



# *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.*

**OCTOBER 2022**

**HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

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

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

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 11, 2021**

**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

## **You Are Not Alone**

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared.

## **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.



## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

2008-Maxwell B. Heath, Son of Carrie & Dirk Heath  
1986-Brendon Chase Mooney, Son of Richard & Joan Mooney  
1981-Amanda Cristina Ramirez-Velazquez , Daughter of Cynthia Cruz  
1986-Tara Michelle Rose, Daughter of Angie Rose  
1972-Grant Koval, Son of Linda Koval  
1983-Kevin Donat, Son of Diane Donat  
1999-Joselito C. M. Boquilon, Son of Raulito & Kim Boquilon  
1980-Felipe Danny Sanchez, Son of Lupe Sanchez  
1968-Travis Davis, Son of Sharyl Davis  
1988-Kayla Lower, Daughter of Lori Morris  
1994-Braden Hughes Patton, Son of Sherill and Chase Patton  
1963-Robert Elizeus, Son of Joanne Wycoff  
1988-DeAndria Sharee Anderson, Daughter of Rawn & Loretta Stephens  
1989-Michael Vincent Ledwig, Son of Mary Ann Ledwig  
1985-Jenny, Daughter of John and Debbie Ryan  
1975-Aimee Hurst, Daughter of Doris Odell  
1967-Julie Less, Daughter of Jim Less, Sister of Susan Less  
1994-Vanessa Whitford, Daughter of Russell & Nury Whitford  
1981-Michael Haner, Son of Jeanne Haner  
1991-Jacob Landon, Son of Brenda Landon  
1971-Tony Dizona, Son of Rosemary Dizona  
1982-Nathan Waldron, Son of Dan Waldron  
2007-Sean Michael Gonzalez, Son of Rick & Jazmin Gonzalez  
1990-Patrick O'Masters, Son of Laurie Martin  
1992-Jerret Macias, Son of Betty Macias  
1979-Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen  
1992-Kelsey Jackowski, Daughter of Camille Jackowski  
2001-Dylan Wheeler, Son of Gavin and Rachel Wheeler  
1986-Taryn Tidmore, Daughter of Renee Tidmore  
2005-Gabriel Tuschl, Son of Brian & Lyndi Tuschl  
1994-Erin Elena Moretz, Daughter of Patricia Moretz  
1996-Christian Carr, Son of Ivonne Carr



## OCTOBER ANGEL DATES

2010 Delaney Womack, Daughter of Carrie & Eric Womack  
2010 Sean Hengel, Son of Laura Hengel  
2004 Kristal Randolph Gilbert and Unborn Son,  
Daughter and Grandson of Josephine Babineaux  
2009 Travis Davis, Son of Sharyl Davis  
2009 Patrick Noel Jernigan, II, Son of Juanice Jernigan  
2009 BreAnna Brashear, Daughter of Julie Jones  
2004 Kristine Ashley Bergaila, Daughter of Kathleen Livingston  
2008 Bryan Russell Lewis, Son of Olga Lydia Lewis  
2008 Shane Woodson, Son of Theresa Woodson  
2008 Kayla C. Ladner, Daughter of Stephen Ladner  
2009 Natalia Lopez, Daughter of Melissa Lopez  
2007 Deborah Levy, Daughter of Pat Morgan  
2011 Katelyn Holmes, Daughter of Melinda Holmes  
2012- Kimberly Wise, Daughter of Patsy Grubbs  
2009- Allison, Daughter of Ingrid Todd  
2013-Braiden Mainor, Grandson of Barbara Herring  
2011-Nevaeh Ramirez, Daughter of Amy Ramirez  
1995-Christina, Granddaughter of Barbara Thomas  
2007-Ryan Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler  
2010-Donna Weston, Daughter of Roberta Ware  
2014-David Arthur, Son of Cathy Arthur  
2014-Brayon Molden, Step-Son of Reagan Molden  
2013-Korie Joiner, Daughter of Julie and Brad Joiner  
2015-Kacie Joiner, Daughter of Julie and Brad Joiner  
2015-Christopher "Cole" Knight, Son of Ken and Jan Knight  
2014-Tony Dizona, Son of Rosemary Dizona  
2015-Lindie, Daughter of Beth Shelton  
2016-Corey Cole, Son of Tim and Cheryl Cole  
2016-Jeffrey Scott Byers, Son of Deanna Young  
2016-Amy Lynn Kramberger, Daughter of Nancy and Ken Thornton  
2017-Reagan Ottnat, Daughter of Stacy Ottnat  
2017-Bryce Cook, Son of Faye Cook  
2018-James Ropp, Son of Janet Ropp  
2019-Chantal Warfield, Daughter of Jacqueline Smith  
2014-Jake Hickford, Son of Henry Hickford  
2021-Kayla Cannon, Daughter of Janet Cannon  
2021-Brayden, Son/Stepson of Bill & Lisa Miluszusky  
2021-Beau Kocina, Son of Carolyn Kocina



## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 11th. at 7pm.**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members, **Carol Kramer, she lost her son Mark in August 2021; Julia Hine, she lost her son David in January 2022; Servando & Jeanne Pena, lost their daughter Gabriella in August 2022; Brian & Milly McDonald, lost their daughter Mary in June 2022.** 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!

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

**Save the Date**  
**Compassionate Friends**  
**Worldwide Candle Lighting date this year:**  
**Sunday, December 11, 2022**



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 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

## Our Child's Birthday

Many bereaved parents begin to have trouble as the time of their child's birthday grows near. Even those whose child has died a number of years ago. The ache that is in their heart is always there and the yearning for their child is never more strong than around the time of their child's birth. The greatest gift you could give to a parent who has lost a child is to listen intently as they reminisce and share memories of their child. Call a special friend who has lost a child on that child's birthday and encourage them to talk about him or her. Or better yet, invite your friend to coffee or lunch so you can look into their eyes and they can feel your compassion and empathy. Many parents relish the opportunity to share pictures of their child with others. If your friend likes doing this, ask that they bring photos, a scrapbook or mementos of their child. It will help to spark fond memories of a happier time. Make your list ahead of time. Ask your friend questions in order to draw them out such as; do you remember how you felt when you were anticipating the birth of your child? How did you feel when they were born? How did you come to pick your child's name? What was your child like as a baby? How old was your child when they took their first step? What was their first word? Do you remember your child's first day at school? What was their favorite color? What was their personality like? Did your child take after someone in your family? Did your child have a beloved pet? Did your child enjoy a special hobby or activity? Do you have any stories to recant about a memorable family vacation or gathering? What was their favorite holiday? Did your child have a favorite book, song or movie? Do you remember any heartwarming or funny stories about your child? What was your child's personality like? The list could go on and on. Just stop and think about it for a moment. You can also make your own list and give it to a trusted family member or confidant to ask you when it's time for your child's birthday. The point is to draw the parent out. Try and get your friend to remember the beautiful sweet story that was their child's life and not to focus only on their passing. Once they get started they will recall wonderful things that were once forgotten. A child's death is only a small moment of time in their short lives. Remembering a child's life in this way can be a very cathartic and healing experience for a parent whose child has died. As bereaved parents, we know all too well that most of the people in our lives do not want us to speak of our child. I can't think of a better gift to give to another parent who is like we are than to talk about, honor and celebrate the life of their child.

Janet G. Reyes  
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

*Remembering your child is a healing experience for you and all bereaved parents. Please share some of your wonderful memories, a special story, a holiday, a vacation, or anything you would like to tell us about him or her. We would be happy to share your story in our newsletter. Thanks David*

## ANGUISH

After 23 years of being the chapter leader and facilitator, and after observing and being with grieving parents at our monthly meetings, and after watching the newly bereaved struggle to get through the door for their first meeting, I believe if there is one word that describes what bereaved parents feel, it is the word anguish.

Anguish is defined as extreme mental or physical pain or suffering. Synonyms are agony, torment, distress, angst, misery, sorrow, grief, heartache, desolation, despair and torture. All of us can relate to these words, and it often seems like all of these feelings happen at once.

After my son David died in an automobile accident in 1997, I received a note from my friend Ed Devlin in Taos, New Mexico. Ed's adult daughter had died of cancer the previous year, and shortly thereafter his wife, while driving their two granddaughters, had pulled out in front of a concrete truck and all three were killed.

Ed's note was short. It read, "I understand your anguish". That has stuck with me. It's also why The Compassionate Friends works. We understand each other's anguish.

David Hendricks  
In Memory of my son David  
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



## Choosing Life

“It will never be the same. Never.” As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief’s profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, “...never the same.”

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls “The Valley of the Shadow.” It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever “the same.” Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

Marcia F. Alig  
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey



## Autumn Memories

My son and I always enjoyed the autumn season. Yes, when we lived in the cold zone, we knew that winter’s winds and snows were on the way. But, yet, we took time to enjoy the beautiful array of colors that nature gave us as a final salute to the growing season.

