



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

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

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Jan. 2022 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be Jan 6th, the first *Thursday*  
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

#### **LOCATION:**

**The Neighborhood Church**  
**415 Paseo Del Mar**  
**Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274**  
**(South of Torrance Beach)**

**DIRECTIONS:** Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → Meetings are held at the west end of the church.

**--Please remember to park in the church parking lot and not on the street.--**

#### **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 ***Thursday***, Jan. 6th meeting will start with "Finding the 'New You', in the New Year."

To participate in our Zoom meetings, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739 or [Liccia79@gmail.com](mailto:Liccia79@gmail.com) for the link.

The TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237<sup>th</sup> St in Torrance) at 1 PM. every Friday. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Kristy at (310) 938-2409.

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## Due to scheduling problems, meetings at the church have been changed back to Thursdays.

The **Thursday, Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>** meeting will start with "Finding The 'New You' In The New Year." We are all at different places in our grief. This meeting we will be sharing how we evolve through our pain and loss... How we incorporate our losses into our lives so we can learn to live without our child in a healthy and productive way. Part of facing the future in 2022 is not so much as saying good-bye to our loved one, as it is saying farewell to the old us and the life we shared. I hope the following articles will give you some ideas of finding ways to face the future with less pain and longing in your own way and on your own timetable. While we are each unique in our grief, we share many commonalities. Join us as we share ways to adjust our grief to include finding hope, peace, and a "new you".

## Endings and Beginnings

Each of us has just lived through the beginning and ending of the holiday season. If the death of your loved one was recent, every day is hard and the holidays may have been no more than a blur amidst the deep grief that already envelops your day. If, however, it has been several months or years since their death and you were having moments each day when the pain was not as sharp, where you may have found a reason or two to smile despite your sadness, the holidays may have brought all those initial feelings in all of their intensity back. You may feel as though you have lost any progress you had made. The very nature of grief is full of ups and downs, good days and bad, two steps forward and one-step back.

Unexpectedly hearing our loved one's favorite song or smelling their cologne on someone can trigger waves of grief. Other times those same things can warm our heart as we re-experience feelings of the love between us. Special days when all the family gathers erase any denial, conscious or unconscious doubt that our loved one has died. Family photos when one member is conspicuously absent, the chair at the table now empty, a story they always shared no longer spoken, are an unmistakable, shouting, perhaps screaming at us that our loved one has died, they are not coming back, and we will never be the same.

We may feel very alone no matter how many

other people are present. We may feel like an outsider and intruder on the celebration we are part of. Though others in the room may be feeling the same way and some of their gaiety fake, grief is a solitary journey, that others may support us through, but it is we who take the journey, it is our feelings we work through, it is our relationship with our loved one that has changed. Theirs may have changed also but it is ours we must struggle with and learn to live with in a way that makes life meaningful and joyful again.

Do not be hard on yourself for your sadness, tears, or your anger. These are normal reactions to the death of your loved one. They are the visual signs of what your loved one meant to you and the difficult adjustment to their absence.

As time passes, pain softens. It doesn't ever completely go away. It remains part of the longing for what was and might have been but it will not always control your life. Talking about your loved one, talking to them, sharing memories, telling their stories, are ways of staying connected to them and keeping their memory alive, even though they died.

Being physically absent from them does not mean we have to be emotionally absent from them. They will always be a part of us. Acknowledging that and cherishing that is what makes living our life meaningful and enjoyable again. So treasure your memories and give them life by sharing them with others.

-- Deb Kosmer, MSW, CSW, CT



## Resolving to Care for Ourselves

We all approach the New Year very differently. Many cannot wait for the year our child or sibling died to pass, while others feel it separates them further from that person. But, the one thing most newly bereaved agree on, is that they are glad the holidays are over. For some the anticipation was far greater than the holiday itself. When pain and stress control our lives it is very difficult to be optimistic.

