



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

July 2020 ISSUE

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

****REGULAR MEETINGS
STILL 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 July 2nd Virtual meeting is coming using Zoom. See page 15 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.

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Chapter Co-Leaders:
**We need a Co-leader
Could that be you?**
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Please join us for the July 2nd meeting via Zoom.

We understand the need and benefits of being among a group of bereaved parents. While not ideal, until we can resume regular TCF meetings, will be conducting virtual meetings. Like last month, everyone should go online with Zoom 5-10 minutes ahead of the 7 PM meeting time on their computer, smart phone, or tablet. This way, those encountering a difficulty will be able to be talked through any technical problems being experienced prior to the meeting time. If you are new to this, the first step is to send Connie or Leo an email or text. You can reach them at ConnieStar58@gmail.com, Liccia79@gmail.com or (310) 536-9305. Give one of them a phone number or email address so they can send you a text message. A day or two prior to the meetings, Connie or Leo will send you an email or a text, giving you joining details, including information about the Zoom video conference program and what you need to do to 'join in'. I know that sending emails and texts back and forth may sound like a lot of unnecessary bother, but the process of sending your email to them and them sending information out to you accomplishes three things: 1) it lets us know that those who eventually tune in to the video conference are TCF invites (and no one's privacy is compromised); 2) it helps us monitor the need, so we have adequate resources on our end; and 3) since we know who will be joining, we can be looking for you and may be able to reach out to you if you don't show up or are having problems. Give it a try. It really is easy to take part.



The July 2nd topic will start with "Living With Grief." Once the shock of our child's death wears off and we begin living with the day to day reality of our loss, we will be forever changed. One can not go through all the pain and questioning that a child's death causes, without becoming a different person. The pain, the questioning, the loss of friends you thought would be there for you in your time of need— but aren't, forces you to change. There are so many things we must face as we travel into our "New Normal". Coming out of our fog of forgetfulness, explosive emotions overpowering us unexpectedly, learning to laugh again, finding a stronger empathy for others, hope for the future—all of these and many more lessons in life that we

thought we already had within us will be changed. This progression is different for all of us, but many bereaved parents do go through similar paths as they find their way out of the pain of loss and into the sacredness of warm memories. I hope the following articles will offer comfort and a sign of hope as you reflect how you are progressing in your own grief.

Progress In Grief: What It Really Looks Like

A year has passed since we lost Ev. Well, for everyone else anyway. For myself, this has been one, lone, agonizing moment. The dictionary defines "progress" as a forward or onward movement toward a destination. I don't have a destination, unless you count death. Death is my destination. But when I say things like that, it upsets people.

I'm often praised for my rawness of emotion, for being able to express my pain without sugarcoating it. But the downside to that is very few people have the stomach for that level of authenticity. My honesty about what I am feeling in real time makes many people uncomfortable.

They look away. They step to the side. In some cases, they simply close the door. I reflect something in them they have worked very hard to ignore. I am like hugging a pincushion, always needle sharp. I will poke you in your tender places. If there are wounds you haven't tended to, you may find my company untenable.

My therapist insists, despite how I feel, I am making progress in my grief. I take her word for it because I often can't see it for myself. I must be reminded. There is a list of changes she recites to me in these moments. A list I have grown and will, on occasion, recite to myself.

- I can be alone for short periods of time now.
- I can drive myself places.
- I can work modest hours at my job ... most weeks.
- Some days I can cook and clean for myself.
- I can walk the dog (progress for both of us).
- I can go to the grocery store on my own and not always cry in the middle of the aisle.
- I can get dressed and affect an appearance that will satisfy most of the public.
- I can laugh at things that are funny, with or without the sucker punch of guilt that follows.
- I can smile when I feel like it, or when it makes

people leave me alone.

- I can help my kids manage their own lives and schedules a little more.
- I can write one to two chapters a week that may not be half bad.

The list is meant to make me feel better about where I am in this god awful journey. Some days it works. Other days, it just feels depressing. I have a history of not feeling "good enough". My brain likes to torment me with the list of things I can't do much more often. I won't write that list out. It doesn't deserve space here. Most of it's not even true. But there is a third list. A list of stills. If you want an accurate portrait of my grief, you must read these two together.

The list of changes and the list of stills.

