



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

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

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

DECEMBER 2019 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be **December 5th, 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 December 5th meeting will start with "The pain of grief verses the joy of the holidays."

Friends and Family are invited to join us for the TCF World Wide Candle Lighting on Sun. Dec 8<sup>th</sup>. See pg. 2 for information.

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 Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on Sunday, Dec. 8th, unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the life and memories of our children who have died.



As candles are lit on December 8th, 2019 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people will commemorate and honor the memory of all our children gone too soon. We invite you, your guests, and the community to attend this year's event being held indoors, at St. James School's O' Gorman Center in Torrance, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm. The address is 4625 Garnet St. Torrance. Candles will be provided. Bring cookies to share after the ceremony. To have your child included in the slide show, see instructions on page 15.

The Thursday, **Dec. 5th meeting** will start with **"The pain of grief verses the joy of the holidays."** The war of emotions that may descend on us at this time of the year makes the loss of our child even greater. Do we try and run from the pain and past memories or do we think we should stay and fight the grief as we face the holidays. Do we focus on the happier times we shared with our child and try to celebrate or is it too much this year? Either way, this is a very difficult time for the newly bereaved. It isn't fair that everyone else is smiling and looking forward to enjoying the holidays as usual, while our hearts are aching.

Our grief and our love for our child will be with us where ever we are. Be sure to give yourself the necessary time needed for grieving during the holiday season. Whether this is your first holiday without your child here, or you have had the experience of dealing with the season without your complete family, we hope you can join us as we share ways to handle our grief at this time of the year. We will start the meeting by talking about: Concerns and fears of the newly bereaved; Dealing with the expectations of family and friends; What if anything do you feel capable of doing?; Changing traditions; Surviving children in the family. We hope some of our long-time members will return to share their experiences, good or bad, on getting through the holidays.

### The Holiday Balancing Act

The holiday with all of its traditions and special memories, also brings extra stress and pressure

for families dealing with the death of a child. Instead of being a time of comfort, togetherness, and joy, the sights, sounds, smells and holiday gatherings can bring feelings of defeat, sadness, meaninglessness, and pain. Still for others, holiday traditions and rituals offer a way to remember their child and offers families a place to share stories and express their emotions.

Parents often have difficulty making decisions regarding the holidays. Everything from familiar traditions like holiday baking, decorating, gift exchanges, and family gatherings has changed. This can be frustrating and overwhelming but also rewarding and comforting. It all begins with a balancing act.

What I need, as a bereaved parent, what my immediate family needs, and which things can be adjusted to meet those needs should be our priority. You and your family come first. What is the most comfortable for all of you is what should be done. Discuss with your kids how they feel and what they would like to do. Remember, this is a season of grief for them also. We need to balance the pain of our loss with the pain of their needs for the holiday. Be gentle with yourself, and allow yourself to do what feels right, even if others disapprove.

I recommend you start, create and maintain a new tradition each year for those first few holidays. It doesn't have to be something major. Simple things can make up a new traditions. Light a special candle, buy an angle stocking to hold and share thoughts about your child, find, print and share the recipe for a favorite holiday treat your child loved. (Baking Eric's favorite and giving haystacks to friends and family makes me feel he is a part of the celebration). Buying a special ornament each year in his/her memory and donating to TCF in your child's name are all easy but helpful gestures. New rituals that still include your child, helps to stabilize your emotions. Do what you feel you can handle and change old traditions into new ones to accommodate your changed family. If they work keep them, if they don't make things easier, discard them and try something new again next year...It's all a balancing act.

Communicating with friends and family is extremely important at this time of the year. Others are trying to make their plans and want to include us but don't know what to say. We need to talk about our mixed feelings and our grief and how overpowering our emotions are at times. Don't

hide your feelings to make others feel comfortable. We need to share those feelings so others can help us and understand where we are coming from.

Accept the fact that nothing you can do is going to make things the way they used to be. While we may yearn for the past, we must face the fact that we have to live our "new normal." Part of that includes finding ways to incorporate our late child's memory into our remaining family's rituals. Decorate your child's grave or special area. Purchase or make a special ornament in their memory to add to the tree each year. Invite friends and family and attend a remembrance ceremony. Give someone who has helped you a gift or special card thanking them for their kindness. These can all help you feel better.