We must try to face the New Year with the thought that we will not always be in this much pain. As difficult as it is for us to believe, the pain does soften. One day you will find a tolerable life again. It will not be the same as it was, but in many ways our lives can be richer, for we don't fret over the trivial things we used to. We have learned the real values in life. January is the time of year we struggle to put all our trying events behind us, and begin the year with new expectations,

unfortunately, that does not apply to our grief. We cannot "get on with our life" until we have spent sufficient time resolving our grief. All too often, we choose to repress the most painful emotions. They are too difficult to share with others, and we feel too fragile to deal with them. Once unresolved issues become delayed grief, it can be very damaging, and much harder to resolve.

Perhaps, one of our New Year resolutions should be allowing ourselves freedom to grieve. We need to take time to read, attend meetings, phone a friend, cry, walk, eat healthier, and in general remove our name from the bottom of the list of people to care for. We need to place ourselves at the top of the list, making ourselves number one. We cannot always be a reservoir of strength; this may be the time to let others care for us.

We can't expect this to be a good year if our grief is fresh. But, we should expect good things as well as bad. We have survived the impossible ordeal of the death and funeral. We have learned to take one day at a time, and not to set our expectations too high. If a good day comes, cherish it. Many times we have problems with the most important ingredient of recovery, and that is to learn to laugh and be happy again. We feel guilty for that moment of pleasure, and sometimes even feel it disrespectful. This is not a sign of forgetting, or a lack of love, it is a very healthy sign of hope. I would like to share the last stanza of one of Sascha Wagner's poems, "The New Year," with you.

But let us not forget  
that this may be the year  
when love and hope and courage  
find each other somewhere  
in the darkness  
to lift their voice and speak  
Let there be light.

-- Marie Hofmockel TCF Valley Forge, PA

## For the New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

1. Let's not to imagine the future — take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times.

You may all become closer for it.

4. Try to be realistic about yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how could there be perfect understanding?

5. When a good day comes, relish it; don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.

6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take multivitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.

6. Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell — a very healthy sign.

7. I know following these won't easy but what has? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

-- Mary Ehmann TCF, Valley Forge, PA

## Who Am I Now?

Why am I a thousand-piece puzzle when everyone else is already put together? Why is the rest of the world a size 10? Why do their kites fly so high? Why does the grass grow greener next door? Because I am a thousand-piece puzzle. Who am I now? Who am I, now that my loved one has died? Who am I, now that I have survived the holiday season and find myself deep into the gloom of winter? Why do I feel so scattered? Why does January seem so empty? Why do the seasons reflect my moods and why do I take on the cast of the weather outside? Just as the world is stiff and frozen outside my window, I feel dead and cold and scattered inside myself. Who am I now?

I tried to make it through the holiday season, though the how's of that feat are truly beyond my recollection. I can't even remember eating the holiday meals. In those glittering days I managed to smile and even to find a few moments of peace and joy; but here in the gloom of January, all I seem to see are the scattered pieces of my life ... cast before me on the card table, waiting for me to pick them up and make the picture. But what picture do all these pieces form? I used to think I knew. I used to know who I was and where I was



going and how I was going to get there. But now, now in the chill of January, I can't even remember where the puzzle begins and I end.

I think I'm still grieving, and that surprises me. It's been \_\_\_\_\_ ... (too long, regardless of the time frame you insert), and I should be getting better. Why do I still ache from a sunburn I got years ago when we were together on the beach? Why is there still sand in my shoes and why does your name still stick in my throat? Who am I now that the memories grow cold in January's chill? Am I still a mother if there is no child to tuck in at night? Am I still a dad if there is no one to lend the car keys to? Am I still a wife if there is no one to snuggle up to in my bed? Am I still a husband if there is no one waiting at home for me at the end of the day? Am I still a sister or a brother if there is no one to tease? Am I still a child if my parent has died? Am I still a human being, capable of loving and being loved, if the one person I loved more than anything has become frozen in time? Who am I now that my loved one has died?

The gloom has permeated even my toes, and my whole body seems icy. Why can't January be warm and gentle — especially after the struggle of the holidays? I need some sunshine, some warmth, some help in turning over the puzzle pieces and putting them back together. I need some spring. But spring is a way off and I must (somehow) get through these days. If you're feeling like I am, perhaps these few suggestions will help you find the pieces to your new puzzle.

1. Identify specific feelings. Do not generalize. Try to figure out exactly what's bothering you. Look for the tiny grains of sand that are still hiding in the bottom of your shoes. Acknowledge them. Be honest with those feelings, whatever they are. If you're angry, be angry. If you're sad, be sad. Be specific in your sadness!