- I still cry every single day.
- I still miss her and long for her the way a body on fire would cry out for water.
- I still feel responsible for what happened to her, for not preventing it (translation: guilt).
- I still hate the upstairs and avoid it at all costs.
- I still need counseling and support and compassion by the truckload to get through each day.
- I still have to distract myself for inordinate periods of time in order to survive.
- I still feel exhausted and struggle to find the energy to do basic tasks.
- I still experience PTSD symptoms like hyper arousal (anxiety), upset stomach, sleep deprivation, and disturbing dreams.
- I still have mornings where I wake up crying.
- I still hate this "life" and resent this experience.
- I still feel unsafe in the world.
- I still fear for my other two children's lives.
- I still struggle with questions about faith and belief and what comes after.
- I still want to die, but I am still choosing to live.
- I've learned a lot of things over the course of this last year, too.
- I've learned how to put on the mask that others need me to wear in order to be in my presence.
- I've learned what compassion really means, what it looks and feels like to the one who is suffering.
- I've learned where my pain threshold is, and where it is for most of the people around me.
- I've learned who my friends are ... and who they aren't.



- I've learned that death terrifies many people to such an extent that they will abandon all their principles to distance themselves from it.
- I've learned how we lie to ourselves and others.
- I've learned that honesty may be the best policy, but don't expect it to make you popular.
- I've learned that a heart can still beat even after it's been decimated.
- I've learned that all pain is valid and deserves a voice.
- I've learned that it's impossible to "cry yourself out".
- I've learned that surviving is not everything it's touted to be.
- I've learned that people who kill themselves are not selfish, they are desperate.
- I've learned that no one is truly safe, ever, even when they are not in danger.
- I've learned that vulnerability is the truest expression of the human experience.
- I've learned that contrary to popular belief, a mother will survive the death of her child.
- I've learned that even in the darkest dark, there are sparks of gratitude.
- I've learned that family—the one you get and the one you make—is the only thing worth caring about.
- I've learned how to love others better than I did before.
- I've learned how to give, how to lean in, how to sit, and how to listen.
- I've learned that suffering awakens and connects us all.
- I've learned what a real hero looks like, and how people who have been through hell can become the closest thing you'll get to heaven while you're here.
- I've learned how to let myself fall, and when to pick myself up.
- I've learned how to ask for help when I can no longer help myself.
- I've learned that most things we think are important don't actually matter at all.
- I've learned that time is just an idea, that there's nowhere else to be but right here, in the present moment.
- I've learned that love is the only thing that matters.
- I've learned how to breathe without her, through the most excruciating pain.

I can't say that I appreciate all the lessons I've gained in this year. Many of them hurt like hell, and I would trade every one to get her back. But you find ways, when the mind is beating itself against an unsolvable problem, to pivot your focus before you

actually go insane. You find things to feel good about, to be grateful for. You find whispers of relief, and you do your best to generate them whenever possible.

A year is nothing. It's not even a wrinkle. The only hope that gives me is that the rest of my life will pass as a flash. Suffering makes time inconsequential. See what I did there? Another thing to be grateful for. My gratitude journal will not look like yours, that's true. Because my world does not look like yours. It has a giant, unfillable, Ev shaped hole in it. That hole changes my perspective completely. And it's not going away. Ever.

I live in the space where she was because there is nowhere else for me to be. But I know things, see things, because of that perspective—things that can make this place a little better. I don't want you to lose a child. I don't think child loss is an antidote for the world's stupidity. But I encourage you to find someone who has, find someone who has truly suffered something, and force yourself to stand next to them for a while. Open your eyes and your ears, if you can bear it, to what their suffering, and your own, has to teach you. Be willing to sit with their pain. Be willing to sit with your own. Make friends with the hurt inside of you. It's not going anywhere, and the results are far preferable to making it your enemy.

I try not to think in terms of time because for me, the future is a hell I don't want to imagine, and the past is a haunt that is always at my back. They both hold more pain, and I don't really need to take on any more than what this moment can dish out. But I try to appreciate that for others, time still exists. It still feels like something. It still registers somewhere. A year has not passed for me, and I'm not sure progress is the most accurate word for what's transpired. But there is movement of a sort. There is flow. There is some kind of inescapable pulse that animates our experience of space. There is the now. And the now after that. And the now after that. And like stop motion animation, I can see where I am a little bit different in each one. And I suppose, for this now, I'll take it.