Todd and I raked leaves in the autumn. I had purchased a home in a town on the Mississippi River bluffs; the home had been built in the 1860s and I am sure some of the trees were well over 50 years old. The leaves would fall and we would rake. We made a game of it. Sometimes his best friend, Allen, would come over and help. The boys would jump into the piles and laugh with delight. We’d create a big pile and rake it to the concrete so that it could be burned. I can still see Todd laughing and dancing around that fire. His pure childhood joy was contagious.

Todd and I loved to look at the changing leaves along the bluffs of the river. We would drive on weekends and find the best view. Then we’d park and marvel at nature’s wonder. The big bluffs, the turning leaves, the eagles soaring above us. Ducks flying south....even the occasional group of geese overhead...honking, honking as they journeyed to a warmer climate.

The light is different in the autumn...it’s diffused somehow. It’s different than the light in any other season. Autumn sun was our favorite light. It seemed less harsh, more forgiving, gentler in a strange sort of way. That was another time and another place.

Now in the autumn I remember all the special times I shared with my child. Looking at leaves, collecting leaves, raking leaves.....we did this together, just the two of us. “Mom, when are we going to go look at leaves?” Todd would ask. That was my cue to load up some soft drinks and sandwiches and head out on the first sunny Saturday. We’d repeat this ritual until the leaves had all fallen and it was time to rake.

When we moved to the Houston area, Todd was 12, and we talked about the seasons. He told me about his great memories of leaves and drives and time together. He said he would miss autumn with me. That made me feel good. These were memories that we shared, of a time when it was just Todd and me for those special moments. Looking back, I am so glad that I spent the time to make memories. I thought I was making memories for my child, but in fact, I



was making memories for us both. And now those memories are my memories.....good memories....memories that I will cherish always.

Here it is autumn again. Soon Todd will be gone five years. The memories are flooding back: the first day of each school each year, the changes as he grew to become a man. High school, college, graduate school....all began in the autumn. Autumn marks the beginning of many good memories for me. I listen as the school bus stops in front of our house to pick up today's children. Once in a while I go to the door and watch them load up, chatting with each other as they take their seats. I think of my 12 year old son, getting on that bus in front of our home for the first time: the first day of school in Houston. And for a moment, just a fleeting moment, I think I can see him sitting at a window seat, waving at me. Waving goodbye.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX  
October, 2007



## Thoughts from a Parent Who Lost an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin  
TCF Orange Park-Jacksonville, FL

## The Loss of A Child

The moment I knew that you had died, my heart split in two  
One side filled with memories, the other died with you.

I often lay awake at night, when the world is fast asleep  
And take a walk down memory lane, with tears upon my cheek.

Remembering you is easy, I do it every day  
But missing you is a heartache, that never goes away.

I hold you tightly within my heart, and there you will remain  
Life has gone on without you, but it will never be the same.

Don't tell me that you understand, don't tell me that you know  
Don't tell me that I will survive, how I will surely grow.

Don't tell me that this is just a test, that I am truly blessed  
That I am chosen for the task, apart from all the rest.

Don't come to me with answers, that can only come from me  
Don't tell me that my grief will pass, that soon I will be free.

Don't stand in pious judgement, of the bonds I must untie.  
Don't tell me how to grieve, don't tell me when to cry.

Accept me in my ups and downs, I need someone to share  
Just hold my hand and let me cry, and say  
"My friend, I care"

~Author Unknown~



## Forgive Unto Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love, if forgiveness is silent within us? We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word, or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment, and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so softly in that maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive, and forgive unto forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to learn to grow and strive beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

Don Hackett  
TCF Hingham, MA  
November 21, 2000



## **Tomorrow Will Be Better**

When my son died, I felt like there would be no tomorrow. I didn't want a tomorrow. I wanted yesterday with its promise of joy and perfection. I wanted my son to be alive. But he was gone.

Now, when life gets me down, I remember the joys of yesterday, think of all that I was given, take measure of all that still needs to be done, and I promise myself that tomorrow will be better because I will work very hard to make it better.

My grandmother often told me, "If you think you can, you're right. If you think you can't, you're right. What do you think?" As a child I thought this was strange. As an adult, I know it to be true.

Tomorrow *will* be better. Tomorrow I will, once again, tell my mind to stop the negative thoughts. And my mind will do exactly that, as I command my ship of grief.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF Katy, TX  
Forever remembering my son, Todd Mennen

## Phone Friends

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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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