



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

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

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

JUNE 2019 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: [Lynntcf@aol.com](mailto:Lynntcf@aol.com)

### **OUR NEXT MEETING**

**will be June 6th, the first Thursday  
of the month at 7:00 P.M.**

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

**LOCATION: This month only, The Sizzler Restaurant -  
2880 Sepulveda Bl. in Torrance (Between Crenshaw &  
Hawthorne Bl.) Next month we return to our regular location  
at 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 June 6th meeting is our Balloon Liftoff and Remembrance dinner at The Sizzler instead of a regular meeting. (**2880 Sepulveda Bl. in Torrance**)

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.

South Bay/LA Chapter of TCF  
P.O. Box 11171  
Torrance, CA 90510-1171  
(310) 963-4646  
[www.tcfsbla.org](http://www.tcfsbla.org)

Chapter Co-Leaders:  
Linda Zelik (310) 370-1645  
[Linzelik@gmail.com](mailto:Linzelik@gmail.com)

Co-leader needed

The National Office of TCF  
P.O. Box 3696  
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696  
Toll free (877) 969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**The Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held at The Sizzler, 2880 Sepulveda Bl. in Torrance for our balloon liftoff and remembrance program instead of our regular meeting.**

We hope you and your friends and family will join us for this special tribute to our children in honor and in celebration of their lives. Friends and family members are invited to attend as we write messages of love to our children and send them off together. This is a time to reaffirm the love that we still share for our child with our friends and family. Come join us for this special event.

Since we can not do our annual balloon liftoff at the Neighborhood church we have moved the event to The Sizzler. The meeting will take place in the private banquet meeting room at Sizzler. **(Use the front entrance, then follow the signs for the banquet room.)** We will gather in the banquet room and start the program at 7 PM. After we write our messages to our children, we will use the private exit to the parking lot to gather as a group and release the balloons (which are biodegradable, including the string & paper). Afterwards, people can then individually order and pay for their dinners which will be delivered to the banquet room. We will proceed with our short program while the food is getting ready. For those families who want to pay tribute to their special child, we encourage you to write a short poem or story to share at the event.

Remember to wear your picture buttons so everyone can see your child. The button machine will be at the event so those of you who would like to make a picture button can do so. If you would like a picture button made, bring a picture with you for each button you would like made. Color Xerox pictures work great. If you mail them to Ken ahead of time they will be ready for pick up at the dinner. The Memory Book pictures of our children will also be on display. If you haven't brought a picture in for the memory book, now is a good time.

### Balloon Lift Off

Balloons ... Balloons...  
Gaily colored shapes of plastic and helium...  
Twisting and tumbling as if anxious  
To hurry aloft now and swiftly bear  
Our special thoughts and personal messages.  
With tears and markers we gently inscribe  
Names, dates, hearts, hugs.



We kiss the smooth surfaces ...  
Fervently wishing that they could be instead ...  
The living flesh of certain dear faces  
On many a wing and a prayer  
We hoist our bouncy emissaries  
Way beyond reach ...  
Into the azure desert sky,  
Then strain our sight to watch  
'till not the smallest speck remains visible.  
Though in our mind's eye, we see them still. ..  
Our precious messages ...  
Tender thoughts ... caring missives ...  
Are conveyed - Oh, so carefully ...  
Via the iridescence of God's atmosphere ...  
Flowing smoothly from our hearts and minds ..  
On the whispered stirring of angels' wings ...  
Arriving safely ... to lovingly reach and touch  
The eager and receptive souls  
Of our beloved children.  
-- Vicki Douglas-Otto TCF Tucson, AZ

### The 50TH anniversary of The Compassionate Friends was January 28, 2019!

Several of you have heard the story many times over of how our beloved organization began. However, for those who have not, it is very noteworthy; and for those who have, it most definitely bears repeating, especially at such a momentous milestone in TCF's history.

In early 1968, Reverend Simon Stephens was the young assistant chaplain at the Coventry & Warwickshire Hospital in Coventry, England. On May 23, 1968, 11- year-old Kenneth, the son of Joe and Iris Lawley, died following severe head injuries when he was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. In the same hospital, Billy, the son of Bill and Joan Henderson, died a few days later from cancer. When the Lawleys heard of Billy's death, they sent flowers to the Henderson's. Joe Lawley stated, "We did not then know the significance of that act, but, looking back, it might be said that The Compassionate Friends started there."

The Henderson's were so touched by the Lawleys' kind gesture, the two grieving couples met for a cup of tea. Through this, they found a place where they could speak openly about their sons and their lives, and their own shattered hopes for the future. They found, in each other, someone who truly did understand their devastating losses. Their shared experiences brought them a measure of comfort that they could

not get from anyone or anywhere else. Upon watching how much their friendship and sharing helped them on their grief journeys, Reverend Stephens suggested that what they were doing together was far more beneficial than anything he could help them with. He wondered if this might also help other parents suffering the loss of a child.

Therefore, in January of 1969, six people came together, including Simon Stephens, where they talked about developing an organization that would help bereaved parents. And thus began "The Society of The Compassionate Friends", eventually shortened to The Compassionate Friends. From a handful of people meeting around a kitchen table to what the organization is today - a lifesaver for those whose precious daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren died much too soon. A place where bereaved families can find understanding listeners and sharers, friendships with others walking on a similar journey of grief as they learn to cope together, and, in time, find hope for renewed meaning in life again.