—Anna Silvermail. Anna is a crystal healer, spiritual teacher, author, and self taught artist. Anna's world was shattered when her beautiful and beloved daughter, Evelyn, passed away unexpectedly in her sleep at the age of 18. Lovingly Lifted from TCF We Need Not Walk Alone Autumn/Winter 2018

The Gap

The gap between those who have lost children and those who have not is profoundly difficult to bridge. No one whose children are well and intact can be expected to understand what parents who have lost children have absorbed, what they bear.

Our children now come to us through every blade of grass, every crack in the sidewalk, every bowl of breakfast cereal, every kid on the scooter. We seek contact with their atoms — their hairbrushes, toothbrushes, their clothing. We reach out for what was integrally woven into the fabric of our lives, now torn and shredded. A black hole has been blown through our world and, indeed, it often does not allow the light to escape. It is a difficult place. For us to enter there is to be cut deeply and torn anew, each time we go there, by the jagged edges of our loss.

Yet we return, again and again, for that is where our children now reside. This will be so for years to come and it will change us, profoundly. At some point, in the distant future, the edges of that hole will have tempered and softened, but the empty space will remain — a life sentence.

Our friends will change through this. There is no avoiding it. We grieve for our children in part, through talking about them, and our feelings for having lost them. Some go there with us; others cannot and, through their denial, add a further measure, however unwittingly, to an already heavy burden. Assuming that we may be feeling "better" 6 months later is simply "to not get it". The excruciating and isolating reality that bereaved parents feel is hermetically sealed from the nature of any other human experience. Thus it is a trap — those whose compassion and insight we most need are those for whom we abhor the experience that would allow them that sensitivity and capacity.

And yet, somehow, there are those, each in their own fashion, who have found a way to reach us and stay, to our immeasurable comfort. They have understood, attained each in their own way, that our children remain our children through our memory of them. Their memory is sustained through speaking about them and our feelings about their death. Deny this and you deny their life. Deny their life and you have no place in ours.

We recognize that we have moved to an emotional place where it is often very difficult to reach us. Our attempts to be normal are painful and the day to day activities carry a silent,



screaming anguish that accompanies us, sometimes from moment to moment. Were we to give it its own voice, we fear we would become truly unreachable and so we remain "strong" for a host of reasons even as the strength saps our energy and drains our will.

Were we to act out our true feelings, we would be impossible to be with. We resent having to act normal, yet we dare not do otherwise. People who understand this dynamic are our gold standard.

Working our way through this over the years will change us as does every experience — and extreme experience changes one extremely. We know we will have actually managed to survive when, as we have read, it is no longer so painful to be normal. We do not know who we will be at that point nor who will still be with us.

We have read that the gap is so difficult that, often, bereaved parents must attempt to reach out to friends and relatives or risk losing them. This is our attempt. For those untarnished by such events, who wish to know in some way what they, thankfully, do not know, read this. It may provide a window that is helpful for both sides of the gap.

--Gail Schroeder, Boca Raton Chapter

Just A Thought On Humor

When I am asked what has helped me the most in coming to grips with the death and absence of my son, I have to say I have been helped the most by attending TCF meetings, and becoming involved with the chapter in his memory. TCF helped me understand many things, among them that laughter was okay.

This was very difficult, but I knew somehow I had to learn to laugh again. I made myself watch humorous TV shows and videos. I had to force myself because my heart wasn't into humor anymore, and there was an awful guilt that accompanied the thought that anything could ever be fun or funny after that awful disaster. But laughter was part of my life as a person, wife and mother, and I needed the soul-repairing chemicals that laughter provides the human body.

One of the things I loved about my son was his sense of humor, dry wit and funny quips. The sound I still miss the most is his laughter and teasing giggles.

Many of us struggle with regaining humor and enjoyment of life in any capacity. This is a part of what we have to relearn when our lives are turned

upside down and inside out with the end of life as we knew it.

I wish for you a gentle return to a livable life and I hope humor will be part of that life.

--Karen Story TCF, Montgomery, AL



Hidden Emotion

Hidden deep inside my breast is a longing that has been suppressed. The feeling is always there—longing—longing to see you, to hug you, to know who you are at this time in your existence. It stays hidden for a period of time and then—when I least expect it rises to the surface and must be tended to.

At times I feel as if I cannot breathe, as if I will suffocate trying to suppress the pain. At other times a tear comes from nowhere and trickles down my cheek. Occasionally, something inside of me explodes causing me to weep uncontrollably. I can only guess what causes these unbidden emotions. Is it the song that's playing on the radio? Can it be the changing of the seasons? Do the budding trees beginning new life cause me to let down my guard?

