thanksgiving to come this year or ever again. My daughter was away at school and I knew she would be coming home. My mother was struggling with lung cancer and I knew there would not be many more Thanksgivings with her. What do I do? I think we all decided that if we could just go through the motions it would be better than doing nothing and I think we all did it for each other.

I cried the whole time I was preparing the meal. I do not remember anything other than the tears. Several friends wanted to join us for Thanksgiving that year and they volunteered to bring a turkey and dessert. I readily accepted their offer.

We gathered together at noon, my husband said the blessing (which I really had a hard time with) and then I wanted to read a poem in Chad's memory. I asked everyone if they would bear with me as I read this. Several times I could not speak. The words would not come, but I was determined that I was going to read this poem. When I neared the end of the poem I felt the lump in my throat and I knew I was going to start crying out loud. As soon as I finished I got up from the table and left the room.

There was dead silence. No one spoke a word. Then I heard one of our friends say "Look at that butterfly. I can't believe there is a butterfly this time of year. And he looks at though he wants to come in. He is hitting himself against the glass door."

My tears turned from sadness to tears of joy. I knew that was Chad. I knew he had come to get some of my Cornbread Dressing. The only regret that I have is that I did not let him come in. I knew if I went back to the dining room and told my friends that was Chad they really would think I was crazy. If I had to do it over again....it wouldn't matter but at that time I had not

gotten involved with TCF or did not know another bereaved parent....so to me my "crazy thoughts" were just that and I thought they probably were not normal.

We do not have butterflies in Atlanta in late November. I choose to believe it was a sign from my son. This will be our fifth Thanksgiving without him. The pain has softened. My tears do not come as often. The memories are sweeter. My heart is a little lighter. My love for my son is as strong as ever. I feel his presence in everything I do. I do not fear I will forget anymore. I know he is with me.

This Thanksgiving my plan is to make a LARGE pan of my southern cornbread dressing along with Chad's favorite Ham recipe and take these to the hospital to share with my daughter, who is an RN, and all the staff in the PICU at Children's Hospital—Egleston Campus and the parents who are spending Thanksgiving with their children in the Intensive Care Unit. For some, this will be their last Thanksgiving with their own children.

The staff at the Children's Hospital work very long and stressful hours. They are away from their own families on this holiday to take care of the children who are in the hospital. I feel this is a way I can help others and also include some precious memories of my Thanksgivings past with my own son and daughter. I am looking forward to this very much and I am thankful I can be with my daughter.

I wish for those of you who are facing your First Thanksgiving that you can read this and know that it will get better. You will find joy again. There is hope. The love will always remain and your child will always be with you. Of course, it is not like we hoped it would be but it can be good. Our children will always be a "present" part of our lives....they will not be forgotten.

I pray you find peace this holiday season. I pray your sorrows will soften and your memories bring smiles. I pray you will be able to enjoy your other family members. I pray you know you are not alone.

Jayne Newton
TCF Atlanta, GA

In Memory of my son, Chad Gordon 5/21/72 - 9/3/96 and All Our Children

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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