



The Compassionate Friends *of Northwest Houston* Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

MAY 2026

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church
Family Life Center, Room #116
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 116

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks
936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

Regional Coordinators:

Ghislaine Thomsen

tcfsouthtexasrc@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Linda Brewer 936-441-3840

llbrewer67@hotmail.com

National Headquarters, TCF

P.O. Box 46

Wheaton, IL 60187

1-876-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

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

To the Newly Bereaved

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

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

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

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





*Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren
Remembered*

MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1993- Richard Allen Ginn, Son of Barbara & Richard Ginn
2008- Aaron Michael Wolf, son of Laura Wolf
2008- Bryan Russell Lewis, Son of Olga Lydia Lewis
2008- Alexander Gene Davis, Son of Janice Davis
2010- Tristen D. Hopkins, Son of Howard & Denise Hopkins
2008- Kayla C. Ladner, Daughter of Stephen Ladner
2003- Jeff Costin, Son of Carol & Richard Costin
2006- Marlinda Raschke, Daughter of Gloria Raschke Sister of Kevin Rasche
2000- Darrell Wayne McSpadden, Son of Janet & Robert McSpadden
2006- Michael Beshara, Son of Mike & Elaine Beshara
1983- Staci Kendall, Daughter of Larry & Tami Kendall
1990- Sewika Tekle, Daughter of Medhin Boakai
1976- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
1984- Nancy Elizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
1987- Cherelle Luter, Daughter of Sylvia Green
2005- Nevaeh Ramirez, Son of Amy Ramirez
1986- Allison Todd, Daughter of Ingrid Todd
1977- Misty, Daughter of Terri DeMontrond
1990- Traci Foehr, Daughter of Donna & Bubba Foehr
1982- Justin Ross Heino, Son of Darryl Heino
1986- Steven Jackman, son of Deborah Jackman
2011 - Jamie Leonard, son of Carrie Newman
1999 - James Ropp, Son of Janet Ropp
1989 - Victor Alberto Renteria Jr, Son of Carla Renteria
1985 - Aaron Kirby O'Neal, Son of Sylvia Ann Roushion
1983 - Bryan Pflugger, Son of Penny McElhaney
2002 - Elijah Tsaftarides, Son of Gerri Tsaftarides
1997 - Parker Coogan, Son of Tim and Amy Coogan
1991 - Eric Castelo, Son of Debbie Castelo
2008 - Jake Hickford, Son of Henry Hickford
2004 - Gabriella Grace Pena, Daughter of Servando & Jeanne Pena
1973 - Antonio Ramos Jr., Son of Rosie Aguirre
1990 - Joshua Bell, Son of Jamie Bell
1996 - Triston Fifield, Son of Lisa Fifield
May 18- Daniel son of Debbe Webne



MAY ANGEL DATES

- 2009-Brendon Chase Mooney, Son of Richard & Joan Mooney
2010-Shaun N. Finley, Son of Barbara Finley
2002- Braden Hughes Patton, Son of Sherill & Chase Patton
2006- Danny Ewing, Son of Steffani L. Ewing
- 2003- Ronald Lee, Son of Ana Castellanos
2009- Samantha Short, Daughter of Linda Short
1998- Fallon Ginther, Daughter of Lisa Ginther
2012- Hamzah Zubair, Son of Farah Zubair
2012- Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
2012- Danielle Basford, Daughter of Jerry & Laurie Basford
2013- Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull
2013- Alan James Stokes, Son of Kellie Harris
2014- Milana Ramirez, Daughter of Deann Ramirez
2014- Tremaine Robinson, Son of Toya Robinson
2014- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2015- Vanessa Whitford, Daughter of Russell & Nury Whitford
2017- Joshua Bell, Son of Steve & Donna Bell
2018 - Grace Sanders, Daughter of Mary Parker
2021 - Shawna Merchant, Daughter of Bitsy Hatch
2020 - Darryl Allen, Son of Sandra Allen
2021 - Matthew Benjamin, Son of Nikki Jolivette
2020 - Eric Garcia, Son of John and Louise Garcia
2025 – Madilyn McMillen, Daughter of Monica McMillien
2025 – Ryder Jacoby, Son of Brian Jacoby
2025 – Ember Doyle, Daughter of Jennifer Doyle
2024 – Austin Mallet, Son of Linda Mallet

Memories...let them fill your mind, warm your heart,
And lead you through.

