



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

January 2021 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 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 Jan 7th Virtual meeting is coming using Zoom. See page 15 to request the link for the meetings. It is very easy to join just by clicking on the link in your email. Leo will walk you through it ahead of time if you are worried about technicalities, just email him at Liccica79@gmail.com

The TCF Sharing group is not meeting until dining restrictions are lifted.

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

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The Jan 7th Zoom meeting will start with “**Will It Ever Get Better?**” How will we survive the new year without our child here with us? There are many things we do as a new year begins. Resolutions, plans, preparing for something in the future. But what do we do when we are so consumed with grief and the uncertainty this year holds? Will it ever get better? The answer is yes. It will never be the same as before our child died, but it will get better with time and attention to our grief work. This meeting we will discussing some of the ways we can help ourselves regain our balance and focus on life again. I encourage you to explore the ideas in the following articles. We do progress in our grief and it is helpful to hear from other bereaved parents who once felt like you are feeling now. Please join us on Jan 7th at 7 PM on Zoom as we explore ways to continue our grief work and find some kind of future we can look forward to in 2021.

Another Year Without My Child

It's a new year and I am marking it, for the fifth time, without my child. Last month was the fourth anniversary of his death. This is one more milestone in the journey of a bereaved parent. The new year brings the promise of new adventures, happiness and prosperity to others. To bereaved parents it adds another dimension to our loss. It also brings the opportunity to look at where we are and how far we have come.

I remember the first new year's day without my son. What an empty, hollow feeling I had. My world had ended, the shock was still systemic in my mind and body, and I counted the days since he last walked, talked and laughed on this earthly plane, dwelling on the passing of days, hours and minutes since the moment of his death. I was frozen.

Looking back at that time, I recall just how the pain felt; unlike other pain, the pain of losing a child is never forgotten. I feel the familiar jolt that rocked my mind and body each time I awoke to remember that my son had died. I remember the misery of slogging through endless, meaningless days. I remember the tears, the second guessing, the anger, the guilt....I remember it all. I still bounce in and out of those emotions; this will never end. It has moderated greatly, but it never ends.

Now I am more focused on my son's life. Details

about his life spring into my mind...happy times, maturing times, good times and funny times. I remember it all with the clarity that only a mother can possess. And so, that is how I will begin this new year....remembering the life of my child but never forgetting the loss.

I am a different person than I was before my son died. I feel as though a lightning bolt struck me on the day of his death, and now I perceive the world from a different vantage point. I have simplified my life from what it once was. I have many new friends who share the experience of losing a child; I have permanently removed old friends from my life who simply couldn't accept my grief and were fearful of talking about my child. I have a new understanding of the problems that other parents face...problems that a mother of one never has to address. I have become more solidly spiritual. I have gone through Dante's seven circles, walls and gates of hell and emerged as the unique person I should have been all along. People change. Bereaved parents change a great deal.

I no longer dread each new day. I no longer weep silently every night. I no longer ache from head to foot with the pain of losing my child. I read, I write, I stay active in the community. I work in my small business, doing what I want to do and what I must do. I go to museums, to movies, to stage plays. I listen to music, watch television and work in my home and yard.

Amazingly, my word recall and memory are returning. Forgetting names, events, people, destinations and other critical factors of daily life was something I dealt with for over three and half years. I thought I had lost my mind until I started talking to other parents. I have begun doing memorization exercises...something I probably should have done three years ago. I am learning that the journey through grief lasts for a lifetime. Each stage is different, each sudden, poignant memory is paralyzing and each new day brings an opportunity to evaluate progress.

Much has changed during the past four years. Much will change throughout my life. Each of us experiences the loss of our child at the deepest level of our psyches. Yet each of us comes to this place with a different set of experiences and a unique genetic composition. I cannot compare myself to others. I can only mark my tiny steps forward with a sense of wonder at the resiliency of the human mind and spirit while simultaneously accepting that I am



not in control...at any moment a flash of the past might bring me to my knees. I have learned to go with it.

I have found hope for the future. It certainly isn't the future I had envisioned. There will be no late night talks with my son, no holidays or birthdays shared, no participation in my son's children's lives, no cards, no handmade gifts. That door was closed by lawsuit-happy former in-laws who have no standing in my life today. I have crawled through the minefields and dodged the bullets of some pretty mentally unbalanced people and survived. I have faced the abyss of losing my only child while enduring the cruelest of sniping, the worst of intentionally inflicted pain. I did none of this with grace and finesse...I merely got through it. I survived. I became stronger by letting go of my anger. I found hope by remembering the goodness that is my son and by leaning on friends who had lost their children. These friends were there for me when I so desperately needed the comfort of kindred souls: Compassionate Friends who reached out to me gave me the glimmer of hope when all seemed forever lost and living was almost intolerable.

