



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

June 2020 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: Lynntcf@aol.com

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

****REGULAR MEETINGS
CANCELLED****

We will let you know when meetings at The Neighborhood Church and Mimi's Café will resume.

LOCATION:

Online only for the time being. Join us on Zoom for our virtual meetings. For more information call Connie or Leo at (310) 536-9305 or e-mail Connie at ConnieStar58@gmail.com

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 4th Virtual meeting is available using Zoom. See pages 15 - 16 to register and request a password for the meetings.

The July 2020 National Conference in Georgia has been **CANCELLED** due to the Corona Pandemic.

The Mimi's Sharing group is cancelled until further notice.

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

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

Chapter Co-Leaders:
**We need a Co-leader
Could that be you?**
Lori Galloway (760) 521-0096
Lorijog01@gmail.com

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

The June newsletter will start with “**Learning to Co-Exist With Our Loss.**” Instead of “Dwelling” on our loss, we need to learn to “co-exist” with our loss. Dwelling is **part** of the healing process. In the beginning it’s all we can do, because the pain of losing a child is devastating. It’s how we come to terms with the “Why, what if, and if only’s” that accompany grief. Those thoughts that pop into our minds and seem to resurface every time we close our eyes. It’s how we learn to accept the unacceptable. By **learning to co-exist** with our loss we must learn how to dwell on it without guilt, without the isolation, without the overwhelming pain. Co-existing with grief is a **process**. As we reach out to others, sharing, listening, learning, we start to take back control of our lives and make peace with the pain. With time, we treasure the memories, we move forward, we reach out to help others and learn that reaching out also helps us to heal. I hope the following articles will help you to co-exist with the death of your child. While we cannot meet to help each other as we self-quarantine, we will have a “virtual meeting” online using Zoom. Please join us at 7 PM on June 4th. Know that we at TCF are thinking of you and hope we can soon resume our regular meetings.

Choosing Life

“It will never be the same. Never.” As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief’s profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, “...never the same.” This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls “The Valley of the Shadow.” It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. Between. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place.

Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose. The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.



Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be.

When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you. When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever “the same.” Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery. Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

--Marcia F. Alig TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

Grief

I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was a sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.

But I’m learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.

And grief is not something that you complete.
But rather you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish,
And move on,
But an element of yourself -
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing,
A new definition of self.

--By Gwen Flowers from the TCF L.A. newsletter

Bereavement: Affliction Vs. Addiction

Since my son, Jonathan, was killed seven years ago, I've spent a great deal of time alone with my thoughts. Countless hours have been spent dissecting the various aspects and stages of grief. My diagnosis is a life of being a bereaved parent, and to my knowledge, there seems to be no cure. My prognosis, however, is self-determined.

Unlike alcohol addiction, there is no 12-step bereavement program in which to enroll. For some bereaved parents, only a few steps are needed to move forward. For others, the number of steps may seem insurmountable. Grief is such personal emotion that attempting to pinpoint time frames is impossible.

Although there are similarities, to my thinking, grief is an affliction rather than an addiction. However, just as the alcoholic is an alcoholic for the remainder of his life regardless of how long he has

gone without drinking, so too for the bereaved parent. For as long as I live I will be a bereaved mother. The loss of my son will never be separated from me. The part of my heart that is tinged with sadness will always belong to Jonathan, no matter what twists and turns my life should take in years to come. What I must strive for in my quest as a bereaved parent is to enter and remain in the "recovery" stage, just like those individuals who suffer from alcoholism and drug addiction. To me, this bereavement recovery stage is a release from the overwhelming, all-consuming grief that initially occurs at the death of a beloved child. The ache of missing the child certainly remains but the intense physical distress abates. Coping skills improve and life begins to regain some sense of normalcy under totally abnormal circumstances.

Bereavement is an affliction that is thrust upon every parent who has lost a child. Unlike addiction, it does not happen slowly over a period of time. Because there is no cure, the healing will never be complete. The best that can be desired is that the recovery stage occurs and is maintained. As in addiction, bereaved parents must work hard to stay on this "recovery wagon" for the remainder of our lives.

Care must be given that parental grief does not grow into an addiction. In the beginning it is necessary to lean into the grief and let it run its

natural course. However, severe grief can be insidious sometimes encompassing us to the point that it is difficult to function. At times it seems easier to allow ourselves to become somewhat drugged by its crutch-like facade than to face head-on the cause of our grief. We become enfolded, as we would in a soft, warm cape – wrapping our grief around us until such time that we feel it may be possible to slowly undo our tight grip. Allowing ourselves to lessen our grief grip in no way intimates that we no longer miss our children. This

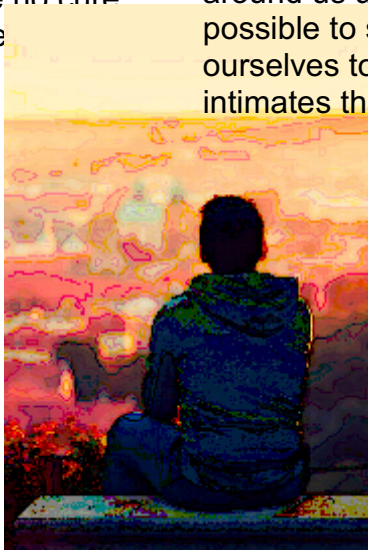
letting go of the intense grief does not happen quickly. Leaving any cocoon is never an easy task. There are always risks, whether real or imagined.

