



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

NOVEMBER 2018 ISSUE

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"This newsletter is sponsored by an anonymous family in memory of our children".

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Nov. 1st, the first Thursday
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:
The Neighborhood Church
415 Paseo Del Mar
Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274
(South of Torrance Beach)

DIRECTIONS: Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → Go to the WEST parking lot. Meetings are held at the west end of the church.

--Please remember to park in the West church parking lot and not on the street or East lot.--

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.

The Nov. 1st meeting will start with "Thanksgiving and Grief".

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Ken at (310) 544-6690.

TCF Lunch Group meets for lunch at Mimi's Café every Friday at 1:00. (Crenshaw and PCH). All members are invited.

A new chapter of TCF is starting in Manhattan Beach. More info on page 15.

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SAVE THE DATE: The Dec. 9th World Wide Candle Lighting will take place at the St. James school in Torrance, on Anza/Garnet. We will be having a slide show of our children as part of the ceremony. Linda Zelik has volunteered to assemble this wonderful tribute. To have your child included, please send Linda 3 pictures of your child and include their birth and death date on each one. You can e-mail them to Lzelik@verizon.net before Nov. 15th or bring them to the next meeting so she has time to make the video.

The Nov. 1st. meeting will be a regular meeting. It will start with “Thanksgiving And Grief.” Feeling thankful when you are consumed with the death of a child is usually impossible for the newly bereaved family. The thought of enduring the holidays may seem overwhelming for some time. The idea of celebrating the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday can stir up very complex feelings. How can I feel thankful for anything...my child is dead. Do I have to join in or host Thanksgiving? If I don't feel like doing anything for Thanksgiving, is that fair to the surviving family members who don't want to face the thought of losing something else in their life. Preparing for ways of dealing with the holidays ahead of time, will make facing them a little easier. Come share ways others have found to be helpful in dealing with the upcoming Thanksgiving season. Join us as we share what has helped and what we would do differently to acknowledge the holidays. As you go into the season, I hope that you will not only take time to grieve but to also take time to reflect on some of the happy memories you shared with your beloved child.

Holidays

The cool crisp air of autumn brings the excitement and anticipation of Thanksgiving, the holidays, family gatherings, special food, warm, joyous memories - and, for those of us experiencing illness, grief, or separation from those we love, it can also be a time of pain, sadness or dread.

How can we comfort and heal the hopelessness and emptiness we feel as the rest of the world is dancing with happiness? Instead of pretending to be happy, allow yourself the



permission to be exactly where you are – sad, withdrawn, depressed, angry – or, if a moment of quiet, relief, warmth, love, or happiness washes over you, allow yourself that moment. You may judge yourself for being sad or a "downer" and in the same breath, deny yourself any moments of peace and happiness, by feeling happiness or for feeling good.

Grief will come in waves– waves of memories of what you once shared together that you no longer will have. Holiday time can bring up incredible frustration, helplessness, and anger at a world that appears to be totally oblivious to your pain. As the holidays approach, focus on what you need to take care of yourself. It might be to create a new way of celebrating important events that will be a healing balm to your grief rather than a re-opening of the wounds. Solicit other people's support in your active process of surviving the season. Share with family and friends your plan to take care of your hurting. If there is something someone can do to nurture you, let them know. You will be giving them the gift of caring.

Our senses are acute at this time. Every sight, sound (i.e. music), aroma, taste (i.e. goodies), and touch will be magnified. Or the opposite may occur and we may be anesthetized and not be able to feel anything.

Throughout our journey into and out of the winter months, it is vital that we listen carefully each day, hour, and minute, to what we are experiencing, what we need, and what we can do to get what we need.

Be gentle with yourself. Treat yourself as you would the most delicate, tiny child who is hurting-who yearns only to be held, cuddled, and protected. Care for yourself as the precious human being that you are.

–Janet Childs TCF, San Jose/Palo Alto, CA

The Dreaded Holidays

The holidays are coming, and there are some things we can do to make it easier to bear: If you are still in that robotic stage of grief, you may not even remember to flip the page of the calendar. People talk about the upcoming holidays and you feel "so what, my child is dead". Don't they understand? Can't they realize you don't feel thankful for anything, yet alone look forward to a Thanksgiving dinner?

If it is the first Thanksgiving without your

child, give yourself permission to do nothing or as much as you feel comfortable with. As a bereaved parent, we often feel we "ought" to do the traditional thing. That is fine if you have enough energy, but right now don't spend the little bit you have by doing anything that isn't really necessary.

For a bereaved family, the first set of holidays to be faced without their child is especially confusing. Nothing you do will feel normal. You haven't experienced ways to face holidays without your child. Right now, it is a trial and error matter as we experiment with new ways to observe holidays without our child here. Try to do what you feel you can do. If it doesn't work, don't feel afraid to try something different. Each time you make the effort, each time you try to do something, you learn from it.

This whole grief thing is new, we haven't mastered it yet. Give yourself a break, don't put unrealistic expectations on yourself or others.

If it has been awhile, and you feel the need to resume the festivities again, by all means, do so. The dreams of a lifetime died when your child died. If you have managed to overcome some of the pain and suffering, the terrible doubts, or the "if only's", rejoice in the fact you can see hope and a brighter future again. Celebrate and return to those things you once treasured.

Whatever you do this holiday season, remember, start early, allow yourself plenty of extra time, and keep the stress down as much as possible. Accomplishing small steps gives you the courage to tackle bigger ones. Don't put too much emphasis on doing what others want. As long as you take care of yourself and try to get through things as best as you can, you will have done enough.

Whenever it all seems like too much, remember, The Compassionate Friends will be here and available to help however we can.

-Lynn Vines TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

The Holiday Army

Here it comes again — the Holiday Army — in its annual march against us. Some of its generals are called "Thanksgiving," "Christmas," "Hanukkah," "New Year's Eve" and "New Year's Day." They are no respecters of the heartbroken and emotionally wounded, and their troops are merciless. They take no prisoners!



They demand that we participate in their joy and nostalgia or they will mow us down with their militant tanks of holiday spirit.

Sometimes they declare their war on us openly — without shame or remorse. Sometimes, they wait for us in ambush. Their intelligence operators have been working diligently all year, waiting for the Thanksgiving Day (or sometimes Halloween!) trumpet signal to begin their attack. They just don't seem satisfied to have their celebrations and parties and dinners and festivities unless they can recruit ALL of us into their ranks.

Actually, we wish them well. All we really want is for them to leave us alone and let us mourn in peace and quiet. We prefer our "Silent Nights" to their "Deck the Halls" and Jingle Bells." We don't intentionally spoil their fun; it's just that our pain makes them uncomfortable. They've been conditioned to believe that "The Holiday Season" should have no blemish of suffering or lack of frivolity. We must not only bandage our wounds while in their presence, but cover them with taffeta and sequins besides. They are convinced that all we need is to "put on a happy face" and all our sorrows will magically evaporate.

In their mad pursuit of happiness, they shoot us with the bullets of shopping, piped-in music, special holiday foods and fragrances, gift wrapping, decorations (especially the angels!), joyous children with happy smiles, cards, invitations, parties and gift exchanges. Any other time of the year, snow is considered a nuisance to shovel and plow through. At the holiday season, though, it is touted as romantic and is linked to sleighs and starry nights in front of fireplaces, snuggled close to those we love.

The most devastating bombs they drop into our lives are the images of reunion — times of greeting and hugging folks who are much loved and sometimes not often seen for awhile. They may only be separated by geography; our absent loved ones cannot cross the chasm of loss that looms before our tear-filled eyes. They remind us of things we should be thankful for (and we are more thankful for many of those things than they can ever imagine). They prod us with their spears of delightful togetherness, never realizing that what they celebrate is what we cannot now enjoy.

We would not dream of attacking them in these battles for holiday survival. With our noses pressed against the glass that divides us, we actually long to be able to be part of their happiness. We remember the times we joined in

their fun and we, too, were part of their army of nostalgia and joy.

Our broken hearts and bleeding wounds do not excuse us from being gracious, however. While grief does not give us permission to be rude and selfish, and we take no overt action against their aggression, we are not without defenses in these battles. We can shield ourselves with the armor of dignity with kind but direct and simple explanations: "We understand your need for celebration, but this year we prefer quiet and private reflection and meditation." "Right now it's hard for us to function in large groups and to appreciate laughter and high spirits." "Our energy is so limited; we'd appreciate some quiet one-on-one time with you in a more spiritual atmosphere."

