



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

MAY 2019 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be May 2nd, 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 May 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will start with "Observing Special Days."

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.

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The **May 2nd meeting** The May 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will start with "Observing Special Days." Mother's Day, Father's Day, proms, graduations, and weddings can catch bereaved parents by surprise. We may anticipate that our child's birthday and anniversary day will be painful, but often times less major holidays leave us feeling overwhelmed. For many bereaved parents Mother's Day and Father's day seem to scream at us that our wonderful child is dead. If this is the first year without your child, you may be overwhelmed with emotions and not know what to do about celebrating anything. We will be discussing various methods other bereaved families have devised to make these holidays and special occasions a little easier to bear.



## May: The Unusually Difficult Month

For the bereaved parent, May is frequently the cruelest month. The month of May offers the rest of the world a promise of another carefree summer, swimming, family vacations, relaxation, reading, cook-outs and picnics, trips to the lake and so much that is inherent in our culture.

Yet May also brings memories of our children. The common denominator for mothers (and fathers) is Mother's Day. This tradition was wonderful when our children were alive, now the direct mail and newspaper advertising sentimental television spots, in-store promotions, cards and letters and the countdown to the day itself are very cruel reminders of our lost children. Who will remember us on Mother's Day?

This will be my fourth Mother's Day without my son. I miss him terribly all year long, but May and December are the worst months for me. First we have Mother's Day, then my son's birthday and throughout the month I am bombarded with invitations for high school and college graduations each one reminding me of what once was. My son finishing grade school, high school, college, graduate school. Each was accompanied by a ceremony. All the ceremonies rush into my mind as I realize how much of myself is in my memories and those memories are very entwined with my son's life. A big part of me died with him that night in December.

Three years ago I was overwhelmed, sobbing, still occasionally in deep shock. My mind was

mush, my heart was crushed and I did not have the will to do much more than quietly weep. It was my first Mother's Day without my son, the first birthday that he wasn't here, the first Memorial Day Weekend without him. I was paralyzed. May would never be joyful for me again.

What to do ... what to do. I ask myself this question each April as we begin the ramp up to the longest month. This year, I am counting out the last days of April and wondering how I will handle it. I am not worried about it; I am just wondering. I have gotten used to the transformation that has taken place in my mind, heart and soul. I experienced a slow spiritual awakening which accompanied a deep, deep sense of loss over which I have no control. I go with it.

There are questions that we must ask ourselves. The answers are unique to us. Collectively we know this is a month to dread; individually we have our own memories and our own methods of coping. Collectively we lean on each other for hope, comfort and support. Individually, we each walk our own road depending on how many circumstances of life are in our month of May: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations. How we handled the beginning of summer, the end of the school year all of these events can bombard us in May. The memories float into our minds like a mist that thickens into a heavy fog. We are enveloped in our fog of memories; the before death years come to us in a hodgepodge of the happiest times and clash with the reality of now. These are our memories, our children and ultimately our choices. And there seems to be little joy we can take from this month of memories.

Once again, we make the decision. If we are not ready to acknowledge Mother's Day, we shouldn't do it. If we are facing other days in May that will tear at our hearts, we must plan for it. Some of us prefer to be alone and isolated. Others of us prefer to be with friends or family. Some of us go to the cemetery; others go to the park. Some read, watch movies, sit on the deck or simply rest. Others take a weekend trip, which puts them into a different state of reality. There are as many choices as there are parents who have lost their children. Consider your options.

Be honest with yourself. Don't be pushed into

anything. Take control. We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I am working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope, and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

—Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF/Katy, TX

## Mother's Day



Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past... gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children. With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the eighth Mother's Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself... "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

While my first Mother's Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother's Days have been more subdued. The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just "go with the flow." Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth.

The day itself is not nearly as overwhelming as the buildup of anxiety and sadness which precedes it. I have found this to be true of all holidays, birthdays, death anniversaries and special occasions. I am trying to live in the moment. When the moment of Mother's Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

--Eastside TCF Kirkland, WA

## Making Mother's and Father's Day Special

Here are a few hints to help you through these days after the loss of a child.

- 1) Pamper yourself— this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
- 2) Do what you need to do— what helps you. Grieve your way.
- 3) Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice.
- 4) Plan ahead—do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace.
- 5) Start new rituals to make new memories.
- 6) Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.)
- 7) Include deceased children in the day— through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
- 8) Join with another bereaved family to honor this day and have mutual support.
- 9) Start a garden or add to a special garden in

memory of your child.

10) Use this day to plant spring flowers so you can always see your child in each bloom and each bouquet that you cut.

11) Visit the cemetery if that helps your heart on this day.