The longing never goes away. I feel like a tight rope walker never knowing if I will make a misstep, causing me to fall into the stream of emotional pain that forces me to cry out, as I long to see you again. With the passing of years, I have learned that if I can hang on for just a little longer, these emotions—strong as they are—will pass and I can live again with the longing hidden deep inside my breast.

--Shirley Muller TCF Lafayette Indiana

Shattered

I remember the day
The policeman came to say
There is just no good way
To tell you your son died today
A world SHATTERED.

To be without my first born
I did not want to go on
Why did God take him away?
Oh the pain of that day
I felt SHATTERED.

I felt my world come to an end
I just did not know how to begin
I knew I had to find a way
Or from that fateful day
I would stay SHATTERED.

Then slowly I begin to mend
And learn to live without him
To put my life back together again
Would it be possible then
To not be SHATTERED?

Yes the cracks are still there
But by putting the pieces together with care
With family and friends I learned to share
To feel their love and their care
Could I be less SHATTERED?

Although my grief is still real
With the emptiness I can now deal
I learned to live life again
Yes, I will always miss him
But no longer do I feel SHATTERED.
--Betty Thoreson Northern Nevada TCF

Memories



Tell me honestly...with the quarantine and the increased amount of time we have spent in our homes, do you find you have been thinking more about your family and your children who have died? From what many of you have said, I think we have all been going over the memories we have of our children more in the past couple of months than we had previously. While that may be a fairly broad assertion which is open to a vigorous debate, let me throw in a caveat to fully give my opinion some firmer ground: this may not apply to families which have had a child die in the past year or so...for them, it is safe to say that their memory time is about the same.

Now then, going back to remembering our children, it's true that we all probably think about them every day. Looking at something they liked, seeing something that belonged to them, or hearing certain music just triggers a thought about them automatically...and that's a given. We do that regardless of what has happened recently in our lives. What I'm talking about, though, is that the time we have spent thinking of them is greater than what is our 'normal'.

Why is that? It doesn't take a highly-regarded

psychologist to tell us. One, we have more time on our hands; two, we have been immersed in 'societal' death and fear all around us; and three, we have spent more time on our own, isolated from friends and extended family. And this isolation and mistrust about the future just sets the tone for us to feel somewhat powerless, a little depressed, and just generally out of touch with how we once considered ourselves in our environment.

Our thoughts are turned inward and in times like this, some of the grief we had not handled sufficiently, now boils to the surface to be reexamined and pondered over. We may have dealt with a lot of the loss we have suffered, but now, it comes back and what we may have been able to mentally tie up and put away with a pretty little bow around it, is plopped back in our laps for more work.

I've found that even though our sons died 18 years and 6 years ago, I can be watching TV and find tears streaming down my cheeks over something in a program that normally would trigger a quick thought, but wouldn't have elicited such a response. Additionally, I have noticed memories coming back about them that I haven't had for years. And it bothers me that not only am I being physically confined, I am now being emotionally 'incarcerated'...not knowing what will prompt memories locked up some time ago and flooded by feelings of inadequacy in dealing with them.

If you're silently saying to yourself, "Yes, I've noticed this, too," let me tell you something that happened to me to put it all in perspective. We have a mostly white little dog named Obie who sheds like crazy. It doesn't seem to matter whether I brush him or not; hair still falls out wherever he goes. The other morning I was sitting in my recliner next to a sliding door that goes out onto my deck, reading the paper and drinking coffee, when I spied a couple of sparrows out on the deck. One was on the entry mat about four feet away and it looked like he had a white beard. I thought it strange as I had never seen a bearded sparrow, and then I realized it was picking up Obie-hairs to build a nest. In a way, it was repurposing the hairs from what they had originally been. And then it hit me: my memories were no different than hairs Obie had shed. His hair still had purpose, just like memories I had forgotten had purpose: they remind me of who I am, where I have traveled in my life, and the people who have been important to me... especially my dead sons. Thank you, little sparrow, for giving me

a lesson in life. May your nest be all you want it to be. And for those reading this, may your memories be as nice as mine are now that I came to the realization they are repurposed. And I can live with that!

--Dale Gunnoe Kirkland WA, Eastside TCF

One Moment in Time



As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people. We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same. We definitely mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward.