Although I believe that time is perhaps the most important element in a bereaved parent's transition into the recovery stage, unlike many, I do not adhere to the adage that "time heals all wounds". The death of a child is a wound that will never heal and one from which we can never expect

complete recovery. The passage of time simply allows us to move at our own pace from the intense, overwhelming mourning period into the recovery stage. Along with time, bereaved parents must learn to be both patient with and kind to themselves. Expecting too much from ourselves and those closest to us is a common pitfall. On many occasions we are truly our own worst enemies.

Looking to and learning from other bereaved parents, who are much farther along on grief's journey, can be a valuable experience. Many times these individuals have been down the paths we are travelling and are aware of the subtle obstacles that will impede our journey. Participating in groups such as The Compassionate Friends can be a source of support that is beyond measure. In many cases, the sharing of feelings and emotions enables us to hone our coping skills, which in turn, allows us to progress to or remain in the recovery stage.

Since I am destined to be a bereaved parent for the rest of my life, it is my wish that my grief affliction will remain in recovery. I understand that there will always be "difficult Jonathan days" when I will need to pull the grief cape just a little tighter around myself for comfort, but hopefully as the years progress, these sad days will not be as frequent or last long as before. I will love and miss my sweet boy forever but I will strive to spend the



remainder of my life in recovery by borrowing from Jonathan just a pinch of his zest for living!

--Christine McGowan TCF Abington, PA
In Memory of my son, Jonathan

Writing the Heartache

The first year after the death of a child is like having the worst noise possible running through your head each day and night. There is no way to turn the horrendous sounds off because there is no off button. I tried writing. Grammar didn't matter; penmanship went out the window. These aren't a concern when you are writing to survive.

I wrote through that noise. I wrote from the heavy bag of emotions bereaved parents and siblings must carry—anger, guilt, sorrow, and confusion, all the “what ifs” and “how comes” and “whys.”

I wrote of longing for a blond-haired boy with blue eyes whose laughter brightened hospital rooms. A quiet spot under weeping willows at a local park is where I carried my pen, journal, and pain. As I wrote over the course of many months, I was although I didn't realize it at the time, providing therapy for myself.

Some days when the weather did not permit a trip to the park and my body and mind harbored excruciating pain, I shut myself in a room, away from my other children and husband. I'd grab my journal and let the experiences of the day and my feelings freely emerge onto each white page. Writing the heartache, complete and honest, is a way of healing. Our cry is, “Help me with this pain!” We find ourselves lamenting as King David did in Psalm 13:2, “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” David wrote many of his psalms starting with anger and agony and, gradually, ending with hope.

Writing can do that for us. We enter into our devastation, get a good grip on what our struggles are, and something about seeing them on paper causes us to realize the pain is not only within us anymore. It is shared, even if only on a sheet of notebook paper. It is documented, and the more we write, the better we are able to understand and deal with our intense sorrow.

Some people think only the creative types write, when in reality, writing through the pain is available to anyone who has suffered the loss of someone

close. “I don't have the time,” many say. “What will I write?” others wonder. The blank page scares some because they think they have to fill it with something profound. But just writing a memory of your child or a few lines about how you felt after he died is a notable start.

If we think of writing as a private endeavor and an effective tool, not a paper to be graded by a high school English teacher, we will conquer many of the doubts about our ability. In time, we will see that writing helps us become better in tune with our feelings and thoughts. It clarifies our lives and gives us understanding.

Other reasons to take the time to write are:

- To experience personal growth.
- To leave a legacy or a keepsake so that there will be recordings of what and who our child was.
- To demonstrate a way of cherishing our child.
- To feel a connection to our child as we remember the things we shared here on earth.

We also are honoring our grief, our pain, and what has happened to us. We are validating its existence. As studies have shown, writing is healthy for our minds and bodies.

Professor James Pennebaker claims that writing actually helps the physical body when the writer is able to open up, by sharing deep feelings on paper over a period of time. In his study, half of a group of students at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, wrote their heartfelt thoughts and feelings about a stressful event from their lives; the other half wrote about superficial topics. Each group wrote for 20 minutes a day, for four consecutive days. Before and immediately after writing, blood pressure and heart rates were tested and a galvanic skin response was done. Six weeks later, the students had their blood tested again. The group that had written about trivial topics showed no sign of changes. But the group that had poured their pain onto paper, claimed writing had actually calmed them. Their skin was drier after writing and both heart rate and blood pressure had decreased. Their blood work even showed an increase in lymphocytes, the white blood cells that work to keep the immune system healthy.

Writing through the heartache of losing a child is some of the best therapy I have found on this journey. I didn't know how helpful it was, I just knew I needed to organize my thoughts and get them on paper.

Now, four years since my 4-year-old son Daniel's death, I see that when all the evidence is



presented, there is no reason not to write. It causes dim skies to light up when not only the pain, but also the love and cherished memories, are recorded.