12) Plant a flower or shrub that will come to bloom this time of year.

13) Do something special for someone else or something special in your child's name (helping Cancer Care, MADD, Scouting, a nursing home, etc.)

14) Listen to music that makes your heart feel good.

15) Cook some favorite recipes that your child enjoyed or cooked for you.

16) Buy a present for yourself from your child and enjoy the comfort it brings you.

17) Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.

18) Attend a family gathering of relatives— their love and support can give you a lift on this day.

19) Make a booklet of favorite poems that help your heart, and give copies to dear relatives and friends in memory of your child.

20) Take part in a special church ceremony honoring Mother's Day and Father's Day.

22) Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone.

23) Write a letter to your child, telling what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).

24) Allow the tears to flow— crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings.

25) Think of a way to "share your child with the world" - making sure his or her memory lives on through scholarships, writing, good deeds.

26) Give and get plenty of hugs.

--Elaine Stillwell Rockville Center, NY

## My April Child



When our daughters were growing up the arrival of springtime was a favorite time of the year, filled with anticipation of the coming of special days of family fun. The freshness of the air, the brilliant colors of springtime trees and flowers, and the song of the birds returned from their winter retreat resounded the message of

hope and that life was good. We had survived another cold, snowy Michigan winter and we are soon to be rewarded with blue sky, sunshine and temperatures well above freezing!

Birthdays in our family were a time of celebration together. Each year Larry, Anna, Debbie and I, and perhaps a friend or two, would celebrate Anna's April birthday by dining at her favorite Mexican restaurant. There would be lots of silliness and laughter. During her teenage years, Anna would always forewarn us not to have the staff come to our table to sing their crazy birthday song. Of course, since we always insisted that our role as parents was to embarrass our children, her threats and warnings could not stop our tomfoolery. I believe she secretly enjoyed the attention.

As Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories... That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. My April child died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away on her birthday. For several years we did just that. With hearts filled with the numbness of fresh grief, our restructured family of three would hop in the car and head out of town. We would spend the day busying ourselves with whatever it took to survive. We would laugh half-heartedly, share memories, or cry together as we struggled to discover our new identity as a family without Anna's physical presence.

As always, only a few short weeks following Anna's birthday Mother's Day would arrive right on schedule. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless

ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt tremendous relief that it was over.

Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep. It seems impossible that it has been nine birthdays and nine Mother's Days since Anna died. In my heart it was only yesterday. I can still see her smile and hear her laugh. I can feel the warmth of a quick hug as she heads out the door. With each passing year comes a new reality of what it means to be a bereaved parent, of what it means to find a new normal for our lives. The pain continues to occasionally catch me off guard, but it is softer now. The tears still come, but less frequently. Warm memories bring joyful moments to the emptiness. I smile quietly to myself, reassured that Anna lives on in our hearts and lives, as well as in the hearts and lives of those around us. Once again each April we celebrate the day of her birth, for her life has been a gift of unimaginable joy. Our traditional Mother's Day rituals have changed to new ones. There is more laughter now, fewer painful tears. I rejoice that I can celebrate that I am Debbie's mom, and now Scott's mother-in-law, as well! Life is good.

The winter has been long and cold, as has been the winter of our grief. Springtime has arrived. The sunshine and blue sky, the purple crocus and yellow daffodils pushing through the warming earth bring hope of renewal and reassurance that life continues. Although there is an irreparable hole in my soul and an emptiness in my heart that will never leave, I am forever grateful that Anna lived with us for 23 years. I am eternally thankful that I am and I always will be Anna's mom. May the warmth and brilliance of springtime fill your hearts with times of peace and hope and love.

--Paula Funk TCF Petsokay, MI

## Graduation Time

It's graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring

"Pomp and Circumstance". Now there will be a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. Go if you'd like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others.

Just remember that your own instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think of you. It was your child who died. This is your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way - and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

--Peggy Gibson TCF, Nashville, TN

*In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation which designated May 15 as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as Police Week. Currently, tens of thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world converge on Washington, DC to participate in a number of planned events which honor those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The following poem is a tribute in remembrance of our law enforcement officers who have died. Let's remember that this week doesn't just encompass the officers on the street. It pays homage to ALL areas of law enforcement.*



## Peace Officers

"Step forward now, policeman - how shall I deal with you? Have you always turned the other cheek? To My church have you been true?"

The policeman squared his shoulders and said, "No, Lord, I guess I ain't. Because those who carry badges can't always be a saint.

I had to work most Sundays and at times my talk was rough. And sometimes I've been violent, because the streets are awful tough.