Now the healing process has completed its circle. I am here for those parents who need me. Strangely, this helps me to heal as well. I reach out to others who are new to the process of grief, and I tell them that there is hope. One day the sunrise will again be beautiful and you will find peace within yourself. You will remember your child's life, you will honor your child's life and you will forever be changed by your child's death. But always, always, your child will remain in your heart. This is my truth to all who wish to know. Lean on us, for we have been where you are today. We will walk with you on your journey toward hope, peace and resolution. It is in this place that the healing will begin. This is a new year.

-- Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy TX

Reflections On A New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, "Wait, I'm not ready

New Year
fresh start
RESOLUTIONS
 determination
GOALS AND DREAMS
PEACE
 joyful beginnings
OPPORTUNITY
HOPE

yet!"

The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount.

We're living the same life—differently. Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child's life has had upon the world continues through us.

So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond?

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect. Nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life "on hold." Rather they are a part of life itself! Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call "me"— a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child's presence in the life we choose to live.

--Paula Staisiunas Schultz, South Suburban TCF Chapter newsletter. In Memory of Melissa and Jeff

What is New about the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and

pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year? I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you's" not said often enough. We can do all these things now.

We can establish new memories with the family we have right now. Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

--Dory Rooker TCF, Upper Valley, VT

Can We Hold Back the Night?

I read with interest Mitch Carmody's response to Linda (Ryan's mom) in the August on-line newsletter. I especially like the last two sentences in Mitch's writing. He said: "The world is very harsh and the moment our child is born they are vulnerable to attack from all fronts. We love them unconditionally and do the best we can, but we cannot hold back the night."

Guilt is a powerful emotion, and it seems to be a common feeling for a newly bereaved parent. We

"what if" ourselves to death. "What if" I if I had noticed the symptoms sooner and taken my child to the hospital. "What if" I hadn't bought that new car for my child? "What if" I had paid more attention and noticed that my child was severely depressed and gotten help for him/her? "What if" I had been more watchful and noticed that my child was getting in with the wrong crowd, etc., etc., and.....etc.. It seems normal and right to feel guilt. But, one of the problems with guilt is that it is a somewhat useless and debilitating emotion "after the fact" (after the fact of our child's death). It is true that sometimes guilt will prompt us to change a bad habit, stop doing something we shouldn't do and begin to do something we should do. When guilt is correctly tied to our conscience it can cause us to take a better action, go down a better path, make a change we need to make, become a better person. In these cases, guilt prompts actions which are better and right. But, when our child is dead and we cannot take an action to bring the child back, guilt may lay like a heavy rock on our heart, since there's no way to correct what went wrong.

The specific cause of my daughter, Bonnie's, death was an automobile accident. Bonnie was an inexperienced driver and she made a driving mistake. A terrible series of random occurrences played out, and it happened that a larger vehicle traveling the legal speed on the highway came over the rise in the road and slammed directly into her side (the driver's side) of the vehicle. No, I didn't tell her to drive this other person's vehicle, and I certainly wish she hadn't. But, "What if" I had exercised more parental control over her? "What if" I had been a stricter father and demanded that she be at home at a certain reasonable time each night? "What if" I had broken up her friendship with the guy who owned the vehicle she was driving (then she wouldn't have been out with him that night, all night)? "What if" I had taken her on many driving sessions myself and helped her be a better driver? "What if" I had impressed on her firmly that she was never, ever to drive someone else's car? "What if", "what if", "what if"....

As a bereaved parent, I was troubled by my part in the chain of events that led to what happened. Simply by not doing something (being strict, etc.) had I allowed/caused this to happen? In fairness, Bonnie on her own, had corrected some things in her life a few months prior to her accident. She had



pulled away from most of the bad influences in her life, had gotten a part time job, and was going down a better path. And maybe I can say this on behalf of bereaved fathers (and mothers), we are pulled in many different directions as parents. For fathers, there's bills to pay, grass to cut, cars to repair, toilets to unstop, etc.. For mothers there's meals to fix, housework to do, children to take to the doctor, teachers to talk to, etc.. And I think I can safely say that we are all imperfect parents. All human beings are imperfect, and since parents are human, well.....you see the point.

So then, how should we see our "part" in what happened to our child? As mature adults usually 20 to 35 years older than our child, we are obligated to set a good example for our children using our values, morals, and experience. And of course, we should share verbally with our child what she/he needs to hear. And our children have certain basic needs which we must satisfy. But can we hold back all the "night"-the bad influences, the dangerous deeds, the random occurrences, genetic bad health, etc.? Maybe we need to "cut ourselves some slack" as bereaved parents.