In 1970, Arnold and Paula Shamres of Florida lost their 10- year-old daughter, Gabrielle, in a tragic car-train accident. In 1971, they learned of the British Society of The Compassionate Friends from a Time magazine article. Recognizing the tremendous value such an organization would have in the U.S., they contacted Simon Stephens.

Gratefully, he came from Great Britain to Florida, and following that, TCF came to the USA. How grateful we are to our founders, Simon Stephens, the Lawleys, and the Henderson's, who began this amazing organization 50 years ago, and to the Shamres family for bringing TCF to the United States.

-- Cathy Seehuetter,  
TCF Director of Online Services



## The Month Of June

June along with all of its many usual celebrations has arrived. This month brings us: Father's Day, the end of the school year, graduations, and naturally there will be some of us who will face the dream June weddings of children from other families and friends instead of our own. June can become a most overwhelmingly busy month by comparison to the imaginary lazy days of summer one might conjure

up in the corner of one's mind. So much for tranquility and escape in the trials of overcoming the whip of grief's blow!

Yet, on the other side of the story, June, complete with the entire bustle, will be loyal. June will still bring the grieving parent warm summer nights to stroll and ponder over old consoling memories under starlit skies. June will be faithful to still soft breezes in the cemeteries and special places we all visit to quietly cry. June is one of those caring months that tries to calm one's soul, promising to give each of us a small measure of comfort whenever possible. For this I am always thankful.

My prayer this month is that June will wrap her arms around each who grieve and embrace you with peacefulness beyond this world. May we always remember our children are within our hearts and we walk this path among compassionate friends!

--Central Oregon TCF newsletter

## Buried On Father's Day

I am an impostor. I sit at support group meetings but my pain is different than yours. Yes, Neill died at 23 and I helped to raise him for fifteen of those years. That meant paying bills when there wasn't any money-helping him get well when I was sick myself- carrying him in my arms when I didn't have the strength.

Just like all of YOU! But I am not Neill's father. I am his stepfather, and ... STEP is a four-letter word.

I sit silently at meetings wondering if I have the right to speak. Perhaps my life hasn't changed as deeply as yours? Perhaps step-parents aren't struggling for answers like the genetic parents. But we are!

Every Father's Day both Neill and his brother were legally mandated to spend the time with their natural father. That meant that Maddy, my wife, had to scramble to minimize the loss. One year we went to a winery upstate and pretended to study every vintage. On another Father's day we spent hours exploring some out-of-state shopping malls.

I never had the chance to swell with pride on Father's Day. Neill said he had reconciled the "competition" between fathers. I'm not sure he really did. Besides, his mother was an unwitting accomplice, letting Neill have his way over both

fathers' protests.

Maybe, if there hadn't been so many exhausting legal battles over the kids, and constant, draining power struggles between households ... maybe Maddy and I could have added to the family with children of our own. Maybe ... Anyway, it's all just hopeless hindsight. Neill's wish for peace between warring households became a reality when he died unexpectedly in June of 1995. He was buried on Father's Day.  
--Cliff Kasden, Manhattan



## Adrift In A Sea Of Grief

I am adrift in an endless sea of grief. As I float along, the world continues to go on around me as if I am walking among the bustling crowds-but my feet haven't touched dry land since September 30, 2009. It was on that day- the day my 4-year-old daughter drowned - I was unwillingly thrust into this watery journey.

### Drowning in Despair

Without warning- and in a matter of moments- my daughter's sudden death unleashed a monstrous tsunami of indescribable pain that was so huge and so dense, it blocked out the light of the sun. In complete darkness, it crashed down upon me and destroyed life as I knew it. Then the undertow dragged me kicking and screaming out to the middle of a deep sea of grief where a violent storm of emotions raged around me.

For months on end, the giant waves would crash over me and shove my body under the water where I choked on anguish and despair. Then the undercurrent of that same wave would spit me back out, forcing me to tread water until the next waves of emotions pummeled my weakened body. It felt endless and torturous.

I thought many times it would be easier if the water would take my own life in the way it took my daughter's- but for some unknown reason to my wearied mind, my body just continued to go through the motions and fight for survival.

Buoyed by compassion and support

Without really knowing how, my flailing hands began grabbing lifelines that had been thrown my way. These were lifelines of love and support from family and friends; from grief counselors. Lifelines also came from other bereaved parents who had already learned how to survive in this very same storm and whose compassion inspired them to reach out and help others through

this treacherous journey on the sea of grief.

Buoyed by their love and support, I began weaving these lifelines together to build a makeshift raft that could give my aching body a rest from the constant struggle to stay afloat. As my raft took shape, the waves seemed to come a little less often and didn't feel quite as intense. Of course, they still came. And when they did, they still crashed over me- leaving me feeling horrible and defenseless. Yet, despite my continued pain, my body was able to start the healing process now that I had a raft to cling to.

As I slowly started healing, I began to focus my growing energy towards weaving together more lifelines into a bigger and stronger vessel that could better protect me from the stormy sea. I discovered that the more I shared my feelings with those willing to listen, the longer and more plentiful my lifelines became- and the more material I had to build with.

### Getting My Sea Legs

As my raft began transforming into a sturdier vessel of support, I got better at understanding how to navigate the waves of emotions in ways that didn't feel so debilitating as before.

I began to see that trying to steer clear of the waves altogether only made them more dangerous and damaging. I learned that every time I tried to outrun the wave, I ended up getting caught in the wave's impact zone- where it has the most power to pull me under and hold me within the churning currents coming from every direction. This is where grief is the most intense and agonizing.