But I never took a penny that wasn't mine to keep. Though I worked a lot of overtime, when the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help, though at times I shook with fear. And sometimes, God forgive me, I wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place among the people here— they never wanted me around, except to

calm their fear. If you've a place for me here, Lord, it needn't be so grand. I never expected or had too much, but if you don't— I understand."

There was silence all around the throne where the saints had often trod, as the policeman waited quietly for the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, policeman. You've borne your burdens well. Come walk a beat on Heaven's streets - you've done your time in Hell."

--Author Unknown



## Memorial Day

Many choose not to celebrate Memorial Day, or to set it aside as a day to honor the war heroes. My son is my hero; I'm sure you feel this way about your own child.

I will take flowers to the cemetery this Memorial Day. But at some point, memorials and rituals need to be more personal – closer to home. There are those who feel that memorials hold us back in our grief process. One article talked about someone 'getting well' because he no longer needed to have a picture in a certain spot; that he no longer needed to look at it all the time.

I feel that rituals in memory of our children get us through difficult times. Burning a candle or decorating a small tree at Christmas, sharing memories around the table at Easter, releasing balloons on birthdays, taking fireworks to the cemetery on the Fourth of July— these are some of the activities dedicated to our children that make us feel close to them.

Spring is, for many, a difficult time; everything is alive and blooming. One mother said she was so mad at the plants for coming alive when her son isn't ever going to live again that she wanted to douse them all with weed killer. But she has found a garden like the one she used to visit with her son. Perhaps her ritual for Spring could be to visit the garden when the leaves bud ...to feel her son there among the trees that they shared together.

I have been working industriously on Etienne's memorial garden. I want it to be ready for a Memorial Day picnic. I think about him each time I plant something. When I'm at the nursery, some plants "speak" to me of him. It's almost like I hear him saying, "get the purple ones, Mom!"

One of our bereaved fathers proudly pointed

out his daughter's memorial garden. Many friends and neighbors had contributed trees and plants in memory of his daughter. This was very meaningful to them, and must have given him a wonderful feeling of support at such a lonely, trying time.

If you have scattered the ashes of your child in the mountains, this might be a good time to take flowers to the spot, or to light incense or simply to be, quietly remembering. Each Memorial Day, one bereaved family makes a wreath together. They go out on the Sound, where the ashes were scattered, and release the wreath. That evening they share their tears and memories.

The point is that remembering your own hero on Memorial Day, in your own way, can be very beautiful, and useful.

Participating in memorial rituals can provide a warm fuzzy tool for processing different aspects of your grief, which often leads to the realization that, even in grief, you can choose your own destiny. The love you have for your child is empowering. Spring can be difficult, and memorials, and rituals created especially for your child can welcome the season and help you to cope.

**Love is for always.** Through our memories and expressions of love, our children live on. No matter what the season is, in our hearts, they are immortal.

--Lois Enger, TCF, Seattle, WA

## The Burden of Guilt...

Guilt evokes a sense of failure, remorse and shame. It often accompanies unexpected death. All opportunities to change the tenor of the relationship or erase a hotheaded moment seem to be swept away. Questions about what you might have done to avert the death gnaw at you. Guilt may also arise when a relationship was rocky or when the emotions you feel --- numbness, anger, relief, or even surges of happiness --- don't seem to be what other people think you should feel. When a death follows a long or difficult illness, care givers may feel guilty about feeling a sense of relief.

**Getting Over Guilt...** These exercises may help you ease feelings of guilt following a death. Write a letter. Express your feelings to the person who died. Read it aloud in a favorite spot or perhaps in a place where you can feel his or her presence. Keep the letter with you so you can

read it or add to it whenever you like. Consider good and bad. Write down the good things about the relationship or things you are glad to have shared. Then mark down what worked poorly in the relationship or things you wish you hadn't shared. Accept that people—including you—are imperfect. You can't always give or get love in the way you might wish to do so.

Talk to a friend. Discussing your feelings with an empathetic friend can help lighten the burden of guilt and may reveal other perspectives that you are overlooking.

--South Suburban Chapter Evergreen Park, IL

## Grieving And Driving



We hear a great deal these days about "drinking and driving." My lovely daughter, Jane, was killed by a drunk driver three years and four months ago, so that makes it much, much too late for my family. I hope the big push to keep drunks off the streets and highways, will perhaps prevent others from having to go through this awful pain and agony that we are suffering through.

"Grieving and driving" is, however, another problem which most people are totally unfamiliar with. At times I feel as though my head is detached from my body, that my mind has taken a leave of absence and I do not think straight at all. Very often, I can leave all other matters behind and the tears I have fought back all day start to flow.