How did they do it? Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with our pain and loss.

We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is unique. The common denominator that all of us share is the need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.

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

TCF

When a drunk driver killed my daughter, Allison, at age 19, it was a monumental effort to just breathe much less think my mind and body could survive. I was so dysfunctional that I lived every day in just my pajamas. Going to my first support group meeting of The Compassionate Friends, I pulled a pair of jeans and sweatshirt over my pajamas. I listened as each parent spoke of their child and their grief I heard those whose child died months ago and those whose child died years ago. These were living, breathing people in the same room with me and not just names and stories in a newspaper or book. It's 14 years later and, on occasion, I'll wear a pair of pajamas under my clothes when I go to a meeting just to remind myself of where I was and how far I've come in this journey I share with others.

Barbara Reboratti, Allison's mom
TCF Quakertown Chapter

Helping a Homicide Survivor Heal

HOMICIDE AFFECTS EVERYONE

A friend has experienced the sudden, violent death of someone they love. You want to help, but aren't sure how to go about it. This article will guide you in ways to turn your cares and concerns into positive actions.

Traumatic and Violent Death

Death by homicide creates overwhelming grief for survivors. Their world has been turned upside down. Nothing in life prepares survivors for the reality that someone they love has died a violent

death. Murder results in survivors grieving not only the death, but how the person died. A life has been cut short through an act of cruelty. The disregard for the human life adds overwhelming feelings of turmoil, distrust, injustice and helplessness to normal sense of loss and sorrow.

Murder and Social Stigma

Survivors of murder victims enter into a world that is not understood by most people. A sad reality is that members of a community where a tragic murder has occurred sometimes blame the victim or survivors. Out of a need to protect themselves from their own personal feelings of vulnerability, some people reason that what has happened has to be somebody's fault. This need to "place blame" is projected in an effort to fight off any thoughts that such a tragedy would ever happen to them. As a result of this fear and misunderstanding, survivors of homicide deaths are often left feeling abandoned at a time when they desperately need unconditional support and understanding. Without a doubt, homicide survivors suffer in a variety of ways: one, because they need to mourn the loss of someone who has died; two, because they have experienced a sudden traumatic death; and three, because they are often shunned by a society unwilling to enter into the pain of their grief.

Allow For Numbness

Feeling dazed or numb is a good thing for your friend. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives emotions time to catch up with what the mind has been told. Nothing in one's coping mechanisms prepares survivors for this kind of trauma. Shock is like an anesthetic—it helps create insulation from the reality of the death until your friend is more able to tolerate what he or she doesn't want to believe. Don't assume your friend is "being strong and taking it well" when he or she is really in shock. They may appear strong, but early on in grief, their appearance reflects their numbness and disbelief. However, they need you now, and will particularly need you when the shock begins to wear off and reality sets in. Let your friend move at his or her own pace.

It is damaging to try to push someone through shock and numbness. By "walking with" your friend at his or her own pace, you are giving one of life's most precious gifts—yourself.

Work Together as Helpers

Remember that the murder of someone loved is a shattering experience. As a result of this death, your friend's life is under reconstruction. He or she

will need to talk about it for years to come. Be the person who will encourage and allow your friend to share feelings about the homicide after other listeners have moved on. Use the name of the person who was killed when you talk to your friend. Hearing the name can be comforting, and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important person who was so much a part of your friend's life.

To experience grief is the result of having loved. Homicide survivors must be guaranteed this privilege. While guidelines in this article may help, it is important to recognize that helping a homicide survivor heal will not be an easy task. You may have to give more concern, time and love than you ever knew you had. But this helping effort will be more than worth it.

--Excerpts from the writings of Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D

Choices

By Fran, Mom of Don



God could have stopped you as you picked up the gun,

By gently whispering, "It's not your time son."

Just willing you to put the gun away

And face the challenge of another day.

But He knew that your spirit was sadly broken

Although the words had never been spoken.

He also knew that you were seeking His face

And the promise of life in a better place.

So as a tear rolled from His eye,

He whispered, "I'll just be standing by.

I will not encourage nor interfere,

Just feel my presence standing near.

For with all the miracles I can do,

I must leave this choice up to you.

If you feel that you just cannot go on,

I'll welcome you to your Heavenly home.

Though I would prefer that you could stay

To follow my life's plan for another day.

But I cannot promise all joy and wealth,

Or great happiness or robust health.