We are imperfect just like our children. Maybe now is the time to look at the man in the mirror and say, "I tried, I tried. I made some mistakes, in fact, I may have made a lot of mistakes, but in my own way, I did try." We loved our children and we didn't want this to happen to them, but maybe they understood our frailties better than we know. And maybe we can come out of our own "night" of sadness and move into the sunlight.

--Written by David Haddock Clinton, Mississippi
In memory of Bonnie Catherine Haddock

Giving Grief A Voice

Jude was the kind of child who took your breath away. A shock of messy blonde hair and mesmerizing blue eyes: his was a crazy kind of beautiful. When he died, two days before Christmas 2011, it was sudden, unexpected and incomprehensible. This cheeky, knockabout five-year-old, who we all thought was indestructible, was my oldest friend Fiona's boy. His death, from an undetected heart defect left a hole so enormous I couldn't believe it wasn't leading the 6 o'clock news.

Shock gave way to grief, that came in a flailing, hanging-on-by-the-fingertips blur. As I prepared for



the flight home to Scotland for the funeral, I found myself in the self-help section of a Melbourne bookshop, searching for ways to support my friend. My impotence was matched only by the abject futility of the titles I found. When bad things happen to good people, and Beyond the broken heart: a journey through grief. It was like trying to fight a firestorm with a watering can.

I had no idea how to talk to the bereaved. Until then, I'd mostly avoided those who'd lost loved ones. I didn't know what to say so I said nothing. In a culture that's distinctly uncomfortable with pain, this is a safe position for many people. We don't like to look that kind of loss in the eye for fear it might swallow us.

Now, under recent changes made to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – the psychiatric handbook used globally by doctors to diagnose mental illness - grief can be classified as a depressive illness after just two weeks.

Fourteen days. How has it come to this that a natural, albeit intensely painful, part of the human experience can be deemed so alien we'd rather label it as abnormal than let ourselves feel it?

Unlike some cultures - in which wailing rituals, open caskets and unbridled public displays of grief are an important part of the healing process – in our buttoned-up, western world, grieving is something to be done discretely and behind closed doors.

Silent mourning has become so normalized that psychotherapist Renate Ogilvie describes a phenomenon of "car grieving", where the sound-proofed isolation of our car is the only safe place to express our most profound emotions. But grief isn't pretty and it's rarely quiet. It can be a skin-scratching evisceration, that rattles through every nerve ending and rasps on each breath. Denying it a voice isn't healthy. And it's an insult to those we've lost.

When you make space for it, grief can be the grandest monument to love. The exquisite pain is a measure of our loss. Tiptoeing around the bereaved for fear we may say the wrong thing is a natural response to a life event many of us are often too scared to contemplate. But grief needs to be spoken.

For Fiona, one of the hardest things in the aftermath of Jude's death was feeling as if he was being erased. Some people would say anything to avoid talking about him, terrified it would trigger

more hurt. It had the opposite effect. She told me: “I’m not over the death of my baby boy and I never will be, so the mention of his name doesn’t remind me that he died, it lets me know that people remember that he lived.”

Nearly two years on and her sense of loss remains ever present. By any measure, she will always be grieving. But she is not ill. She has simply found a way to accommodate her pain. In December, as she prepared for the first anniversary of Jude’s death and another Christmas without him, she swapped the traditional advent calendar for a journal that marked one thing each day that she was grateful for. I was, and still am, in awe of her resilience and capacity for love.

How, I wondered, does she do it? Her explanation simultaneously reassured and devastated me: “I need people not to misunderstand my sense of being okay. They shouldn’t decide that I’ve moved on, accepted my loss or, God forbid, replaced my precious son. Instead, people should know that it’s possible to choose to be okay whilst at the same time living with a broken heart.”

For some people, grief may well morph into something self-destructive that requires medical support. This assistance should be made readily available. But for the majority of those who experience loss, I suspect they just need to be allowed to mourn vocally and whole-heartedly, without fear of some arbitrary time limit dictating that their pain has run its course.

I can never replace what Fiona has lost but I can promise her I will never say, “enough now.” I will never tire of hearing her talk about Jude, and I will continue to remember her crazy-beautiful boy and say his name out loud for as long as I have breath in my body.

-- Jill Stark (Senior Writer with The Sunday Age)

The Lesson of a Child’s Suicide

The burial service had just ended. I crossed the carpet of artificial grass that surrounded the plain coffin about to be lowered soundlessly into the ground and shook hands with the parents of the dead young man, looking into their numb eyes and murmuring, “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.”

Everything was golden: the sunlight, the mound of white, yellow and orange flowers (a florist’s expression of masculinity), the beautiful blonde hair



of the mother. The parents, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins watched as the coffin slid into the hole in the earth that had been prepared for it, watched as all that remained to them of a boy they had loved disappeared into a dark and silent new home.

Finally, we all turned and began the walk back to the waiting limousines, shepherded with solemn correctness by the funeral director in his dark suit.

