



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

May 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.

“Special Days in May” is the topic for the May 6th Virtual meeting 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 Friday, TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237th St in Torrance) at 1 PM. Do to dining restrictions, we must know you are coming in advance. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

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?**
Lori Galloway (760) 521-0096
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P.O. Box 3696
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The May 6th Zoom meeting will start with "Handling May's Special Days." Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Memorial Day are just around the corner. These holidays can all can trigger unexpectedly strong reactions, or leave you feeling so empty inside, that you wonder if you will ever enjoy anything again. Whether it's been years or this is the first time you must face them with your loved one missing, expect many conflicting feelings to emerge. By thinking about your reactions ahead of time, and planning for these special days, you can take some of the sting away. Join us as we explore ways other parents have managed to get through these painful "firsts". Perhaps you are a few years down the road in your grief, and you have found new ways to celebrate and let some joy back into your life. We welcome your input. By sharing ideas or just by listening, we gain an understanding of ways to handle special days without some of the pain we may be anticipating. We invite you to join us on Thurs. May 6th at 7 PM on Zoom. Go to TCFSBLA.org and enter informaton for the virtual meetings.

Mother's Day Brings Joy and Pain

Mother's Day used to mean special times, great moments, sweet gifts and acknowledgment of the deep bond that Mothers share with their children: I have many happy memories of Mother's Days past. Their value is incalculable.

But that was before ... everything now is measured in "before" and "after." When I lost my only child, Mother's Day changed. Now Mother's Day has a different meaning ... one that is not as happy as it once was, but one that still reinforces the many years I shared with my son on this earth.

I was considering this strange paradigm, this shift in my thinking over the past six plus years, and I have come to the conclusion that eventually bereaved parents begin to accept the death of their children on a subconscious level. But before that happens, our subconscious minds wage war on our conscious minds and we experience such terrible emotional lows. It's an internal fight for each of us. Along with the fight to survive, to acquire the will to continue living, we are battling internal forces that must resolve themselves. Once that internal war ends, our healing begins. We will always love and miss our children. We will always shed copious tears for no reason. But something inside of us has shifted, shaping our perspective from this point forward.

*"On Mother's Day
there is no Mother
more deserving
than a Mother who
had to give her
child back"*

Erna Bombeck

So, this Mother's Day I will acknowledge my beautiful son, the wonderful life that he lived, the joy I received in raising him and the wisdom I acquired through the gift of my child. We learn unconditional love when we become mothers. We learn foresight, gentleness, joys in the simple elements of life. I will remember past Mother's Days and think of the wonder that is my only child. I will remember him with much love, more than a few tears and a special sense of thankfulness that his life graced mine for over 35 years.

I will honor the fact that I am a mother. Although my son does not share this earthly plane with me, he is forever my child and I am forever his mother. This is a bond that time, space and death do not alter. Quietly, with serenity and peace in my heart, I will mark this Mother's Day doing what I want to do. I will know what that will be when I get there. Live in the moment ... that's another element of life that I learned from my son.

We are each unique on our grief journey, and we will each mark this Mother's Day in a different way. Whatever your choice might be, make it your day ... your day to celebrate the eternal bond between mother and child. There is nothing more beautiful.
--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX

Sarahs Australia

Father's Day

Father's Day not a big holiday like Christmas or Thanksgiving, but one that holds a lot of meaning for those to whom it applies. For first-time fathers, that Sunday in June brings a feeling of joy and pride. For a long-time dad, it's a reminder of the fulfillment which children may have brought to his life.

For those men who have lost a child, it can be a, painful time. For those who must endure their pain in secret and in silence, either through their own desire for that approach or through society's expectations that they must be strong and controlled, it can become a horror. But we in TCF wish to acknowledge the day because the death of a child does not negate the parenthood of the dad who loved him or her.

Love for ones offspring does not die when the body dies and death does not succeed in robbing us of our parental identity. We wish all bereaved fathers a day of peace. In the midst of the grief and loss, may you experience a taste of good memories and remembered love for your child.
--Betty Roehm, TCF Mesa County, CO

Making Mother's Day And Father's Day Special



Here are a few hints to help you through these days after the loss of a child.