So instead of trying to avoid the waves, I decided to learn to ride them as a surfer does. I embraced the understanding that these waves, of emotions were temporary moments of time that would eventually end. Over and over again, I practiced finding my balance to ride across the tube of each wave- where the water was smoother and had less chance of pulling me under. It wasn't easy; learning anything new and outside your comfort zone can be difficult and challenging. But when you keep trying, you learn new techniques through trial and error- and eventually you get better at it.

### Setting a New Course

Once I became better at surfing the waves of emotions, I was able to ride them to a place on the sea of grief where the storm didn't constantly rage. In calmer water, I looked for the land I was taken from. I still desperately wanted to go back there

and return to everything I once knew. But as I scanned the endless horizon, I came to understand that the loss of a child is so profound, there is no going back. All we can do as bereaved parents is set a new course— to uncharted waters where we must learn to exist in a world without the children we lost.

These days, the water I float on is mostly calm. I've learned to appreciate that there is an abundance of beauty and love in this new world I live in. My boat is now large and sturdy, and I can steer it in any direction I want. Over time, I've been able to find water shallow enough where I can touch and walk along the sandy bottom and easily interact with the world of dry land— even if it is within the confines of the sea of grief.

### **A Constant Reminder**

Unfortunately, no matter how far I've come and how many new positive experiences I can create, I always feel the water as it continually blows across my face and body. It is a constant reminder that I will never leave the sea of grief.

Most days the wind that blows the water is a gentle breeze. Other times, a storm begins to brew, the wind grows stronger, and the pain of the stinging, salty water becomes more noticeable and intense. Some storms are predictable each year— like the time leading up to the anniversary of my daughter's death— but mostly the storms are random and unexpected.

I can't keep the storms from coming; I can't completely navigate away from them. But I can sail through them knowing they are only moments in time— and just as they have a beginning— they always have an end.

### **Lifelines**

As I sail along this sea of grief, I will continue to throw lifelines out to those I come across just starting out on their difficult journeys. Thankfully, I've come to a point in time where I have plenty to spare. For those of you reading this who are treading water in the constant waves of emotions— know that you too will learn to build your own vessel. You too will find your way to calmer waters. And if you only look, you'll find plenty of others to help and guide you on your way.  
--Maria Kubitz TCF-Contra Costa County, CA  
In loving memory of Margareta Sol Kubitz

### **With Many Thanks to Dan Noordman for Permission to Share this Article**

The most tragic and traumatic losses life can deal out to a person is the death of a son

or daughter. The death of a child means the loss of more than just a precious life. It represents the loss of future experiences and future hopes. No parent is prepared for the loss of a child, and when it happens, their world is forever changed. The grief, pain and anguish felt are acute and lasting.

In June 2015, our family suffered the tragic and traumatic loss of our beloved son and brother. Ayron was 23 years old when he passed away at home in his sleep as a result of an accidental Fentanyl poisoning. His death rocked the core of who we were; our lives forever altered. It left us stranded, abandoned, imprisoned and lost. We didn't just lose our son; we lost us too. In an instant we vanished with him. When you lose a child, the battle becomes not to lose yourself. It is kind of shocking when your world falls to pieces and everything and everyone around you carries on with life. How can the birds continue to sing? How can people carry on loving life?

"It is like you have become frozen in time and are now watching life like a movie. As the weeks and months roll by, life becomes more real again, but you will never forget that point in time where your life stood still." - Zoe Helen Clark

Two years ago, Fentanyl was a word most of us knew nothing of; sadly today that word is heard almost on a daily basis as people from all walks of life lose their lives or their loved ones to this horrible poison. As a Police Officer in our city, I saw and knew about this poison that was slowly making its appearance on our streets. But, like many families, we didn't think it would happen to us.

As more families are affected by addiction, more and more families are left with the grief of losing a loved one. Every overdose death is someone's son or daughter. An overdose death can happen to anyone; it does not discriminate and has destroyed the lives of many children. Yet the unique experience of grieving an overdose death still hides out in the shadows. It is veiled in guilt and shame, stigma and discomfort. Families are left feeling guilty, shame, blame, anger and anxiety.

Due to the stigma of drug use and addiction too many people still view addiction as a failure. A failure for not only the addict, but of those people around the addict, the loved ones, the friends. They are seen as failing their loved one with addiction and must have done something wrong, or did not do enough. Parents are looked at with a



biased sympathy and somehow the death of their child doesn't compare to a death of a child from an accident or disease. Every loss is personal and deeply internalized to the person experiencing it; there is no measuring stick capable of indicating whose is more painful. But parents of an overdose death are left feeling their loss doesn't rate the same as others. It is all tragic. Personal loss of a child should never have a pain rating. The real tragedy is that people get wrapped up and lose sight of who the person was underneath the stigma of an overdose death.

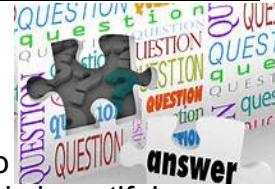
We need a culture change. We need to shift from a culture of shame and punishment to one of healing and wellness. In order to change our culture we need to change our beliefs and stigmas associated with overdose deaths. One of the most important things families can do after an overdose or poisoning death of a child is to control the messaging. I recently read that when we think wrong, we believe wrong and when we believe wrong, we act wrong. The words parents use have a dramatic impact on the stigma surrounding an overdose death. The term "Opioid related death" should be used in place of "Opioid Overdose" in order to avoid any suggestion that the death was intentional. The term "overdose" is sometimes associated with self-harm or an intentional act by the victim. The term "overdose" then re-victimizes the victim of an unintentional opioid related death and families are left feeling they need to defend their child or even worse, remain silent. With Fentanyl and Carfentanil now tainting the entire drug supply on the street, many of our children didn't even know they were ingesting these deadly poisons.