If you do not have the strength to carry on,

Maybe it is time to come to Heaven's home."

The young man breathed a heavy sigh

And said, "I can no longer try."

As the trigger was pulled he heard a soft voice

"It's not my will son—but I accept your choice."

--Submitted by Carol Johnson in memory of Jared Sheets

Regret?

To ask a mother who has recently lost a child, "What is the one minute of your life you regret the most?" may bring up surprising answers.



Her first reflections may be painful, for her daily thoughts are already plagued by a litany of "what ifs" and "if only's": What if I had stopped the fever sooner? What if we had caught a cab instead of the bus to the pediatrician's office? What if we had gone straight to the hospital? If only the EMT had noticed her tremor and seizure? How could I, her mother, not know she was THAT sick?

What I wouldn't give for my younger self's simple regrets: giving up piano lessons to play soccer with friends; staying out late partying; buying too much music and camera equipment on credit. Regret requires amends, but how do you make amends with the dead? It's an ultimate test of self-love and compassion to review the minutes leading up to her death. But it's also the lesson my little one taught me: "unconditional love".

So the moment I most regret occurred a day or two before that ambulance ride. She sat on my lap, bouncing on my legs as toddlers love to do. Turning to face me, she threw her arms around my neck, leaning with her head tipped to the side with her curls falling over one eye. She gleefully grabbed my cheeks in her little hands and rubbed her nose against mine, giggling with pleasure. She leaned in closer to kiss me on my lips and make her biggest, funniest SMOOCH noise. She tried to bite my nose, as she sometimes did instead of a kiss. I gently moved her smiling face back, avoiding the teeth. If only I had let her linger just a minute more. --Mahealani Ahia, Hina's Mom, TCF Honolulu

Newly Bereaved...

Newly Bereaved ... Burden of Grief

As I struggle with words to find answers
Reading and writing my pain
The pages grow blurred before eyes that are tired
From this crushing emotional drain.
The relief that comes from the writing
Parallels what I feel when I read—
To open myself to the torture of loss
Seems to soothe this unbearable need.
There's no pleasure in life at this moment
It's an effort to get through the day

And I labor to stay above water...
But the shoreline is so far away.
So I pick up a pen or a book about grief
And it serves as a raft for a while.
And I hope, as my tears fall on pages of pain
That I'll learn once again how to smile.
As I swim toward the shore of acceptance
I pray for the peace of belief
That heaven's your home and you're waiting for me
Then I'll finally be free of this grief.
--Sally Migliaccio TCF Babylon, NY

Seasoned Grievors...

Wounds of the Spirit

Wounds of the spirit are most gently soothed and made whole by the passing years. Under the old scars flows again the calm, healthful tide of life. Under a great loss the heart impetuously cries that it can never be happy again, and perhaps in its desperation says that it wishes never to be comforted.

But though angels do not fly down to open the grave and restore the loss, the days and months come as angels with healing in their wings. Under their touch aching regret passes into tender memory; into hands that were empty new joys are softly pressed; and the heart that was like the tree stripped of its leaves and beaten by winter's tempests is clothed again with the green of spring.
-- George S. Merriam

For Friends And Family...

Time

"Time marches on" is the old cliché. It does march on with fury and determination, but some things stay the same. Your seat is still empty at the dinner table. Your bed is still not slept in. The sound of your laughter is only in our memories. Your photo framed in the family gallery of pictures stays the same while everyone else's ages. Your phone number never shows on the caller ID. Your clothes are never found in the laundry; your name is hardly mentioned. But time marches on no matter how much we wish we could go back in time to the days when these things were common occurrences.

Somehow we have managed to move along with time. At times it has been a real conscious struggle to keep afloat. We resist, not wanting to leave you

in times past. We have managed to survive your death, but we are forever wounded. Sometimes the wound doesn't show to others. Only to those who really take time to "peer" into the question. "How are you?" Those that dare venture and ask the question sincerely waiting for a heartfelt answer are truly special to us. These individuals touch our hearts in that special place where our children still live. They can make us smile and the tears flow without shame, just by acknowledging the pain is still there. They validate our child's existence.

To have someone mention our child is truly a gift to a bereaved parent. Few are the non-bereaved that will venture to this "special place" and have the courage to enter. You can be assured that the bereaved parent doesn't forget these instances when permission was given by you to share their son or daughter.

--Karen C., TCF Frankfort, KY



Welcome ...