1. Pamper yourself — this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
2. Do what you need to do — what helps you. Grieve your way.
3. Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice.
4. Plan ahead — do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace.
5. Start new rituals to make new memories.
6. Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.)
7. Include deceased children in the day — through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
8. Join with another bereaved family to honor this day and have mutual support.
9. Start a garden or add to a special garden in memory of your child.
10. Use this day to plant spring flowers so you can always see your child in each bloom and each bouquet that you cut.
11. Visit the cemetery if that helps your heart on this day.
12. Plant a flower or shrub that will come to bloom this time of year.
13. Do something special for someone else or something special in your child's name (helping Cancer Care, MADD, a Compassionate Friends Chapter, Scouting, a nursing home, etc.)
14. Listen to music that makes your heart feel good.
15. Cook some favorite recipes that your child enjoyed or cooked for you.
16. Buy a present for yourself from your child and enjoy the comfort it brings you.
17. Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.
18. Attend a family gathering of relatives — their love and support can give you a lift on this day.
19. Make a booklet of favorite poems that help

your heart, and give copies to dear relatives and friends in memory of your child.

20. Take part in a special church ceremony honoring Mother's Day and Father's Day.

21. Pray to your child — talking is the best medicine and prayer is simply talking.

22. Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone.

23. Write a letter to your child, saying what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).

24. Allow the tears to flow — crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings.

25. Think of a way to "share your child with the world" — making sure his or her memory lives on through scholarships, writing, good deeds.

26. Give and get plenty of hugs.

--Elaine Stillwell, TCF Rockville Center, NY

Thoughts from a Gold Star Mom

If you have already endured the death of a child, spouse, parent or sibling while in service to our country, you probably already know what I am about to say. If you are a warrior who lost one of your battle buddies, a comrade in arms, due to combat or due to the effects or exposure of what happened while on a mission... then you too will understand what I am about to say.... because you have been there.

Like myself and countless others I have talked to, there seems to be one thing that we all have in common. It is a constant continual struggle daily with the anger, the pain, the sadness, the uncertainty, and the survivors guilt questions that haunt us on a daily basis.

You still find yourself begging for a do-over. One that would have led to different circumstances. One that would have had a different outcome that didn't end in the death of a Fallen Warrior. It is hard not to go there especially on Memorial Day.

Many probably already know what I am speaking about because they, like I, are alive and someone that we love has died.

When people say they cannot imagine what it must be like to lose a child... I tell them they are right and that there will just never be the appropriate words. The only way I can even begin to convey to them the feeling of what we have been through... is to tell them to imagine being in a helicopter that is

traveling up high over an ocean. There is no land in sight. Then, suddenly... for no reason that YOU can comprehend...you are shoved out the door without a parachute... and then WHAM you hit the water hard.

As the initial shock begins to wear off... you start to feel the pain and it's excruciating. You think... this can't be happening. This can't be true. But then the reality starts to seep into your subconscious... but you are numb with disbelief. You can hardly move. While trying to come to your senses you notice that the helicopter starts to move out of site... and that you have been left below in the cold turbulent water with a storm brewing around you.

You don't know what to do... you feel you should do something... but you can't think. Your body moves... but your mind is not working. You look for land... but all you see is water. You know you should swim... but have no clue as to which way to go. Your body tires from treading water. It is an effort just to keep your head above the waves. It is an effort just to breathe. You have fleeting thoughts about how it might be so much easier to just fill your lungs with water and allow yourself to sink... plummeting down into the depths of the ocean below. The wind is howling... the sky is black and the waves are enormous. You fear the storm will never end and you don't know how you will survive.

Then one day you start to realize that the turbulent storm is beginning to wane. The waves that were once over 40 feet high are subsiding. You slowly begin to realize that you are swimming... even though you are unsure of your direction. You begin to start thinking you may be able to survive... if only you can find something to hold on to.... and then you see it. It's just a plank of wood... but it allows you to grab hold and it gives you hope.

As you drift though the water... still clinging to the board... you become aware that you are not alone. There are others in the water with you. Some have been in the water longer than you... and they have somehow managed to lash their planks together. They have built a boat. And not only have they built a boat but they are rowing. Throwing you a life line they pull you in. Although they greet you with open arms... they wish they did not have to welcome you aboard... because they know the price you have paid for this trip is way too high.

But without hesitation they take you on board their vessel. With their knowledge and experiences though this tough journey they comfort you, they provide a safe haven for you to tell your story, they

listen, and they listen... and they listen... because they understand, because they get it.

They encourage you to speak your loved one's name, to share your Warrior's story... to share with them your journey. They give you hope. Although, unsure of your destination... knowing that your life will never be the same again...you join them and slowly begin to row.

My name is Kelly Kowall and I am the proud gold star mother of Spec. Corey Joseph Kowall. On September 20th 2009, my son was killed in Afghanistan on a combat mission. My life as I knew it came to an end. It was on an evening, many years ago, that two soldiers knocked on my door and then proceeded to pushed me out of that helicopter. I remember screaming during my fall... and I remember my cries of anguish and pain after hitting the water.