But most importantly, take care of yourself. Grief depletes energy, making simple tasks seem insurmountable. You may feel emotionally exhausted, stressed, and overwhelmed. Add to that the anticipation of the holidays and it all just seems too much to bear... Respect what your body and mind are trying to tell you. Be patient with yourself. Do what you can for now and accept that it will just have to be good enough. Take a deep breath, remember your child's special smile and do something soothing for yourself... After all, it's just a balancing act.

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

## Coping With Christmas

There is no right or wrong way to cope with Christmas, especially if this is the first Christmas without your beloved child. We have compiled a list of ideas, gleaned from many sources. Hints that other grieving parents have found help get them through Christmas. If there is a suggestion that you feel is right for you and your family hold on to it and let the others go, maybe next year you might feel like trying some other ideas.

### Preparation

\* You and your family come first, what is most comfortable for all of you is what should be done. Decide how you want to spend the day and let friends and family know so they can better support you.  
\* Think about how to answer certain greetings in advance. For example, when someone wishes you "Merry Christmas," you may respond with "I'll do

my best" or "Best wishes to you too."

\* Discuss with your family how they feel and what they would like to do. Let them decorate the tree, make the cookies, wrap the presents etc.

### Ways to Include Your Loved One's Life and Memories

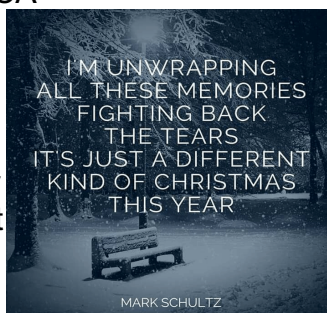
- \* Take time, maybe before dinner, to have a moment of silence to think about your loved one. Ask them if they would like to share their thoughts.
- \* Invite everyone to write down a special thought about your child/sibling and place it in his/her Christmas stocking to be read by anyone at any time. This could be a special gift for you and your family to revive those special memories.
- \* Burn a candle on Christmas day in memory of your loved one.
- \* Buy a gift your child would have enjoyed and donate it to charity to brighten another child's day, or make a donation in your child or sibling's name to his/her favorite charity.
- \* Buy a helium balloon and get the family to write messages to tie to it and together release it.
- \* Ask everyone to bring photographs of 'Christmases Past'. You might find that the sharing of these photos makes it easier and leads naturally into the sharing of memories of your child, brother or sister as well as other family members who are absent (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)

### Changes You Could Make

- \* Have a different type of tree, a smaller one, a white one instead of the traditional green, or maybe no tree at all this year.
- \* Make a special ornament to add to the tree using craft materials or even a photo. This Could be a good way to include younger family members.
- \* Change the time of your Christmas meal, maybe dinner instead.
- \* You might like to go out for Christmas.
- \* Attend a different Church or different service.
- \* Do something for someone else. Focusing on others (elderly neighbor, someone with no relatives nearby) for part of the holidays will give you a respite from your pain.

### Some Things Not to Do

- \* Don't feel you should send out Christmas cards; I'm sure your friends will understand.
- \* Don't pretend you do not hurt.
- \* Don't make changes in everything.
- \* Don't forget that Christmas and holiday times often magnify feelings of loss of a loved one. Experiencing the sadness that comes is important and natural. To block out such feelings is



unhealthy. Keep the positive memory of your loved one alive.

\* Don't give yourself the additional burden of worrying about crying. Your tears shouldn't ruin the day for other family members, but will provide them with the same freedom. Remember your crying can't MAKE others cry, they cry because they too are affected by the death of your child or their brother or sister.

\* You might not want to change anything; you may want to keep busy, not have time to think, hold back the pain. Don't get so busy that you will not have time to think about your loved one, it will catch up with you and possibly hit you harder than if you had allowed yourself the freedom to hurt, to yearn, to wonder what might have been, to truly miss them and be allowed to say so.

This list was compiled from many articles from many TCF chapters. The hints were found to be similar in many and some were found in just one; however, the one important thing that was stated in ALL of them was—

realize that no matter what we do, Christmas (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries) will come and that the anticipation and lead up is nearly always worse than the actual day.

-- Your TCF families

## Chanukah

Chanukah is a joyous holiday. It is a time for lighting the menorah, making potato latkes, spinning the dreidel, exchanging gifts and spending time with family and friends. We also tell our children the story of Chanukah, how the Maccabees defeated the Syrians and the miracle of the oil. There was only enough oil to burn in the Temple for one day, but miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days. To celebrate this miracle we light the Menorah and recite a prayer for eight days.