We can gently remind them of how important it is for us to remember those we love who are gone. These are statements that clarify our position without judging or criticizing them for theirs. In kind and non-threatening ways, we need to tell them what's good for us, because they won't think of it on their own, and they can use the education. We also can exercise the muscles of our sense of humor. It will take some effort on our part, but so does anything that is worthwhile and good for us.

We can teach ourselves not to fall into the trap of thinking that our grief makes us the center of the universe. We can limit our demands that others treat us in "special" and "deferential" ways because of our pain. We can cut them a little slack and remember that once upon a time, we were just like they are now. It's good and healthy for us to review our perspectives now and then and decide if we're being fair and reasonable.

We can express our love in simple and unhurried ways without all the frenetic, expensive and often hysterical hype that the holidays can generate. And we must exercise the expression of our love. Grief does not rob us of our ability to love; it reminds us ever more dramatically of our need to both give and receive love while we are here.

Whenever we can take some control in our situations, we empower ourselves, and then we feel less like victims in what seems like a war of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." Anytime we can educate and inform with mercy and compassion, we have given a truly spiritual holiday gift of love that will keep on giving forever.

-- Andrea Gambill

Grief Work Is:

Allowing the pain of grief to engulf your spirit. Taking one more breath when part of you wants to die. Getting up in the morning when your body feels like it weighs a thousand pounds and couldn't possibly move. Eating delicious food and finding it tasteless. Putting clothes and makeup on without a reason. Putting thought into a decision that affects others when you couldn't care less. Returning to everyday activities when only a part of you is really there. Going through the treasures of your child's life and death and then talking about something else— for a while. Smiling through tears. If you have done any of these, your "grief work" has begun.

When does it end? After five years the load is lighter. I am comfortable with that.

--Nancy Green, Livonia, MI TCF

Grief and Marriage



When our son was killed, I remember thinking through the haze of pain that this most horrifying of life experiences would somehow bring us closer. Sharing the loss of a child created and loved by both of us for twenty years would surely deepen the bond between us. I was in for a surprise.

We clung almost blindly to each other until the shock began to give way to ugly reality. As we each moved to our individual pattern of grieving, differences began to emerge. I felt like a time bomb about to explode. I needed desperately to talk about our son. My husband refused to verbalize his feelings and became angry at my overtures. I stopped trying to communicate. This was beyond my comprehension.

Where was my helpmate, my best friend? I felt rejected, unloved and terribly alone. Anger overwhelmed me as I bitterly realized that I wasn't going to be able to share my grieving with the person who meant the most to me in the world. I knew that many marriages fail after the death of a child. Dear God, how could we possibly survive an additional tragedy?

We attended a few Compassionate Friends meetings, and then I continued alone. The gentle acceptance of others who had lost children permitted me to talk or cry without guilt. Our problem was definitely not unique; many other parents expressed similar frustrations. So many couples experience marital difficulties after the

death of a child that it is now considered the norm.

We weren't going crazy; and just because our grieving styles were different didn't mean that our whole marriage would fall apart. My anger began to dissipate as I slowly faced the fact that I had been placing unrealistic expectations on my husband.

Hurting at least as much as I, he simply could not meet my needs for support. Much later, the knowledge that support had been there all along from my friends— if I had only asked for it—saddened me. I had to admit that I simply had been too proud to reveal myself as a suffering person in need of help. I will be forever grateful to Compassionate Friends for being there with loving, open arms.

We began to have some honest discussions, agreeing that we needed each other's nurturing in order to survive and find meaning in life. We learned to respect each other's feelings. We tried to please each other in little ways: a hug, a special meal, anything that expressed caring. Patience with each other smoothed over many rough moments. Time spent alone together was very healing. It took a conscious decision from both of us to try harder. Some days, we didn't have any energy left when grief was particularly painful. It wasn't always easy as we couldn't talk about our son for a long time.

As I look back, I see that ignorance of grief and the impact it can have on a marriage was the basis for our problems. But in retrospect, how could we possibly have been prepared for the onslaught of paralyzing emotions that overwhelmed us? Anguish of this intensity can reveal a spouse you've never seen before. Deeply wounded, both of you will be inevitably changed from the experience of losing a child. Back then, understanding these simple facts would have immeasurable helped us.

--Pat Retzloff TCF Oshkosh, WI

The Tree in Our Backyard

My daughter Lesa was a free spirited child who always had something to say, who enjoyed school and loved life. One day, as part of a school project, she planted a tree in our back yard and announced that she had named the tree Angella. Lesa watered the tree daily, fertilized it, talked to it, and finally placed stakes in the ground to give it more support to help the tree grow straight. Lesa watched over this tree she named Angella with



determination and a certain amount of pride that she was able to nurture a spindly, leafless tree into a blossoming life-giving part of nature.

One day our daughter Leslie was mowing the lawn and accidentally hit the tree. Lesa witnessed this event from an upstairs window and immediately flew down the steps to confront her sister. A confrontation followed between the two girls, with Lesa demanding an apology. Leslie told me later that she did, in fact, go over to Lesa's tree, pat it on the trunk and apologize. Laughing, she told me it was not only the first time she had spoken to a tree but also the first time she had apologized to one.

Angella the tree continued to flourish and grow, watched over and nurtured by my daughter. Lesa, however, became ill with cancer. As her cancer worsened, she was unable to watch over Angella. Before our last trip to the hospital, Lesa visited the tree and discovered bumps on the leaves. We delayed our trip to spray the tree to reassure Lesa that her tree would be safe while she was in the hospital.

Lesa died on a hot summer day in August, two days before her eighth birthday. We moved away from that house, hoping to find some peace in a new environment and we transplanted Lesa's tree Angella to the back yard of our new home. We watched it closely, wondering if the tree would survive the transplant. Our special friends who knew the story of Lesa's tree shared its progress with us.

Several years later we sold our home, but this time Lesa's tree was too big to transplant. I wrote the story of Lesa's tree and how she named it Angella and how Lesa had died of cancer and I left it on the kitchen counter for the new owners, hoping they would take care of the tree.

Several months passed while I considered contacting the owners, and then one day I met the daughter of the family that now lives in our old home. She stopped to tell me that the story of Lesa's tree had been passed on to them and that they would guard Lesa's legacy for us. She described how her family had been touched by this story and they were planning to pass on the story should they move in the future.

So, the legacy of a child's love of nature and determination to take care of a special tree goes on. My daughter did not survive her cancer but the story of Angella the tree has touched the lives of every family that has lived in our house.

--Pat Langford TCF North Platte, NE

Compassionate Friends

The secret of The Compassionate Friends' success is simple: There is no line between being a helper and being helped. In the early months in TCF, it seems that most of the time is spent absorbing ideas, crying and letting the grief flow, and "learning the ropes" of being a bereaved parent.

The next step is reaching out to others and helping them. It is not a big step, for listening to another person sort out his life helps us to sort out our lives, too. But it is an important step because it is the first point at which the movement is reversed. All the energy had been going inward. We had been feeling so empty inside that we kept withdrawing into ourselves. But at that point when we turn around is the point when we first listen to another, speak the words of comfort and hope, share our pain instead of just feeling our pain. At that time the real healing has started.

--Dennis Klass, Ph.D TCF, St. Louis, MO.

Is There a Lawsuit in Your Future?



If your child dies because of carelessness or neglect on someone's part, be it an accident or illness, a lawsuit may seem the only answer that will satisfy your anger. It may appear a simple decision; instead, it is a choice that needs much consideration. Many times an out-of-court settlement for the full amount of an insurance policy is offered, but refused. Seeing the accused party on the witness stand, admitting full liability, is the only objective. No amount of money can make it otherwise.

Often there are two lines of thought within a household: one spouse in favor of a suit and unable to be at peace without one; the other spouse against the idea and unable to handle the thought of the stress that the suit would bring. The question then becomes: Whose needs are the greatest if you hope to live together in peace afterwards. Each spouse should carefully consider the other's ability to live with the final decision. There is not much comfort in winning a lawsuit but losing your marriage, or not having a lawsuit and losing your marriage.