In my conversations with other bereaved parents, I have found that this is a common problem. Many times other family members have been involved in accidents. Within six months of Jane's death, my niece, two of my sisters, and my son were involved in accidents. One of these was very tragic wherein another person died.

There is a great need to be aware of what can happen and what we can do about it. After having had a number of very shaky things happen while "Grieving and Driving", I decided to tell you about them in the hopes that we can all become more aware of our situation.

-- Peggy Miller, TCF Seattle WA

Editor's Note: Over the years I have talked to many bereaved parents who have had either close calls or actual accidents while driving during their first year of grief when we seem to be on auto-pilot. We all need to focus extra hard while driving

during this difficult time.

## My Memorial Day

I saw you today, in the downy soft face of a newborn babe, nestled lovingly in the protective arms of his mom. I felt the joy that only a mother could feel, radiating from her face as she proudly gazed at him. It took me back to another day when you first came into my life.

I saw you today in a precocious four-year-old at the supermarket. His little hands grabbed for colorful boxes of cereal and other goodies. His bewildered young mom kept one hand on him and one on the cart while explaining to him why he couldn't have everything he saw and what would happen to him if he didn't behave.

I heard your voice today through the backyard fence in the voices of children as they negotiated at play. Who was going to be the first to go down the slide and who was going to tell Timmy next door that he couldn't play? My mind raced back to another day when you came running in from play, saying someone wasn't being fair.

I wiped the tears from your dark little face and brushed your hair back with my hand. Somehow a hug and a kiss would even the score. Out you'd go to get into it again.

I saw you today, in a young boy 12 or 13 years old racing his bike down the street. I remember the blue one we bought for you and how proud you were of it. How I worried as you flew like the wind down the street, hoping you wouldn't get hit by some careless driver. How we searched the town after it was stolen from the parking lot at school; the disappointment you felt when we couldn't find it.

I saw you today on the football field as the boys were out for practice. Driving by, I remembered your games, the ones I missed because I had to work. How proud I was when I did see you play.

I saw you today in a young army private just home on leave; those civilian clothes were no cover for that short cropped hair. Your hair, soft as a kitten it was. I was the only one you'd trust to cut it. "Thanks, Mom," you'd say, "that's just how I wanted it." That hair, cut within an inch of your scalp, was not at all your style. You looked so strange this Christmas when you came home on leave. But you were my son, and you looked very handsome to me, and I was so very proud of

you.

I saw you today in the handsome strong face of an eighteen-year-old. The smile on his face belied the turmoil within. Only God knows why he, like you, decided that life wasn't worth living anymore. He ended his life with a single shot just as you ended yours. I sit and stare at his picture in the obituary column of the morning paper. Hot tears sting my face as I think of his mom, how much she must have loved him. I share in her grief, remembering the numbness of the first few days and the unbearable pain. I say a silent prayer for her and the young man, knowing for her what surely lies ahead. As she lays her son to rest, her memorial day has just begun. For as each passing moment, hour, and day evolve into weeks, months, years, she will see her son and hear his voice in someone else's child, and she will remember.

--Mary A. Bell TCF, Ankeny, IA



## Life Is for the Living

I went to offer condolence, a job I abhor, but done it must be. The grief-stricken mother paced the floor and tearfully poured her heart out to me. She said .... "What does one do with the baby bed when the baby dies? What does one do with a heart that moans and aches and cries? What does one do with all the tiny things made by loving hands? What does one do with shattered dreams ... and hopes ... and plans?"

I tried to console her, but she looked at me with reproachful eyes and said, "But what could you know of a mother's grief when her baby dies? "The sorrow that lay dormant all these many years ripped thru my aching heart and filled my eyes with tears. " I answered her softly ....

"Twice, I have knelt beside a tiny grave with none left to call me Mother. Twice, I have loved a tiny soul, each one more than the other. I know the ache of empty arms in a house that's suddenly still. I know the pain of a broken heart that moans and cries at will. Our baby bed was placed in the attic, with a tear drop on the dusty floor. An old trunk stored the tiny things they never ever would wear. The shattered dreams were placed in the back of my mind for a later giving. And my heart mended itself, my dear, because life is for the living."

--Greater Ozarks Chapter, Springfield, IL

## Newly Bereaved...

### To The Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into our 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 as they 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 have 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 the first 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, and that you weren't willing to be swallowed up 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 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, and to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share, 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.

--Karen Schendel TCF Houston, TX



## Seasoned Greivers...

### From Death to Hope

Going from unbelievable pain over our loss to finding hope for the future takes work and time. Each baby step we force ourselves to face ultimately helps us to regain our lives. As we learn that grief two-step we start to see our bad days are lessening but will return, and we start to realize this pain may start to diminish, which gives us a sliver of hope. Although we would rather have our child here instead of missing them so terribly, we need to recognize we do grow from our loss. Our new understanding of what is truly important in life changes. With that change we become different people.