When I think about the miracle of Chanukah, I think of the story of David, my David's story. David abused drugs for several years, but in the end he won his fight over the mighty drugs. But, no miracle for David, for he died from being given the wrong pain medication following the extraction of his wisdom teeth. I still wonder why David beat the odds in the battle against drugs, but lost the war.

Time has softened David's loss and allows me to remember the miracle of his birth and his short but wonderful life. I cherish the light of his

laughter, the light of his wit and intelligence, and the light of his love.

--Lois Copeland, TCF, Arlington, VA

## The Paradigm Shift

Bereaved parents often recant with sorrow that the most calloused, harsh, and even cruel comments made to them regarding the loss of their child often comes from their nearest friends and family members. The reason for this is because these are the very people in our lives who have known us the longest and who think that they know us better than anyone. They have built a paradigm in their minds of who they think that we are based on our past relationship with them. We fit neatly into a box in their minds that tells them things like; "He has a great sense of humor," or "She loves to go the movies," etc. Based on our "history" with them, they have developed a long list of descriptive terms based on their memories about us that forms the framework of what they perceive us to be.

When our child dies, the components that served to build the models in the minds of those we love folds like a house of cards. Suddenly, and irrevocably we are changed forever. This makes those closest to us very uncomfortable. To them we may look and sound like we used to, but we behave very differently now. Their uneasiness with this dramatic change causes them to pressure us into changing back to the way that we used to be in order for us to continue to fit the mold that they have conceived in their minds of how we should be. They want us to "Hurry-up and change back ... now!"

Sadly, this is the reason why some families grow distant and many friendships end. However, this is also one of the reasons that it is so easy to open up and connect with others at a Compassionate Friends meeting. No one there has any preconceived expectations or ideas of how we should act or behave. We are embraced and accepted in our grief and brokenness just as we are. One thing that we can do is to reach out to our loved ones and let them know that although we may never again be the person that we use to be before our child died, if they will bear with us and not abandon us, with time and effort we may regain some of the traits and characteristics that we were most loved and remembered for.

--Janet G. Reyes TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX





## When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag— are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something.

Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared.

Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on.

Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and that was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the

meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

--Nita Aasen St. Peter, MN

## The Sounds of Silence

The sounds of silence are everywhere – it is the silent pain of the loss of our son Andy, it is the silence of our home because one of our children is gone, and it is the silence of the sudden quiet that comes over people when we mention Andy.

We have become both better and worse in the six years since Andy died of cancer at the age of 22. We are better because we are able to get on with our lives and even enjoy ourselves occasionally. We have gotten worse because, as the years go by, we feel his loss more deeply. We feel his loss every time we participate in a celebration marking some milestone of our friends and relatives or their children. We feel the loss because any celebrations of our own will always be incomplete – one person will always be absent and not there to celebrate with us or to enjoy his own milestones. The pain of his absence is always present at these events.

When Andy died, the pain of his loss was a sharp acute screaming pain that tore a hole inside of us. Now, the pain is a silent quiet steady pain. The hole is still inside us, covered by a scar, but it is still there. It doesn't scream out loud any more but instead just remains as a quiet steady and never-ending ache and sadness – a silent pain. The silence of our home is a different kind of quiet. By now, if Andy had lived, he probably would have been out on his own. We would have been "empty nesters" anyway. But, when a home becomes empty because of the death of a child, it is a different kind of empty nest. Our daughter Lesley is married and out on her own, the way it should be. But, Andy is gone for a different reason. So, the silence of our empty nest is not the silence of knowing we raised two children and now they are both out leading their own lives. Instead it is the silence of a home that is empty because one child is gone forever – of having to deal with the reality that phone calls only come from one child, not two; that only one child stops by for a visit, not two; that one child is forever gone from the nest. There is a silence in our home that often seems to pervade every space. It is a sad silence, not the temporary quiet of a happy home.



And then, there is the silence of relatives and friends when we talk about Andy – not about his death but about the things he did while alive. It is as if Andy has become a forbidden topic because he died, as if his death wiped out the 22 years he did live. It occurs when a relative whispers that our son died when someone asked how old he was – like his life and what happened to him was a big secret. It occurs when people suddenly get a funny look on their faces and don't know what to say next when you mention something about Andy. It occurs when you get the feeling that people want to avoid you because you remind them of a horror that could happen to anyone. It is a silence that reminds you that your emotions and feelings are different from that of others and that you will always have to live with the sounds of silence resulting from your son's death.

--By Mel Winer, Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Copyright 1997.