2. Pick your worries. Focus on only one worry at a time. Give up being worried about being worried. Prioritize your worries. This helps combat feelings of being overwhelmed and you can decide which worries to keep and which to send to your mother, father, children, family, neighbor, enemy.

3. Keep a picture or two of the sand castle where you can enjoy it every day. You may decide not to make a shrine out of your memories, but don't lose the joy that you had in making that marvelous moat! Keep the sand you found in the shoe — you

just don't have to keep it there! That's what memories are for... a place to stash the important stuff that we need.

4. Become as informed and as knowledgeable as possible about this new world in which you live. We fear what we don't know, what we can't see, what we can't touch. Read, listen, learn all you can about grief. It's not where you planned on being this winter, but it is where you are. Look around.

5. Listen to everyone. You will receive enough advice about how to do it (grief) to sink a fleet of battleships. Be grateful ... at least someone is talking with you! But, FOLLOW YOUR OWN MUSIC.

6. Be kind to yourself. You survived the holiday season, and now it is the beginning of another season, another way of living. Learn to forgive yourself for living.

7. Set small goals first. Accomplish them. Then, set bigger goals. Try starting with getting the garbage out on the RIGHT day. Then, open the closet ... the drawers ... the heart. Try going out. The next time you might be able to get farther than the driveway. TAKE YOUR TIME. It's a long way

to the beach. You'll get there again ... someday.

8. Remember that living requires effort on your part. Make friends with the vacuum, the checkbook and the car. Become determined to learn to remove the box before microwaving the dinner.

9. Don't wait for happiness to find you again. Make it happen. Build another sand castle, maybe on a different beach this time. Don't lose the memories just because they hurt. Look at the pictures, listen to the song, remember the love ... you haven't lost that. How could you possibly lose the love you shared?

10. Keep turning the puzzle pieces over. But don't keep trying to put them back into the same picture. That picture is gone. There is a new picture to be made of those scattered pieces. Search for that scene. Search for the new you... search for the new person you are becoming.

11. Don't forget how to dream, how to laugh, how to dance. The music is different, but so is the season. The room may be empty, but the heart is not. The spirit may be filled with sand, but the shoes remember the steps. One day at a time is OK if you can manage it, but know that, some days, all you can manage is one minute at a time. But minutes add up to years, eventually, and each



grain of sand adds to the strength of the castle. Build the sand castle again ... if only in your memory. Just because it's January, doesn't mean the beach is closed forever. Build your new castle in the middle of the winter. Find the new occupant ... the new you.

12. Be gentle this winter season. Turn the pieces over slowly, experiencing each piece as a newly found treasure. We can fill our days with bitterness and anger that the picture will never be the same. Or, we can hope for the spring that will surely come if we let it. I know there are good things on the horizon. Winter can't last forever. If those things turn out to be less than we hoped, we will simply have to make whatever we get into something livable. Perhaps that is the secret to melting winter into spring: The challenge is to always carve out something beautiful from the icicle. There is joy in living ... if we allow time in the winter to reassemble the thousand-piece puzzle.

--by Darcie D. Sims

## The Secret

The secret of The Compassionate Friends is simple. There is no line between the helper and being helped. In the early months of people's membership in TCF, it seems that most of the time is spent absorbing ideas, crying and letting the grief flow, and learning the "ropes" of being a bereaved parent.

The next step is reaching out to others and helping them. It is not a big step, for listening to another person sort out his life helps us to sort out our lives, too. But it is an important step because it is the first point at which the movement is reversed. All our energy had been going inward. We had been feeling so empty inside that we kept withdrawing into ourselves. But at the point when we turn around is the point when we first listen to another, speak the words of comfort and hope, and share our pain instead of just feeling our pain. At that time the real healing has started.