I refuse to believe all this pain and suffering was for nothing... I believe that something positive has to come out of something so overwhelmingly negative. Most of us seem to evolve from this horrendous pain a better person. Living through this tragedy makes many of us more patient, understanding, loving, and compassionate.

Time goes on. We have no control over that. We would like time to stop so things can remain the same as when our children were here, but it won't. Life moves ahead without them here. There is no one magical thing that suddenly gives us hope. Life eventually catches us up in the everyday things we do to exist. It moves ahead and drags us along, and we learn how to handle the changes.

In the beginning of grief we couldn't care less about what is happening around us. Making simple everyday decisions leaves us exhausted. Planning anything seems useless. We can't control anything, so why make plans that can be ripped from us. Why let glimmers of hope lead us down into another pit of pain? If we don't want, we won't be disappointed. Slowly, we begin to heal from the onslaught of pain that grief causes. Ever so slowly, we begin to realize that deadlines can be met, events can be planned, the future might even hold some happiness.

Further down the road of grief, we realize we must take chances again. Nothing is foolproof, but everything is not a disaster waiting to happen. There are no guarantees in life, but we owe it to ourselves and to our child's memory to make something out of the life we've been given. With

time the depression lifts and life awaits us. Life is still scary, but it is worth living again, instead of just existing. The realization that I can do some things my child would have done, if given the chance, gives me the encouragement to try. I can do things in Eric's memory. I can do things we both can be proud of.

Grief work is the hardest thing you may ever have to do. You can't hide from grief or just wait for time to heal you, with the hopes the pain will go away. You must deal with it. First wallow in your grief, accept it, work through it, and give yourself time. It will get better as you find ways to deal with it.

Each year got easier. It's taken four years but I realize I have grown from this experience. All this pain has taught me something ... I'm a survivor, and I can take a chance on life again. It still seems scary, but I deserve some happiness. I've paid my dues. Remember, wherever you are in your grief, it takes time and hard work. I hope you will also reach a point where you can be happy again. You deserve to be happy and to find hope for your future. Your child would want no less.

--Lynn Vines

South Bay/L.A.,CA

### Welcome...

### We Are Alike



We are alike, at the same time we are very unlike. Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling our grief are different, but we are alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt. We experience many of the grief symptoms alike, and we are alike in our need for help. While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away each other's pain, we can help each other by simply being there and listening to each other.

--Dennis Klass, TCF St. Louis, MO

Editor's Note: We invite you to join us at our meetings. The encouragement, understanding, and compassion are just what bereaved families need in their grief. You are not alone. Other people are experiencing the same kind of pain, confusion, and doubts. By talking together and sharing what worked for us, we help each other come to terms with the death of our children.

## Friends And Family...



### How to Help Me Grieve

**Be there for me:** I feel alone, in pain. I need a friend.

**Share my sorrow:** Speak from your heart. I have to talk about my feelings.

**Let me grieve:** Listen to me, I need to cry. We all grieve in our own way and in a different time frame.

**Keep the memory alive:** It is always on my mind. I have so many memories.

**I need your help:** Help me, call me, pray for me. Do whatever you can.

**Don't desert me:** Don't desert me after the 1st or 2nd week. I need you, especially on holidays.

**Take care of yourself:** I need to depend on you.

**Help me heal:** Involve me, listen to me months later. I need your interest and invitations.

**Be my friend:** Don't be afraid of me or my grief. It's okay to cry. Lastly, please don't criticize until you've walked in my shoes.

**Instead:** Pray for me.

--Vivian Sagert TCF, Minitonas, Manitoba, Canada



### Book In Review...

*LOVE SONGS TO A JUNKIE SON*, by Sherrie Cassel. Sherrie has been published in *Addiction.com* and has written a book, *LOVE SONGS TO A JUNKIE SON*, a book of poetry about her son's struggle with addiction. Ms. Cassel also manages a grief site at Facebook called *AFTER THE STORM*. The site is specifically for parents who've lost children to the disease of addiction.



### Helpful Hint...

There is an Egyptian story that says when God created the world, He made everything small so that it could grow up with time. The grain into the wheat, the baby into the man, the bud into the flowers. Only sorrow was created full grown so that it might decrease with time and Man might be able to live with it.