## Memory Tree

My nephew, Alex, 18, was killed in a car accident January 31. He was like a son to me. My brother, Lowell (Alex's dad) died by suicide July 1. After Alex died, I decorated a "Memory Tree" and have continued to do so every Christmas since. Now, I will do the same for my sweet, loving brother. I decorate the tree with cards, pictures of Alex, baby shoes, hand prints, angels, gifts, doves from the funeral and floral arrangements, little handmade ornaments given to me by Alex ... anything personal I have received or collected over the years from him. Of course, I decorate with lights... lots of lights which make the "memories" stand out. The tree topper is a huge bow with the last picture of Alex attached to it. The tree gives me comfort each time I pass by it and it's a reminder to my friends and visitors that YES, this person lived and YES, this person made a difference in my life and his life counted as much as anyone's ... and the memories live on.

--Martha Grogan, Cumming, GA

## Christmas Will Never Be Quite The Same

The Christmas tree will never be quite as straight and tall. The cookies always seem just the tiniest bit burnt. The laughter at parties just isn't quite as hearty. The crowds at the stores are

annoying, and I rush through my shopping, passing up the gift that would be "just right" for one which will "just do". The songs of chestnuts and open fires and snow and love leave me weepy, not warm.

But late at night, all by myself, I hold your blanket close to my heart, and my eyes catch glimpses of your angels on the tree, your candle, and your stocking (with a rose from Daddy's garden peeking out of the top!), and I feel your baby hand on my cheek, and smell the sweetness of your velvet-skin. Then the sadness leaves my face, and I am filled with my love for you.

Merry Christmas, Brian Christopher. Merry Christmas, Little Man.

--By Marie Teague

## Newly Bereaved...

### "Hope for the Day"

When we are grieving a loss, we often feel like giving up on everything. We're wiped out—exhausted. We feel like we're empty and nothing at all can begin to fill us back up. It's all we can do to stare at the clock and make it through another hour.

During those first months following a loss, it's so important to take time to adjust to the new place where we've been forced to live. We're on new turf and nothing looks, feels, or smells familiar. And, it takes time to adjust. Time to get a feel for what life is minus the one that we loved so much. It's important to know that you're going to feel this way for a while. It's important to give yourself time to work through all of the different emotions of grieving. It's even important to recognize when it's time to let go a bit. At first that might sound harsh. But, in reality it's not.

Letting go is a form of hope. Letting go says that I now understand what has happened, and it's time for me to find a new normal. I'll never, ever forget the one I love so much, but I must begin to live again or I will stay stuck in a very dangerous place called denial.

It's so hard to break loose of those feelings of aloneness, guilt, fear, emptiness, and fatigue. It's hard to look for hope in a place where everything seems so dark and devoid of hope. But we can, and we must. We don't have to look down the long road of years without our loved one. All we have to focus on is today. Right now is what we have. And, with a bit of hope, you can take one tiny step

forward in this journey called grief. Reach out. Touch a life with your smile. Fill your lungs with the fresh air and be thankful. Watch the glory of a new sunrise, and know that this day was made just for you! Hope will carry you through!

“Hope is finding the blue in the sky that once looked so black!”

-- Clara Hinton (from SilentGrief.com)

## Seasoned Grievors...

### Giving Myself Permission

It has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season. After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays. Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before.

But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me. Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply, too painful for me. Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter? Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son's name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made.

That's Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps

serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

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

## Friends and Family...

### My New Address Book



One of my support pillars in this grief journey is Dennis Apple, author of *Life After the Death of My Son*. In a webinar hosted by the National Office of The Compassionate Friends, Dennis mentioned that once you become a bereaved parent, your address book changes. I may have heard that phrase previously, but with the holidays coming, it really jolted me.

I was once one of “those people” who dutifully mailed out annual personalized Christmas cards, complete with a holiday photo of our family and the oft-dreaded “Christmas letter.” Since our son died, I can't yet see myself even sending out a generic holiday card to anyone ever again.

It's obvious that the number of cards in our mailbox has dwindled. Perhaps that was inevitable. For one thing, we're not sending them out ourselves. Many folks expect a card exchange to be reciprocal. I get that. Also, situations change. Once, our lives were concentrated on our children and their activities, bringing us into constant contact with our community. There were parent/teacher conferences, Back to School nights, PTA meetings, sporting events, concerts, plays, class parties, car pooling obligations, etc. Without those activities, some of our relationships would have faded away even if Jordan hadn't died.