--Alice J. Wisler In Memory of my son, Daniel
We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The
Compassionate Friends.

The Loving Listener

One day last month, seemingly out of nowhere, my dark and dreaded companion "grief" came roaring back in to my life. Just as I thought I was "doing all right," grief came once again to wrench, rip, and tear at the thin delicate membrane of scar tissue that had formed over the wound in my heart, that I had foolishly believed allowed me to be normal again.

I was in unbearable agony. I thought, "Oh my God, I can't believe I ever hurt this bad. How did I ever survive this agony?" I finally pulled myself together as best I could and reached out to one of our beautiful angels of mercy. I called our "Loving Listener." "Hi, do you have a minute?" She chirped "Absolutely!" I went on to pour out my heart to her. She listened patiently. She offered no quick fixes or advice, trite phrases, or empty platitudes. She just spiritually embraced me and suffered along with me; quietly offering her love, compassion and understanding.

When most of my pain and sorrow had finally emptied out, I realized it was coming up on the anniversary death date of my child. It would mark five years since the death of my beloved daughter Angela. This was the catalyst that had plunged me back into the abyss of grief. I could not bear the thought that my beautiful child had been dead for a half a decade. As soon as I realized what had caused this awful digression, I began to feel a little better. If your chapter has a Loving Listener, please give them a call. They will give you solace, comfort and companionship.

We Need Not Walk Alone.

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

If you have any interest in being a "Loving Listener" please contact your chapter leader and we will list your contact information in the newsletter.



We Can Never Return to Pleasantville

When I got home today, the movie, Pleasantville was on the TV. It's an interesting story of a young man who finds himself magically transported into a world much like a 1950s television show. Everything is ... pleasant. The world is laid out in "Leave It To Beaver" perfection ... and in black and white ... literally. There are no colors, just shades of gray. Everyone is fitted into roles and follows them nicely. There are no problems because people live their lives "properly."

The movie's hero, who finds this world enjoyable at first, soon realizes that it is all wrong. People need to experience love, anger, sorrow, depression, joy. People need colors, not black and white, to make life real.

It occurred to me while I was watching the ending of this movie, that maybe the world has us bereaved parents all backward. We are seen by many as wrapped up in "black." They chide and deride us to return to what's "normal" ... Come back to Pleasantville. But our eyes have been opened by our children, their struggles and their deaths. We now see a wide spectrum of colors many will never experience.

We shout the reds and oranges of anger. We feel the soft blues and pinks ... echoes of our children's voices in our minds. We understand the greens of quiet reflection in a crazed world rushing off to the mall looking for that one perfect gift ... our gift is in the time and love that we spent on our kids and continue to spend on others around us.

We shed sparkling crystalline tears reflecting a pain that springs from an ocean of courage that kept us going through days, months, and years of treatments, transplants, and tragedy. Pride for our children, all of our children, glows deeply within us like the magenta colors of the sky in a setting sun. And on some days we experience the warm golden glow of healing flowing gently through our bodies and souls.

We can never return to the world of "Pleasantville" where hard things are hidden under a mask of unclear grays. Our eyes have been opened, not by death, but by the lives of our children.

--Bill Sowers TCF Topeka, KS
In Memory of my daughter, Rachel Sowers

An Only Child

Parents and the only child learn to adapt in the multi-child culture. Family members, friends, school and the community at large assume that an only child is not normal therefore, something must be wrong or at least could be improved.

The years of Kari's life taught us to do the best we could each day. All of her life, we encouraged her to do her best, because it is important to have a deep self-satisfaction of a job well done.

After the sudden auto accident that claimed her life and in our deepest grief we received some strength from the values we had seen in her life. I did not feel that I was alone in the world without my only child. I felt as if I did not want to live without my child, not that she was my only child. Perhaps the fact that parents of other children who have also died and had other surviving children felt they were not able to live without their precious children either, helped us to understand no child can be replaced.

Again, the community came assuming that you could not survive the death of an only child, just as you could not have normalcy with an only child in life. Many freely gave suggestions ranging from you should move, to adoption (had we been younger, I am sure the advice would have been to have another baby) and other well meaning, misguided advise.

We remembered our numerous encouragements that we had given Kari, we do not live alone in the world: our pain is no greater, we are no different from any parent whose child has died.

There are actually some blessings to not having other children in the household. What little energy you have can be spent on your own grief work and not worrying about what you need to do to help surviving children. Parents with surviving children have a blessing. They also have the awesome task of helping surviving siblings understand issues of life and death. Not a topic most parents plan on teaching. Without this distraction parents grieving the death of an only child can spend uninterrupted time toward healing.

The death of an only child does tend to exclude the parents from most family events. They will never experience grand parenting, weddings, holidays and all the other family oriented gatherings. This leaves a very 'left out' feeling in conversations, knowing they will never get to experience these special times.

Each parent that experiences the death of a child, no matter the age or cause, has not had a choice in the event. It does not matter if we have multiple children or only the one child, we love each one and could not make a choice. We each have a difficult time in learning to live again after the death of our child.

We do heal. We do learn to live again. We are not the same person as we were before but in time each will find a new normal. Patience to let time and grief work to help us heal is the path to knowing we will survive.