A poison is any substance, including medication, whether prescribed or not, that is harmful to your body if too much is eaten, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin. An unintentional poisoning occurs when a person taking or given too much of a substance did not mean to cause harm to themselves.

With the poisons in the drug supply right now, anyone's child could die of Fentanyl poisoning. This is affecting casual users of any kind of drug, people suffering from Substance Use Disorder and inexperienced teens and young adults. The statistics might tell you that hundreds of people have died to date in Manitoba from addiction and drug overdoses, but not one of those is just a statistic to those who loved them.

--Dan Noordman TCF Winnipeg

## Lessons Learned from the Death of My Child



A bereaved father once said to me after the rape and murder of his beautiful young daughter, "It's as if my whole life has exploded. For me to rebuild, I'm doing it one piece at a time. I look carefully at what I once believed, and I challenged it. If that piece doesn't fit any more, I throw it away." His words made sense to me. I felt the same after my daughter's death.

After she died, I wasn't sure what to believe any more. In order to unscramble my feelings, I questioned everything from God to life itself. The challenge was good for me, and led to my greatest growth. I still had the hard work of dealing with my emotions, not the least of which were my envy of parents who still had their children, and my anger for those who didn't seem to care.

Once, at a restaurant, I saw a dad having dinner with his young son and daughter. But, instead of interacting with them, he had his nose in a newspaper, completely ignoring them. It was all I could do not to go over to this father, rip the newspaper from his hand and shout, "Pay attention to your children! You are lucky to have them, and they need you. Besides, you may not have them tomorrow."

Every day, I must confess, when I hear parents talking about their children driving them crazy, I bristle. I catch myself thinking "You don't know what crazy is. Crazy is not having your children at all! What I wouldn't give to have Krissie here to drive me crazy!"

Trying to understand why my daughter had to die, I found myself thinking about all children who die. Children die every day, and Kristen was one of them. Today I also think about the children who are lost to drugs, or missing. My heart goes out to these parents, because they do not want to give up hope. They are held hostage to a pain they must endure daily. They may never know if their children are dead or alive, but they realize unhappy endings are all too often the result.

How do others cope! I wondered. How do they overcome their unique challenges - debilitating handicaps, the loss of jobs with no other source of income, chronic or fatal illnesses? I didn't miss Krissie less, but this perspective did keep me from completely giving up. It kept me from climbing into bed and pulling the covers over my head. I also learned the great importance of

ongoing support. So important, that in my book [Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare](#), I addressed it in the first chapter.

Rebuilding my life after Krissie's death. I don't have to bury my memories with her. No one can take them from me. I can look back on our good and bad times together, and they are all mine. I can do whatever I want with them. I can be bitter, angry, hateful, and resentful, or I can look into the meaning of the many things we shared, I decided to choose the latter. If there was anything I learned From Kristen, it was not to be victim to these emotions, but instead to love and trust. This perspective helped me to emerge from my cocoon of grief. I focus on how much was given to me, instead of how much was taken from me. I am honored to be Kristen's mother.

One of the greatest lessons I learned when rebuilding my life after Kristen's death, was the importance of love - love for others, but also love for ourselves.

Equally significant I learned that the truly wonderful things in life are so simple that we often miss their wonder until they are beyond reach. How much we take for granted! Anyone who has lost a loved one knows this. The beauty of life lies in the quality of our relationships, for what else could possibly matter more?

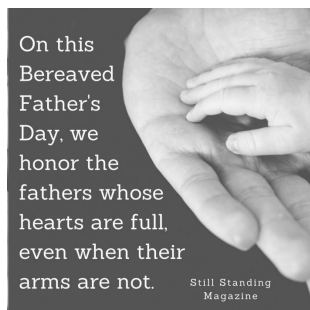
--Carol Keams, PhD

## Father's Day

I remember sitting at a dinner table with friends and their kids on Father's Day - the first one after our daughter Caroline was stillborn. Every day was a tough day, but I decided I would be tough enough to make it through that Sunday.

One of the girls - she couldn't have been more than 3 - started pointing at each of us sitting at the table. "Daddy." "Daddy." "Daddy." Then she got to me: "Daddy." She was right. Even though my daughter wasn't there at the table with me, I thought of myself as a "Daddy."

Turns out, I wasn't as tough as I thought. I went upstairs and had a good cry. When I came back downstairs, I didn't pretend to hide anything. This sweet girl's innocent comment triggered a lot of hard emotions. I could have held it in, I guess, but everyone knew. And, to my surprise, I was



OK with that.

If you've suffered a stillbirth, a miscarriage or infant loss, you hurt in a way that you can't readily explain to anyone, and you don't truly understand it yourself. If you're like me, you struggle with those feelings and you often end up somewhere between "tough it out" and "break down."

We all share a common feeling - we're missing someone. But we all process that grief differently and that can be really hard to deal with. That's why Share exists. They understand that a Dad's grief is unique, and so is the way each of us handles it. The volunteers and staff at SHARE know that we need someone to listen, someone to tell us it's OK to cry and someone who can help us find our way to hope.

My loss comes back to me when I least expect it. I might see a novelty key chain with Caroline's name on it. There's a Caroline Avenue I pass on my way to work each day. Oh yeah, and there's that Neil Diamond song you've probably heard a million times. Gets me every time.