It is impossible for me to know which relationships might have endured. It is difficult to calibrate what would have happened anyway and what has happened because we've become bereaved parents.

There may be some who avoid contact with us because they can't bear to face our reality. It's too painful and perhaps too scary. If it could happen to us, could it happen to them? Is it contagious? There are also those who may find that our sadness somehow diminishes their happiness. For those who may avoid us for such reasons, I have to say that's pretty pathetic.

For most, I think it might just be a case of not knowing what to say or do. They might be afraid of saying or doing something to hurt us further. For those people, I have a few suggestions during the holiday season.



Please do send us a card even if we don't send you one. It might be best if you don't send the card you're sending to everyone else. A cheery card is not appropriate. The Merry is gone from my Christmas. There are plenty of "gentle" holiday cards expressing "thinking of you." For me, I'd appreciate a note that says something like, "I can't imagine how much you miss Jordan at this time of year." I'd even like it if you include a memory of Jordan from past Christmases. I may cry when I read it, but I cry anyway.

Invite us to your holiday celebrations, even if we don't feel up to it. I like to know you realize I haven't fallen off the planet. Please don't be offended if participating in a "party" is beyond us. If we do attend, please understand if we don't stay long. (I cannot speak for all bereaved parents; surely there are some who welcome social opportunities.)

If we do accept an invitation, make people who might not know us aware of what our circumstances are now. It is very, very hard to deal with the "So, how many children do you have?" question from a stranger in a social setting. Protect us from that if you can.

If your schedule allows, call and ask us to meet for a cup of coffee, or lunch, or a movie. Offer to stop by for a short visit. Accompany us on a walk. It is impossible to express how grateful I am for any moments of diversion, especially during this season when I'm trying to avoid decorations, Christmas music, toy commercials, etc.

My "revised" address book has two other categories. One, of course, is the new friends I've met who are also bereaved parents. I know for sure I would die of a broken heart without them.

But another category is the people who I barely knew who are not bereaved parents but who call me, email me, spend time with me. People who just have such heart that they want to reach out to provide whatever comfort they can. However superficial our previous contact may have been, it's now deep and indispensable. Some of these are "old friends" from years ago, some of these are more casual acquaintances from my more recent but pre-tragedy life. I'm grateful for them all. They are a gift in my address book.

--Peggi Johnson TCF Arlington, VA  
In Memory of my son, Jordan

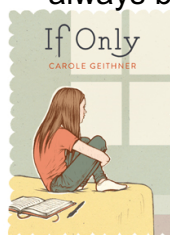
## Welcome...



The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

**To Our New Members**— Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

**To Our Members Who are Further Down the 'Grief Road'**— We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"



## Book In Review...

If Only Cover Carole Geithner's coming-of-age novel shines a realistic light on bereavement in adolescents.

This is a moving and sometimes humorous story that has helped open difficult conversations in families, at schools, and among friends, about the often-avoided yet universal experience of loss.

"I love IF ONLY, and I love Corinna. The voice is so authentic, the details of friendships and family life so convincing, and the experiences of loss and grief and confusion and consolation so painfully true, that I sometimes forgot that I wasn't, in fact, reading the actual journal of a suffering and touching teenage girl trying her valiant best to come to some sort of terms with her mother's death... a wonderful book." — Judith Viorst, author of *Necessary Losses* and *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*



**Helpful Hint...**

When grief is new you need not find a reason however good and brave - to temper your despair. When grief is new the heart accepts no answer however wise and kind - to ease your mourning. When grief is new your life can only know disintegration, overwhelming pain...

My friend, try to believe what other grievers learned: You will not always hurt as you hurt now... Time will restore the soundness of your mind. All other words are shadows on the wind when grief is new. - Sascha

**I Will Be There**

Mom, tomorrow I will be there  
 Though you may not see.  
 I'll smile and remember  
 The last Christmas with you and me.  
 Don't be sad, Mom,  
 I'm never far away.  
 Your heart has hidden sight  
 My memory will always stay.  
 I watched as you touched the ornaments  
 Sometimes a tear was shed as you did.  
 I touched you gently on your shoulder  
 And on tiptoes I proudly stood.  
 I'm only gone for a little while, Mom,  
 I'm waiting for the day to be.  
 When God calls out your name, Mom,  
 We'll be together, just you wait and see  
 But until that time comes  
 Carry on as you did when I was there.  
 I tell the angels how much I love you.  
 There are angels here everywhere!  
 I stand behind you some days  
 When I know that you are sad.  
 I want you to be happy, Mom,  
 It would make my heart so glad  
 So on this Christmas Eve, Mom  
 Think of me as I will be thinking of you.  
 And touch that special ornament  
 That I once made for you.  
 I love you, Mom and Dad, also  
 I know you know I do.  
 And I'll be waiting here for you  
 When your earthly life is through  
 Love, Your child in Heaven  
 --Sharon J. Bryant [www.angelabode.com](http://www.angelabode.com)

**The Christmas Tears**

I will gather with the family,  
 Christmas Day is finally here.  
 But I will reserve a moment of time  
 To shed my Christmas Tears.