This was not the first suicide I had consigned to eternity with the authority and blessing of the church. There have been too many, really, for the short time I have been a priest.

It was the beauty of the day, and the beauty and elegance of the grief-stricken-mother and father, that fixed this one in my mind and keeps it there still. It was jarring—to me and to them—that one among this prosperous and generous family had found life to be beyond bearing any longer.

A year of pain was beginning for the mother and father, a year of questions that haunted their dreams at night and wouldn’t leave them alone during the day: How could this have happened? What caused it? What did I do to cause it? There must have been one pivotal moment of failure, my failure. When was it? What was it that I could have done and didn’t, what was it that he needed that I withheld from him?

As the weeks and months went by, special occasions came and went, each with its own special pain. At Easter, there were images of a little blond boy in short pants searching diligently for colored eggs in the green grass of the backyard. His birthday. Halloween (a 10 year-old in a skeleton suit disappearing into the night with his father and a flashlight, and returning laden with chocolate bars and candy corn). Thanksgiving (the family around the table, but the places rearranged so there would be no empty spot where he should have been, instead of his sitting with his brothers and eating as only a young man can).

The family had been close. It had not been a family that ignored its children. It had been like a charmed circle, a safe camp in a hostile world. The mother had always felt it was a warm, glowing place, their home. Had she been wrong all those years? Can’t I try again? And the answer of time, sternly: “No, you can’t have a second try.”

As the rate of suicide among young adults in the United States rises amid growing alarm among mental-health professionals, some parents face with brutal suddenness the impossible task of coming to grips with the deaths of their children by their own

hands.

There is no drive stronger in parents than the drive to protect their children, no matter what the cost. Most people, faced with the choice between their own lives and those of their children, would not hesitate for a moment in making that choice.

American parents, especially, have found themselves able to protect and enhance the lives of their children far beyond the capabilities of parents in many other parts of the world. We are free from hunger, free from childhood diseases, free from dangerous political unrest.

Parenting in the United States is a competent round of pediatrician visits, good nursery schools, good grammar schools, private lessons, organized sports. We are more able than any other people on earth to give our children the raw materials of a happy life.

But into this orderly progression of possibilities comes the news, sometimes, that a young person with everything to live for—as we tell each other in shocked disbelief—has found himself unable to live any longer. We look at our own moody teenagers with apprehension. How do we know that this might not happen to them? And if it did, how on earth could we ever bear the pain of it? The bitter truth, all of our love and good intentions and capability aside, is that there are arenas of our children's lives we cannot control. However much we seek to make our homes a charmed circle, our children must one day step out of them and walk in the world alone.

However hard we try, we will make mistakes. And however few mistakes we make, the world will still be a hard place for them, as it was for us. Hard in different ways, maybe, but hard just the same. The same rich sense of possibility that we are able to impart to our children—the very notion that the sky's the limit—can be the oppression they cannot shake.

To be young is to be unsure of one's capabilities. To be surrounded by competence and saturated with the message that they can, and should, do great things can be a source of despair at ever measuring up to the hopes and dreams of others for them. Perhaps the greatest gift we can give our children is the sense that we are delighted with what they are, not that we are anxiously pinning our hopes on what they will be.

Perhaps our quiet empathy in times of failure is

more important than our loud cheers at their successes. Children and young adults need to know that failure is the primary way human beings have of learning, a difficult message to hear in a culture that worships success and its trappings, as ours does. And a more-difficult message to send from a parent who wants the best for her child and has worked hard to provide it to a child who wonders, in his heart of hearts, if he can ever return the best for the best.

Picking up the pieces of her broken life, the mother wondered. She wondered about the last moments of her son's life. What had he been feeling? He had been all alone in his apartment. Had he tried to call her? Had she been out? Her heart twisted inside her at the thought of him tormented by a pain she could not soothe, and she wished herself back with him on that day, calling out to him: "Hang on—try! Call again. Call me, call somebody. Anybody. Don't go. Don't."

But the outcome of this daily fantasy was always the same: alone and probably crying (and at that her heart twisted again), he went.

In her mind, he was frozen forever in that moment of anguish; it was as if his pain in that moment was eternal, as if his spirit still wandered, crying out its silent pain to a world that could not hear.

She joined a group of parents whose children also had taken their own lives. In some of their stories, she saw herself, in some, she did not. But in all of them, she recognized her own pain, and the simple fact of being with people who had known the same unnatural pain was a surprising source of comfort and strength.

As the days went by, she began to feel a change within herself. Although she fought it, the sharp edge of her grief softened a little. The memories that flooded her dreams changed from being pure agony into moments of a sorrow that felt almost holy.