Although the ocean is a treacherous place when there is a storm, when the waters are calm... it can be quite magical and healing. I guess that is why I envision my journey of grief to that of being adrift in an ocean as I try to survive and navigate my way to a new world. Although the waters are not always calm... for the moments when they are... they can provide time for hope and healing. How do I know? Because I have been out in that ocean. I have endured many storms... and I will continue to do so as they come... but mostly I know... because I am a survivor.

Bless each and every one of you during this Memorial Day as we reflect on the Warriors who made the ultimate sacrifice for our continued freedom. A debt that can never be repaid... but one that we have the obligation to remember and honor.

As a Gold Star Mother, my hope will always be that each one of us will always be able to find a safe port or harbor when a storm blows in... as we continue on OUR grief journey. Be kind to yourself on this Memorial Day and may our Warriors NEVER be forgotten!

--Kelly Kowall (Proud Gold Star Mother of SPC Corey Kowall) President & Founder of My Warrior's Place. www.mywarriorsplace.org



The Never Ending Battle With Grief

Do I get out of bed to face the morning pain? Why are my feet and my socks soaking? I stepped out of my bed into a huge puddle of hurt and anxiety. As if the room had flooded overnight and I need rubber boots and a life jacket to survive. Yesterday was so long and negative. Am I ready to do it all over again?

I throw back my bed sheets, stretch my tired muscles, and wipe the tears from the edge of my eyes. My son is still dead and my world is still flooding each day with emotional tsunamis. Calm, then turmoil, but never stillness or peace. I pray for them, but get no relief.

I paddle my way to the kitchen waiting for the next wave to crash all around me. I didn't ask to be on these waters; this isn't the trip I signed up for. I try to think of thoughts each day to get me through, but more often than not I am struggling for air as I swallow the surges of grief that pound me in the face.

A sign flashing on the bank for an upcoming 5k, but the last thing I expected was to see my son's name scroll across that yellow-bubbled screen. Out of nowhere a slam into my chest as if I was struck by a huge anchor being hurled into the water. It doesn't hit and stop. It has to fall all the way through me and never feels like it hits the bottom. It just gets heavier and heavier, until I am hit with the next one.

Walking in to watch my daughter play volleyball at my son's high school, I see his friends. He should have been a senior. Some say hi, some look away, and I get punched in the chest again. The questions come on so fast and so quick. It's like they are always right below the water and waiting to pop up like a submarine in enemy waters.

Why is he not standing in that line or sitting in these stands? Why are these kids alive and not mine? Why is her big brother not here to watch her play? What would he look like as a man today? But I have to continue the battle, a battle that is very real.

The trauma returns to my upper back as I relive holding him in my arms on that street. I cheer for the girls and yell and the other team. I even make small talk with some of the dads. Inside I am dying, or dead, or just really sad. Mad. Who knows what I am, not even me, not sure how I should act or how this all ends. It just hurts dog paddling through life now instead of fishing or hunting with him in a boat above these stormy waters.

On the way home, my wife tells a story of a girl



my son knew. She shared a story with her, one I never have heard. He stayed with her on a bench at a game when everyone left. It was a small gesture but one she treasured and held on to. When all of the friends returned, a song came on he knew and he belted it out singing so loudly for all to hear around him. She said he had such a great voice and he knew it. Slam, another anchor to my water. It felt like in the Marvel movies when Thor reaches up for his hammer and it flies out of nowhere and smacks into his hand with a thunderous boom.

Only, I seem to catch them with my whole body. I get physical pain that won't go away. I question if it's grief or a heart attack, as I bring the trash down to the end of the driveway. Not a heart attack, but it is an attack. One that I will have to face again today... in the never ending battle of the bereaved parent. Join me today, find some waders and rain gear and get ready to be hit with anything.

--Kody's Dad, Kurt Roettjer St. Paul TCF

We All Think About It

How old is your child? Do you miss him or her for the child they were or the child they would now be? Isn't it confusing when you see a child 3 years old? He reminds you of your little Timmy; same color hair, same build, same mischievous grin. You think of your son and you miss his sweet little arms around your neck. Then you realize Timmy wouldn't look or act like this anymore; he wouldn't be 3, Timmy would be 8 now. Not climbing on your lap, but climbing trees. Not a toddler, but a little man. You wonder how he would look, what his voice would sound like, who his friends would be. Would he be a Cub Scout, or playing soccer? Then your mind swoops back to reality, the little boy that reminded you of Timmy is gone.

You're glad you noticed him, it feels good to think of Timmy. But there's confusion in your thoughts about him also. Of course the pain mixed with the warmth of his memory is confusing enough. But that reoccurring wondering about what your child would have been like today is even more confusing. And you're wondering if you should even think about it... he's not 8 ... and he's not 3. He's in heaven and he's not here. But he's in our memory and he's in your heart and it's OK to remember him as he was ... at 3. It's OK to think of him as he would be ... at 8. It's OK to think over this confusing feeling of the loss of both of the Timmys you miss. The toddler at 3, and the boy at 8. It's OK to think about it. We all think about it.