--Dennis Klass, PhD. Advisor, TCF, St Louis, MO  
<https://www.compassionatefriend>

## Choices

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

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

Just willing you to put the gun away  
And face the challenge of another day.  
But He knew that your spirit was sadly broken  
Although the words had never been spoken.  
He also knew that you were seeking His face  
And the promise of life in a better place.  
So as a tear rolled from His eye,  
He whispered, "I'll just be standing by.  
I will not encourage nor interfere,  
Just feel my presence standing near.  
For with all the miracles I can do,  
I must leave this choice up to you.  
If you feel that you just cannot go on,  
I'll welcome you to your Heavenly home.  
Though I would prefer that you could stay  
To follow my life's plan for another day.  
But I cannot promise all joy and wealth,  
Or great happiness or robust health.  
If you do not have the strength to carry on,  
Maybe it is time to come to Heaven's home."  
The young man breathed a heavy sigh  
And said, "I can no longer try."

As the trigger was pulled he heard a soft voice  
"It's not my will son—but I accept your choice."  
--By Fran, Mom of Don Submitted by Carol  
Johnson in memory of Jared Sheets

## Confessions of a Long-term Griever

They say that childbirth is a pain you forget, but nobody ever says that about child death. Losing your child is like having a piece of broken glass jammed into your heart. Permanently. Over the years, the sharp edges are often worn smooth, like sea glass, and cut less sharply. You learn to breathe through the pain. You survive. But you certainly never forget. And the younger your child was when you lost them, the longer you live with the remembering.

It has been 22 years now since the terrible day when our fifteen-month-old son, Noah, was run over in my in-law's driveway. Noah was our fourth child and my husband and I were 35 years old, still getting our marriage, family, and careers on track, when our world was shattered. It has also been 21 years since the day, nine months after Noah's death, when our fifth child, Jonah, was stillborn. We buried two babies in the space of ten months. And two decades later, we are still recovering. In many ways, we will mourn their absence for the rest of our lives.

I'm pretty sure two decades qualifies me as a long-term griever. Certainly, there was a time



when I never thought I'd last this long. Whenever I attend a TCF conference and they ask for a show of hands, although I'm much younger than the oldest bereaved parents in attendance, I'm definitely among the longest. Indeed, those of us who lose our children to miscarriage or stillbirth, or as infants or toddlers, will likely live for many decades with our grief. We are the ones for whom that blessed "normal life" we once knew was shorter than the one we'll live long after we've crawled through the valley of the shadow of death. We are the bread and butter of the grief world, the stalwart attendees of support groups and conferences forever after our children's funerals are over. We will live to power wash the lichens growing on their gravestones, time and again, as the trees we planted in their memories reach ever closer to the sky.

Part of my responsibility as a long-term griever is to assure the newly bereaved that they, too, will survive and, yes, even thrive, again. Which is what we all need to hear when our worlds come crashing down around us. But there will always be work to do. As much as I hope some day I'll wake up to find all of my rough edges worn smooth, that day has yet to dawn. Jagged shards keep breaking off, exposing sharp, shiny edges. Some are new cracks, but some are the same old worn spots I've glued back together many times. And I must confess to three that I find myself having to repair, again and again. Forgiveness. Anger. Regret. All have persisted. And along with cupboards full of things considered fragile, like wedding china and crystal, it seems I'll have a relationship with these three nouns for far longer than I ever had my sons.

F is for Forgiveness and I feel like I've earned a PhD in this particular field of study. Noah was run over by my sixteen-year-old niece, which was an accident. But that didn't make it any easier for me to forgive her. Especially when she didn't take responsibility for her actions, nor were there any apparent consequences. Jonah's death resulted in a medical malpractice lawsuit in which we prevailed. But that didn't mean the doctor took responsibility, either. On the contrary, she fought us in court.

I teach my kids that there are three parts to an apology: "I'm sorry," "I did this," and "How can I try to make it up to you." The people responsible for the deaths of our sons said none of those things,

but we couldn't move forward without figuring out some way to forgive for our own sake.

I have learned that forgiveness isn't necessarily forever. It's fluid. Relationships change over time, things resurface, and sometimes the people we forgive are lost to us forever.

Sometimes self-preservation means excommunicating people we once loved. Sometimes the people we need to forgive are ourselves. We can talk all day about the "if only's" because we all loved our children more than ourselves and "if only" we'd known better, we would have done better. We've all learned the hard way that we're not in control. It's not our fault. We are only human. Extending that grace to others becomes our mandate, difficult as it may be, even if we simply stand on the shore and shout it out to the sea.