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday May 12th. 7pm.

TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE July 2-5, 2026 in Baltimore, MD



Registration Rates:

Adult Registration ~~\$320~~ early bird registration rate \$285

(early bird registration rate ends May 20th at midnight, EDT)

Active Military/Student Registration ~~\$245~~ early bird registration rate \$210

(early bird registration rate ends May 20th at midnight, EDT)

Child Registration (6-17 years old) ~~\$200~~ early bird registration rate \$165

(early bird registration rate ends May 20th at midnight, EDT)

Hotel Reservations

This year's conference will be held at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated [reservation link](#). Our discounted room rate with the Hilton is \$189 per night (*reg. \$334+/night*) plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in Baltimore!



GRIEF WEBINARS

Supportive webinars are offered through The Compassionate Friends with new ones being added each month. Click the link below to register to attend upcoming webinars or watch past webinars offered by The Compassionate Friends. We encourage you to share this resource with family and friends.

Upcoming Webinars:

Post-Bereavement Growth and Tenets of Transformational Living

Presented by Andy McNiel

Wednesday, May 27th at 8:00 pm ET

Components of Living Intentionally after Profound Loss

Presented by Andy McNiel

Tuesday, June 9th at 12:00 pm ET

Apart From Us, But Always A Part of Us

Presented by Lora and Dave Krum

Monday, June 22nd at 4:00 pm ET

Webinar

Dear Compassionate Friends,

When I lost my daughter DeAndria in July 2008. I thought the world had come to an end. I thought I was the only one who had lost a child, I thought the sun would never shine again, I thought I'd never smile again let alone wanting to see another day.

When I found Compassionate Friends all that changed. Compassionate Friends help me find a new normal, a new way of living. When I attended my first conference I learned that I was Not Alone. I learned that the sun will shine again, I learned that I will smile again. The conference gave me a new look on life on how to handle this grief walk we're on.

If you haven't attended a conference put this one on your calendar. I've had the opportunity to attend several and have walked away with a new look on life.

If you'd like to speak with me personally feel free to reach out.

*Regards,
Loretta Stephens
Dees mom
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net*



A DIFFERENT LIFE

May is coming, I can feel it. There's Mothers' Day and my son Daniel's birthday on the 18th, days that we celebrated joyfully together for 31 years. Now, it is different. My son died, 12/22, and this will be the fourth time getting through May.

I am a single parent and Dan was my only child. I love and miss him each day, and these feelings are accentuated in May. Most family and friends go on with their lives, but my life is not the same. Each day I try to carve out this new life while honoring my son's memory. Some days are easier than others.

Shortly after Daniel died, I went to a meeting where a parent shared that we who have lost children will never stop grieving them, but along with that there will be intermittent softer moments. Those words were so consoling to me and have proven to be true. Also, I read an article in the Compassionate Friends Newsletter, "What is Left?". That question enabled me to identify what remains in life after Daniel passed away. Cherished memories and his spirit strongly remain. He continues to walk beside me. He encourages me, and I talk with him and feel his presence.

In the first months after he died, I was unable to participate in and go on with my life. I thought if I did, he might feel I was leaving him behind. In time, I began teaching again and working in an antique shop. These activities bring me satisfaction. I also began to see that doing them did not mean I was forgetting Daniel. They coexist.

It is my loving responsibility to carry on Daniel's memory. Each month I have benefited from reading the articles in the Newsletter. Though I don't know any of the people who wrote them, there are always several articles that speak to me, and I feel heard as a parent whose child has died. This article is another way of honoring Daniel. This year, I wish for you and myself some softer moments on Mothers' Day.

Debbe Webne, Daniel's Mom

Houston Northwest Chapter

*For Those Grieving on Mother's Day,
May Your Minds Be Filled With Memories,
And Your Hearts Be Warmed With Love.*

Mother's Day

Mother's Day.....a time set aside to honor each mother's role in her child's life.....is often dreaded by bereaved parents. This holiday, like Father's day, is dedicated strictly to us, as parents. Other holidays differ from this one. That difference, which once was so meaningful to us as parents, is now a poignant reminder of all that once was and will never be again.

Bereaved mothers often approach this holiday with much anxiety. Yet, the holiday itself is generally not as difficult as the ramp-up to it. There are television specials, movies, commercials, signs in stores and advertising everywhere we look.....all of which remind us that our children are no longer with us. This is a difficult time for many bereaved mothers-difficult but not insurmountable.