--Connie Miles, TCF St. Louis, MO

Letter From Jimmy

She jumped up as she saw the surgeon come out of the operating room. "How is my little boy? Is he alright? When can I see him?" The surgeon said, "I'm sorry. We did all we could, but your boy didn't make it."

Sally said, "Why do little children get cancer? Doesn't God care any more? Where were you God, when my son needed you?"

The surgeon asked, "Would you like some time alone with your son? One of the nurses will be out in a few minutes, before he's transported to the university."

Sally asked the nurse to stay with her while she said goodbye to her son. She ran her fingers lovingly through his thick red curly hair.

"Would you like a lock of his hair?," the nurse asked. Sally nodded yes. The nurse cut off a lock, put it in a plastic bag and handed it to Sally.

The mother said, "It was Jimmy's idea to donate his body to the university for study. He said it might help somebody else. I said no at first, but Jimmy said, "Mom, I won't be using it after I die. Maybe it will help some other little boy spend one more day with his Mom." My Jimmy had a heart of gold, always thinking of someone else. Always wanting to help others if he could.

Sally walked out of Children's Mercy Hospital for the last time, after spending most of the last six months there. She put the bag with Jimmy's belongings on the seat beside her in the car. The drive home was difficult. It was even harder to enter the empty house. She carried Jimmy's belongings and the plastic bag with the lock of his hair to her son's room.

She started placing the model cars and other personal things back exactly where he always kept them. She laid down across his bed, hugging his pillow, and cried herself to sleep.

It was around midnight when Sally awoke. Laying beside her on the bed was a folded letter. It said: "Dear Mom, I know you're going to miss me, but don't think that I will ever forget you, or stop loving you, just because I'm not around to say 'I love you.' I will always love you, Mom, even more with each day. Someday we will see each other again."

"Until then, if you want to adopt a little boy so you won't be so lonely, that's okay with me. He can have my room and old stuff to play with. But,



if you decide to get a girl instead, she probably wouldn't like the same things us boys do. You'll have to buy her dolls and stuff girls like, you know.

Don't be sad thinking about me." "This really is a neat place. Grandma and Grandpa met me as soon as I got here and showed me around some, but it will take a long time to see everything. The angels are so cool. I love to watch them fly. And, you know what? Jesus does not look like any of his pictures, but when I saw Him, I knew it was Him. Jesus himself took me to see GOD! And guess what, Mom? I got to sit on God's knee and talk to Him, like I was somebody important." "That's when I told Him that I wanted to write you a letter, to tell you goodbye and everything. But I already knew that wasn't allowed. Well, you know what, Mom? God handed me some paper and His own personal pen to write you this letter. I think Gabriel is the name of the angel who is going to drop this letter off to you."

"God said for me to give you the answer to one of the questions you asked Him: 'Where was God when I needed him?' God said He was in the same place with me as when His son Jesus was on the cross. He was right there, as He always is with all His children."

"Oh, by the way, Mom, no one else can see what I've written except you. To everyone else this is just a blank piece of paper. Isn't that cool? I have to give God His pen back now. He needs it to write some more names in the Book of Life. Tonight I get to sit at the table with Jesus for supper. I'm sure the food will be great."

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you. I don't hurt anymore. The cancer is all gone. I'm glad because I couldn't stand that pain anymore, and God couldn't stand to see me hurt so much, either. That's when He sent the Angel of Mercy to come get me. The angel said I was a Special Delivery! How about that?"

"With Love from God, Jesus & Me"

--Connie Haighi TCF, Independence MO

Look at yourself in the mirror.

Say to yourself,

"It is hard to lose a child."

Say to yourself,

"It is reasonable to hurt,.

Say to yourself,

"Healing takes time."

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF.

-- Sascha Wagner

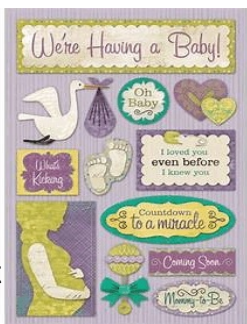
To Danny

Today you would be only thirty
 I still can't believe
 The decision you made
 That you wanted to leave
 This earth that is so difficult sometimes
 I wish I had known
 We all could have been more kind
 Your birthday today feels empty and sad
 I miss you so much
 I feel endlessly bad
 Did I fail as a mother?
 Did I do something wrong?
 Is it my failure to you?
 That you couldn't be strong?
 To face this life, it's fault challenges and problems
 It's hard I know
 But I wish you wanted to be here
 Instead you had to go
 It hurts just as bad even more so now
 I thought time would help
 But it doesn't.
 I love love love love you
 My heart is a hole
 The agony is endless
 Sadness my goal
 Please show me a sign
 That you are still connected to this ground
 Maybe that will help comfort me
 When I'm feeling down
 Wherever you are please wait for me to join you
 So, I can feel whole again
 Love, mom
 -- Helen Hansen, TCF Honolulu
 In loving memory of her son,
 Daniel "Danny" Malcolm Hansen

Having Another Baby

When you plan for the first baby, you wonder if you'll be a good parent what he or she will look like, if you will deliver before or after your due date, even what color to paint the nursery.