She had been obsessed with the moment of her son's death; now, it seemed, she had regained his life, and she could fish around in her memory and even smile at what she saw there. She could talk to people again without hating them for having what she no longer had and then being ashamed of that hate.

It was as if she had handed her son over to the care of the universe, larger than herself, and there was in her a peace she had thought she could never feel again. Nothing is as awe-inspiring, for those of



us who are privileged to witness it, as the power of the human being to recover from tragedy. However beautiful this woman was, however capable and competent, nothing she had ever done was as beautiful and powerful as her healing from a wound that she thought would kill her.

She said that the strength she discovered in herself during this healing process was the final gift of her beautiful son. AND SHE WAS RIGHT.

--The New York Times by Barbara C. Crafton

The Anniversary

Let me be sad today,
Give me this day to mourn.
It's the date my little son died,
And also the date he was born.
Let me think back to his birth
The fear of viewing him, dead.
Memories of holding him close,
And cradling his little head.
Allow me to visit his grave,
To let a few balloons go,
To place flowers lovingly,
And trim the grass that does grow.

Allow me tears to cry,
Love fills my heart to the brim
Spilling it on those close by.
While always longing for him
--Elizabeth Dent TCF McMinnville, OR

Seasoned Griever...

Death of a Child: What's it like at 10 Years?

January 11, 2002 ... Ten

years? Sometimes it seems like yesterday.

Sometimes it seems like it never happened.

Most of the time it is somewhere in between.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Rich Edler, 58, past president of TCF's national board, author of *Into the Valley and Out Again* and treasured friend to many in TCF's extended family, died suddenly and unexpectedly on February 16. He had completed this article for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, TCF's national magazine, just over a month earlier.)

It has been 10 years today since Mark died. When I wrote *Into the Valley and Out Again* I chronicled first one day, then one week, then the first month and year. Now it is 10. Here are my thoughts:

The hurt never goes away. We never forget. We never get over it. We don't want to. We hurt so

much because we loved so much. But the focus on death and the event fades and the warmth of good memories replaces it. Oh, we can still go back there in an instant. Back to the call, the moment, the good-bye. Back to the night that will forever separate our life between "before" and "after." But we now go back less and less. Time helps a lot.

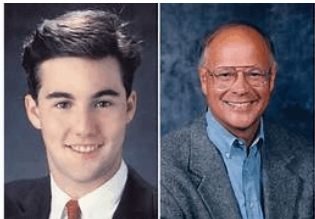
I have fewer friends. Better friends, mind you, but fewer. I am out of the circle now. My Rolodex is cold. My networking, which used to be razor sharp, has atrophied. My power lunches have become tuna fish sandwiches. But the amazing thing is how much I don't care. I miss some special people so I go out of my way to stay in touch. And that is enough.

I have new and different priorities. I move through life a little slower, a little more tuned to life around me, and to life gone too soon. I brake for sunsets. I hurt for the people who share this walk with me. Since Mark died, hundreds and then thousands of children have died. I feel for them and for their families in a way I could never have understood before. I value people more than things, moments more than milestones and I no longer equate what I do with who I am.

I am not having the life I expected to have. I recall an old saying, "Man plans ... God laughs." Dennis Prager, an author and Los Angeles radio talk-show host, said that unhappiness equals image minus reality. What he meant is that you are unhappy when your image of where you should be is dramatically different from where you really are.

When a child dies, the reality of the life we are going to have is altered forever. I am no longer going to be Mark's dad. I am no longer going to join him at UCLA football games. I am no longer going to be a grandfather to the children he will never have. If that gap between image and reality is a recipe for unhappiness, well, then the reverse is also true. If you "solve" the equation of happiness, happiness equals image matched closely with reality. So I have had to change my image to match the new reality.

I like my new life better. This makes me feel guilty because I would trade my life in an instant if I could have Mark back. But I really do like the person I have become since Mark died. I don't even know that person from 10 years ago. Back then my life purpose was to run a large advertising agency. Today, it is to give back in gratitude for the joy of the life I have been given. I want to make Mark proud. I want to be a blessing to others. And I want to enjoy



the journey, too. I still have a grief that goes unspoken. Who will listen at 10 years? Yes, I still miss Mark. But I miss him quietly and silently. I grieve for his loss; for the loss of the person he would have become (he would be 28 now, but instead is forever 18); and also for the loss of the life I would be having if he were here.

I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I have been blessed beyond measure. I have a surviving son who has given me more joy than I could imagine any parent having ... and now a beautiful daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter. Gratitude is one of the most helpful and healing things you can do on your grief journey. And with gratitude comes thanks. So in gratitude, Kitty and I made a list this week of the people who were there for us when we needed them most. These are the people who dropped everything in their lives on a moment's phone call and rushed to our side. These are the people with whom we are joined forever, and who, no matter how far they drift, or what unimportant spats we might have, will always have a special place in our heart. You make your own list. Then find those people wherever they are, and say thank you.