## Memories

You first walking on shaky legs...  
 You dashing out the door on your way to the beach ...  
 You in the midst of your messy room...  
 You in the midst of my life, our lives ...  
 Each memory brings smiles, but mostly tears  
 And pain ... intense pain  
 binding up my heart to the point of strangling.

But, I will not forego this pain  
 It is there underscoring the love--  
 The passionate feeling I will carry for you,  
 forever in my heart.  
 Such intense pain, such immense love.  
 I'll see you tomorrow ...  
 --Susan Howard- TCF San Diego, CA

## Missing You

I sometimes talk to your pictures  
 When no one else is around.  
 They listen patiently to my ramblings  
 They smile and never make a sound.  
 There's one picture in particular  
 Your eyes right in my line of sight  
 The smile on your face reflects the joy  
 On one of the happiest days of your life.  
 That picture has been my whipping post  
 Many heavy conversations in the past six years  
 It's witnessed the gamut of my emotions  
 It's seen me laugh, it's seen countless tears  
 There have even been some times  
 When that picture almost seemed to smirk  
 After I sincerely apologized  
 For all the times I was a jerk.  
 Of all the pictures that we have of you,  
 It would be impossible to pick just one.  
 There's just something about your smile  
 I didn't see it until you were gone.  
 So many things you never got to do  
 Your time ran out before your dreams came true.  
 I'll look into your eyes and talk to that picture  
 I'll see you again someday. I miss you.  
 --Tom Murphy Greater Cincinnati TCF-East  
 Chapter, OH



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 Alvarez

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

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

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

Sam Boldissar  
Born: 10/91 Died: 3/17  
Parents: Jeeri & Frank Boldissar

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

Julian Burns  
Born: 12/18 Died: 1/19  
Parents: Daniel & Marta Burns

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

Carina Chandiramani  
Born: 5/86 Died: 9/18  
Mother: Norma Chandiramani

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

Ryan Dobie  
Born: 7/92 Died: 2/19  
Parents: Linda & Douglas Dobie

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

Marc David Guerrevia  
Born: 7/97 Died: 7/17  
Mother: Sharon Cortez

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

Kyle Bernard Kirby  
Born: 5/93 Died: 9/18  
Father: Vince Kirby

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 Kropman  
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12  
Parents: Brenda & Greg Kropman

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

Lizzie Jester  
Born: 6/93 Died: 7/18  
Father: Lee Jester

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 Luthé  
Born: 11/76 Died: 1/98  
Parents: Jeff & Lorraine Luthé

Matty Mallano  
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18  
Mother: Paula Mallano

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  
Parents: Mike & Shirley Matich  
Grandmother: Susan Matich

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

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: 1/18  
Mother: Maria Puliselich  
Sister: Michelle Pulislich

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew L Weiss  
Born: 9/96 Died: 8/18  
Mother: Natalie Narumoto

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John Patrick Rouse  
Born: 1/78 Died: 7/02  
Mother: Sharon Rouse  
Danny Ryan  
Born: 07/79 Died: 10/15  
Parents: Mike & Andrea  
Ryan

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 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, click on the following link to donate online. [www.tcfsbla.org](http://www.tcfsbla.org))

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.

## For Siblings...



### My Brother's Birthday

In the month of May, we celebrate my brother's birthday. He would have been 31 years old. He died thirteen years ago. So on the day of his birth, do I focus on the fact it serves as a marker by which we count how many years his life was cut short? I suppose that will depend on my view of how he lived.

I know his life contained all the good things that so many strive for: family, friends, love and success in his endeavors. I know he loved and was loved by God. I know he lived better than most. But I am also aware of the lack in my life. I regret that my children will not know their uncle or my husband his brother-in-law. I regret that my family web is missing the strength of his thread. He won't be with us when we are old. I miss him.

Yet, I don't want to count the years he has been gone. To me, he will always be seventeen, secure and smiling. He enriched my childhood and filled my memories with teasing, shared adventures, laughter and tears. We were blessed to have shared him as a family. I remember him and celebrate his birthday by giving life to his beautiful and happy memory. Happy Birthday Tracy.

--Kathryn Smith Sibling Newsletter

### Common Sibling Grief Issue: Taking Care of Parents

When asked to edit the sibling page, I was told that each newsletter has unifying themes and this issue would focus on spring and Mother's Day. Mother's Day? I am a bereaved sibling! I thought about siblings being the forgotten grievers. After further thought, however, I realized that Mother's

Day creates anxiety for bereaved siblings just as it does for bereaved parents. Some surviving siblings resent that only their parent's loss is recognized.

This sense of being forgotten can be heightened on Mother's or Father's Day when parents expect enhanced sympathy and attention to their grief. Other surviving siblings are consumed with taking care of their devastated parents, perhaps to the extent of neglecting their own grief process. These siblings may experience greater worries about their parents on the impending Mother's Day.