It is important that you understand being involved in a lawsuit can, and usually does, lock you in place and does not allow you to move ahead through your grief work. It is so easy to

concentrate on a lawsuit in an effort to postpone dealing with the unpleasantness of early grief. No matter the result of your suit, your grief, being the patient thing that it is, will be there waiting for you when all is said and done on the witness stand.

Not everyone should bring a lawsuit. Even if the facts seem clear-cut and plainly in your favor, you would be wise to seek the advice of an attorney who is a specialist in wrongful death actions, before making a decision. There are a few attorneys out there who, though not qualified, will foolishly take on such a suit. There is really nothing worse than having a lawyer botch it up from lack of expertise or experience.

Once you've selected a qualified attorney and brought all the honest facts before him, give him the necessary time to investigate your claim thoroughly. Let him have the responsibility for the decision to sue or not, and in the process, relieve your family of a tremendous burden. It helps if your attorney knows about your claim as soon as possible so he can investigate it before the trail gets cold. Things can get changed or covered up if you wait too long.

If, after a thorough investigation, your attorney tells you that you don't have a suit, believe him! He isn't about to advise you against suing if he feels there is a chance your suit would be fruitful. He does, after all, make his living from fees earned from successful lawsuits. It is his job to not only analyze what is in your best interest, but also to say no when he doesn't feel you have a winnable claim. Though it hurts to be told there is no remedy for you, it does allow you to shift your interest to more attainable things that are a part of surviving after a child dies. If the decision is made to go ahead with a lawsuit, start then working on your attitude, for it does you no good to win the battle but lose the war. Don't let opposing attorneys devastate you. It is their job to discredit your claim. They should be thought of as "hired guns." They do what they must do to win for their side. You must approach the suit knowing what your child was and was not capable of. When you have the truth firmly in mind, there is no need to take every insinuation made about you or your child to heart. Once you have decided to stay above the fray, you will find you have come out a winner, no matter the outcome of the trial.

--Mary Cleckley Atlanta, GA

Peace

Today is the one year anniversary of the day my son realized he could no longer live. I know this because he told us so in the writings he left behind. It is not the anniversary of his death. What I remember of the day is that it was not unlike any other. There were no family fights or friend drama. There were no failed tests or poor academic projects.

It was just a day like today. That week was just like any other as well. Tom attended high school and college classes, and we worked, going through our days just as we always do. But Tom found a way to spend special time with each of us before he left. He and L.J. spent Monday night playing music together. I tried to record it, but it was not perfect, so I deleted the file that night. Tuesday night he and I made his favorite meal together, pasta with hot sausage red sauce. Then, we played a complicated Wii game which consisted of me pushing random buttons to fend off the bad guys while he worked his magic on the most powerful villains. We played for a few hours, until my hands hurt and I could not see straight from all of the blurred images on the television. He played the music he loved and told me which was his favorite song. I listened to it through his ears, but cannot remember the song name. That night, he peeked his head in our room, and played with the light switch, turning it on and closing the door behind him with a mischievous grin. He spent the next few days with his father, doing the things they loved to do together, including gaming with a great bunch of folks on Friday night.

He spent Saturday and Sunday at our house, doing homework, playing on the computer, and listening to music. That Sunday, as I cooked in the kitchen and talked casually with him, he wrote his final farewell to us.

We had no idea of his pain, his plan, or our future. In his note, he told us that past week had been the happiest he could remember because he was able to live during that time without fear and anxiety of the future. So a part of me is at peace, if that's possible, because he was able to spend his final hours free from his demons. But how I wish, in that week, he had found the strength to fight through the darkness and tell us of his inner war. How I wish I had seen past his armored wall into his soul, so I could pull him through to the light of our love. I wish we could have shown him how many people appreciated him and were impacted by him, and how many would have stood by his

side as he fought his undiagnosed illness so he could win his battle with a full army. I wish...

I miss him every hour of every day. I miss his humor, his intelligence, his presence, his thoughtfulness and his soul. Someone recently responded on one of my posts that maybe Tom misses me, too. I hope he is beside me as I write, and can feel the outpouring of whatever is stronger than love, that I have for him. I pray that through his death, he found the peace he could not find in life.

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

After I've Lost My Baby, Please :



1. Don't ignore me because you are uncomfortable with the subject of death - it makes me wonder if what happened to me, means nothing to you.
2. Acknowledge my pain, even if you think I shouldn't be feeling it because I've lost "only a baby." And please, don't expect me to be "over this" in a month (or maybe even a year or two); losing a baby is one of the most difficult of all life's experiences and the depth of my grief will even shock me as it returns in waves over and over again long after everyone else has forgotten. (Holidays and the anniversaries of his birth and death will be particularly difficult.)
3. If you haven't yet called and a long time has gone by, tell me that you are sorry, that you just haven't known what to say, but don't say you've been too busy! This has been an extremely large event in my life and it hurts to hear it has been so low on your priority list that you couldn't spare a five or ten minute call.
4. If you invite me for lunch in the midst of my grief, expect to talk about my loss. It's all I'm thinking about anyway and I need to talk it out. Small talk neither interests nor helps me now.
5. Don't change the subject if I start crying. Tears (and talking about it) are the healthiest way for me to release this intense emotion.
6. Telling me that so-and-so's situation must have been harder to bear won't make mine easier. It only makes me feel you don't understand or can't acknowledge the extent of my pain.
7. Don't expect that because "He's in the presence of the Lord" that is all that should matter (i.e.- that I should not be hurting). I do believe he is, and I'm thankful for that, but my arms ache to

hold him here and I miss him so.

8. Now is not the time to tell me about your own birth experiences - it reminds me painfully that you came home with a baby and I didn't.

9. Telling me I must be a very special person that God would send me such a heavy burden and that "God's will is best" implies that God purposely did this. I believe His will is best, too, but I don't believe everything that happens (including my baby's death or anyone being killed by a drunk driver, for instance) is God's will.

10. Don't remind me that I'm so lucky to have other kids I am and I know it, but my pain is excruciating for this baby and the others don't take that away.

11. No matter how bad I look, please don't say, "You look terrible." I feel like a total failure right now and I don't need to hear that I look awful too.

12. "Don't say I'm so glad you didn't get to hold him or nurse him." I am in agony because I didn't get to do those things. My arms ache to hold him and my breasts are full of milk meant for him, and the feelings of deprivation and missing my baby are so intense I can't imagine you'd believe it is easier for me this way.

13. Don't devalue my baby ("Oh well, better luck next time", etc.) - to me he was a very special, unique person and there is no way he can ever be replaced. (Besides, you don't know if there ever will be a next time - I don't either and that is a pain all it own.)

14. Don't say, "I know how you feel, I lost my mother..." It is not the same. We all expect our parents to die one day after they have lived their lives, but I am intensely grieving for all the might-have-beens of my baby's life.

15. When you ask my husband how I am doing, don't forget to ask him how he's doing too. He also lost a son he was eagerly awaiting and if you ignore his hurt it says to him that his pain shouldn't exist or doesn't matter.

16. Don't say, "you'd try again?" like I must be crazy. (If you had my history you might not want to face menopause without doing everything you could to change it either).

17. If I snap at you for saying any of the above (or anything else), please forgive me and try to understand it came from my intense pain. (Your dog might bite you when you try to pick him up at the side of the road after he's been hit by a car - that wouldn't mean he hates you or is ungrateful, just that he's been hurt and your touch, well-intentioned though it may be, has added more pain).

18. Hug me; tell me that you care and that you're sorry this happened.

19. Be available to me often if you can and let me talk and cry without judging me. Saying "don't be angry, is like saying don't be thirsty" - my feelings are part of a normal grief response and I will work through them quicker if you aren't judgmental.

20. Just love me and I will always remember you as a true friend.

--TCF, St. Louis, MO newsletter

Newly Bereaved...

Time Will Ease The Hurt



The sadness of the present days is locked and set in time, and moving to the future is a slow and painful climb.

But all the feelings that are now so vivid and so real, can't hold their fresh intensity as time begins to heal.

No wound so deep will ever go away, yet every hurt becomes a little less from day to day.

Nothing can erase the painful imprints on your mind; but there are softer memories that time, will let you find.

Though your heart won't let the sadness simply slide away, the echoes will diminish even though the memories stay.