I choose joy over sadness. If there is one overriding thought in these years, including 10 TCF conferences in a row, it is simply this: Grief is inevitable; misery is optional. It does no good to sit in a hole. It does no good for the loss of one life to lead to the loss of two. What does do good is doing good. To decide to lead the second part of your life differently and better than you would have before ... in your child's name. When we do that ... when we do one small act of kindness we never would have done before ... when we reach out to other bereaved parents because we can and because we have been there ... then the world is changed in some small way for the better, and then the actions we take become a living tribute to our child's life. And then that child is never entirely gone.

And that, my fellow compassionate friends, is how it looks at 10 years for me.
--Rich Edler TCF So. Bay/L.A. CA In Memory of my son Mark Edler

Newly Bereaved...

Grief

It's an entity all its own, with its pain that's never really gone.

It has many thoughts and faces, but very few reality traces.

It makes you ask many a question, all of which you try to shun; What-When-Where-If-Why?

Could I have done something so my child wouldn't die?

These are what every parent asks;

this part of grief is a heart wrenching task.

Hours turn to days; days to months; months to a year, this is the war you fight without gear.

You feel bare and naked and all alone, at times you feel like you can't go on.

You say "This happens to someone else, not me!"

This I think every parent would agree.

But this time it really was you,

you scream, No, No, No, but it's oh so true.

This nightmare that never seems to end, with these feelings you cannot pretend.

People say "Well you sure look good"

don't they know that we would die if only we could.

Yes grief has its own way,

while we endure it and live day to day.

--Judy Craig, TCF Memphis, TN

Written in memory of her son, Travis Carter

Friends And Family...

How Can You Survive?



You stood there staring with your eyes open wide when I told you my only child had died. Then I heard that question again today and those thoughtless words that take my breath away, "I could not go on living had my child died." "How can you stand it, how can you survive?" You seemed not to notice the hard painful lump that had settled in my throat despite my brave front I tried to speak, but my mouth was bone dry. All I could do was just stand there and stifle my cry. Then you turned in silence and I followed your lead. Wiping tears off my face as I struggled to breathe.

How do I answer these questions you ask?

Should I tell you the truth and then wait for your gasp? I've been told by other parents who have also lost a child that they have heard these words before and cannot believe the guile of those who think life simply stops because you're left to bear the greatest tragedy of all, lost hopes and bleak despair.

Yet perhaps you do not realize the pain you have just caused so once more I will answer in hope to give you pause. I would have gladly died, exchanging my life for his. Willing myself into my

son's broken body, for weeks I prayed for this. When he took his last breath, I was left alone in this place to live one day at a time and remember his sweet face.

You ask me how I stand it; how I manage to survive? How I can stand to go on living when my only child has died? The answer is so simple; I'm amazed you cannot see that the answer you seek does not lie with me. The Lord in His wisdom makes me draw breath each day. I do not know His reason, I do not know His way. I wake each morning with my son's death on my mind. Living only for heaven to hold the child I called mine. This is how I stand it; the only reply I can give I did not die, I did not survive, and I did not want to live.

So when next you see a parent grieving for their child take care to be gentle and just offer us a smile. For our numbers are great and our hearts have been broken. We need only your love with your arms wide open.

--Nancy, Alive Alone, October, 1998 In memory of Eric.

Book in Review...



No New Baby by Marilyn Grate. For boys and girls whose expected sibling dies. This book deals with a child's questions and fears about what is happening in a simple yet effective way.

Helpful Hint...



It's what our loved ones have left in our hearts that make us strong. With that Love, strength, humor and compassion along with our faith, we can do it. One thing I am learning is that it's not forgetting the pain, it's remembering the Love. In remembering that Love, it puts that pain in a kind of limbo. Because they meant so much to me, I know it will never really go away completely, but the Love makes it easier.
--author unknown

Welcome...



You Are Not Alone

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're

wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us, but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared.

--Space Coast TCF, FL

Editors' Note: We welcome you to join us on Zoom until our regular meetings can resume. It is so beneficial talking to other bereaved parents who understand the depth of what you are going through.

We do not recover from the death of a child — we heal.

Part of the healing process is accepting

That not only has our own life changed,

But we are becoming different people.

We may look the same as before our child died.

We look at life in a new way.

We have more understanding and compassion.

We cannot know why sad things happen.

We can only know

That nothing beautiful in this world is ever really lost

Because all precious things live in memory

Forever ~

--Anonymous

Precious Child Remembered

We know that you are hurting

We know just how you feel.

The pain deep inside your heart

You feel it can't be real.

We know what's going through your mind,

Thoughts that cloud it through the day.

We're on the road you're traveling now.