During the month before the second Mother's Day without my son, I realized that it was my perspective that was the problem. I understood that the world was going to continue to spin, the commercialism would build and the reminders would increase until the holiday arrived. I could either ignore the advertisements through my superb channel surfing skills or I could watch them and torture myself. Passing up print ads was simple....I scanned right past them in the newspaper, and I put the mailings in the trash without comment. Each time I actively said "no" to these reminders, I became a little stronger.

As the week before Mother's Day crawled to a close, I thought I had it aced. Then came Mother's Day. My husband gave me a card and a gift. That was it. The gift and card were both lovely and sweet. My husband cried. I cried. Then we settled down and read the Sunday paper. We had both agreed that we would stop protracting the self-torture and live in the moment. Since I was keeping Mother's Day in my heart, the celebrations and thoughts and sales projections of others mattered not. I keep Mother's Day as I choose.

Each of us must work at developing coping skills. Logic is the choice for some. Setting boundaries works for others. Some parents choose to go with their emotions. The decision to celebrate a holiday and the level of the celebration is a choice unique to each parent. We cannot allow others to set our agenda. Mother's Day is the singular holiday which serves to reinforce that I am forever Todd's mom. My child lived, loved and laughed with us, and this holiday brings deep, beautiful memories of that time. I choose to keep those sweet memories of my son in my heart. Making that decision was one more emotional choice in my grief work. Letting go of what was, living in the moment and cherishing my child forever.....all of these have helped me to find an ever brightening light of hope.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my Son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

We All Need Support
By: Beth Crocker
Loving Memory of Cheyenne and Emily Crocker



It's been 20 years since our oldest daughter passed, and 16 since our second daughter went. So much has changed. I knew it would, I feared it would. The decades since came gently, for the most part. The only thing that would occasionally get me was whenever I'd realize how much time has passed, or how much has changed since then, I'd be shocked, because in many ways it still seems so much more recent. I can't say how long it feels, it's vague, but fresh. It's so long ago, but still so real on my heart.

I'd like to say it's better, it's easier, now... and it is, mostly. After 20 years I've pretty much run the routine cemetery visits into the ground. Posting pictures of the flowers I do four times a year... two birthdays and two passing dates. There was a time when family would join us. They faded away, making excuses, and who can blame them. I'd like to think I'm a happy person, or at least positive person to be around, I don't want my grief bringing others down, or sucking their energy from them. But when I'm left with no support, I find myself wondering, doubting, who I am. My husband, son, and I have been making those cemetery visits alone now for some time. It's nice, too. Maybe I miss the extra support, but it can also be more peaceful.

Then again, sometimes I need the support. The 20th was tougher than I was ready for, but I got through it. Barely. I was a wreck the whole week leading to it, and that might have been all, then back to my current life, but it wasn't all. By the end of the day I was very painfully aware that out of a combined sibling total of 7, between my husband and me, not counting their spouses, not a single one of them made any effort to reach out and check on us that day. My best friend did. Not my siblings. Not even a text message. I posted pictures

on my social networks all week, mentioning my extra struggle with the 20th anniversary, and our siblings saw and acknowledged these posts, but not one of them had so much as commented on any of the threads. They knew. They didn't bother.

So why would I be using this not-so-supportive story to support bereaved parents? I want to remind you that you are not alone, and those with you are not necessarily who you would expect. We need support. We can't do this alone. It hurts when the flesh and blood of our children can't make time for us, I mean our children were their nieces and nephews, and the hard days just pass right by them without a thought. I know, they did think about our girls, and your children are remembered, too, but what we need is for them to tell us they are thinking of us on those days. First, we need to tell them that we need them in those days. After that, it's up to them, so surround yourself with those who support you. No matter the connection. Those are the people you need. Time does heal... almost. Create a new you. A you that still includes your child, and welcome only those who are ready to meet the new you, and walk the journey with you. Leave the rest behind. They are happy in their lives, and will never understand yours. That's ok, it's not their path. It's yours.