--Bruce Wilmer TCF/ Cumberland, NJ newsletter

Seasoned Grievors...

As The World Turns

Nine and a half years ago, when the world stopped turning for me, I listened, without hearing, to the platitudes offered by those observing my sorry state. When I railed against the heavens, when I begged for release from the pain, when I prayed that I could join my beloved, now dead, child, all anyone could do was stand by and watch. There really was nothing anyone dared say without getting some horrific retort from me. So those who stayed just listened. Most drifted away, unable or unwilling to cope with the despair that emanated from my every pore.

The days were as dark as the nights. Nothing and no one could offer me any hope. And in looking back, it is hope that we all long for. It's taken years and years to heal to this point, and as the painful season of "joy" approaches, I thought I would reflect a little bit, on the journey, the

distance and the light that slowly appears at the end of the tunnel. Sure they're all clichés. But as those of us who have lived for years in the world of metaphor know only too well, they are clichés because they describe this place so well.

This will be our tenth Thanksgiving without Peter. That first Thanksgiving I thought it would be a good idea to surround myself with the activity of the day and make dinner for my remaining family. It was a major mistake. The day proved more difficult than I imagined and for years after, Phil and I refused the company of friends or family and remained sequestered at home with the tiniest turkey we could find.

It was several years later, with two other couples, also newly childless, that I attempted Thanksgiving dinner again. And with my new friends we all reflected on how grateful we were to have had our kids, even while we continued to rail together at the fates for our mutual misfortune.

The December holidays, hot on the heels of Thanksgiving, brought only more pain. Store windows, newspaper ads, magazines, television, radio... the holidays were in my face everywhere I turned. There really wasn't anywhere to hide. It was a painful annual rite of passage. But to where?

No getting around it. In spite of us, the world keeps turning. The holidays come relentlessly every year. Along with all the other special days we must anticipate and endure. But for me, more than nine holiday seasons later, the edge has finally softened. Thanksgiving remains difficult, but not as difficult. We can even enjoy sharing the day with friends. And the beauty of the holiday season, especially in a city like ours, no longer makes me angry. I'm glad now, to know that so many people are untouched (yet) by tragedy. That they can enjoy the holiday season with the brightness and clarity of innocence. And I suspect now, that so many others are like me. I no longer feel so uniquely tragic.

I am an observer now, not exactly a participant. But from my perspective, high on a perch looking back over so much of life, I can appreciate the wonder, and remember that I too was innocent once, untouched by tragedy. And knowing what I now know about life, I look at all the joy and know how tenuous it all is. I've also learned the human spirit is a miraculous thing. And that as the world turns, as night turns into day, despair can turn to hope. As the pain begins to subside, the restorative power of hope returns.

For those who are only recently bereaved it is

important to understand that there is no timetable for healing from our wounds. No formula. For some it is months, some years, some decades. Taking it one hour then one day at a time is key. There is no way to rush the process. But finding hope... that the pain will begin to soften, that despair will lift, that life will once again be worth living, that the thought of our children will bring a smile instead of tears, that just maybe, we will be with our children again someday ... you can be sure the power of hope will return.

The world is still turning. We're just going along for the ride. Rest assured we will all reach the same destination. No need to ask if we're almost there yet. One day, without even realizing, we'll know because our kids will be there, waiting.

A peaceful holiday season to you all.

--Marie Levine

Friends and Family...



Can I Still Grieve?

How much time am I allowed; are there rules I must go by.
 Does anyone ever keep track of the thousand tears I cry?
 Will I someday know the answers, have it figured in my head?
 Just how long am I supposed to grieve now that my child is dead?
 People think they know the answers to all the questions I may ask.
 But only if you've lost a child, can you understand this task.
 I'm reading all the books I can, to know what griefs about.
 But do these rules apply to all?
 It's hard to figure out.
 While driving home from work tonight, I feel I'm sinking low.
 I try to put grief off my mind, but where can I now go?
 You think grief has a pattern, with a beginning and an end.
 But I'm grieving for a lifetime, can you understand, my friend?
 So, when I really need you, will you stay or will you leave?
 What will be your answer, when I ask, "Can I still grieve?"

--Debbie Hefflinger

TCF Toledo OH

Welcome...



“...a bear wedged in great tightness.”

“In a tape called, ‘To Touch a Grieving Heart’ there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit’s hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can’t even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think grief is like being ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’ And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that ‘we need not walk alone.’ ”

Opening remarks of the late Richard Edler’s keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference

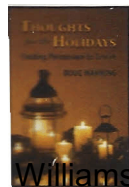
Editor’s Note: We welcome you to join us and see for yourself how helpful meetings can be.

Helpful Hint...



Treasure each other with the recognition that we do not know how long we shall have each other.
—Troy MI newsletter

Book Review...



Renewing Your Spirit A Guide for Holidays and Special Days by Sherry Williams.

A season filled with joy can become a burden to people who have recently experienced a loss in their life or are caring for a loved one. However there is a way to cope with the constant reminders and memories on these holidays and special days.

This book that will help grieving individuals learn creative ways to integrate the memories of a loved one into new holiday traditions and rituals.

Order online at www.centering.org or toll free at 1-866-218-1010 (tell them you are from TCF for free shipping).

Heart Strings

Those we love deeply are never really very far away,
For we are bound by heartstrings-

The most powerful of bonds;
Neither death nor distance can break them.
--Nadine Boyd

Freedom is Not Free ...

I watched the flag pass by one day,
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young Marine saluted it, and then
He stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform
So young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert.
He'd stand out in any crowd.

I thought how many men like him
Had fallen through the years.
How many died on foreign soil?
How many mother's tears?

How many pilots' planes shot down?
How many died at sea?
How many foxholes were soldiers graves?
No, freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night.
When everything was still.
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That taps had meant "Amen"
When a flag had draped a coffin
Of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard
At the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.
No, Freedom Is Not Free.
--Cadet Major Kelly Strong

Memory

Memory is a form of immortality
Those you remember never die
They continue to walk and talk with you
Their influence is with you always.
--Wilford A. Peterson TCF, Kansas City, MO



Troy Akasaka
Born: 1/91 Died: 2/15
Parents: Jay & Sharon Akasaka

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Connor Aslay
Born: 5/99 Died: 7/18
Mother: Erin Aslay

Jeremiah Bell
Born: 1/88 Died: 6/15
Mother: Angela Albarez

Scott Berkovitz
Born: 5/88 Died: 1/16
Parents: Carl Berkovitz & Maria Moore

Noah Bernstein
Born: 6/87 Died: 2/17
Mother: Beth Bernstein

Cheiann Jayda Berry
Born: 12/2001 Died: 7/16
Mother: Kristina Berry

Alex James Bonstein
Born: 11/91 Died: 7/16
Mother: Cynthia Sanchez

Tamara Lynette Boyd
Born: 12/65 Died: 12/00
Parents: Gloria & Gayle Jones

William Joseph Britton III
Born: 3/62 Died: 7/85
Mother: Jean Anne Britton

Larry Broks Jr.
Born: 7/88 Died: 9/17
Mother: Thessia Carpenter

Scott Vincent Buehler
Born: 3/80 Died: 2/08
Mother: Elizabeth Buehler Miller

Frank Christopher Castania
Born: 8/94 Died: 7/05
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania, Grandparents: Richard & Ann Leach

Vanessa Roseann Castania
Born: 2/97 Died: 7/05
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania, Grandparents: Richard & Ann Leach

Blair Chapin
Born: 4/82 Died: 5/18
Sister: Elizabeth Chapin

Michael Edward Clapp
Born: 2/93 Died: 4/18
Mother: Patti Clapp

John Francis Cleary
Born: 12/74 Died: 8/93
Mother: Pauline Cleary Basil

Kelly Swan Cleary
Born: 3/59 Died: 3/95
Parents: Dick & Bev Swan

Matthew Hales Clifford
Born: 1/80 Died: 3/15
Parents: Bob & Melissa Clifford

Aaron Christopher Cochran
Born: 11/90 Died: 9/12
Mother: Julia Carr

Tiffany Lamb Corkins
Born: 7/70 Died: 8/05
Mother: Nancy Lamb

Hannah Elizabeth Cortez
Born: 9/92 Died: 7/13
Parents: Rafael & Shari Cortez

Mike Sebastian Cortez
Born: 5/97 Died: 6/17
Mother: Rita Cortez

Scott Curry
Born: 8/59 Died: 7/08
Mother: Marilyn Nemeth

Michael N. Daffin
Born: 2/85 Died: 4/17
Parents: Michael & Diana Daffin

Daniel Elijah Day
Born: 4/93 Died: 5/16
Mother: Kristen Day

Michael David Deboe
Born: 12/75 Died: 5/09
Parents: Dave & Judy Deboe

Luke Edward Devlin
Born: 12/07 Died: 12/07
Parents: Jacqueline & Tom Devlin

Allison Jeanine Kirkbride Dewart
Born: 10/87 Died: 1/06
Parents: Z & Michael Dewart