It can be handled, there's a way.

Don't fight the tears you're feeling,

You must just let them flow.

Speak of your child daily

To many people that you know.

Find others who can understand

They'll hold you as you cry.

The questions, we have all asked,

All the how's and every why.

We will always think of our child,

No one will have to say a word.

They will remain in our hearts

Our precious child remembered.

--author Unknown



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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel Draper
Born: 1/84 Died: 5/2004
Mother: Tracy Solis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christie Hagenburger
Born: 4/63 Died: 12/17
Father: D.W. Hagenburger

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

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

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

Jennifer Nicole Hower
Born: 6/75 Died: 12/04
Brother: Jeff Hower

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

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

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

Rachel Suzanne Hoyt
Born: 2/70 Died: 1/95
Sister: Laura Hoyt D'anna

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

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

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

Sarah Jade Hurley
Born: 6/97 Died: 5/17
Father: Tim Hurley
Grandmother: Laurie Hurley

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kevin Le Nguyen
Born: 5/88 Died: 6/14
Mother: Tracy Le Nguyen

Joseph Licciardone
Born: 4/94 Died: 3/16
Parents: Connie & Leo Licciardone

Gaby Lindeman
Born: 7/64 Died: 9/12
Parents: Gilberto & Graciela Rodriguez

Alberto Lopez
Born: 8/66 Died: 2/12
Mother: Albertina Lopez

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sarah Mc Donald
Born: 10/00 Died: 6/17
Parents: Tom & Shideh Mc Donald

Kirk Nicholas 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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Laura C. Toomey
Born: 1/61 Died: 12/78
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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

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

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

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

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.tcsfbla.org

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month

For Siblings...



Dear Mom & Dad — a Note from Your Surviving Child

Dear Mom & Dad,

There may be moments when you wonder about me. How I am doing since our precious family member was stolen from us. A few things I wish you would know:

- I am hurting so much, but afraid to share with you just how much, lest I add to the tremendous pain I see you are suffering.
- I don't know what to say to you sometimes. I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing. I'm afraid of saying the right thing.
- I know you knew my sibling from the day they were born, but I knew them my entire life. We were so close in years and they were older than me and so there is not a day of my life that they did not exist. You have years of memories before they were here. My life without them started the day they died.
- I feel unloved sometimes as I watch you fuss over them instead of me who is still here. I understand why and don't begrudge you – but some days it stings.
- I feel guilty for not protecting them and don't understand the lion that roars inside of me from all this hurt.
- I've become fiercely protective of my other siblings and you. Don't mistake that facade of strength to mean I'm okay.
- I don't understand this grief and that makes me question how I could possibly know how to help you and our family with their grief. But somehow feel responsible to do so.
- I worry as I watch you fade and diminish from

your grief.

- I wish you could kiss this and make it all better, like you did when I was little and scraped myself. I know you can't but I still look up to you and the little child in me still wants it with all my heart.
- I don't blame you for their death.
- I know I may be hard to handle: angry, sullen, distant. Please know that is just the hurt coming from my deep pain that I sometimes direct at you because I can't get to the one that is responsible.
- Under all the ugliness, I still love you very much.

JULIE BROWN

Julie Brown lost her sister Amy to homicide in 2016 and has spent the past years trying to care for her surviving son and her parents while navigating the stressful path of the justice system. She has learned from having a high profile case associated with the loss of her sister, that finding any small point of gratitude is a powerful way to survive and endure the complexity of grief that comes from sudden and violent loss. She and her husband Jeff reside in Pennsylvania where they are actively involved in their church and helping other families deal with loss to homicide.

--Posted August 29, 2019

Memories of My Brother

Why is it so very hard
Accepting you are gone;
I guess the thought is unbearable
I am not that strong.

I am too afraid to face the truth
And picture you still there
Till I awaken dreadfully
To watch you disappear.

You were always happy and carefree
And I don't understand
How you can seem so real to me
As your grasp slips from my hand.

The sixteen years of life you had
Somehow does not compare,
To the tragic, senseless death you faced
And cross you had to bear.

I try to think of pleasant times
And childhood memories,
But guilt and sorrow haunt my soul
And I cannot break free.

I am sorry for the times we fought
And for treating you so bad
I am sorry for ignoring you
And wasting the time we had.

You were and are my brother still
When you took your last breath,
A part of me went on with you
And I shall mourn your death.
—Jennifer Chase Ellicott City, MD

For Grandparents...



Dear Compassionate Friends,

I am writing to thank you for giving me one of the best Christmas presents I have ever received. You don't know me, but I put my grandmother on the mailing list of the Pittsburgh Chapter. Two years ago I lost my mother to breast cancer. As devastating as it was for me, my grandmother took it a lot harder. My mom was her oldest daughter. I felt like I lost not only my mom, but my grandma as well. My mom died February 16, two weeks shy of her 61st birthday. My grandmother told me that "your child is your child no matter how old they are." When a friend told me about your caring organization, I wrote and requested that my grandmother's name be placed on the mailing list as she is 89 years old and unable to attend meetings.