I know Father's Day can be tough, but I also know that memories are beautiful. I wish you gentle thoughts today and every day.  
--Brian Henry - Board Member - Share - nationalshare.org Finding Light Through Darkness group.

## Newly Bereaved...

### GRIEF: Our Act of Love

"I had a child who died." How simple these words are, yet how painful they are to say. The death of a child is the harshest blow life has to offer; it destroys our trust in the world at the most basic level. Grief is our total response to the death of a child; our body, mind, emotions and spirit all react to the loss. While many of us wish to stop the intense grief work we are doing, we find it impossible for many reasons.

First, grief is an act of love, not a lack of strength or faith. The more we loved our child, the greater will be our grief. The more integrated our lives were with the life of our child, the more we will miss his or her very presence. The intensity of our grief is often representative of our love.

Second, grief is a necessary process that we must go through in order to maintain our wholeness and sanity. If we do not grieve, we will not heal. One of the earliest and hardest

lessons we bereaved parents learn is that men and women grieve differently; women, in general, grieve more openly than do men, and women, on the whole, are more comfortable verbally expressing their feelings of loss. While segments of our culture indicate it is more “manly” not to cry, we know this is not true.

Grief work also helps us to complete unfinished business with our child and close the past relationship that we had. We will never “get over” the loss of our child, nor would we ever really want to. We are who we are partly because of our relationship to that child. Our lives will always be influenced by our son or daughter, but most of us will eventually learn to live a meaningful life, despite our tragedy.

Our child will always be with us in spirit and in love, and we often feel a need to hold on to tangible items, such as toys or clothes, to maintain that feeling of closeness. But, intense grief work allows us to let go of the relationship we had and create a new relationship with our child. Our remembrances, love and feelings of oneness with our child can never be destroyed.

I cannot see nor touch my Philip, but I vividly remember him. I have completed earthly mothering, but I still have an intense mother-child relationship with my son.

Grief over the death of a child is the hardest work that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve intensely because we loved intensely. It is unrealistic to expect that grief to ever totally go away, because the love we have for our child will never go away.

Our grief is an act of love and is nothing for which we should be ashamed.

--Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom TCF, Atlanta, GA

## Seasoned Greivers...

### Why I Do What I Do

Today, as I start writing my column, it is January 19, 2004. It is an anniversary of The Day. The day which changed the course of my life and the lives of my wife and daughter forever. Eight years ago the three of us were plucked out of our normal routines and dropped into a horror chamber. The words still ring clear, “We found your son's Body .....” They will forever ring in my heart.



Weeks later, still reeling from the impact, we were at the stone mason's place trying to figure out what words should be on his gravestone. It was a time to breakdown again. Are we supposed to be making that decision over the life of a twenty year old son? It was decided that the fitting words should be “You Made A Difference.” The difference for the better Carl made in me is, for the most part, why I lead a Compassionate Friends chapter. He taught me about compassion and caring.

I also do what I do now because of the wonderful folks in the old Hanford TCF chapter who nurtured me, heard my pain, and gave me hope when I needed it the most. They modeled proper grief recovery for me. They modeled the life of survival after child loss by sharing their experiences and wisdom. They offered suggestions on how to handle tricky issues of grief like how to grieve, how to handle days of significance, and how to handle the ignorant words or actions of family and friends. Newly bereaved parents need role models. They need to see successful grief survival modeled to them. That is why our chapter encourages parents and siblings with many years of successful recovery to come back and show others the way. They can become the lived out examples of joy and purpose, with time, in life again.

I do what I do to provide education to the bereaved and to the general public as well. There is so much misinformation out there about grief. Grief is a natural process after child loss. Strangely, painful as it is, it is the start of the healing process. It needs to be felt. It needs its proper expression. Yes, child loss/sibling grief hurts deeper than one can know, outside of experiencing it.

However our sorrow runs so deep because the love for sons and daughters runs so deep. Sorrow and love are intertwined here. Concerns arise in me whenever new comers say, “This is too painful. I can't talk about it,” or, “If I think of him or her, I will start crying.” Mourning delayed is just mourning denied, and, it will not be denied! Left untreated, it wreaks havoc emotionally and physically. Unresolved mourning probably takes its toll on many marriages. The road to recovery is a journey going through child loss survival in all of its stages. Then one eventually arrives at peace and happiness.

One of the healthiest steps in recovery I have ever taken is to attend the annual Compassionate



Friends National Conference. There is power and healing in numbers of folks coming together in remembrance of their loved ones. Listening, learning, and sharing with people around the nation with this common bond of loss, creates a powerful tool in healing ourselves.

Log onto the website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) Going to the National Conference would be a great way to be good to yourself. So, be good to yourself. --Aaron Pueschel, The Topeka TCF Chapter nl

## Welcome...



## Welcome to the Club

I belong to the toughest club in the World!  
No, it's not the Marines.  
It's not the Green Berets, or the Navy Seals.  
I belong to The Compassionate Friends.  
We are one tough bunch, let me tell you.  
Though you would never suspect it  
as you watch us wiping away our tears.  
The initiation to join the club is so horrible  
that nobody willingly volunteers.  
So we are chosen.  
Who knows why, or how.  
There is no just reason. We just are.

You see, in order to become a member of our club, you have to be able to withstand insurmountable pain.  
The agonizing pain of having your soul ripped away from your body.  
Having it torn to shreds, and left strewn all over the place.  
You're left alone.  
You slowly pick up the pieces of your soul.  
You try to fit the pieces together,  
but some of the pieces are missing.  
You're left with gaping holes where once a large part of your very being existed.  
You've lost your child!