Beth Crocker
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



*"As I sit in heaven and watch you everyday,
I try to let you know with signs I never went away.
I hear you when you're laughing and watch you as you
sleep.*

*I even place my arms around you to calm you as you weep.
I see you wish the days away begging to have me home.
So I try to send you signs so you know you are not alone.
Don't feel guilty that you have life that was denied to me.
Heaven is truly beautiful, Just you wait and see.*

*So live your life, laugh again.
Enjoy yourself, be free.
Then I know with every breath you take,
You'll be taking one for me."*

Aftershocks

The news of Tom's passing was life shattering, a major shift in the landscape of my world. In the first moment, it felt as though a bolt of lightning seared through me, adrenaline making my entire body tingle and shake. My mind raced. My body permanently changed that night, becoming physically older and weaker.

On the phone, I remember screaming, "You are wrong; he's just asleep" over and over again. Time slowed down as we drove to his location; we could not get there fast enough. But that did not matter. We could not have changed anything. Then, when I saw it was true, a wailing sound I had never heard came out of me, lasting for hours. In fact, there was a chorus of pain as those of us closest to him processed what had happened. As my adrenaline wore off, my stomach tightened, and I became nauseous. I sat on the door stoop for hours as the scene was processed, alone in my thoughts and pain, together with those who shared the same emotions.

The first two weeks are a blur. Many people came and went, bringing food, flowers and words of love. I remember how much I appreciated them caring for us. I also remember doing laundry and thinking my world has stopped, but there are still clothes and dishes to wash. I cried all day, every day for a long time. The sobs would not stop. I remember planning and attending the service, and knowing I was finding my strength in those around me who were lifting me up through support, service, and prayer, but my world continually quaked during that time.

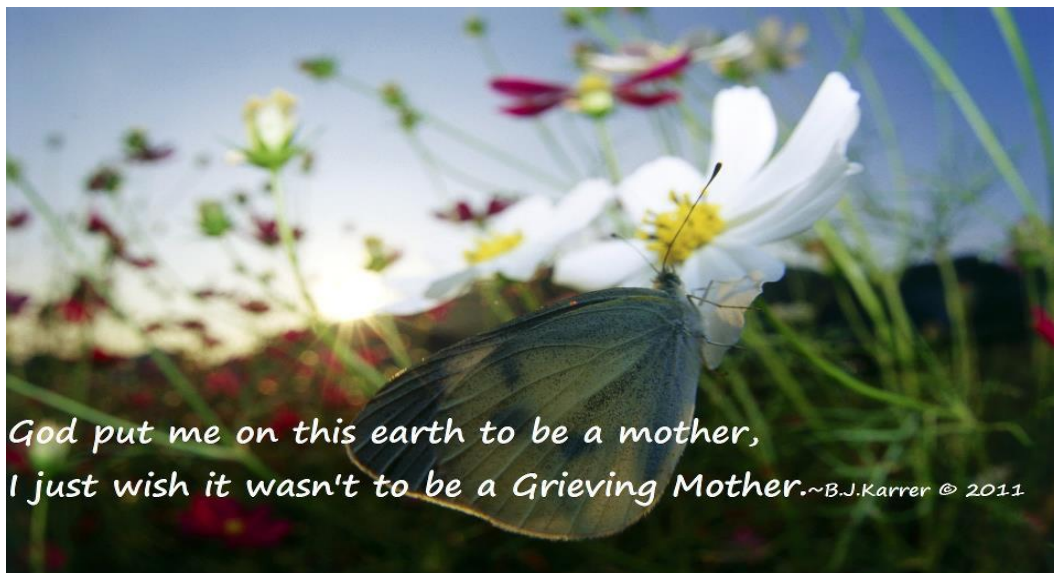
What I remember about earthquake aftershocks is they are expected, but unpredictable in timing and strength. This is certainly true of my grief. I returned to work two weeks later, easing back into the real world. I was able to hold it together in the classroom, but the aftershocks were persistent. Coworkers, students, and friends were generous with hugs, support, and Tom stories and memories, but each brought an emotional jolt which reopened my wounded heart and caused the tears to flow. But knowing he is remembered and I am supported is worth it.

Two months out, people say less about it all, so the aftershocks come from other sources, music, his picture, his room, during counseling, and my memories of him. I do not cry all the time now. Sometimes when the aftershocks hit, they are strong and rumbling and I cry uncontrollably not able to catch my breath. Other times, it is a tear or two meandering down my face, hoping to sneak out so no one notices. I had expected each day to get easier, but that is not the case. Some days I cry just a few times, other days it goes on and on. A day has not yet passed without tears.