Thanks to you, my grandmother is more at peace than she has been in a long time. I think reading about others who have lived through the death of a child has helped heal her aching heart more than anything. She really looks forward to your newsletter. Now that her grief is easing just a little, we can talk more about my mom and we're able to comfort each other.

Sincerely, Marylou Mrvo
Lexington, KY

From Our Members...



Coping With the New Year Blues

It seems that everyone is excited to start the new year ahead with gusto, and plans for the future. To someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one, this can bring about even stronger feelings of sadness and despair. The one we spent our time with is no longer here to make plans

with, while the world moves on without us.

Some grievors may feel that there is nothing left to live for at this very delicate time in their life. This thought couldn't be more wrong.

Each and every one of us has a purpose in this life. Just as the ones we are missing had purpose. As hard as it may be, we need to find it within ourselves to live out the purpose that was given to us upon our birth.

You have a significant reason for being here. Consider sharing your story of your loved one by going to a support group or volunteering somewhere that has meaning to you. One can never tell how much sharing a part of themselves can help change the life of another. You may never realize how much your story has affected a person, but by putting yourself out there, you will not only ease the pain of others, but you will begin to heal your own heart as well.

If you are uncomfortable with face to face meetings, then find an online community that you like and start posting in the forums. In no time, you will find that you have created friendships with people in similar situations, who also need a shoulder to cry on. It goes both ways, which is the most wonderful part of online bereavement groups. Everyone there knows the pain of loss and understands the grief that you are going through.

If you find that your sadness is unbearable, please talk to a family member and seek the advice of a medical professional.

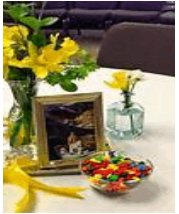
--Written by Lora Mercado from Open to Hope Newsletter. Submitted by Karen Teal

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.

ZOOM... We will be holding our next Zoom meeting on Thursday, January 7th @ 7:00 p.m. We will be having virtual meetings until we can meet in person. We send 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 click on the link in the e-mail to join the meeting. Or contact the Zoom hosts, Leo & Connie for help at (310) 536-9305 or Conniestar58@gmail.com, or Leo at Liccica79@gmail.com. We hope to see you.

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: Jan. 1st for Feb. 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.

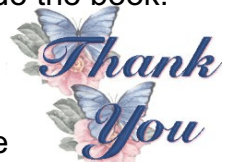


Get Your Photo Buttons... Photo buttons are a perfect way to share your child, grandchild or sibling with others at monthly meetings. If you would like to have some made, call Ken at (310) 544-6690. You can mail him a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) and Ken can make 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.)



Our Website... Leo Licciardone 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.**

Lori Galloway(chapter leader).....(760) 521-0096
Linda Zelik (former leader).....(310) 370-1645
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)	
grasphep.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.

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CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone

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PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

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Kitty Edler

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Lair Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Ken Konopasek

Susan Kass

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. **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--

6:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

7AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings (open depending on monitor availability)

7 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

TUESDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

5 PM PST: Loss to Substance Related Causes

6 PM PST: Bereaved Less than Two Years

6 PM PST: Bereaved More than Two Years

WEDNESDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

THURSDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

5 PM PST: No Surviving Children

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

FRIDAY--

7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

(open depending on moderator availability)

5 PM PST: Loss to Substance Related Causes

5 PM PST: Pregnancy/Infant Loss

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SATURDAY--

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SUNDAY--

5 PM PST: Suicide Loss

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings





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 P.O. Box 11171
Torrance CA 90510

Please consider giving a donation in your loved one's name.

In loving memory of my sweet daughter, Megan Rexroad (12/91 - 10/15) You are missed every day!
Love, Mom

In loving memory of Chidinma Ezeani, 8/89 - 10/19. It's almost a year and you are still fresh in our minds.

We love and miss you, Dad, Mom, Ada, and Melie

In loving memory of Emily Matilda Kass, 6/95 - 3/06. Missing you and loving you always.
We love you, Mom & Jessica

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.

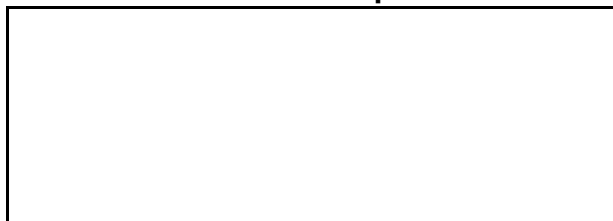
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January 2021

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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