The next pregnancy after your baby has died you don't plan. You wonder if he or she will live and whether to paint the nursery at all. That was the hardest part for me ... Never, even for a minute really believing I was going to bring this baby home. Though I won't be the one to tell you that



subsequent pregnancies are good, I will tell you they are worth it. Its wonderful to have new life in the house. To have this tiny thing to hold and love. Oh - he smells so good, and he looks so cute when he gets mad!

There have been a lot of sad moments since Samuel's birth, looking at him and missing this time with Zachary. When Samuel was about a week old, if he slept just right, he looked a lot like Zachary. I could smooth back his face so his cheekbones weren't so full; it was almost magical. With a little imagination I was holding Zachary again.

Now Samuel is six weeks old and he is just Samuel - our wonderful baby. I feel happy, more satisfied with life. There is still Zachary, we are still bereaved, but life is better, easier. He is a good thing and its been a long time coming.

--Laura House TCF St. Louis, MO

Newly Bereaved...

Grief was not a stranger at our house - we had felt the anguish from the death of older family members, friends who had died during the Vietnam War, and the day to day losses we face most every day. In the first six months after the death of our son, the mechanics of responding to memorials, flowers and letters gave me an excuse to keep the door closed on that unwelcome guest who waited outside.

But the day did come when I didn't have the energy to keep that door locked. It burst open with a terrifying sound - sobs racked my body most of my waking hours, my chest hurt and I couldn't breathe, and worst of all, I looked around and saw that I was alone. Oh, there were people around me but we didn't speak the same language. I wanted to talk about the death of my son and how afraid I was that I was indeed losing my mind and that I should be doing a lot better than I was. I wanted to verbalize my pain, my anger, my fear, but I didn't have a willing audience. They tried to listen to me at first but it was too painful for them; they wanted me to be doing better so they wouldn't be worried about me.

This feeling of being unable to cope with my grief is what prompted me to find help. I wanted someone to tell me what I could do to make my life and the lives of my loved ones better. I had lost my optimism and I wanted it back - NOW. In addition, I wanted some concrete answers - from God or anyone else who could supply them. I took all of this

personal business to my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends.

There were several people who were newly bereaved at that first meeting. In listening to them, I learned that several were experiencing the same things I was; several were dealing with problems I didn't have. I learned that in talking openly some of my fears began to get smaller so that I could recognize and deal with them. I learned what SUPPORT really means - people willing to walk with me those first miles into that dark forest of bereavement, holding my hand, encouraging me to forge ahead on my own, but also willing to come back and get me when I would drop in my tracks. I learned that these were the same people with whom I could learn to laugh again; and these were the people who would ask me to help someone else who came through the door for the first time with that telltale imprint of grief. I learned how differently we grieve and I learned that accepting that difference is a milestone in the healing process.

I will be forever grateful to those farseeing people who had the wisdom to start TCF in this area and to those who are committed to seeing that this vital group continues. My optimism has been restored; God is giving me the answer I seek and He is doing it through other grieving parents.

--Gretel Ekbaum TCF, Jackson Mississippi

Seasoned Griefers...

On Time and Healing

In February 2014 I gained entrance into this group none of us want to join when my beautiful son Ryan passed away. As all of you are too well aware of, the months that followed were filled with unbearable grief and questions and "what-ifs". As landmark dates started coming – birthdays, holidays, death-days (euphemistically referred to as Sunsets or Angelversaries), I struggled with what to do to mark these events.

We all have places and things that are significant to us and our loved one – for me, one of these things was a tree on a beach. At times when my grief was overwhelming that's where I would go, alone, to think and feel. So, it made sense to me that this tree would be where I would go to celebrate Ryan on his special days.



This tree had an injury, a large wound, where a limb had been removed. I measured it, it was 4" x 9", and then I took a trip to Maui to try and find a wood carver who could carve me a memorial to mount on Ryan's tree. This didn't work out, so instead I began the ritual of taping a photo of Ryan in the wound, and then watching the sunrise over the tree.