Michael John Dornbach
Born: 7/60 Died: 10/17
Parents: Maria Trilegi & Edward Dornbach

Wayne Douglas
Born: 9/71 Died: 1/10
Mother: Marie Galli

Ramsay Downie, II
Born: 2/64 Died: 10/99
Parents: Ramsay & Sally Downie

Scott Michael Dykstra
Born: 7/72 Died: 10/01
Parents: Mike & Rita Dykstra

Mark Edler
Born: 11/73 Died: 1/92
Parents: Kitty & Rich Edler

Lorian Tamara Elbert
Born: 5/66 Died: 10/07
Mother: Dorota Starr Elbert

Jeffery Mark Engleman
Born: 6/61 Died: 2/10
Parents: Janette & Laszlo Engelman

Richard Paul Engelman
Born: 02/66 Died: 03/95
Parents: Janette & Laszlo Engelman

Jesse Eric Esphorst
Born: 9/00 Died: 3/17
Parents: Jesse & Julie Esphorst

Michella Leanne Matasso Fincannon
Born: 8/86 Died: 1/06
Parents: Bill & Cheryl Matasso

Emma Nicole Fisher
Born: 11/99 Died: 7/06
Parents: Nancy & Elliott Fisher

Scott Galper
Born: 2/62 Died: 5/97
Mother: Sheri Schrier

Lexie Rose Gilpin
Born: 4/09 Died: 4/09
Mother: Michele Gilpin

Steven Paul Giuliano
Born: 4/55 Died: 4/95
Mother: Eleanor Giuliano

Leslie Geraci Hart
Born: 6/66 Died: 7/11
Father: John Geraci

Adam Guymon
Born: 4/89 Died: 4/06
Mother: Eileen Guymon

Christie Hagenburger
Born: 4/63 Died: 12/17
Father: D.W. Hagenburger

Jennifer Nicole Hower
Born: 6/75 Died: 12/04
Brother: Jeff Hower

Rachel Suzanne Hoyt
Born: 2/70 Died: 1/95
Sister: Laura Hoyt D'anna

Sarah Jade Hurley
Born: 6/97 Died: 5/17
Father: Tim Hurley
Grandmother: Laurie Hurley

Steven Ishikawa
Born: 9/75 Died: 4/17
Mother: Miki Ishikawa

Emily Matilda Kass
Born: 6/95 Died: 3/06
Mother: Susan Kass

Douglas Drennen Kay
Born: 3/72 Died: 9/06
Parents: Diane & Steve Kay

Kathryn Anne Kelly
Born: 12/72 Died: 1/91
Parents: Dick & Timmy Kelly

Colby Joshua Koenig
Born: 6/84 Died: 1/10
Parents: Cindy Tobis & John Koenig

Scott Koller
Born: 10/83 Died: 3/15
Mother: Betty Benson

Keith Konopasek
Born: 1/63 Died: 7/95
Parents: Ken & Mary Konopasek

Michael Kroppman
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12
Parents: Brenda & Greg Kroppman



Cherese Mari Lauhere
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96
Parents: Larry & Chris
Lauhere

Bryan Yutaka Lee
Born: 12/70 Died: 9/07
Mother: Kathee Lee

Steven J. Lee
Born: 1/63 Died: 10/06
Mother: Donna Lee

Kevin Le Nguyen
Born: 5/88 Died: 6/14
Mother: Tracy Le Nguyen

Joseph Licciardone
Born: 4/94 Died: 3/16
Parents: Connie & Leo
Licciardone

Gaby Lindeman
Born: 7/64 Died: 9/12
Parents: Gilberto & Graciela
Rodriguez

Alberto Lopez
Born: 8/66 Died: 2/12
Mother: Albertina Lopez

Richard Lee Luthe
Born: 11/76 Died: 1/98
Parents: Jeff & Lorraine Luthe

Shauna Jean Malone
Born: 8/70 Died: 1/13
Parents: Tom & Mary Malone

Elizabeth Mann
Born: 7/60 Died: 5/05
Parents: David & Olivia Mann

Janet Sue Mann
Born: 10/61 Died: 9/10
Mother: Nancy Mann

Alex J. Mantyla
Born: 3/89 Died: 8/08
Parents: Jarmo & Bonnie
Mantyla

Travis Frederick Marton
Born: 10/91 Died: 1/15
Mother: Ricki Marton

Matthew "Matty" Louis Matich
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Mother: Shirley Matich

Max McCarty
Born: 4/05 Died: 8/15
Parents: Derk & Akemi
McCarty

Joseph Mc Coy
Born: 9/11 Died: 11/14
Mother: Amy McCoy

Sarah Mc Donald
Born: 10/00 Died: 6/23
Parents: Tom & Shideh Mc
Donald

Kirk Mc Nulty
Born: 7/84 Died: 2/14
Mother: Elaine Mc Nulty

Jeremy Stewert Mead
Born: 10/61 Died: 11/14
Mother: Carol Mead

Robert Andrew Mead
Born: 5/65 Died: 4/11
Mother: Carol Mead

Nicole Marie Megaloudis
Born: 10/84 Died: 2/04
Mother: Gail Megaloudis-
Rongen

Shawn Mellen
Born: 05/81 Died: 8/99
Godmother: Rose Sarukian

Damion Mendoza
Born: 7/76 Died: 6/92
Parents: Carlene & Paul
Mendoza

Christopher Metsker
Born: 11/94 Died: 3/18
Parents: Justin & Tara
Metsker

Steven Douglas Millar
Born: 2/70 Died: 10/00
Parents: David & Suzanne
Millar

Jacki Montoya
Born: 10/89 Died: 6/15
Mother: Theresa Montoya

Joshua Montoya
Born: 4/15 Died: 6/15
Grandmother: Theresa
Montoya

Danielle Ann Mosher
Born: 8/78 Died: 6/97
Parents: Paul & Rose Mary
Mosher

Benjamin A. Moutes
Born: 3/07 Died: 5/10
Parents: Kevin & Claudia
Moutes

Danielle Murillo
Born: 5/96 Died: 4/14
Parents: Cheryl Outlaw &
Manuel Murillo

Christopher Myers
Born: 10/86 Died: 5/06
Parents: Janet & Larry Myers

Edward W. Myricks II
Born: 4/72 Died: 10/11
Parents: Edward & Sandra
Myricks

Lisa Nakamaru
Born: 12/93 Died: 10/14
Mother: Grace Nakamaru

Richard Paul Negrete
Born: 6/43 Died: 2/04
Mother: Sally Negrete

Stephanie Sue Newkirk
Born: 12/67 Died: 10/15
Mother: Cindy McCoy

Steven Scott Nussbaum
Born: 5/61 Died: 11/15
Parents: Will & Gloria
Nussbaum

Trevor Mitchell Nicholson
Born: 7/99 Died: 1/18
Parents: Brad & Kendra
Nicholson

Sally Anne O'Connor
Born: 12/62 Died: 2/11
Mother: Grace "Darline" Dye

Isabella Ofsanko
Born: 6/97 Died: 10/15
Mother: Desiree Palmer

Dominique Oliver
Born: 5/85 Died: 3/02
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Jessica Perez
Born: 5/89 Died: 10/03
Sister: Monica Perez

Andrew Periaswamy
Born: 5/97 Died: 10/16
Parents: Megala & Xavier
Periaswamy

Donnie Vincent Puliselich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/08
Mother: Maria Puliselich
Sister: Michelle Pulislich

Shannon Quigley
Born: 12/68 Died: 1/09
Mother: Kathleen Shortridge

Dax Jordan Quintana Dantas
De Oliveria
Born: 6/17 Died: 8/17
Parents: Alexandar &
Sanderson
Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