This special moment is just for us  
 A mother and her son  
 I'll laugh and cry about times gone by  
 And all the things we've done.

As I sing our Christmas carols  
 I'll open the gift you made for me.  
 This gift is more precious than gold itself,  
 It's the gift of your memory.

As I sift through the layers of tissue  
 That are in this gift of mine,  
 It takes me back to a Christmas past,  
 To a brighter and happier time.

I'll relive all the Christmases  
 That we had for twenty-two years,  
 Knowing that there will be no more  
 Brings on the Christmas tears.

But you have bestowed a second gift.  
 That starts things all anew,  
 A granddaughter to mend the hole in my heart,  
 That was left by losing you.

I trust these precious gifts of yours  
 Will sustain me through the years,  
 And maybe there will be a Christmas day,  
 With no more Christmas tears.  
 --Linda McInturff TCF/Southern Maryland

Try to strike that delicate balance between  
 yesterday that should be remembered and a  
 tomorrow that must be created."  
 --Meg Avery Lawrenceville TCF

**Our Children**

I like to think that they are encircling us,  
 Sunlight in their hair,  
 Starlight in their eyes,  
 Holding hands in love.  
 The older ones nurturing the younger,  
 Helping them to grow.  
 I like to think that they are one,  
 As we are ONE, A family of love!  
 -- Gloria Grant, TCF Miami, FL



## Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong  
Miscarried: July 1995  
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gregory Robert Ehrlich  
Born: 4/91 Died: 2/19  
Mother: Sarah Ott

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cheianne Jayda Berry  
Born: 12/01 Died: 7/16  
Mother: Kristina Berry

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

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

Cody Jarod Esphorst  
Born: 3/02 Died 7/19  
Parents: Jesse & Julie  
Esphorst

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Our Children Remembered



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

Marc David Guerreva  
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

Alexander John Jacobs  
Born: 3/90 Died: 8/19  
Mother: Diane Jacobs

Stefanie Jacobs  
Born: 5/87 Died: 1/97  
Father: Rob Jacobs

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

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 Lulhere  
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96  
Parents: Larry & Chris  
Lulhere

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: 6/17  
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

Keith Moilanen  
Born: 10/80 Died: 5/19  
Mother: Jill Moilanen

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

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





## Our Children Remembered



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

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 Mosher

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

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

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

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

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



## Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* For corrections or to add your child to the Our Children Remembered section of the newsletter, call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 and leave a message.

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

### 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.tcfbla.org](http://www.tcfbla.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.

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

Sorry, no birthday tributes were submitted this month.

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

## For Siblings...

### Things Will Never Be the Same Again

Christmas will never be the same again. Life will never be the same again! I remember my last Christmas with my brother, Chris. He was a senior in high school, recently accepted to USC, the college I was to graduate from five years later, without him. It was going to be his last Christmas at home, before he went off to college. What we didn't realize was that it really was his "last Christmas at home." He gave me sapphire earrings, the ones I wear everyday of my life. I can't even remember the gift I bought him, but I do have a picture of us in our customary places on the sofa; our arms around each other, pajamas on, smiles so big they stretched across the room ... like a frozen moment in time.

Life goes on for the rest of the world, but we, the mourners, find ourselves back at the starting gate, beginning life over again. We have to learn how to live a new way, without a significant relationship - our brothers and sisters. This is not an easy task, and the challenge of the holidays is upon us once again. For my family, each Christmas since our last with Chris has been a trial and error process.

Traveling, changing traditions, going back to old traditions - all forced efforts and struggled attempts to "make it through the holidays." Personally, I have found more comfort in embracing the old traditions rather than running away from them. We, as a family, have formed new traditions that blend with our old ones. We have breakfast on

Christmas morning with another bereaved family which has become a comforting new custom. While opening gifts, I prefer to sit alone on the sofa Chris and I used to share because I just can't imagine it any other way. It took us a couple of years before we felt like decorating the house, or having guests over again, and before we could do a lot of the old traditions.