--Gerry Hall TCF South Central, MO
In Memory of my daughter Kari

My Dog Died

"I know how you feel—my dog died." These words can bring murderous rage to the hearts of bereaved parents when spoken by well meaning, but errant friends. I never actually had this experience, but several of my friends did and the result was always the same—a compelling desire to strangle the person with one's bare hands.

On the morning of December 21, my husband and I said a tearful final goodbye to Gretchen, our beautiful Doberman, who had been a constant companion, loving friend, protector, and source of great joy for nearly eight years. She was, in a word, magnificent.

The pain and feelings of sadness are tremendous. As I look around at the empty bed, the dish in the kitchen, the favorite toy, I am overwhelmed with an intense sense of loss and sorrow. Memories of happy times, daily rituals and the unconditional love that only a pet can give assail from all directions. Tears flow uncontrollably. I really hurt.

No, it can't compare with the loss of my son. This pain will pass before long; we will get another dog (although there can never be another Gretchen); in years to come we will remember her with love and wonderful memories; she will never be forgotten.

But it is not the same. I know this because I have lost a child. Only one who has walked this road can know that no other loss, no matter how profound, can compare with the death of a child. If I had not had this experience, I, too, might be tempted to say "I know how you feel—my dog



died.”

We must endeavor to understand that these words are spoken from the heart—from someone whose pain is intense and who knows no better point of reference. And we must pray that those who speak those words will never know...

My pain is assuaged somewhat by my firm belief that Gretchen is now in the loving care of my beloved Robert, who will enjoy and love her as we did. She is in good hands. I know they are having a wonderful time.

--Carole Ragland TCF West Houston Chapter, TX
In Memory of my son, Robert

Fathers, The Fixers?

With Father's Day coming up this month, I suppose it is only fitting that I address a subject that pertains to those honored by the holiday. Fathers, whether as a chauvinistic holdover from another period of time or for their actual skills, are always regarded as people who can fix things...whether they grew up inclined that way or just happened to develop 'fixing' skills later as a matter of necessity. Personally, I was probably more in the latter category and when I retired from the military after having had five children, I had a box of 'bits and bobs' from things I couldn't fix that had followed us around the world. Now, I am back in the 'fixing spotlight' since we have a daughter and four year old granddaughter who live with us and I am besieged on what seems like a daily basis with, "Da Da, can you fix this?" And I do...and my 'fixing average' is improving. That's what fathers (and grandfathers) do...we fix things.

But fixing things has limits, doesn't it? You fathers who are reading this will have already seen this coming and will have said to yourselves, "I'm in a mess...I feel bad because something went 'wrong' and there's nothing I can do to make things right. I've always been relied upon and I fixed things, but I can't even fix things for myself, let alone for my wife and my other children. My child died. I was powerless to stop it from happening and I am powerless to make things better." Well, perhaps the reason we can't make things better is because we are not analyzing the problem and phrasing what we need to do correctly. The simple fact is: "better" is a relative term and when we are using it, we need to step away from thinking of "better" as chasing away all the ills and 'rebooting' our lives to make hurt go away. The fact is that the hurt we...and our

family members...have will always be there, but the pain will diminish gradually...if we let it. We do this 'fixing' by talking about our loss, helping our partners voice what and how they are feeling, and by communicating with our children in an open and honest manner. We are on this road and we didn't choose it...it chose us. And we will be on it until the day we die. But there can be good times on the road. It isn't all just sadness...it's about a new 'normal' we are developing.

--Dale Gunnoe, Eastside WA TCF

Father's Day

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 Fathers Day."
--Alan Pederson



NOT a Matter of Choice

Our son Keith was 29 years old when he decided to end his life by suicide. Suicide is a frightening word, and it is not only ignorance but fear and stigma that keep people from understanding why someone would take their own life. In a way, it is easier to think that a person made a "choice", freeing us from knowing the truth.

The word "choice" continues to perpetuate the stigma of suicide. The definition "choice" is "the freedom in choosing, both in the way one chooses and in the number of possibilities from which to choose." In a pre-suicidal state, an individual is overwhelmed in a given situation. They suffer extreme mental anguish and a painful sense of hopelessness. Their sense of judgment is distorted, and they do not have the ability to make "choices" or options. They usually want to kill the pain rather than themselves.

Suicidal people may be unable to restrain themselves from acting on feelings or impulses. This strong impulse to end the pain is often due to the depletion of the chemical called serotonin. Serotonin is a chemical within the brain that helps restrain impulsive behavior. "There is no suffering greater than that which drives people to suicide." Suicide defines the moment in which mental pain exceeds the human capacity to bear it. It represents the abandonment of hope," says John T. Maltsberger, M.D., past president of the American Association of Suicidology, practicing psychiatrist and teacher at Harvard Medical School.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the USA and the second leading cause of death for those ages 25-34. About 30,000 of the 650,000 Americans who attempt suicide each year die. Suicide is almost always the result of depression, an illness of the brain.

We can only imagine the horrible mental torture our son Keith endured. Depression is one of the most terrible and pervasive illnesses of our day. In 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States listed suicide as a national public crisis. Having accurate information about depression is critical. We live in a world where people hang onto old stereotypes. In order to stop future loss of lives by suicide, we must make certain to take advantage of any opportunity to encourage greater awareness. In that goal, we can make great strides to ensure that these stereotypes cease to persist.