One of the many disappointing things we experienced in our hour of need was that the people we expected would be present for us didn't show up. And yet, they're still in our lives all these years later. People don't always behave the way we think they will.

Sometimes they behave much, much worse. Conversely, others show up whom we never expected, strangers even. And so we learn to be grateful for the kindness of strangers, to embrace the gifts we do receive. And for the things we don't, we try to relinquish our expectations and forgive.

Sometimes we are still angry. Yes. We are. Anger still exists, right in between what we've lost and what remains, and how the world goes on, regardless. We might be angry with people, like family and friends, or with institutions, like the medical system or insurance companies, or with the higher power seated on the throne of our particular house of worship. We might not be angry but our anger might be triggered by what people feel the need to say, even all these years later. We may still be angry about the specific circumstances of our child's death or the fact that people's attitudes haven't changed or that the people responsible are still driving around or practicing medicine. Or we might be angry about people's behavior towards us. We might feel they treat us like pariahs, like we're the problem and it's our fault that our child died. We'll always be "those people". And that's why they can't be our friends or let their child sleep over at our house.



But we have to remember that others are trying to find the fault line, to rationalize why this would never happen to them. Even though all of us, here, know that it could. Sometimes we have to talk ourselves off the ledge. It's okay to throw yourself a tiny pity party. But when the party ends, sweep up the mess and move on to a happier place.

Regret is really difficult to live with. It's insidious, seeping deep down inside of us and hiding in our cells, erupting as broken heart syndrome, digestive disorders, or hypertension. When Noah died I remember thinking if anything should cause cancer, it's this. And maybe it will, some day. In the meantime, live with our remorse we must. Regardless of the circumstances, we all failed, as parents, to protect our children. And we have to make our peace with that.

Regret may last forever but time creates the space to live with it and cushion the blow. So, breathe. Every time we inhale deeply, straight in to the anguish we're avoiding, and then exhale with gusto, we release a little of whatever we're holding onto. And we create a tiny space within which we can replace our sorrow with joy. Then we can begin, again, to smile, laugh, and enjoy our lives. We are all works in progress.

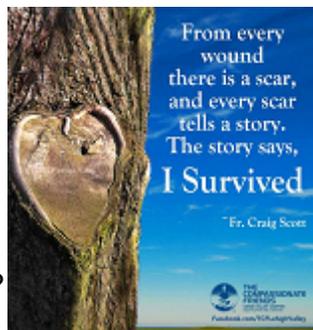
Forgive yourself. Release your anger. Manage your regrets. Over and over, again. Rub those broken edges between your bloody fingers until they're worn smooth. Every day is a new day. Keep gluing yourself back together. As Leonard Cohen said, "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

--Kelly Kittle

## Seasoned Greivers...

## It Seems Like Eternity...

Is it a moment or an eternity? There are days I sit in silence as something deep within me screams out for one more day to find you sitting by my side. There are days where I struggle for my next breath. There are times I find myself having conversations with the sky because I have so much to say but you are not here to listen. There are days where I am lost in the emptiness since you've been gone. There are days where memories overcome me and storms rage deep within as I struggle to understand why this life gives us love and then forces us to let it go. There are days where I look to heaven and wonder if you are there looking down on the life you left



behind. There are days where I wonder what do you hear and what do you see and what do you feel. There are days where the rain fills my face and days where I smile when I recall all the happiness you left in my heart. There are days I feel your presence and I know that you there. There are days I mourn your passing and days where I celebrate your life. There are days I see your reflection in the face in the mirror that is looking back at me and then there are days where I struggle to become half the image of the life you were.

So much life that has gone before me and so much life that has yet to come. Sometimes I curse this world and sometimes I bow my head and give thanks for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon me. I know I was blessed to have you in my life. I know that there is a greater purpose than the air we breathe and I know your life was more than the presence before me and that you had other canvases to paint. So I gently catch my breath as I breathe one more day without you. I try to live a life of purpose because you would expect nothing less.

Years have passed and you are always in my thoughts and in my heart. Life will cease but love lives on long after the candle has been extinguished. I breathe because you lived and nourished my soul with the seeds of hope that you planted in my life.