Holidays always highlight a family's loss. For me, I worry about showering my mother with enough love to ease her pain. But, I feel ultimately incapable of being as enthusiastic as I was when Andrea was here to help me cook or decorate the apartment, or to brainstorm, weeks in advance, on whether we should chip in for jewelry or kitchen utensils. I feel strange and empty gift shopping alone. I hate the cards that say "To Mom, from Both of Us". So please parents, remember that all holidays, even Mother's Day, is hard for surviving children too.

--Allison Hams, TCF Manhattan

### All The Things I Miss

I sometimes think about all the things I miss about my brother. There are lots - some painful, some I never would have believed that I would miss. I find that what I miss most are the things that should have been.

I bought my first car the year he would have turned 16. He should have been here to ask to borrow the keys - not that I would have given them to him, but he should have been here to ask.

He should have been a senior this year, getting ready to face the world with no summer vacations and deciding what to do with his life.

He should be here when I fall in love to tease me and give me his opinion of the man I choose.

He should be here when I have a child, to be a godparent and uncle, friend, and confidant. He should be here to get married and have kids of his own, so that I could be an aunt and a sister-in-law. He should be here to celebrate when things are good, and to commiserate when things are bad.

My brother was my friend and my foe in a way that only a little brother can be. And as I sit here and think about my brother, what I think the most is he should be here.

-- Shannon, TCF Lowell, IN

## For Grandparents...



### Remembering Grandmothers

Grandmothers are often the forgotten grievers. We turn to our mother (our child's grandmother) for comfort and support during our grief, not realizing that she is suffering not only the grief of losing a beloved grandchild, but the pain of watching her child suffer. We acknowledge your strength and your love and your wisdom and we thank God for your existence. With love always from your child.  
--Coeur d' Alene, ID TCF newsletter  
(Editor's note: A few lines on the card acknowledging their loss for your mom or dad on their special day will remind them of the unbroken bonds of love from you and their grandchild.

### From Our Members...

*Our dear co-leader Mary Sankus is stepping down from her role. She wrote the letter below to say good-bye to her Compassionate Friends. We wish her well in her next adventure. She will be missed at meetings and her place will be hard to fill. If any of our members is up for the challenge, please consider volunteering to be a chapter co-leader in honor of your departed child. Call Lynn at (310) 963-4646 for details.*

Dear Compassionate Friends,

I am moving on. After tonight I won't be coming to our Neighborhood Church to participate in the recovery from the loss of my son, Andy. As you know grief of this nature is life long.

I treasure my nearly 4 years with you good folks as we rise from the devastation and pain. I encourage each of you to get involved with The Compassionate Friends (a National organization) - especially our awesome South Bay/LA chapter. We need each other and each person makes a difference.

My life is forever changed. I attended the grief program offered at The Gathering Place and learned of The Compassionate Friends: There was no waiting. I was welcomed at the very first meeting. I remember arriving in the dark. That night I had my Grandchildren with me. My daughter; Staysea, met me here. She went in to check out if I should stay. We were both still so fragile. She took her children knowing I was where I needed to be. I've been coming ever since.

Grief is an integral feeling in what it means to be human - it permeates to the depths of our souls. There are no words to describe the pain and despair experienced with the death of a person we have brought into this, world so I won't even try. That said, each of us knows it - intimately.

We are each uniquely qualified to reach out tenderly and honestly and speak the words "I know ..."

There is a time when the loss seems unsurmountable. We truly are forever changed. Thank you for showing up in my life through these days and nights. Thank you for sharing yourself with me. Thank you for being willing to be raw and vulnerable. Thank you for coming back as we began to heal little by little. There were times I thought I had a handle on my feelings and that I could 100% be there for others. I rarely succeeded in a whole meeting without some tears. My heart went out to you ... for moments at a time I wasn't just me. We understood each other on a level unknown to many. Thank you for all you arranged so we could be in the room together.

I have decided to re-direct my attention to other areas of this one precious life. This life I live on after Andy's passing. I carry him with me always here in my heart. And he carries me. Love never dies.

These days moments I otherwise might have thrown away mean so much more - the value I place on time has changed. I have a new friend who calls it the "Noble Truth" that no one gets out of this life alive! So it is time for me to again turn to other aspects of this vitality that still surges within me. I choose to expand and grow forth into areas where I can BE and become; ways I may serve and participate.

I sincerely hope our paths cross - we have shared deeply and truly about the LOVE of our children with each other. I have a picture of my son and my daughter on the wall beside my bed. I see it every day. Sometimes I look at it and remember the times past when we celebrated as family. I am now present for this time of my life. These glorious days - my son would encourage me to cherish and flourish.