- Carol Loehner, TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter, from

TCF national magazine, "We Need Not Walk Alone"

A Little Piece of Us in Heaven

There is a little piece of us in Heaven,
Part of us has already made it there.
Daddy's nose, Daddy's Cheeks, Daddy's feet,
My hands. Does he have curly hair?
Our best parts are already in Heaven,
For he was beautiful.

You see, it is our son who is in Heaven.
He had a short, but special, life here on earth,
But God chose to have a little piece of us
Up in Heaven with Him.

We know you will do all the things that his
parents cannot do.

We know you are holding him.

-By Pam Bortner

Newly Bereaved...**Newly Bereaved;
Advice For Summer
Healing**

Whether you are newly bereaved or you have been on this journey a long time, the change of seasons and the thoughts of coming "events" are hard but it is how you approach them that matters the most.

How will we handle vacation this year? How can we go on vacation without our child? How can I possibly have a good vacation without my child? Why would I want to go on vacation without my child? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves either knowingly or unconsciously and the answers are as vast as the way we grieve.

For my family it wasn't a question of whether or not to go on vacation the following summer but it became a question of why shouldn't we go? We had vacationed at the same place for 18 years and we started thinking about all the good times we had at the "pond" over those years.

For us it became a desire to "go back" and visit the place where our son had been happy and felt safe and secure—a place where we could go and just let go. For both my husband and I and now our daughter and her family, the pond continues to be a place where we can go and feel close to our son because we know how much he loved it there.

It was hard that first year and even the next as

we looked for him everywhere. We chose to have a different campsite than we normally used that first year, but the next we moved back to our favorite campsite—it just felt right. As hard as it was to return to the pond there was and is a peaceful feeling that comes to us there as we allow all of the good memories to invade our waking moments, and we open our hearts and head to those memories knowing that our son had been there and it was one of his favorite places to be...

As you make plans for the summer, whatever they are, know that you have to do what feels right to you—there is no right or wrong. If you can, open your heart and follow it and let those stored memories carry you through.

--TCF, North Shore Boston, Editor, Cindi Bolivar

Seasoned Grievers...

After 15 Years

I often hear, "Why do you still go to Compassionate Friends, why are you still involved with that group, it has been 15 years after all, aren't you beyond that now?"

I no longer judge these people, I forgive them, for they simply cannot understand, in the multitude of ways, how The Compassionate Friends has helped me to heal, and continues to help.

I remember after Danny died wondering how I would live one minute, one hour, one day without him. Where would my next breath come from? I would see others at the meetings beyond five years and say, that won't be me, I can't live that long without my son. But I did. And I did it with the help of TCF.

They gave me hope. The people who attended the meetings were authentic, freely and openly sharing their feelings and I knew it was a place I could share Danny and share my inner turmoil and fears without judgment.

Fifteen years later I can say that my grief has changed. I equate my grief to a pendulum—as my Danny said, "life is a pendulum." My grief pendulum no longer swings violently left and right without rhythm. My pendulum for the most has a soft rhythmic swing. Certainly, there are times when a memory or reflection of what was and what will never be enters my thoughts and the pendulum swings without care.



But, there is one thing I have learned that is true, it passes. My grief pendulum will return to a soft rhythmic swing once again. What does not pass, is the light and love between mother and son. I hold on dearly to that truth when the chaos comes, yes after 15 years there are still times of chaos. I know it will be this way for the rest of my life. Grief will always be my constant companion, as will the love I have for my son.

I am able to find moments and times of joy and happiness, sometimes bittersweet, but the times are there. I value and appreciate and enjoy them at a much deeper level today. At first I was afraid to love again, for fear of being hurt, but today, I love more deeply.

May your grief pendulum swing a soft, rhythmic swing, and my you always remember the love and light never goes away.

--Carol Moss TCF Reno, NV
In Memory of my son, Danny Harper

For Friends And Family...

My Friend,
I sat and cried with you last night,
But it really was in vain-
There is nothing I myself can do
To take away your pain.
I can't bring the life back
That God just took away,
What can I do except be there
For you every passing day?
It tears my heart in pieces
Watching how hard you grieve-
Knowing nothing, nothing
Anyone does ever will relieve
The heartache and the emptiness
And the hole that is there.
Just know my friend I love you
And I will always care.

- Alaine O'Connor



Welcome ...

It is difficult to grasp the depths that one plunges into after a child dies. Only those left behind understand it. Unless you are forced to walk in our shoes; there are no adequate words that can describe our pain. TCF understands that pain and we reach out to you with support and understanding to help you on your grief journey. We hope you can

join us when meetings are allowed to resume.

Helpful Hint ...



“Our grief journey is moment to moment, literally placing one foot in front of the other. Take one breath at a time just as you do one day at a time. Do not look beyond tomorrow to figure out how you can survive the coming days. You do not have to be strong for others, you can let others support you. Do what you need to do for yourself. It is a hard journey without your child, grandchild or sibling but others that are on this journey are here to help.”

--Karen Central, Frankfort

Book Review ...