The first time I did this, I used a 4" x 6" photo, which easily fit into the gap. Over time, I found I had to cut my photos down as there seemed to be less room on the tree. After a couple of years, I started taping wallet-sized photos, and over time, even these needed to be made smaller.

It wasn't until the last time I did this ritual that I stopped to question the change. The sun rose, and with the new light I examined the old wound. And I saw new growth – the tree was slowly healing itself. The new wood didn't look anything like the original surrounding wood – it was clear that the tree had received a traumatic injury. But still, the tree was recovering...re-growing...rebuilding. The process had happened so slowly that I hadn't noticed it at all in those early years. And as I sat there I started reflecting on my own healing journey, and how my path shared similarities with this wounded tree. And I smiled; of course, it was Ryan's tree that helped open my eyes and let this peace shine in.
--Jeanne Martin-Hopkins Ryan's mom TCF, Honolulu

Friends And Family...

Our Children May Not Be Forgotten After All

At one of our TCF meetings, we did the "ask- it-basket", and one question that I put in, which was read aloud, was "What do we do when it seems no one remembers our child?"

The answer walked right up to me the very next week when a friend of mine from work came to say good-bye since she and her husband were relocating due to a new job opportunity. She told me that she would never lose touch with me and especially would never forget my daughter, Alicia's date of death. She now has a little boy of her own. She did not have a child when she attended Alicia's funeral. She was still on maternity leave when Alicia's death anniversary date came this year. She wanted me to know that on this day of each year,

she sits down quietly and remembers me and my family. Now that she is a mom, she is surprised that my husband, Dave, our surviving daughter, Monique, and myself still continue to enjoy life. I told her that we support each other and remember Alicia in all we do. I told her that without TCF, I don't think we'd be this strong or focused.

My friend will be a dear friend for life. Maybe if she didn't have to move out of state, I would have never heard this story from her. So, I feel blessed that she did share this with me. I couldn't help but think that maybe all of OUR CHILDREN have probably TOUCHED MORE LIVES than we can ever imagine, both personally, and even those who never met our children face-to-face. I don't think they are as forgotten as it sometimes seems on a lonely or sad day. I think they are in hearts everywhere!
--Becky Jordan, TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

Helpful Hint...



Permission to Be Crazy

It's OK to do strange things, anything that gives your heart a sense of peace, as long as you don't hurt anyone. Whether you're running down the beach, standing in the shower, or riding in your car screaming at the top of your lungs, releasing balloons with notes attached, talking to an empty chair, wearing their clothes, baking a cake for their birthday, signing their name on cards, decorating their grave with things they loved, or collecting angels in their memory—it's OK. No excuses are necessary. You have learned to do what your heart needs, and that is a big step.

--Elaine F. Stillwell, MA, MS — Excerpt from the booklet *Healing After Your Child's Death*

Welcome...



Do Real Men Attend TCF Meetings?

It has often bothered me that more men and persons of cultural minorities don't attend TCF meetings. I know there are societal and cultural restraints which inhibit many bereaved persons from seeking outside help or support. Being both a man and a member of an ethnic group, I know very well the false pride which often restrains us from admitting we are not as self-sufficient as we want others to believe. We are taught (men in particular)

at a young age not to reveal when we are hurt. We must be strong and brave and silent.

Stoic endurance is really not unique in my culture. The British call it "keeping a stiff upper lip." The Japanese call it gaman. Hispanics pride themselves on their ability to aguantar. In the U.S. it is embodied in the Puritan ethic.

When I began attending TCF meetings regularly, I wondered for a long time whether I was a "real man". Was I less macho than my peers? Couldn't I handle my grief in solitary dignity? The answers, I finally decided were yes, no and maybe. Maybe I could have adjusted to my son's death all by myself. Maybe I could have shunned the possibilities of self-destructive behavior, drunkenness, drug abuse, wild living or the unraveling of my family life without TCF. Maybe I could have dealt alone with all the anger, despair, and depression. Fortunately, I didn't have to.

I readily admit I wasn't very enthusiastic about going to my first TCF meeting. I imagined a group of people sitting around crying on each other's shoulders, bemoaning their cruel fate. Instead, I found people who were hurting as much as I; who, like me, were angry, who often felt depressed—but who were working very hard to mend the tattered fabric of their lives. I soon discovered that this was a place where I could talk about my grief and still feel safe about it. Nobody was going to think me less of a man for not getting over my son's death in a few months.

TCF doesn't promise or offer any quick fixes. There are no magic words or formulas to take away your grief. Whatever "magic" takes place, I know now, happens slowly. I don't believe it is possible for a bereaved parent to "forget", but I think TCF's support and understanding help make it easier for us to go on with our lives. We need not become lifelong emotional cripples.