Malcolm Forbes, entrepreneur, adventurer publisher and originator of Forbes magazine selected for his epitaph "WHILE ALIVE, HE LIVED" My son passed in 2015 - it felt like an ending, as if my heart was forever broken. Life has gone on. I am blessed to live near his sister and his niece and his nephew. I am in contact with his children who

live back east. I am still his Mother - what an honor. I have a life worth living. Today's adventures are mine to appreciate, to enjoy, to accept, to welcome.

Life is a journey and "we need not walk alone" as it says in The Compassionate Friends Credo. I often catch myself smiling, I sing songs we shared and new ones that mean life is real. For all of this I am forever grateful ...

Warmly and with Love, Mary Sankus,  
Mother of Andrew Garrett Sankus  
and your past co-leader and Member of The  
Compassionate Friends

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.

**Chapter Happenings...** All TCF members are invited to join the Steering Committee where we brainstorm topics and ideas for meetings and events. Our next Steering Committee Meeting will be at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. Our address is: 19405 Linda Drive, Torrance, 90503 Also, if you would kindly RSVP at (310) 370-1645 I'll know how many to plan for. Thanks, Linda Zelik.



**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.) You can mail them to the P.O. Box or send them by e-mail to

[Lynntcf@aol.com](mailto:Lynntcf@aol.com)

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month **preceding** your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: May 1st for June 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. To make it easier for those who would rather donate online, just go to our website and use the donate button at [www.tcfsbla.org](http://www.tcfsbla.org) A receipt will be emailed to you for tax purposes. Please let us know if you want the tribute published in the next newsletter. For donations at the meetings, attach a tribute to your donation to





be listed in the newsletter. (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 donations are definitely 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 your 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](mailto: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

**LOCAL TCF CHAPTERS**

- Beach Cities/L.A.** (Manhattan Bch): (970) 213-6293 Third Tue.
- Los Angeles:** (310) 474-3407 1st Thurs.
- Newport Beach** (917) 703-3414 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://www.Alivealone.org)
- SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE:** Support Group for

families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Terry Jordan, LCSW (301) 859-2241  
**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](http://www.comfortzonecamp.org) (310) 483-8313.

**Other Grief Support Websites...**

- agast.org (for grandparents)
- 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)
- groww.com
- childloss.com
- griefwatch.dom
- 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
- CHAPTER CO-LEADER: *position open*
- NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
- PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
- TREASURER: Ken Konopasek
- WEBSITE: Joe Zelik



**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Linda & Joe Zelik	Marilyn Nemeth
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](http://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](http://www.health.voiceamerica.com).



The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19th-21st, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event.

The National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

- Choose to attend over a hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.
- Take advantage of "Healing Haven" to receive free personal services such as a massage.
- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the "Crafty Corner".
- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the "Reflection Room".
- Explore the TCF Marketplace offering items for purchase that are meaningful to all on the grief journey together.

We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

**Registration and Hotel Reservations are now open. Click on the link below to register.**

<http://compassionatefriends.org>

# 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 <http://tcfsbla.org/donate/> 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 Steven Paul Giuliano, April 1955 - April 1995. Always in our hearts with beautiful memories.

Love, Mother and family

In loving memory of Danielle Ann Mosher, August 1978 - June 1997.

From her grandparents, Maryann and Roger Nelson

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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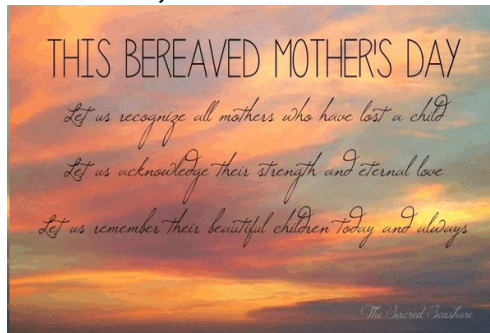
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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

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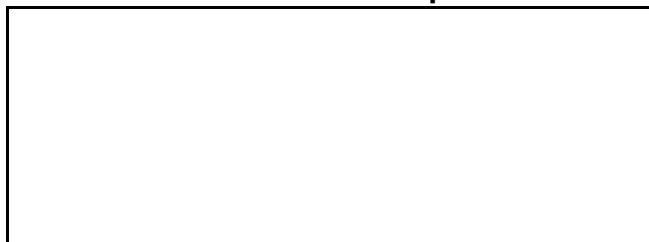
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**May 2019**

– Return Service Requested –



## Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



### 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.**