That entitles you to become a member of our club.  
You wish that this never happened.  
You want to go back to the way things were before.  
You don't want to be a member of this club.  
But you are!

So, my fellow sufferer,  
we look to each other for support.

Like victims of a shipwreck,  
we tread the icy water,  
we cling to anything that will keep us afloat.  
We find solace in knowing that we are not alone.  
There are other people out there  
that can understand how we feel.  
For believe me, no one can even imagine  
what we've endured.  
In order to know, you have to be one of us,  
a Compassionate Friend.

--David Pattison, Marie's Dad

Editor's note: This poem says it all. We are here help you through this terrible time in your life. Having been in the position you are now in, we truly understand what it takes to survive the death of a child. We invite you to attend our meetings where you will find the compassion and understanding that bereaved parents need on this journey through grief.



## Friends And Family...

### Guidelines for loving someone that death has destroyed.

#### Part I: The right words.

They did not "slip away". They have not "passed on". They have not "gone to a better place". There is no better place for them than here... Where they belong. I sure as hell was not careless enough to have "lost" them. They died. Stop seeking to soften the situation with subtle synonyms, as if the word "death" itself can make the reality worse.

"At least they knew you loved them." "At least you had them for as long as you did." "At least it was quick." "At least you have so many good memories; memories that will haunt you, memories that will assail you at random moments, memories that you will come to treasure, and hate, in equal measures." At least they never have to hurt this much. At least they don't have to listen as people try to find positives, to find reasons to be thankful, when nothing about this is good, or fair, or lucky. When nothing can make the fact they're dead seem any less horrific.

You need to know that when I say I am broken I am not being dramatic. I am not being poetic. When I say I am broken what I mean is: most nights I am too scared to sleep because I know they will be waiting in my dreams, and I won't ever want to wake up. What I mean is: sometimes I

feel guilty just for breathing, and there's a crack in my chest that aches even when I am laughing. What I mean is: nothing has tasted sweet since the day that we found out, and I'm scared everything is fading to grey.

### Part II: What to do.

Say their name. Say it out loud. Scream each syllable. Say it ten times. Say it softly, like a prayer. Like it's something sacred. Say their name until it no longer sounds as though you are speaking about a stranger you are scared will steal me away.

Ask questions. Ask questions that will make me smile. Ask questions that will make me laugh. Ask even though answering might make me fall apart. Ask until you feel like you know them as well as I did. Ask questions, but never think that knowing the answers is the same as knowing them.

Accept that you don't need to look after me; that there are too few of us left as it is, and I could never ask them to carry on without me too. Accept that you can't cure me; that sadness isn't a sickness I will recover from but a chronic condition I am still learning to live with.

Accept that you can't save me; but that doesn't mean that I don't need you.

### Part III: What to expect.

There will be days - birthdays, Christmases, anniversaries - where grief is greeted as a familiar face. There will be days for toasts, for shared memories, for gatherings where the guest of honor is the only one who cannot make it. There will be days when, no matter how much I steel myself for the blow, the shock of how quickly time has passed still stings.

There will be moments - a summer evening, a train ride home, a Friday night, where grief appears unannounced. There will be moments for silent tears, for in-jokes and secrets, for countless questions that can only be answered by the one who cannot reply. There will be moments when, caught unawares, the full force of all that I no longer have hits like a punch to the gut.

I cannot believe you when you promise to love me forever. I cannot believe that this will all end happily ever after because, after so much sorrow, happiness seems an alien concept. And, anyway, endings are never happy.

I cannot help but count down the days until you are taken from me too. I cannot believe your "forever", because sometimes I lie awake: "terrified that there's something about me that makes

everyone I love leave." I cannot believe you when you say you'll love me forever, because once-upon-a-time they swore that they would never leave me and then death turned their promises into lies.

I will rage against you for not understanding, even as I pray that you never will. I will curse you for caring, for piecing me back together time after time when I know I will shatter again soon. I will be cruel, and thoughtless, and sometimes pain will turn my words into poison. I will leave you, eventually. I will leave before you can, because I know that everything has an expiration date. I will leave, because I have learned that love cannot exist without loss and for once I don't want to be the one left behind.

—Maya Sonvice



## Book In Review...

LIVING, LOVING and LOSING a SON by Marilyn Rauth. Marilyn's story is one of hope for other parents that have suffered the loss of their child. She writes about how she and Robb grew up together, how they shared their lives together and how she went through his death and the eventually healing and acceptance of it. It's a mother's memoir and it is her hope that it will ease the pain of other parents that have or are going through the same loss. Published in 2009. Paperback. [marilyn@loss-of-child.com](mailto:marilyn@loss-of-child.com)

## Helpful Hint...



I wish I could tell everyone who has lost a loved one how important it is to let themselves, and their family, remember. Forget, if you can, the sickness or tragedy that took them, but give them a place in your life. We have memories to cherish, and we shouldn't cheat ourselves by not doing that. I don't mean that we should constantly talk about them, but when something we're doing reminds us of something good that happened when we were still a whole family, we don't hesitate to say so.

--Lettie Petrie

The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love, and be greater than our suffering.