But when we as a family were ready, we did them - but always a little bit differently. We now have a collection of music note and angel ornaments that fill their own tree, and each one is in Chris' memory. This year we decided to fly to Texas to be with my sister's family, because none of us wanted to be alone. So we continue the trial and error process.

No matter, what you decide for yourself to find your way through the holidays, I do hope that you create a way to include your sibling in your plans. Write a poem, share a story, paint a picture, sing or play a song, eat their favorite ice cream, or bake goodies in their memory. Even purchase a gift that you would have bought for your sibling and give it in his or her memory to a special person.

By finding a personal way of incorporating each of our siblings during the holidays - and every day - they will continue to influence not only our lives, but the people with whom we come in contact, thus continuing their legacy and memory for years to come.

My Christmas wish for each of you this holiday season is that you will have an abundance of precious wrapped gifts to give and to be received from each one within your family. Not CD's, or toys, or books, or things - but memories of your brother or sister, ones that are special and thought of often, or ones that were near to being forgotten. Share these with someone, if you can, and have them, share their memories with you. In this way, our brothers and sisters will remain near in our thoughts and hearts as we continue to make our way through this adventure called life.

--Michelle Dyck Pasadena, CA



## **A Holiday To-Do List:**

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bittersweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst. At any rate, I can handle

- November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:
1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
  2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
  3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
  4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
  5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.
  6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go—the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!
  7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
  8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH—it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
  9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.
  10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you



WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.  
 --Amy Baker Ferry, TCF, Heart of Florida Chapter

## A Letter to My Brother

A part of me, my only sibling,  
 You alone hold the history of my youth.  
 The barbecues at Grandma's and fishing at the dam,  
 The Easter egg hunts, and sparklers on the Fourth.  
 When little, we fought like brothers sometimes do,  
 But more often played, and laughed, and teased.  
 I tried to be what I thought a big brother should be,  
 And you played the younger equally well.  
 Then we reached that age when interests differ;  
 I thought you were too crazy and wild,  
 And you were sure I was too uptight.  
 Neither of us planned to get together,  
 Thinking we would always have the time.  
 It was only when *they* came to tell me,  
 After leaving a note on Mom's door,  
 And again, I had to be the big brother,  
 To let her know you weren't coming back.  
 For a while I believed it should have been me,  
 Since I had failed; I hadn't watched over you.  
 And it was so hard to see how much Mom hurt,  
 Wondering if there was something I could have done.  
 But then I finally— realized, probably with your help,  
 That I did nothing wrong— it was just your time.  
 The love we've always had will never leave,  
 And the memories we share will always be alive.  
 So even though I'll always be the big brother,  
 I realize my baby bro has some special gifts now,  
 And I want to thank you for being that rascally angel  
 Who often lets us know he's always around.  
 - By David Ardenal, from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends

## For Grandparents...



### To Bereaved Grandparents at the Holidays

1. Know that your grief over the loss of your grandchild is legitimate. You have the need and right to grieve.
2. Learn about the grief process, not only so that you will know that what you are experiencing is

normal, but it will help you know that your grieving child is not “going crazy.”

3. Find someone with whom you can share your thoughts and your feelings about your grandchild's death.
4. Know that the holidays will be difficult for you as well as your grieving child. Don't expect too much of yourself this year.
5. Your grieving child will be especially needy of you this year. Find ways to include memories and/or memorabilia of your grandchild who died in your holiday ritual. You may even want to change some of your traditional holiday plans this year.
6. Know that your children who have not lost a child may be uncomfortable with whatever you do but explain to them how necessary it is to your grieving child.
7. Know that however you plan this year's holiday arrangements, it will not be as it has been in the past. The holidays will never be the same, because your grandchild will never be there again. Know too, that it does get easier as the years go by.
8. Take this opportunity to cement a special relationship with your grieving child by being sensitive to their needs during the holiday season.

-- Margaret Gerner Margaret is a bereaved mother, grandmother, and sibling. She holds a masters degree in social work from the University of Missouri at Columbia and has worked in the field of bereavement for more than 25 years. She has written extensively for TCF.