To all of you hurting people who have never attended a TCF meeting, I urge you to give it a try. Attend two or three meetings and see if some of the "magic" doesn't rub off on you. What have you got to lose? You can't hurt any worse than you already have. TCF is for any and all bereaved parents—men and women, minorities and gringos, people of any or no religious faith.

The one thing everyone at TCF has in common is the death of a child— and how it feels.

--Steve Perez TCF, Denver, CO

Book Review...

After The Darkest Hour, The Sun Will Shine Again A Parent's Guide to Coping with the Loss Of A Child by Elisabeth Mehren. Written from her own experiences, Elisabeth answers the question every bereaved parent asks, Will I ever get over it? Both a guide and a meditation, this book is valuable to friends and relatives.

My Child

The air that I breathe is no longer blessed with the magic of his sweet breath.
His eyes that sparkled and danced and shone are closed in the stillness of death.
The earth he once walked is not quite as rich; he took with him treasures untold;
And arms that once cradled and loved him so much are empty without him to hold.
For a child with the promise of plenty of time there were dreams of a future so bright;
But the sands fell too fast and the daytime of joy turned soon to the darkness of night.
His dreams became ashes born on the wind of the storm that stole him one day;
And the spark of life that he once held so dear was brutally taken away.
But the heart that he left me, though battered and worn is lightened with thoughts of him;
And memories are a beacon of light when the joy in my heart becomes dim.
I know he is safe, and I know he is well and he cannot be touched by pain.
And there's sweetness in knowing my arms will be filled, I'll hold him and touch him again.
For I know where he is and I know that he waits with a hug and a smile and a kiss
And the place where he is, is far gentler with him; it's a world that's much better than this
But our earth is much sweeter because he was here and in the nights of sorrow and tears
I am grateful because he was my little child and I had him for all those years.
-- South Texas Chapter, Corpus Christi Texas TCF

Perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness, yet become something beautiful.

-- Author Unknown

**Reflections of a Mother's Day Denied**

On this, my first Mother's Day, I asked myself, Do I have the right to celebrate Mother's Day? Have I truly been a mother this past year?
The answer is yes.
Each day I have cared for my child as every mother does, except differently.
In every way possible I have mothered him.
I have mothered him with every tear shed; through the agony of longing to hold him.
I have rocked him in my heart if not in my arms.
I have kissed his little cheeks in my mind if not with my lips.
Smelled his sweetness with my hopes if not my nose.
Felt his skin with my memory, if not my hands.
Tickled him with my wishes, if not with my fingers.
Am I a mother?
I truly am.
My physical mothering has been limited to lovingly tending his grave.
But I am a mother all the same.
--Michelle Parrish, Columbia TCF Chapter, Baltimore, MD

It Will Be Another Birthday Without You

The sun will shine
roses bloom, geese fly
throughout the sky
stocks will trade,
the weatherman predict
politicians debate
It'll seem like another day
just a day, same 24 hours
not a special holiday
But to this mother
who will stand at the grave
lifting balloons into the sky
serving angel food cupcakes
with rainbow icing
coated with tears
fluctuating between emotions:
the grief over death the celebration over birth
For this mother
It will be yet
Another birthday without you.
--Alice J. Wisler In loving memory of son, Daniel



Our Children Remembered



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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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

Trevor Mitchell Nicholson
Born: 7/99 Died: 1/18
Parents: Brad & Kendra Nicholson

Steven Scott Nussbaum
Born: 5/61 Died: 11/15
Parents: Will & Gloria Nussbaum

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul Slater
Born: 10/71 Died: 11/16
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* For corrections or to add
your child to the Our Children
Remembered section of the
newsletter, call Lynn at (310)
963-4646 and leave a
message.

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

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:

Sorry, no birthday tributes were submitted this month.



For Siblings...

Special Gift Ideas for a Grieving Mom On Mother's Day

A grieving mother has an especially difficult time on Mother's Day. She is torn between wanting to acknowledge her role as a mother and wanting to avoid the inevitable pain. Choosing a gift for a grieving mother can be tricky and needs to be thoughtful.

1. Memory Book and Photos: Contact friends and family to submit their favorite photos. Ask them to write their favorite memories of the child. Put all of this together in a scrapbook. You can also go to many online sites to create an online digital photo album or to have a DVD made. Make an enlargement of Mom's favorite photo. Have it enlarged and framed.
2. DVD: Collect video footage of the family. Have it made into a DVD.
3. Donations: Make a donation in the name of the child to a charity or relief fund. It would be more meaningful if it was a cause somehow related to the child.
4. Stars: Go to the International Star Registry and have a star named in honor of the child.
5. Memorials in nature: Plant a tree with a commemorative plaque. Dedicate a garden bench in her garden, in a park, or along a trail.
6. Buy her a Mother's Ring. This is a ring that includes the birth stones of the mother and her family. Give her a small pendant with the child's birth stone. Give her a small locket with the child's

picture inside. This could also include the child's birth stone.