"Our monthly support group offers hope. Hope that the sharp pain of grief will go away. Hope that I can begin to remember my child's life more than their death. Hope that I will survive. Hope that I will laugh again. Come and share in that hope. We need not walk alone."

--Dave Wilkinson



Helpful Hint ...

When I grieve, when I stand by others as they grieve, even in the midst of seemingly unbearable sorrow, grief becomes a way to honor life - a way to cling to every fleeting, precious moment of joy.

--Courtney Davis, nurse practitioner L.A., CA TCF newsletter



Book Review ...

Will Our Tears Forever Flow. A father's story of grief and hope by Ted Wampler. Ted's daughter was killed when she lost control of her car. This book takes us on a journey of grief, shock, depression, denial, honesty, and the healing process. Powerful because of the honesty, emotion, and healing process laid bare in straight, well-written plain talk.

Then and Now

They were my children, then.

Resounding voices, arguments and laughter -
Intense and wide awake at story time -

In love with music, dance and birthday parties -

So serious about their great inventions -

So filled with promise, all-involved with life.

My children, then.

They are my children, now.

Remembered like a touching of the wind -

Remembered in the clarity of mornings -

Remembered in the smiles of other children -

Remembered like the charm of cradlesongs -

Alive in silence and in absence, present.

My children, now.

--Sasha Wagner

On Vacation

I sat and watched the waves come in and out.

I looked for you there, but you weren't about.

I saw a young child about your size,

And I thought it was you, till I looked in his eyes.

I heard a strange voice call your name,

And I thought for a second you were home again.

I went to the jetty where you used to fish;

I gazed at the stars and made a wish.

Then I closed my eyes and I heard you say,

"I love you, Mommy,

but it can't be that way;

I can't come back to earth

as you know.

But I will live within you

wherever you go;

For I am with God in a

place so divine

Where there is no pain,

no space and no time."

Then I opened my eyes and I walked away

And I've known where you are since that day.

Penny Lineahan, TCF Morris, NJ



***Perhaps they are not the stars,
but rather openings where the love
of our lost ones pours through
and shines down on us
to let us know they are happy.***





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel Draper
Born: 1/84 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jacqueline Marie Taylor
Born: 1/83 Died: 7/11
Mother Jennifer Flynn

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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.

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: Eric Vines July 1977 - July 2001



Dear Eric,

Happy Birthday! It's hard to imagine that you would have turned 43 this year. When I think of you at your last birthday with us, you were a happy, loud, and outgoing 14 - year- old doing cannon balls at your birthday party. Oh how I treasure those memories.

You always looked forward to getting your postcard from Hoff's Hut announcing you were getting a free dinner for your birthday. I still honor that tradition, but this year with the pandemic, I wonder if they will be mailing them out. Who knows...but even if it is take out only, I will still order something from there and remember all the birthdays we celebrated at Hoff's. Your "special day" is still special to me. And even if it brings a tear or two, I will remember you and smile as I wish you a Happy Birthday!

All My Love, Mom

For Siblings...



Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right.

I also hold my emotions back from them. I

always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents. I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back.

I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him. Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them. I miss my brother a lot, more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more. Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Love, A Sibling

--Louisville KY TCF newsletter

They Lived...

Yes, cry dear souls
For the ones you have lost.
Remember the times you shared –
The fun times
The quiet times
The sad times
The thoughtful times.
Yes, cry dear hearts
For the lives cut short.
Remember what they gave –
The laughter...The tears ...The hopes ...The fears.
Yes, cry for the loss of a loved one.
But celebrate, for they have lived.

--Cheryl Larson, Sibling

For Grandparents...



The Butterfly's Sign

I was standing at the gravesite of my beautiful precious grandson
Feeling sad and lonely.
The tears streamed down my face that day
As they had many other times
But on this particular occasion
He sent me a little sign.
A butterfly suddenly landed
On the flowers in the vase

I knew this had to be a sign
 Of God's unending grace.
 I said to the little butterfly
 "Oh Brian, I love you"
 It flew and landed on a balloon in
 that vase
 That said "I love you" too.
 My heart was still and comforted
 My tears began to dry
 For I knew that Brian spoke to me
 Through that little butterfly.
 --Joyce P. Fairbanks - TCF, Fredericksburg VA

From Our Members...