## From Our Members...



### Worldwide Candle Lighting

All of our lost children, young and old,  
 We gather now and gently hold,  
 Remembering with our every breath,  
 That love never ends, not even in death.  
 A heartbroken group of fathers and mothers,  
 With a sorrow unimaginable to others,  
 Struggling to overcome the most devastating blow,  
 Bonded in grief we never thought to know.  
 With each candle that we light,  
 We feel our children's spirits burning bright,  
 Every beloved child's face we see,  
 Forever in our memory.  
 In the candles' golden glow,  
 Even though our tears still flow,  
 We cherish every moment we had with you,  
 Though the days were far too few.  
 We love you now, we'll love you forever,

As your parents we will always treasure,  
The blessing of our daughters and sons,  
Our dearly loved precious ones.  
-- C.A. Stevenson, written in loving memory of our  
son, Graham Thomson Stevenson, age 22

### **Worldwide Candle Lighting**

(The following excerpt displays the shared feelings of attending a world wide candle lighting.)

“The past few years I have been the MC for our chapter’s program in conjunction with the WCL. From my vantage point, I clearly see each tear-stained face. Though the room is dimly lit in the beginning, as each flame is lit for a child gone too soon, the room gradually becomes bathed in a warm and peaceful glow. The candles are held proudly aloft in a show of fortitude and solidarity, with the belief that our children look down and see our lights of love and hope lifted heavenward, signifying that though gone is the life, never is their light.

The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting is the gift I give myself (and Nina) each holiday season, and many family members and friends gift me with their presence at the chapter event or light a candle at 7 p.m. in remembrance of Nina. For all of us whose precious children have died it is a beautiful and special way to ensure forevermore “...that their light may always shine.”

With gentle thoughts over the holiday season, and always...

--Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF St. Paul Chapter  
Editor’s Note: We hope you and your friends and family can join us as gather at our Worldwide Candle lighting this year. This tribute and sharing time is one way parents and friends can come together to share the love and support that we need after losing a child. We meet indoors for the event and the chapter provides the candles.

We will be having a few readings at this year’s event. If you would like to write something to read or have read for you, let us know. For those of you who are ready, we ask that you bring your child’s favorite cookie or finger food to share. After the ceremony we have cookies and beverages as we sit around and share stories of our children and their special place in our lives. We hope you can join us –L.V.

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.

### **World Wide Candle Lighting....**

DATE: The Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> World Wide Candle Lighting will take place at the St. James school in Torrance, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm. The address is 4625 Garnet St. Torrance. The driveway for the school is on the west side of Anza between Garnet and Spencer.

We will be having a slide show of our children as part of the ceremony. Linda Zelik has volunteered to assemble this wonderful tribute. If you attended last year, we still have your pictures. If not, to have your child included, please send Linda 3 pictures of your child and include their birth and death date on each one. You can e-mail them to [Linzelik@gmail.com](mailto:Linzelik@gmail.com) before Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> or call her at (310) 370-1645 to make other arrangements. We hope to see you there.

**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, but donations are welcomed. 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: December 1 for January birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 and let me know. I will try to fit them in. 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  
 Lori Galloway(chapter co-leader).....760) 521-0096  
 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  
**ALIVE ALONE:** For parents who have lost their only child, or all their children. 1112 Champaign Dr., Van Wert, OH 45891 Newsletter available.



www.Alivealone.org

**SURVIVORS 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...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofsuicide.com	alivealone.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)	

### 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 CO-LEADER: Linda Zelik

CHAPTER CO-LEADER: Lori Galloway

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Ken Konopasek

WEBSITE: Joe Zelik

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik

Loir Galloway

Marilyn Nemeth

Crystal Henning

Cheryl & Bill Matasso

Lynn Vines

Nancy Lerner

Ken Konopasek

Kitty Edler

Susan Kass

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Mary Sankus

### 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.





# 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 Andrew Sakura, March 1990 - March 2008.  
Love, Mom & Dad

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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear if time permits.

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

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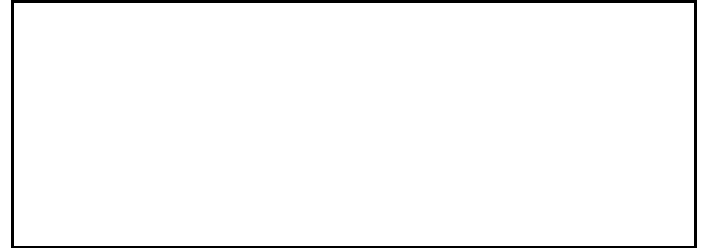
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**December 2019**

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.  
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.  
The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,  
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,  
just as your hope becomes my hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.**  
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If you no longer wish to receive this mailing, need corrections, or have a new address,  
please contact us.