In loving memory of my son, Chris...  
--Lucille Valliere Providence, RI

## Newly Bereaved...

## Shared Thoughts on Facing the New Year

Most of us have a new perspective about the New Year, since our children or siblings have died. For some, it is a relief to close the door on the year of tragedy, and try to perceive the new year with small rays of hope. But, for others it was the last year we shared our life with our loved one, and can't bear to see that segment of our life close. Each of us view new seasons differently, but for most of us, it is a difficult time.

First of all, we must allow ourselves to grieve, both privately and with other family members. We can't expect other family members to grieve exactly as we do. Each needs space to salve their own needs, which may be different than ours. We find it helps to set time aside for our grief, perhaps, that is

why going to Compassionate Friends meetings is so healing for many, where we devote the evening to dealing with our feelings, and hoping for suggestions from others who have "made it through".

It is important to take care of ourselves physically, for bad health can alter our mood, and how we respond to the daily happenings in our life. We need to be considerate of other family members, for they are also struggling to get their lives back together. Both kindness and antagonism will snowball, and return back to us. So, it helps to put all we possibly can into being kind, and considerate to those around us.

This does not mean taking abuse, or ignoring our own needs. If a good hour, or day, comes our way, relish it; we deserved it. Sometimes this causes some guilt on our part. We must remember, the last thing our child or sibling would want, is for us to feel any guilt for a moment of peace. The love we have for our children; is usually matched in return with love for us. So, I'm sure they are glad when we can have relief from the terrible torment we are going through.

We must try to see some good in the new year, and a reason to go on. When newly bereaved, it is difficult to even want to look for good things. Everything looks so trivial compared to our loss, for we are so depressed, and hurting so bad. For those of us who are further along in our grief, will remember how difficult it is to believe anything about "getting better". But, we now know it does get tolerable, and you too, will make it through. You will not always be so miserable, but it takes a lot of work to get there. Healing comes through sharing, crying, feeling guilty and angry, or any aspect of grief it takes for us to move forward.

We do grow through our grief, by becoming more loving, understanding, and compassionate to those around us. Most of us have refined our priorities, and have no time for trivial complaints of others, for we now know there are greater things in life to be concerned with. We have learned the true meaning of desperation, and know it comes from broken people, not broken appliances. God Bless.

--Marie Hofmockel, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

## Friends and Family...

### Be Patient

My child has died.

A light in my life has been snuffed out!



A piece of me is gone forever!

It is said that the depth of love signifies the depth of grief.

This must be true for my love is deeper that I can say.

My grief is so intense that sometimes moment to moment is unbearable.

Be patient

Today I may smile and laugh;

But tomorrow I may be cranky.

I am hurting and I am confused.

Sometimes I am angry that I am in this nightmare.

Other times I feel totally and completely at peace

Because I sense my child is free and no longer suffers.

Be patient

I know I must move on with my life.

I must because others need me and I need them.

The road to recovery is difficult because it has peaks and valleys.

I know my child would want me to move on as well.

I am afraid. Will I forget my child's gentle voice?

Will I forget the tender touch?

No! I will take all the beautiful memories for I was blessed to have this child.

Be patient

I am told and read that grieving parents learn from their child's death and teach others.

What am I to learn? Who am I to teach?

If I am to teach, it should be positive.

Whatever can I learn and teach from this journey that is positive?

With your compassion and support I can make it.

Along the way I will try very hard to learn the positive messages to teach others.

More than anything I want my child,

My family and friends to be proud of me.

Be patient

I may cry; I may laugh; I may be angry; I may be at peace.

At any given time today and today's tomorrow

But tomorrow's tomorrows will bring happiness.

I am trying to seek happiness now,

but I am tired and fragile.

I see other bereaved parents who have gone before me.

They have made it down this long hard road.

I will as well.

Be patient...

~Susan TCF/Winnipeg, Canada

Dedicated to bereaved parents who have traveled this difficult road ahead of us. Written in loving memory of all our children who have left our lives, but not our hearts.