-- Ben Okri

## Wish You Were Here

You'd be nineteen if you were here  
 But why you're gone still isn't clear.  
 Your things are still all in your room  
 As if you'd be returning soon.  
 Spongebob waits there by the door.  
 Your shoes are still there on the floor.  
 Your friends are all young women now.  
 They're working jobs or college bound.  
 Sometimes we see them and they say  
 We miss her so, wish she had stayed.  
 Your boyfriend's in the Army too  
 And by the way, he still loves you.  
 You thought his love was not so true  
 And that some other girl he'd choose.  
 But near two years have passed on by  
 Still to your grave he goes to cry.  
 Your niece and nephews miss you too,  
 And talk of the things you used to do.  
 Your Mother's going to be alright  
 And doesn't cry so much at night.  
 She puts the flowers on your grave,  
 And scrapbook pictures tries to save.  
 And me, I'm still the same old Dad,  
 The same old routine like I had.  
 I work real hard to make a way  
 To pay some bills and pass the day.  
 I'm not as funny as before  
 My world's not happy anymore.  
 I don't let on the pain I feel  
 But deep inside the hurt is real.  
 Time passes by year after year,  
 Life goes on with seldom a tear.  
 One wish I have, a wish so clear  
 My wish most of all, I wish you were here.

~Dad

Steve Tutt TCF Tyler, TX

## Drifting....

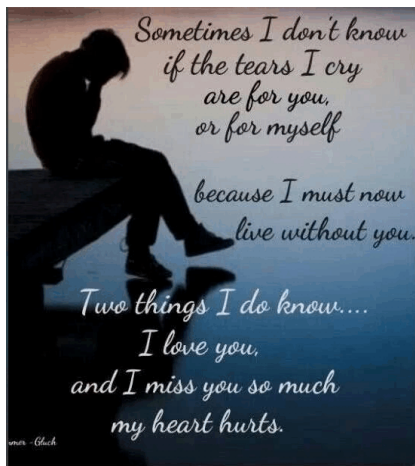
Drifting through life is how I feel  
 The death of my son, doesn't seem real.  
 I catch myself laughing the next moment I cry.  
 I try to quote reason, but my mouth spills out  
 "why"?

I stare at his photo, now spotted with tears.  
 More distance from him is one of my fears.  
 My beautiful boy – his life became shorter.  
 Why couldn't I go first? - That's the right order.  
 So I'll continue to drift along life's falling rain,  
 until the day when our hearts meet again.  
 --Kelly Boerger, TCF Cincinnati

## I'll Always Be Your Dad

Years have come and gone  
 and time has surely drifted by  
 I've searched for any answer  
 yet I'm left to wonder why  
 The only thing I know for sure  
 through the happy and the sad  
 No matter what the circumstance  
 I will always be your dad  
 Not a day goes by  
 that I don't hold you in my heart  
 My love reaches far beyond  
 this space we are apart  
 These empty arms remember  
 all the good times that we had  
 I may be standing here alone  
 but I will always be your dad

Some won't understand  
 so I don't bother to explain  
 They look into my eyes  
 but they can only see the pain  
 Afraid to look too deep  
 as they are blinded by the fear  
 If only they could know  
 a father's love won't disappear  
 So when this road gets lonely  
 and the journey seems too hard  
 And I get to feeling sorry  
 that I didn't get a card  
 If I close my eyes  
 I can almost hear you say  
 I love you and I miss you daddy....  
 Happy Father's Day  
 -- Alan Pedersen



## Grief

Grief: is sometimes silent, like snowflakes falling on a dark winter's night.., but never peaceful or serene or pretty like the pure white snow. When grief is silent, the tears seem to turn to ice, like the snowflakes, before they reach our eyes.

Grief: is sometimes raging, like a monstrous thunderstorm with all its fury and lots of lightning striking our hearts at every angle. When grief is raging, the tears come in torrents, like the rain, and flood our soul.

Grief: whether it be silent or raging... Hurts.  
 --Verne Smith TCF, Ft. Worth, Texas



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

Cheiann 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 Trillegi &  
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

Jillian Nicole Katnic  
Born: 3/87 Died: 10/18  
Mother: Debbie Hughes

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

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

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

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 Match  
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18  
Parents: Mike & Shirley Match  
Grandmother: Susan Match

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 Pulislich  
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/18  
Mother: Maria Pulislich  
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

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

Quvia (Cody) Samuel  
Born: 4/74 Died: 11/18  
Parents: Vincent & Betty  
Samuel

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  
Moshier

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

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

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

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, 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.



### A Birthday Tribute to: Emily Matilda Kass June 1995 - March 2006

Happy "24th" Birthday Emily Matilda!  
Sweetie pie, not a moment passes when you are not in our thoughts. I hear your laughter. I see your brilliantly mischievous smile. I feel your hugs. I know/hope you are up to trouble, but in a good way, fighting to right wrongs. We love you 3000! Always...

All our love forever & ever,  
Mom & Jess



## For Siblings...

### Excerpts From "The Empty Room"

I was fourteen when my brother died. My friends didn't bring it up and neither did I. Family friends, I suppose, didn't want to intrude or thought we would actually ask them if we thought of something we needed. As if we knew. We didn't know what we needed. We were lost, even to ourselves. My parents didn't talk about Ted, or his death, alone or together. They were numb, engulfed in their own separate miseries. I didn't talk to them, either, I was numb, too.

That summer, our schnauzer, Donner, who'd been a gift on Ted's ninth birthday, was hit and killed by a car. It was my mother who found him. I wondered if Ted had summoned Donner to keep him company. We couldn't stand Donner's absence. He was the only morsel of comfort in the house. We got a puppy, Jackson, the next day.