Daniel Paul Rains
Born: 4/72 Died: 3/91
Mother: Janet Ferjo

Jeffrey Alan Rakus
Born: 10/86 Died: 7/06
Parents: Tony & Donna Rakus

Leo Joshua Rank II
Born: 3/11 Died: 4/12
Parents: Roberta Redner &
Leo Rank

Cindy Ranftl
Born: 8/68 Died: 7/97
Parents: Pat & Bob Ranftl

Sarah Lynne Redding
Born: 12/80 Died: 12/05
Mother: Linda Redding

Aaron Rico
Born: 12/89 Died: 12/10
Parents: Cameron & Annette
Rico

Dominic Niall Pennington
Roque
Born: 8/02 Died: 9/09
Parents: Kerrie & Ren Roque

John Patrick Rouse
Born: 1/78 Died: 7/02
Mother: Sharon Rouse

Michael B. Ruggera, Jr.
Born: 4/51 Died: 4/96
Parents: Michael & Frances
Ruggera

Danny Ryan
Born: 07/79 Died: 10/15
Parents: Mike & Andrea Ryan



Our Children

Andrew Patrick Sakura
Born: 3/90 Died: 3/08
Parents: Bruce & Karen Sakura

Daniela Mora Saldana
Born: 3/17 Died: 3/17
Mother: Rosa Saldana

Lisa Sandoval
Born: 9/76 Died: 12/92
Parents: Susan & Ruben Sandoval

Phillip Ruben Sandoval
Born: 7/84 - Died: 6/16
Parents: Valerie & Joe Desjardin

Andrew Sankus
Born: 4/71 Died: 8/15
Mother: Mary Sankus

Jonathan "Jamie" Schubert
Born: 7/65 Died: 12/06
Parents: Lynn & Roy Schubert

Spencer Simpson
Born: 1/80 Died: 6/13
Parents: Rich & Shelly Simpson

Gerald Slater
Born: 2/71 Died: 8/94
Parents: Bob & Gwen Slater

Paul Slater
Born: 10/71 Died: 11/16
Parents: Bob & Gwen Slater

Dale Lee Soto
Born: 7/94 Died: 5/11
Mother: Monique Soto

Patrik Stezinger
Born: 1/89 Died: 8/17
Parents: Raul & Rosemary Mosher

Jonathan David Streisand
Born: 1/87 Died: 8/13
Parents: Pricilla & David Streisand

Brittany Anne Suggs
Born: 10/88 Died: 4/16
Mother: Camille Suggs

Elizabeth D. Szucs
Born: 4/72 Died: 6/11
Parents: Dolores & Frank Szucs

Kenneth Tahan
Born: 2/66 Died: 7/16
Parents: Shirley & Joseph Tahan

Lorian Tamara Talbert
Born: 5/66 Died: 10/07
Mother: Dorota Starr Elbert

Anthony Tanori
Born: 8/82 Died: 8/12
Parents: Chuck & Sylvia Tanori

Ryan William Thomas
Born: 2/82 Died: 4/04
Mother: Linda Thomas

Laura C. Toomey
Born: 1/61 Died: 12/78
Mother: Michael & Elizabeth Toomey

Michael D. Toomey
Born: 4/62 Died: 2/05
Mother: Michael & Elizabeth Toomey

Catarina Sol Torres
Born: 12/16 Died: 12/16
Parents: Marcus & Vanessa Torres

Carlos Valdez
Born: 01/61 Died: 01/12
Parents: Antonia & Refugio Valdez

Vance C. Valdez
Born: 10/90 Died: 3/12
Parents: Carlos & Maria Valdez

Lexi Noelle Valladares
Born: 4/04 Died: 7/10
Parents: Fausto & Erica Valladares

Manuel Vargas III
Born: 3/95 - Died: 5/15
Father: Manuel Vargas

David Michael Villarreal
Born: 11/90 Died: 2/18
Parents: David & Barbara Villarreal

Eric Douglas Vines
Born: 7/77 Died: 7/91
Parents: Doug & Lynn Vines

Rennie S. Wible
Born: 8/66 Died: 1/18
Mother: Jinx Wible

Dovan Vincent Wing
Born: 6/83 Died: 9/17
Mother: Becky Wing

Aaron Young
Born: 9/74 Died: 6/15
Mother: Sheila Young

Remembered



Steve R. Young
Born: 7/57 Died: 2/90
Mother: Marjorie Young

Whitney Marie Young
Born: 8/87 Died: 11/06
Parents: Marlene & Steve Young

Thomas Zachary
Born: 12/85 Died: 7/11
Father: Bob McGaha

Michael Jordan Zareski
Born: 5/71 Died: 12/17
Parents: Susan & Norm Zareski

Kevin Zelik
Born: 11/85 Died: 6/10
Parents: Joe & Linda Zelik

Birthday Tributes...

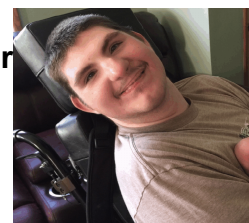


In honor of your child's birthday, we welcome you to submit a birthday tribute. Though your child is no longer here to buy a present for, think of this as a birthday present about your child. This tribute is an opportunity to share your child with us all. (We thank you for any birthday donations that help offset chapter expenses.)

* Please remember we are always working a month in advance and need your tributes by the first of the month preceding the actual birthday.

A Birthday Tribute to:

Christopher Metsker
11/94 – 3/18



My Dear Christopher,
Not a day goes by where you are not thought of or your name isn't spoken. I miss walking in to you smiling and clapping. I miss the sweet sound of your laugh especially when I would vacuum in circles just because it brought you such joy. I miss you reaching out to hold my hand every time I stopped to kiss your cheeks.

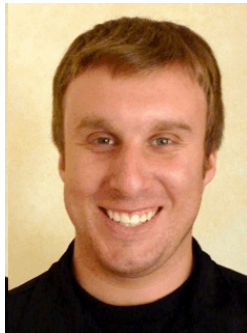
You were an inspiration to many. Your strength and infectious smile touched hearts all over the world. You taught me more than I could have ever taught you. You taught me

patience, unconditional love and to appreciate the little things. I am a better person because of you my precious son. I know you are in heaven chasing all the girls, dancing to Britney Spears and eating all the cheeseburgers and ice cream your little heart desires. My heart is broken without you but knowing you are free from pain gives me some comfort. "It's been a long day with you my son, And I'll tell you all about it when I see you again" Happy Forever 23rd Birthday
Love you so much, Mom

A Birthday Tribute to:

Kevin Zelik

Nov. 1985 - June 2010



Happy birthday, Kevin!
This month you would have been 32 years old, instead of forever 24. We still miss you every day, but cherish the memories of the precious years that we did have!

Thank you for the signs, and pranks, that you have sent us from Heaven! We love every one of them because it reminds us that you are still around us in spirit!

Love, Mom, Dad and Jeanine

For Siblings...



With The Changing Of The Seasons

In the fall of 1996, the leaves were changing colors (as much as they change colors in southern California), the wind was blowing, and there was a chill in the air. This was a season I didn't really like. It meant the end of summer, my favorite season, and that it would soon be cold-as cold as it ever really gets in southern California. Fall caught me off guard this year. It seemed the most beautiful season I had ever experienced. Everything about it seemed larger and more noticeable than ever before. I noticed things like leaves blowing, the skies darkening, even the crispness in the air. Had I ever paid attention or seen the beauty in these things before? After a few days of really enjoying these changes happening before my eyes, I realized that I had totally missed fall the previous year, and most of the rest of the year as well.

You see, my big brother—my only brother— was shot and killed on July 8, 1995.

Keith (or Keithie or Brother, as I referred to him) was a rookie police officer with the Oakland, California, police department. The evening of Saturday, July 8, around 6:30 pm, Keith was conducting a routine traffic stop with another officer, searching a suspect's car for narcotics. The suspect's car was stopped in front of a house where a man, uninvolved in the stop, watched from his doorway. He picked up an assault rifle, aimed it at my brother's back, and pulled the trigger. Keith was unconscious within 20 seconds and pronounced dead two hours later at the hospital. Everything was done to try and save his life, but assault rifle bullets are intended to kill from as far away as 500 feet, and this man was less than 30 feet from Keith.