**Helpful Hint...****After Some Time - It Is Still Okay To Cry**

It seems to be acceptable to go for counseling or therapy during the early months of grief. But what happens after a certain amount of time has passed and you feel yourself being ambushed by the first raw feelings of grief? Most people think you should just: buck up and look around you and count the blessings you have left. These are worthy and meritorious attitudes, but sometimes they are simply unattainable, at least for a little while. We have lost MUCH when we lost our child. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves that it is okay to relapse, that there is nothing wrong with us when we feel alone and sad, that there is no shame in backtracking to the dark recesses of grief, for it is in those times when we give way to the hurt and pain that we acknowledge how MUCH our child continues to matter to us. We sometimes have to allow ourselves space to be sad and permission to cry over the simple sadness of no longer having our child with us. They MATTERED to us. They still do. WE CONTINUE to remember them, to love them, and to miss them. IT IS STILL OKAY TO CRY.

May each of you weep tears of release for the child that you so deeply continue to love and miss. With the deepest respect and compassion for my fellow grievers.

-- Faye McCoy" TCF Jackson MS In memory of Lane McCord (1/26-9/13)

**Book Review...**

***The Death Of A Child - Reflections for Grieving Parents*** by Elaine Stillwell. Bereaved parents know the excruciating pain of losing a child. Elaine, mother of two children killed in a car accident, offers this collection of life-giving lessons gathered over years of experience as a grief minister. Includes creating a new normal, bearing the soul, seasons and more.

**Welcome...****Support**

Come and lean on me a bit,  
I know just how you feel.  
I've felt your fear and loneliness,  
I know your pain is real.

For I have been where you are now,  
Walking that long, dark road.  
Then someone came to comfort me  
And share my heavy load.  
They helped me find new courage  
And hope when had none,  
They let me lean on them awhile,  
'Til my battle has been won.  
So come and lean on me a bit,  
'Til your ordeal is through.  
Then find someone who needs your help,  
And let them lean on you.

--Martha J. Morrison TCF Valparaiso, IN  
Editor's Note: This poem says it all. We are here for each other as long as you need us. We welcome you to join us and find the comfort and understanding that only another bereaved parent can understand.

**An Accident**

It was just an accident  
A senseless stupid accident  
But I need someone to blame  
Somewhere to direct my anger  
Somewhere where it won't  
Bounce right back to me  
Someone to take all of my attention  
Someone to hold accountable  
Someone else to think about  
So I don't think about you dying  
About you being dead,  
when all it was  
was a senseless stupid accident  
That took you from me.

-- Deb Kosmer In Memory of my son Shawn Jeremy Schmitz and all loved ones who die in stupid, senseless accidents

**Beautiful Dream**

Eyes open wide  
I awake from a beautiful dream  
Within seconds the painful reality of my life sets in  
I find myself wanting to scream  
Grief so strong, impossible to explain  
Living with a broken heart,  
Struggling with the pain  
Eyes closed tight  
I pray for that beautiful dream  
A short escape from the painful reality  
That makes me want to scream  
--Robert Willis TCF, Frederick, MD



## Our Children Remembered



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

Joseph Isaac Alvarez  
Born: 3/04 Died: 6/27  
Mother: Elizabeth Eenteno

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

Sean Michael Denhart  
Born: 3/88 Died: 12/20  
Mother: Janna Denhart

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 Trillegi &  
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

Shawn Eric Fillion  
Born: 12/82 Died: 8/21  
Mother: Lise Fillion

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



# Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

Shawn Mellen  
Born: 05/81 Died: 8/99  
Godmother: Rose Sarukian

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

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

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

Damion Mendoza  
Born: 7/76 Died: 6/92  
Parents: Carlene & Paul Mendoza

Bishop Michael Hernandez  
Born: 3/98 Died: 6/21  
Father: John Hernandez

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

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

Christopher Metsker  
Born: 11/94 Died: 3/18  
Parents: Justin & Tara Metsker

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

Margareta Sol Kubitz  
Born: 9/05 Died: 9/09  
Parents: Maria & Bill Kubitz

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

Blanca Isabel Meza  
Born: 9/21 Died: 9/21  
Mother: Angela Azurdin-Meza

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

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

Jesse Robert Martinez  
Born: 1/89 Died: 9/21  
Father: Harry Martinez

Mathew Scott Mikelson  
Born: 44/77 Died: 4/20  
Mother: Dorthy Mikelson

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

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

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

Steven Douglas Millar  
Born: 2/70 Died: 10/00  
Parents: David & Suzanne Millar

Taylor X. Hyland  
Born: 8/06 Died: 7/20  
Mother: Tessa Hyland

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

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

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

Steven Ishikawa  
Born: 9/75 Died: 4/17  
Mother: Miki Ishikawa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Danielle Ann Mosher  
Born: 8/78 Died: 6/97  
Parents: Paul & Rose Mary Mosher