I have spoken with many people who have lost a child and they all have told me the same thing. The tears and pain never go away completely; it becomes the “New Normal.” But from what they say, it sounds like the aftershocks’ strength, duration, and frequency lessen. You become able to remember your child without your entire world shaking you off balance and scrambling for a foothold to survive the tremor. And, they assure me, that your love for your child never lessens, staying entrenched in your heart where it is safe and always protected.

Kimberly Starr
TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son Tom

**As we grieve, we find strength in
the shared stories and memories
that bind us.**



The Isolation of Grief

Now, I've never been a stranger to the isolation that comes from feeling like you just don't fit into your surroundings. But I've never felt as isolated in my whole life as I have after the death of my daughter.

As a child, I was a shy, introverted person and often felt different than the people around me. At the time, I never really knew why. While I didn't like the feeling of isolation, I didn't understand what caused it so it just became a fact of life. Over the years my shyness has lessened, but I still prefer interacting with small groups or one-on-one in-person conversations, and still look forward to time alone. I've learned to accept it as my personality, and it works for me.

After my daughter died, my sense of isolation grew exponentially as a result of grief.

In the immediate aftermath of her sudden death, our house was filled with family and friends who were showing their support for us and helping us do what had to be done: planning the memorial, visiting the cemetery to secure a plot, working with our insurance company requirements, etc. They prepared meals, made sure we were left alone when we needed our space, gave us hugs, and shed tears with us. The phone rang often, and I found myself doing most of the talking when the other end of the phone was uncomfortably silent as people struggled to find the right words to say. Even in my numbness, I was able to understand the dilemma of "I'm sorry" doesn't seem to be enough when someone has just lost a four-year-old little girl.

A few days after the memorial service, everyone went home. Less sympathy cards arrived in the mail until there were none. The phone stopped ringing. Our daughter's preschool arranged a weekly meal donation and then my work did the same, which was a huge help...but eventually those stopped coming too. We were left alone to figure out how to pick up the pieces of our shattered hearts and shattered lives. We went to counseling and support groups. But we were forced to accept the fact that life was going to keep moving forward without our precious girl in it. It was devastating.

That devastation led me to a self-imposed isolation from a world I could no longer stand to be a part of. I didn't want to talk to people who couldn't understand my pain because I didn't want to have to explain myself. The sound of laughter or gossip produced outright anger in me. The everyday acts of going to work, chores, grocery shopping, or even something as simple as showering were agonizingly painful and almost impossible. I wanted nothing to do with any of it. I found myself not answering the phone and not returning messages. I turned down invitations to get together with friends who weren't sure how to help me.

I managed to make sure that I fed my surviving kids and took them to school and practices, but I was no longer the mom they were used to. They stopped wanting to talk to me about how they felt because they knew it would make me even sadder, and they were frightened that not only did they lose their sister, but there was a potential that their mom was losing her ability to take care of them.

Over that first year or so, the suffocating pain began to lessen, though not by as much as I would have hoped. I got better at doing those everyday tasks that didn't seem so impossible anymore. I began to adjust to the "new normal" any grieving person must accept.

Then the isolation of grief began to change. While I started answering the phone and accepting some of those invitations, I felt isolated in the sense that I continued to think of my daughter and experience the pain constantly, but very few people talked about my grief or even mentioned her name any more. I felt completely alone.

Support groups and counseling helped. So did reaching out to other parents who had lost children, and I preferred their company over others. I found myself part of the secret society of grieving parents who mostly keep their grief to themselves and only share it with those who understand because they are faced with the same loss and pain. I found that sharing my feelings with these people helped me immensely.

Now that more time has passed, I am learning how to balance becoming fully reinvested in life while respecting my continuing needs for grief support. I still look forward to support groups and talking with other bereaved people, but I also appreciate that when I allow myself to enjoy and appreciate everyday life, joy will come even without my daughter being physically here.

Despite my continued longing for her to be at my side and the ability to experience the wonder of watching her grow, I know that she will always be with me in spirit. She is forever in my heart, my memories, and my thoughts. And these days, I don't mind sharing that with anyone who cares to get to know me.

Maria Kubitz
TCF Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my daughter, Margareta

*There is no "Normal" way to grieve.
Except for how we each do it.*

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

Debbie Castelo
713-822-7851
debcastelo8@yahoo.com
Adult Suicide

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

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

Lisa Ascencios
281-450-9799
Lisa.ascencios@att.net
Teenage Suicide

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

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

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

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

FOR FATHERS:

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

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

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