Years later, when Jackson's kidneys failed and we had to put him to sleep, our remaining dog, Rudy – a flighty character whom Jackson had bossed around within an inch of his life – was so confused, so grief-stricken by Jackson's sudden disappearance, that he hid under my parents' bed for weeks. When he did come out, he wouldn't look anyone in the eye. He ducked his head, averted his gaze. I recognized

the look. When Ted died, none of us could look one another in the eye, either. To do so was to risk seeing our own pain, reflected back. Or worse, to risk falling apart. If I let loose my grip on myself, I thought, I might never be able to pull myself together again. We hid in separate rooms of the house, my family, meeting only for dinner, at which point we strained to make conversation. I left the table as soon as possible and my parents often ended the meal by fighting.

One day, in the first months after Ted's death, my parents went out without telling me where they were going, and returned hours later, with cardboard boxes packed full of Ted's things from "The Room", as I came to think of it. They stacked them in a walk-in closet at the end of the hallway. Occasionally, when I knew they'd both be out for a while, I'd make forays into this closet, prying open box lids, peeking at what lay inside – records, a guitar stand, the suede hippie hat I'd given him for Christmas, his clogs – feeling as if he might emerge, genie like, if I opened the right container.

Those boxes were a good metaphor for the place my brother came to hold in our lives. Sealed up, hidden away, unopened, except for my occasional furtive explorations. This was how it was, and how it would continue to be.

--By Elizabeth DeVita-Raeburn

## For Grandparents...



### Dear Mommy and Daddy

Less than a year ago I came into this world, my world, filled with love. I felt it as you held your hands gently on your belly waiting for me to kick. I felt it as you talked and planned for my arrival, when you chose my name – gathering my clothes and toys, and told my sisters that I was coming.

I saw it on your face as you held me for the first time and looked deeply into my eyes and whispered 'I love you'.

I heard your laughter, saw your smiles and felt your joy. I remember the sounds of your voice singing and the smiles on your face as I fell asleep in your arms. I loved being your little girl. Sometimes I see you cry because that time together was so short. I wish that I could hold you and tell you how happy I am now and I know for sure we'll all be together again, and that time will be forever.

I want to tell you that in many ways we still are together. Feeling loved by you has not stopped for me, but grown as I see you keep me in your memories and in your hearts. I feel special being your little girl and always will. And because I am a part of Elly, Emily and my new sister or brother, each

time you hug them, I feel hugged. Each time you laugh with them, I see your smiles that I love. I know at times you remember me with sadness and with tears and that is okay. But also "remember me with the smiles and laughter— for that's the way I remember you."

Love always, MacKenzie

-- Claudine "Granny" Grandmother to MacKenzie  
Louise Asbury TCF Front Range Colorado

## From Our Members...



### Your Memory Will Always Last

Friends may think we have forgotten,  
when at times they see us smile.  
Little do they know the heartaches,  
that our smiles hide all the while.  
Beautiful memories are wonderful things,  
that last until the longest day.  
They never wear out, they never get lost,  
and can never be given away.  
To some you may be forgotten,  
to others a part of the past,  
But to those who love you and lost you,  
Your memory will always last.  
--Author unknown 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.) 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: July 1st for August 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.....(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](mailto: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)   | groww.com      |
| goodgriefresources.com   | childloss.com  |
| beyondindogp.com   | griefwatch.dom |
| angelmoms.com  | babysteps.com  |
| healingafterloss.org   | webhealing.com |
| survivorsofsuicide.com   | opentohope.com |
| taps.org (military death)  | alivealone.org |
| bereavedparentsusa.org   | save.org       |
| pomc.com (families of murder victims)  |                |
| grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)   |                |
| <a href="http://www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub">www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub</a> (Suicide) |                |

**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  
 Cheryl & Bill Matasso  
 Nancy Lerner  
 Kitty Edler  
 Mary Sankus  
 Sandra & Eddie Myricks



Marilyn Nemeth  
 Lynn Vines  
 Ken Konopasek  
 Susan Kass  
 Crystal Henning

**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 still available. 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 Michael B. Ruggera Jr., April 1951 - April 1996.  
From his parents, Michael & Frances Ruggera

---

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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

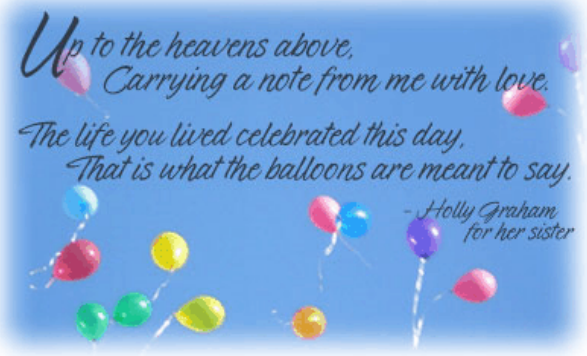
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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

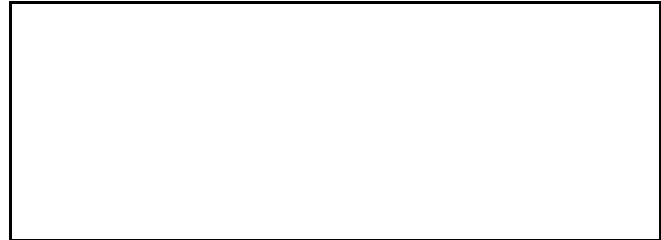
---

NON PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT 3223  
TORRANCE CA 90503

---



– Return Service Requested –



**June 2019**

## **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.  
©2019 THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS -- SOUTH BAY/L.A., CA CHAPTER**

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