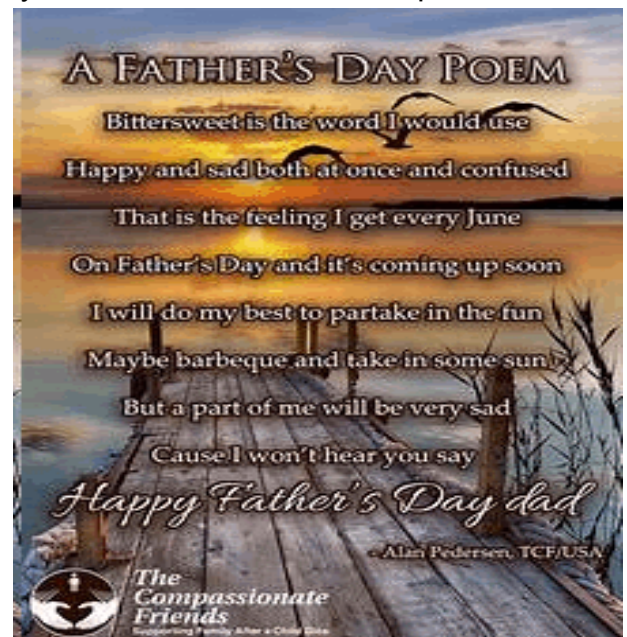
Knowing Why Changes Nothing, by Eva Lager with poems by Sasha Wagner. A moving diary of a grieving mother struggling to grasp the awful reality of her daughter's sudden and tragic death. The eternal questions in the narrative excerpts are echoed in the memorable poems of another bereaved parent who own emotions have softened over the years. (Paperback)

Jewels

My daughters were such girly girls,
Loved pink and shiny things
And the older they became
Their tastes expensive, like jeweled rings.
A gold and opal bezel set
Was Sarah's grad ring gift.
An amethyst collection was giv'n
On Amy's birthday Pittsburgh trip.
Each Christmas or vacation,
New jewels for each event.
Not always pricey or refined
But special 'cause of what each meant.
The girls would scrap, pretend to fight,
Over who would get each family piece.
Grandma's giant diamond necklace,
Or MY wedding rings when I'm deceased
And now, with both my daughters gone,
As I look 'round at this "stuff"
It's just leftover memories
Of my precious jewels above.
--Barbara Batson TCF Katy TX newsletter

This I Can Share

I have not experienced the death of my only child,
but some of us have.
I have not experienced a child dying by suicide,
but some of us have.
I have not wretched my child fight a terminal illness,
but some of us have.
None of us would dare say, "I know just how you
feel."
Even if our experiences ore similar,
no two situations are exactly alike.
But I can say I remember the pain
when my child died.
I remember the feelings of insanity.
I remember the feelings of aloneness.
I remember wishing I could die.
I remember wanting to share something
with my child, but he wasn't there.
So, my friend, our experiences have parts in
common and parts that are different.
So, why should we listen to each other?
Do we have anything to share?
Do we know what heartache feels like?
All of us do.
Do we know the numbness of grief?
All of us do.
Do we know what it's like to have empty arms?
All of us do.
So, let's learn what we can
from our commonalities.
We loved a child,
but our child left too soon.
This we can share with you.
--Marilyn Heavilin TCF, Inland Empire, CA





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chidinma Ezeani
Born: 8/89 Died: 10/19
Mother Ifeoma Ezeani

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel Draper
Born: 1/94 Died: 5/2004
Mother: Tracy Solis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Chase King
Born: 4/87 Died: 11/19
Mother: Laura King

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew "Matty" Louis Matich
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Parents: Mike & Shirley Matich
Grandmother: Dorothy Matich

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

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

Sarah Mc Donald
Born: 10/00 Died: 6/17
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donnie Vincent Puliselich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/18
Mother: Maria Puliselich
Sister: Michelle Pulislich

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carlos Valdez
Born: 10/90 Died: 1/12
Parents: Antonia & Refugio
Valdez

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

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

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

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

* 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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: Leslie Geraci June 1966 - July 2011



My dearest Leslie-

Happy Birthday. Not a day goes by that I don't think of your beautiful smiling face and remember your courage and never once feeling sorry for yourself.

I love you forever.

Pops

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



HAPPY 25th BIRTHDAY

EMILY MATILDA! While forever 10 3/4, we can only imagine what amazing things you'd be doing at 25! We still hear your laugh and are intrinsically inspired by your tenacity and spirit. A few weeks ago I was stopped while walking in the neighborhood by your PT Jaime who I hadn't seen since 2006. As we all do, he still tells your stories and thinks about you. It made me think of the time just after I'd taught you how to write a check and Jaime was a few minutes late to an appointmentyou were not pleased. You looked at him, wrote out one of your 'checks' and then proceeded to tear it up into tiny pieces. The look on both of your faces, so clear in my mind, never fails to make me laugh! Miss Em, you are forever missed, forever loved, forever in our hearts! Happy Birthday Sweetie Pie! All our love, Mom & Jessica

For Siblings...