8 years of pain
 8 years of loneliness
 8 years of loss
 8 years of longing
 8 long years and only the rest of our lives to get
 through
 8 years of connection lost
 8 years of envy towards others who still have
 theirs
 ∞ years left to go
 RIP Sister
 --written by her cousin Roxanne, in memory of
 Jacqueling Taylor

My Unwanted Passenger



It had been twenty three months since my first born son Maxwell had died. I was going about my business, and feeling, well, lets just say, as good as it gets. I opened a manila envelope that I found in a box in my garage. The very first thing I see is my deceased son's painted hand print on a piece of faded green construction paper. Attached was a poem that spoke of how I'd have this little hand print so I wouldn't forget what he was like when he got older...Gulp! I went on to read teacher comments on report cards that mentioned how beautiful and helpful of a person he was certain to be when he grew up. Ugh! There were photos of him leading in school plays, stories he'd written, and on and on, until I got to a handmade Mother's Day card that literally brought me to my knees right there in the middle of my cold garage.

Once again there I was, side swiped with the intense pain that only another parent who's lost a child could understand.

A few days later and feeling very fragile from my discovery, I wondered if I could somehow, in some

way, prepare for the next trigger, big or small. "Probably not," I resolved, "Not now anyway." I don't know, I was grasping at straws, I suppose. But I began to journal my feelings and thoughts about it all, as I often do. Inside my words, I became this little cartoon image, driving in this little blue cartoon car, with big black smoke rings trailing behind me. Putt.... Putt... Putt.... The cartoon images suddenly formed into a little cartoon story for me, and this is how it went...

My Unwanted Passenger by Sherry Smith Feb 21, 2020

With my hands clutched to the steering wheel, face not too far behind, there I am putt...putt... putting along the journey of my life, in my little blue car. A few back fires from time to time, and most everyone passing me by, there along side of me sits my unwanted passenger named Grief. From time to time I look over at him in a look of discontent, but mostly just in great sadness. Then suddenly out of nowhere something threatens to side swipe me on my journey.

I slam on my breaks, screeching to a complete stop. Bewildered, I mutter under my breath, "what was that?" I continue, "It seems to come out of nowhere, and often when I least expect it." After a few moments of sitting there frozen in uncertainty, I look over at my unwanted passenger, "you!" I say in contempt. Then, I hastily get out of my little blue car, and I storm around to the passenger's side and swing open the door, "Get out!" I shout. "I don't want you here anymore!" And then, I barely choke out the next words, "I can;t do this anymore." ...

My unwanted passenger folds his arms across his chest, nose upward and in the other direction and replies, "If I were you, I'd get back into the car and get on with your journey. You see, I'm not going anywhere, not anytime soon anyway. You'd better figure out how you're going to do this thing called life while I'm with you. In fact, he went on, I may be with you for the rest of your life." I stood there for a few seconds swallowing the heavy lump of reality in my throat, and in a state of surrender I guess you could say, I shut his door. I then slowly walk around and climb back into my little blue car, clutch my hands back onto to the steering wheel, and putt... putt... putt... on I go.

--Sherry Smith

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.

☺ We will holding our second Zoom meeting on Thursday, July 2nd @ 7:00 p.m. We will be having virtual meetings until we can meet in person. I sent out emails to our members with invitation information. If you didn't get it, please message me and I will add you to the list. You can reach them at (310) 536-9305 or ConnieStar58@gmail.com, or Leo at Liccia79@gmail.com We hope to see you.

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: July 1st for Aug. 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
- Joey Vines (sibling).....(424)488-9695
- 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 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: 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

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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 & My sons mom



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.

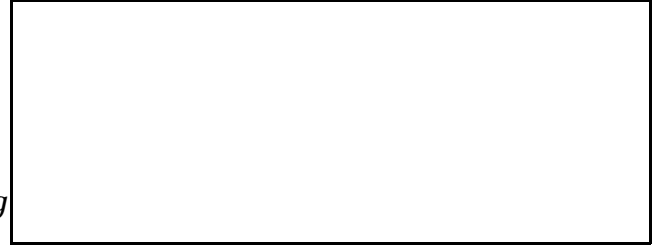
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South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510

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*I wonder... as I lay here
thinking of you
What you must see
from your fabulous view.
Whistlers, screamers,
flashes of light
Make this July 4th a special night.
Can you see all the celebrating
and fun
As you look down after the setting
sun? I wonder....*

–Return Service Requested–



Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,
just as your hope becomes my hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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