7. Honor the memories: Take the mother to choose a special bouquet of flowers to take to the grave. Take Mom on a picnic at their favorite picnic spot. Visit some of their favorite hangouts. Light a candle in the child's honor. Help mom pick out her own candles to burn at home, as well.

8. Give her something to love: A mother who loves animals may enjoy picking out a kitten or a puppy who needs a home. As Charles Schulz said, "Happiness is a warm puppy."

9. Flowers: Simply send Mom a bouquet of flowers with a card. Include some great quotes about motherhood or Bible verses.

10. Plan a getaway.

--Written by Andrea Coventry

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably already know – since you know me better than anyone.

No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives. And the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could have imagined. And at times I didn't want a future that didn't include you. Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions: There is no replacing you. And there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day. To live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you. And to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me many gifts while you were alive and I continued to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling I could not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

--Melanie Lamourei

For Grandparents...

A Grandparent's Point of View



The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives—family, friends, and even strangers. I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the special love we have for our grandchildren and the loss we feel when the child dies. For grandparents, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day.

The smile that was always on my daughter's face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and there are so many questions. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when they were a child. You have no answers for their questions, for you can barely understand your own feelings.

Each day I hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on my daughter's face. I search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering. As time has slowly gone by, I have seen the healing process begin. In time a ray of hope will shine on my daughter's face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to me for what little comfort I can give her. There will always be a part of me that is gone, but in time I will learn to live with the part that is still there.

--Ruth Eaton TCF— Savannah, GA

From Our Members...

A Time For Renewal



Spring has wrapped us in the glory of floral bounty with flowers, blooming bushes and trees and wild bluebonnets hinting at a renewal. In the gentle rains we have received a sweet cleansing of the spirit. It is spring that gives us hope for the future. As the season changes, we sense the cloak of our grief lifting in tiny increments. Yes, it is uplifting. For those of us who are newly bereaved parents or siblings, discovering a bit of lightness in our grief mantle is so very welcome.

And that is how our grief will be for the rest of our lives. No epiphanies, no giant steps, just a slight lifting each day, a microscopic rebirth of ourselves and a step further into our lives after the death of our child. There are setbacks, of course.

The pain is agony in the first year..... brain pain, soul searing pain, physical pain, anxiety and much more seem to rule our days. But each day is a tiny step forward into hope. To enhance our grief journey, we must do grief work. Just as the gardener tends to the soil, fertilizes, gently stimulates tender roots and removes weeds from the flower bed, we must tend to our grief daily. Throwing out the negative...the guilt, the anger, the anxiety and adding the positive by seeking our solace in our journals, reading, movie choices, spirituality, friendships kept and friendships left behind. In the garden of our psyche, our grief must be tended as if every day is the first day of spring.

And so it is that with springtime comes a reminder of renewal and the grief work we must do to obtain that renewal of spring. Day by day we change; month by month we make note of that change. One day we will be able to see the blossoming of our renewal as we move forward in life with our precious children in our hearts.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy TX

Do you have a favorite poem, saying, picture, etc.? Sharing it does two things. First, it helps you in your journey toward resolving your grief. And second, by sharing, it helps others realize they are not alone. Please send any favorite to me, so we can include it in our newsletter. 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, May 6th @ 7:00 p.m. We will be having virtual meetings until we can meet in person. We send out emails reminders 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 Licciardone for help at (310) 536-9305 or Conniestar58@gmail.com, or Leo at Liccica79@gmail.com. We hope to see you then.

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: May 1st for June 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)	
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.

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CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo



Liccaridone

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Lynn Vines

Nancy Lerner

Ken Konopasek

Connie & Leo Liccaridone

Kitty Edler Sandra

& Eddie Myricks

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

In loving memory of Jason Christopher Jenkins, Aril 1986 - November 2020.

Jason, I Love You & I Let You Go!

Your Loving Mother, Caprice

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 _____ From _____

Tribute _____

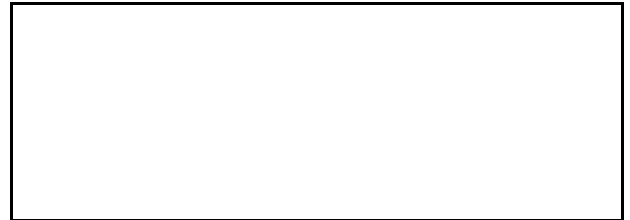
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
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May 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.