Book Review...The Road to Coorain: by Jill Ker Conway. The death of her older brother, Bob, in a traffic accident is only one event in her memoir, but

it is clear for the author that it was a defining one. "He had been like the sun in my universe," she writes, "and most of my aspirations at school and in my daily life had centered on winning his approval....I realized I would always be trying to live out his life for him."

WHAT IF?

Posted on December 28, 2018

We followed a silver Mustang to New York on Friday. My mother and I. Traveling from my home farther south. The boys buckled tightly in the back. It had black stripes on the hood and the windows were too dark to see inside. Like his. We joined minds, spoke without speaking, and imagined the unimaginable. That he was still here.

That it was his. His Mustang, zipping up and down the Belt Parkway in Canarsie, in Flatbush, in his Brooklyn. Visiting this and that, her and her, blasting his music, picking up the pieces, the bits, for the collection, for his soul. We imagined, jointly. It's like we both heard the whisper; a soft, silent whisper, "What if?"

"What if?" it said. What if October 22, 2009, never was? The cloudless sky on that sunny, sorrowful, unexpected day. The day my brother's soul ended its tangible journey beside us. The day that concluded us as we were and began us as we are. "What if?" we whispered. He whispered.

What if ... he was here all along? What if it was as simple as catching up to him on his drive? What if we would find him watching a waterfall in Saratoga? Eating a Klondike bar in Elmont? Outside of a repair shop, getting a car service that took a little too long. Or what if we found him parked in my mother's driveway in Queens at home? At home ...

What if we had just been blinded by a bizarre streak of glaring sunlight? Cast from a low-flying plane? It was possible because we grew up by the airport. What if we had missed him standing there all along, and that man we watched leave us on 10/22 wasn't my brother at all? It was someone else's brother, someone else's son, someone else's ...

What if when the glare cleared he would appear? Smirking. Buffing a small fingerprint from his side view mirror and walking over to us with his heavy steps to make some joke about the latest current event. What if we had another chance to kiss his warm cheeks and cover him in our embrace? Make my mother smile again ... from the inside?

What if he could tickle my sons and meet my dear Wesley, his namesake?

We raced alongside that silver Mustang. Watching and waiting, wondering and willing, wondering and willing ... life. We wondered, What if? We tried desperately to mask the quick sounds of our breaths as we chased this dream. We chastised our souls for wanting to bound toward him and dance in the unimaginable. To morph what wasn't into what is and make this impossible our possible. But it wasn't ...

The universe curses us with unexplained gifts. That driver snuck off at an exit before we could see for ourselves before we could answer before we could reason ... but left us ... imagining, even for that moment, that second, in that small slither of unmovable, imaginable, glorious, beautiful space ... What if?

--T. F. McCray T. F. McCray is a lawyer, freelance writer, and married mother of two. She is a native of New York and currently residing in Maryland. She lost her brother Thomas Wesley Higdon Jr. at the age of 38 on October 22, 2009, from congestive heart failure.

The Answer Is Because

Early in the evening
Reluctant to the dawn
Scot would choose to die
Before the early morn
He chose the final method
The one that hurts the worst
He chose to die the loss
The loss of his self worth.
I miss him something terrible
I wish he knew I cared
I wish he knew I loved him
And really would have shared.
I hope he's happy now
I hope he's found his peace
I hope he's found the things he wants
The things he really needs.

--Stacey Blumenthal TCF St. Louis, MO chapter

For Grandparents...



The Empty Space On The Wall

There's an empty space on our living room wall
Where your senior picture should be
Each time I pass by the empty space
It seems to call to me.

You left us to go live with the angels
So a senior picture you never will be.
Yet, I can't bear seeing that empty space
That seems to call out to me.

So, I'll frame your sophomore picture
And hang it with loving care
Then when I pass that space on the wall
Your precious face will be there.

Still I know each time I look at your face
The tears are certain to start
I'll have filled the empty space on the wall
But I can't fill the one in my heart.
--Maxna Atherton, In loving memory of my
Grandson, Lee Dean Anderson



From Our Members...

Members are sharing the following websites they have found that are helping in their grief:

Janet recommends:

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>
Linda Zelik found:

www.Facebook.com/groups/DavidKessler or you can look up in your group section Grief: releasing pain, remembering the love and finding meaning.

FromGriefToGrowth.com Jennifer Levin, she offers a free 8 week course. She is also live starting 4/30 at 4:00 which will continue weekly for 4 weeks. She is a psychologist who seems good.

There is also a fairly new group called Helping Parents Heal. They offer talks on YouTube by various speakers including psychologists, parents and mediums. You can choose from around 10 different speakers which last from an hour to 90 minutes on average.

Editor's Note: If you have found something you would like to share, call and leave a message or e-mail me at Lynntcf@aol.com and I can add it. LV

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.

☺ **New to Our Chapter of TCF...“virtual meetings”**
We are trying something new so we can still have meetings during the pandemic. In memory of their son Joseph, Connie & Leo Licciardone have set up a “Zoom” account for our chapter. They will be available to help all of us unfamiliar with “virtual

meetings." Learn how easy it is to take part. Along with our Chapter leader, Lori, they will be co-hosting the meetings until we can meet again at The Neighborhood Church. You can reach them at (310) 536-9305 or ConnieStar58@gmail.com for instructions or to obtain the password limited to our chapter's members. **You need to pre-register** to be sent an invitation, so contact Leo or Connie at the above number.