Within two hours I had been informed of the shooting and that my parents had flown from our home in southern California to Oakland. By 10 pm my dad had called to tell my husband and me that my brother was dead As the day closed I didn't realize that it was the day that would forever more be my mark of time- before Keith died, and after Keith died.

The next morning the most remarkable thing happened-cars were driving past my front window as they always had. What were these people thinking? How could life just go on as usual? My big brother had been murdered. Shouldn't everything have stopped, like it did for me last night? At 27, and a newlywed I thought I would never survive this. How could I survive the loss of someone I loved so much, and deal with such a brutal death as well? But for now my survival had to be put on hold, because I had to take care of my mom, and help my dad with all the arrangements and the resolving of my brother's affairs. I had to be there for my little sister, who was single at the time- and what about my brother's fiancée, just two months shy of her wedding day?

I spent the next few months taking care of all of these: attending the funeral services; award dinners; and different events honoring his ultimate sacrifice while performing in the line of duty. We traveled back and forth from southern to northern California several times for these events. While there we also spent time with Keith's fiancée and friends, selling his house, packing up his belongings and closing out the book that had been his life. We also made numerous trips to attend arraignment hearings for the man who had killed him. And when this was all over we settled

back in at home and began nervously waiting for the trial to start.

Later in the year we traveled back and forth numerous times up north for more trial dates, only to find them postponed or rescheduled. We finally spent four days of court time (which is seven working days to the rest of us) at the preliminary trial. I felt that I had to attend every court appearance in order that the victim, my brother who could not be there, would be represented. Living so far away, this was a huge task for my family and me.

Also in that first year we attended national memorial services held in Washington, D. C., for all United States police officers killed in the line of duty, and state memorial services held in Sacramento. Rightly so, police officer funerals and memorials are very "pomp and circumstance," with the folding of flags, the playing of taps, the gun salutes, bagpipes, the missing man formations, the speeches by dignitaries, and the news and media. How draining that is to virtually redo the funeral three times. But at the same time it was an incredible honor, and I was never prouder of my big brother!

As the fall of 1996 rolled around I was through the first year of our tragedy, very involved in TCF, and had started and was leading the sibling group of our TCF chapter. I felt I was making progress toward a healthy resolution of my grief and the realization that my life would never be the same.

It was at this time while driving down a beautiful stretch of road when I noticed the changing season, and began realizing all that I had missed the previous year. The changing of the seasons had never really mattered to me before, but now having missed one, I realized how much beauty there was in this, and that I had been taking it all for granted. I was laughing more now when I thought of Keith, and I was aware of all the gifts he was constantly giving my family and me. After a year and three months my intense grief had lifted and I was finding joy again. Although there were still many painful roads ahead for us in the months and years that followed (and always will be), I had survived what I thought was not survivable. Fall is now my favorite time of the year, and as it again approaches, I wait to see what gifts of life Keith will bring me this year!

--Kristy Mueller TCF, South Bay/LA CA

For Grandparents...



In many families, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are every bit as profound as those between parents and their children. The death of a grandchild also ranks high on the scale of human grief – but it is rarely acknowledged. There are few books or support groups addressing the grief of grandparents, and bereavement counselors who specialize in this kind of grief are rare. Grandparents are usually left to cope as best they can.

When a grandchild dies, the anguish of grandparents is doubled. Their grief for a son or daughter suffering this tragic loss only compounds their pain at the loss of a beloved grandchild. Grandparents who outlast a grandchild struggle with a death that seems out of order; they may cope with survival guilt, perhaps wondering why they couldn't have died instead. Moreover, a grandchild's death chips away at a grandparent's assumed legacy. Most of us hope to make a mark in the world, and the achievements of our children and grandchildren are a part of that dream. When one dies prematurely, that loss resonates through the generations, and like the bell in John Donne's poem – "it tolls for thee."

--By Helen Fitzgerald, CT

New TCF Beach Cities/L.A. Chapter Started in Manhattan Beach...

Kristen Day who has attended some of our meetings and last year's candle lighting has started a new TCF chapter in Manhattan Beach. Their first meetings will be held on Oct. 23rd, and going forward it will be on the third Tuesday of the month. It is located at the Manhattan Beach Community Church on Artesia and Peck. The meeting will start at 7:00 P.M. We hope you can join us as we support her at their first meeting.

From Our Members...



A Thanksgiving Prayer From "A" Bereaved Parent

Dear God,

Though I'll never be glad that my child died, I thank you with all my heart that she lived. She

touched my life in a way that only she could and I'll always feel enriched for having known her.

Thank you for the strength and courage to endure what has happened. While the lesson was very painful, I have learned that I can handle whatever life has to offer.

Thank you for the little miracles you have sent me. The messages took a little while to sink in, but I am comforted by them now.

Thank you for the friends who gathered around me when I needed them the most. They stayed with me through the horrible times and, now through the good times.

Thank you for the friends I have made. They have a very special place in my heart. Though they never knew my child, they care enough about me to listen, hug me, cry, or whatever I need.

Thank you for making me constantly search for whatever good I can find in a situation and strive to improve myself. I will never again be the person I was before my child's death, but I am not broken and empty as I once was afraid I would be. I have more compassion and patience. I am less judgmental. I am the "New and Improved" me.

Thank you for love. Loving someone means risking being devastated by losing again. Never loving, though, would be an even greater loss.

Thank you most of all for my family. They loved me, cried with me, missed my child too, shared my pain, understood, listened to my endless stories, and waited patiently until I could walk on my own again. They were, at first, the only reason I could face another day. Now that I am, once again, a participant in life instead of just a spectator, they share my joy.

Finally, I thank you for taking care of my child. I know she's happy, at peace, and safe in your care. I look forward to the day when I'll see her again. Amen.

--Kathy McCormick, Lower Bucks, PA

Submitted by Linda Curtis

We welcome and encourage you to submit contributions you found meaningful to you in your grief. We prefer your original poems and thoughts, but we can also print other material if proper credit is given to the author. Please take the time to submit a poem or article you found helpful.

Welcome New Members ... We welcome our new members to our chapter of TCF. We're sorry you have a need to be with us, but we hope you feel you have found a safe place to share your

grief and will return. It often takes a few meetings to feel at ease in a group setting. Please try attending three meetings before deciding if TCF is for you. Each meeting is different, and the next one might be the one that really helps.

We encourage you to take advantage of our resources. We have a well stocked library of grief materials, a phone friend committee that welcomes calls at any time, and a members' directory to call another parent you have met at the meetings.



Get Your Photo Buttons...

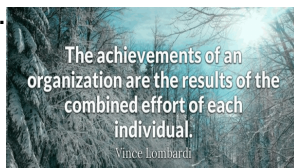
Photo buttons are a perfect way to share your child, grandchild or sibling with others at monthly meetings. If you would like to have some made, simply bring a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) to any of our chapter meetings and Ken can make them for you. There is no cost. Keep in mind that the button is about 3" in diameter, so the picture needs to fit inside that area and the actual photo is used, so make sure it's one we can cut.

Birthday Tributes... During your child's birthday month, you may place a picture and either a short personal message, poem, or story about your child in the newsletter. (Less than 200 words, please.) Do not cut your picture. We will block off unused areas. If it is a group photo, identify the person to be cropped. This tribute is an opportunity to tell a short story about your child, so we will be able to know them better. Photos must have identification on the back. Enclose a SASE in order for photos to be returned by mail. (Please do not send your only picture.)

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month preceding your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: Nov. 1st for Dec. birthdays). Otherwise they will appear if space permits or in the following month's issue.

Memory Book... Our chapter has an ongoing Memory Book that is on display at each meeting. Each child is given a page in the book. Blank pages are located in the back of the book. Feel free to take a page home to work on. Pictures, poems, or a tribute you choose that will help us to remember your child can be included. Feel free to add your picture to the Memory Book at any of our meetings. This is one way we can meet and remember the new member's children.

Library Information... At each meeting we have a library table. It is on the honor system. You may borrow a book and can bring it back at the next meeting. Many of you have books you got when you were newly bereaved and may no longer need. Perhaps you would like to donate books on grief that you found helpful. If you wish to donate a book to our library, please let Linda know so we can put your child's name on a donation label inside the book.