A BIG Thanks to Albert & Nancy Garcia for becoming a Spanish speaking phone friend, and for translating the newsletter into Spanish. The newsletter will be available online once translated. Let me know if you would like an e-mail reminder or a hard copy mailed to you when it is ready. (310) 963-4646 or Lynntcf@aol.com For more information in Spanish, Call Nancy at (310) 406-5163.

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.

Birthday Table... In the month of your child's birthday, a Birthday Table is provided where you can share photos, mementos, your child's favorite snack, a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers or anything you'd like to bring to share.

We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth. This is your chance to tell us a favorite story, or whatever remembrance you choose in memory of your child. Our child's, grandchild's, or sibling's birthday will forever be a very special day and we at TCF know how important that day is and how helpful and healing it can be to share with others. Please plan on attending the meeting of your child's birthday month and filling our Birthday Table with pictures and/or mementos.

Newsletter 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

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month **preceding** your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: June 1st for July 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 in the following month's issue.



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, call Ken at (310) 544-6690. You can mail him a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) 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.

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 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 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 (former 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
- Nancy Garcia (Spanish speaking)..... (310) 406-5163

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 3rd Wed.
- Orange Coast/Irvine:** (949) 552-2800 1st Wed
- Orange Co./Anaheim:** (562) 943-2269
- Pomona/San Gabriel:** (626) 919-7206
- Redlands:** (800) 717-0373 3rd Tues.
- Riverside-Inland Empire:** (909) 683-4160
- San Fernando Valley:** (818) 788-9701 2nd Mon.
- South Los Angeles:** (323) 546-9755 last Tue
- Ventura Co. TCF:** (805)981-1573 1&3 Thurs.
- Verdugo Hills:** (818) 957-0254 4th Thurs.



Local Support Groups...

- Family & Friends of Murder Victims:** Rose Madsen, (909) 798-4803 Newsletter and support group, e-mail Roseydoll@aol.com
- Alive Alone:** For parents who have lost their only child, or all their children. 1112 Champaign Dr., Van Wert, OH

- 45891 Newsletter available. www.Alivealone.org
- Survivors 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 (310) 483-8313. CCZ offers FREE one-day family programs, community programs, and 3-day weekend camps. All programming empowers children to grieve, heal, and grow in healthy ways. Our weekend camps provide children with the opportunity to break their isolation and realize they are not alone in a fun and healing environment. Grief evolves with each developmental stage a child reaches, so learning to manage grief in a healthy way is important at every age. Whether the child's loss was ten years or three months ago, encourage them to attend – you may have an opportunity to change the course of their life.

Other Grief Support Websites...

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

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: Lori Galloway
 CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 SPANISH TRANSLATOR: Albert Garcia
 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	

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.

Online Support (Live Chat) TCF offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. The following list was valid as of March 3rd.

Please Note: Times posted on the schedule are based on Pacific Time. Select "enter room" under the chat room you would like to participate in and you will be prompted to register. Once registered you will be able to log-in with your username and password that you have set up. You can keep abreast of any changes by going to: www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support

MONDAY

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen &

Jeanne

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator Muffy & Mysonsmom**TUESDAY**

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

Loss to Substance Related Causes Moderator: Becca and Cathy

6:00– 7:00 PM PST

Bereaved Less than Two Years Moderator: Debbie

6:00– 7:00 PM PST

Bereaved More than Two Years Moderator: Becca & Carol**WEDNESDAY**

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Debbie

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen and Carol**THURSDAY**

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

No Surviving Children Moderator: Adaline & Izzy

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Carol & Donna**FRIDAY**

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen

5:00– 6:00 PM PST

Loss to Substance Related Causes Moderator: Cathy and Muffy

5:00– 6:00 PM PST

Pregnancy/Infant Loss Moderator: Nikole

6:00-7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Muffy**SATURDAY**

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Michelle and Carol**SUNDAY**

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

Suicide Loss Moderator: Izzy

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Carol & Diana

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.

The 43rd TCF National Conference that was to be held in Atlanta, GA on July 24-26, 2020, has been CANCELLED. It

maybe rescheduled. Go to

www.compassionatefriends.org/event/43rd-tcf-national-conference, for more information.



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 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.

No donations were received this month

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 _____

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 in the following issue.

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

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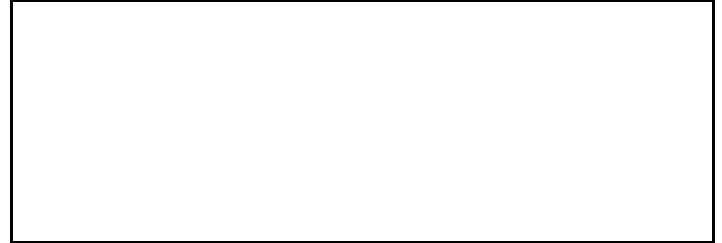
For Father's Day



*You have good memories
Don't crowd them out.
Think about them...treasure them
And let them bring you
solace and a measure of joy.
--TCF Louisville, KY*

–Return Service Requested–

JUNE 2020



Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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