Thank You ... Thank you to all those who donate to our meeting basket or send donations to our chapter. Since there are no fees or dues to belong to TCF, it is only your donations that keep us functioning, and we appreciate your help. Just a Hint: If you plan to leave \$\$ at the TCF meeting, you might want to make it by check so you can receive an IRS deduction. No amount is too small and they are needed to keep our chapter going.

Our Website... Joe Zelik is hosting the website and updating it with the current newsletter and chapter information. Thank you to those who are willing to get you newsletter online. To be able to send a reminder each month to let you know when the latest issue of the newsletter is available, we need your e-mail address. If you have not been getting a reminder e-mail, please let me know. To update our files, please call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 to update by phone. You can also e-mail Lynn at Lynntcf@aol.com If you want to do it electronically. Thank-you for your understanding and help. TCF South Bay/LA

Phone Friends ... Sometimes you want or need to talk about the life and death of your child with someone that understands and can share your pain. The following friends are on the telephone committee, and are available to talk when ever you need someone who understands. Linda Zelik (chapter co-leader).....(310) 370-1645
Mary Sankus (chapter co-leader).(310) 648-4878
Kitty Edler.....(310) 541-8221
Richard Leach (grandchild).....(310) 833-5213
Kristy Mueller (sibling).....(310) 938-2409



Regional Coordinator

Olivia Garcia.....(818) 736-7380

LOCAL TCF CHAPTERS

Beach Cities/L.A. (Manhattan Beach): (970) 213-

6293. Third Tues

Los Angeles: (310) 474-3407 1st Thurs.

Newport Beach (917) 703-3414 3rd Wed.

Orange Coast/Irvine: (949) 552-2800 1st Wed.

Orange Co./Anaheim: (562) 943-2269

Pomona/San Gabriel: (626) 919-7206

Redlands: (800) 717-0373 3rd Tues.

Riverside-Inland Empire: (909) 683-4160

San Fernando Valley: (818) 788-9701 2nd Mon.

South Los Angeles: (323) 546-9755 last Tue

Ventura Co. TCF: (805)981-1573 1&3 Thurs.

Verdugo Hills: (818) 957-0254 4th Thurs.

Local Support Groups...

FAMILY & FRIENDS OF MURDER VICTIMS:

Rose Madsen, (909) 798-4803 Newsletter and support group, e-mail Roseydoll@aol.com

ALIVE ALONE: For parents who have lost their only child, or all their children. 1112 Champaign Dr., Van Wert, OH 45891 Newsletter available. www.Alivealone.org

SURVIVORS AFTER SUICIDE: Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide.

Contact Sam & Lois Bloom (310) 377-8857

OUR HOUSE/BEREAVEMENT HOUSE: Support groups in LA & So. Bay (310) 475-0299 Also Spanish Support Group, Loren Delgado 310-231-3196.

PATHWAYS HOSPICE: Bereavement support and sibling group. Bill Hoy (562) 531-3031

NEW HOPE GRIEF SUPPORT COMMUNITY: Grief support and education groups for adults and children. Long Beach, CA 90808, (562) 429-0075

PROVIDENCE TRINITY CARE HOSPICE AND THE GATHERING PLACE: Various bereavement support groups including support for loss of a child, support group for children 5-8, 9-12, and teens. (310) 546-6407

TORRANCE MEMORIAL BEREAVEMENT SERVICES:

(310) 325-9110 Weekly grief support. **THE LAZARUS CIRCLE:** Monthly grief support. Meets third Thurs of each month, 6-7;15 at First Lutheran Church, 2900 W. Carson St. Torrance

SHARE Pregnancy & Infant Loss: Contact: Megan Heddlesten (800) 821-6819

Walk With Sally: Cancer loss bereavement & art therapy for children- Monica Fyfe (310) 378-5843

Camp Comfort Zone - Year round Bereavement Camp for Children www.comfortzonecamp.org (310) 483-8313.

Other Grief Support Websites...

agast.org (for grandparents) groww.com

goodgriefresources.com
 beyondindogp.com
 angelmoms.com
 healingafterloss.org
 survivorsofsuicide.com
 taps.org (military death)
 bereavedparentsusa.org
 pomc.com (families of murder victims)
 grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)
 www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)

childloss.com
 griefwatch.com
 babysteps.com
 webhealing.com
 opentohope.com
 alivealone.org
 save.org

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Staples for their help in printing our newsletters each month and to The Neighborhood Church for the use of their facilities for our meetings.

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER LEADER: Linda Zelik
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
 TREASURER: Ken Konopasek
 WEBSITE: Joe Zelik



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

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Cheryl & Bill Matasso	Lynn Vines
Nancy Lerner	Ken Konopasek
Kitty Edler	Susan Kass
Mary Sankus	Crystal Henning
Sandra & Eddie Myricks	

National Office Information

Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters. We encourage everyone use the valuable information it holds to help you in your grief. To receive TCF's e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting TCF national website at <http://compassionatefriends.org>. and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

The National Office of TCF has an ongoing support group for parents and siblings online. For a complete schedule and to register for Online Support, visit <http://compassionatefriends.org> and follow the directions to register. There is also a closed group chat room for specific topics that you need to register for.

Closed Group Chat... TCF National has several closed Facebook groups you may find helpful on

your grief journey. Click the blue link above to be connected and request to join.

TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes

Moderators: Barbara Allen and Mary Lemley

TCF - Loss to Suicide Moderators: Cathy

Seehuetter and Donna Adams

TCF - Loss to Homicide Moderators: Debbie

Floyd and Kathleen Willoughby

TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss Moderators:

Susan Peavler and Tiffany Barraso

TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related

Causes Moderators: Andrea Keller and Barbara Allen

The Compassionate Friends Sounds of the

Siblings (for bereaved siblings) *Moderators:*

Tracy Milne and Keith Singer

TCF – Loss of a Grandchild Moderators: Betty

Farrel and Jennifer Sue Hale

TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth

Moderators: Kelly Kittel and Kenzie Janzen

TCF – Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children

Moderators: Lisa Ridge and Vicki Woods-Ozias

TCF – Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver

Moderators: Robin Landry and Rebecca Perkins

TCF – Loss to Cancer Moderators: Lee

Meyerson, Michelle Setzer, Marguerite Caraway Ward

TCF is On Facebook Please visit and help promote TCF. You can get there by clicking on the link from TCF's national website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org. Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA. In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page will have information about upcoming events.

Healing the Grieving Heart... Featuring experts who discuss the many aspects of grief, with a main focus on the death of a child and its effects on the family. "Healing the Grieving Heart" can be heard on the Web live at www.health.voiceamerica.com.

Save the Date



for the 42nd TCF National Conference in Philadelphia, PA with the theme, "Hope Rings in Philadelphia". Watch for the latest information on the 2019 national website.

DONATIONS TO THE SOUTH BAY/L.A. CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



The Compassionate Friends is a totally self-supporting organization. Our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, but we do have operating costs. Your tax deductible donation is what keeps our chapter going. If you want the ease of using a credit card, we now have a credit card or pay-pal account for donations. Use the "Donate Link" on our Website at www.tcfsbla.org Or if you prefer, you can always mail in a check to the P.O. Box

Please consider giving a donation in your loved one's name.

In loving memory of all of our children who are gone too soon. As Thanksgiving nears I am thankful for The Compassionate Friends that were there when I needed it the most...When I didn't think anyone could truly understand my pain...When I didn't understand how I would ever feel any different...That there was hope after all. Alan Pederson's poem sums up how TCF needs us as well. "If you are new in your grief, please understand that those of us who have found our way were once where you are. Lean on us, trust in the process of fully grieving your loss with the comfort and support of others who have walked though our doors feeling hopeless and helpless but who now can be there for you." End of the year donations to TCF insures that our chapter will be there for those who will need our help.

With sincere gratitude and deep appreciation, we acknowledge the generosity of the previous individuals and companies. Your tax deductible donation, given, in memory of your loved one enables us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and they also help defray newsletter and mailing costs. Please help us reach out to others in this difficult time. Indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter.

When making a donation, please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

Tribute _____

To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171

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November 2018

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,
just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.
We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength,
while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression,
while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other
our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love
to share the pain as well as the joy,
share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts,
and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

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If you no longer wish to receive this mailing or have a new address, please contact us.