Emily Matilda Kass  
Born: 6/95 Died: 3/06  
Mother: Susan Kass

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

Kirk Nicholas Mc Nulty  
Born: 7/84 Died: 2/14  
Mother: Elaine Mc Nulty

Benjamin A. Moutes  
Born: 3/07 Died: 5/10  
Parents: Kevin & Claudia Moutes

Douglas Drennen Kay  
Born: 3/72 Died: 9/06  
Parents: Diane & Steve Kay

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

Jeremy Stewert Mead  
Born: 10/61 Died: 11/14  
Mother: Carol Mead

Danielle Murillo  
Born: 5/96 Died: 4/14  
Parents: Cheryl Outlaw & Manuel Murillo

Kathryn Anne Kelly  
Born: 12/72 Died: 1/91  
Parents: Dick & Timmy Kelly

Joshua Lozon  
Born: 6/91 Died: 6/21  
Mother: Tracey Gentile

Robert Andrew Mead  
Born: 5/65 Died: 4/11  
Mother: Carol Mead

Christopher Murphy  
Born: 11/92 Died: 4/18  
Mother: Deborah Murphy

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

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

Nicole Marie Megaloudis  
Born: 10/84 Died: 2/04  
Mother: Gail Megaloudis-Rongen

Christopher Myers  
Born: 10/86 Died: 5/06  
Parents: Janet & Larry Myers



## Our Children Remembered



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

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 Shortridge

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

Quintana Dantas De Oliveria  
Daniel Paul Rains  
Born: 4/72 Died: 3/91  
Mother: Janet Ferjo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Our Children Remembered

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* 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.

## 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.)

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.

## For Siblings...

### Happy Heavenly Birthday Lil' Bro

You'd have been 48 years old today; if a

distracted driver had not killed you on that fateful October day in 2017. I spent this past weekend celebrating your birthday by trying to change that forever sadness and angst about your ill-fated end. I worked on a more powerful motivational endeavor in your honor instead.

I was partially successful as I bagged up 40 trash bags full of litter and roadside debris on Hwy. 7 near where you lost your life. Thanks to MN DOT's amazing Adopt-A-Highway program I enlisted in.

I'm sure you watched with delight from the skies above during some of the mayhem...like when I screamed after a Garter snake snuck up on me, not once, but lucky-me, twice! I also got quite excited when the Common snapping turtle tried to traverse the road over to me...there was a lot of arms waving to oncoming traffic and yelling to save its life.

The impromptu dancing was due to the millions (I swear) of displaced army of ants protesting my removal of their makeshift colonies on debris I bagged up. I called it "the shaking of ants" jig! This was a common encounter. A Tiger Swallowtail butterfly hovered around following me for awhile, and I swear it was sent by you!

The frogs and toads were quite amusing as well, compared to the pesky ticks. Those little buggers, well, they ended the party for us in the emergency room when I couldn't get them outta my boyfriend's rump. The roadways are all clean now again with heavenly serenity. Funny how nature and a day of hard work remind us of the beauty in our intricate circle of life.

I miss you and love you always!

--Danielle Wishard-Tudor TCF Minneapolis MN

## Sibling's Grief Fuels Change

On October 29, 2017, my life changed forever... when two state troopers came to my father's house to notify him his son, at the age of 44, had been killed by a distracted driver. His son who was an avid weight lifter, ate a strict healthy diet and never sped or forgot to put sun screen on. He should have lived to be 100 due to his dedicated positive lifestyle choices. Jean Claude, my brother, instead died because of someone's else's erroneous choice while driving.

A pain and sorrow like I've never known before enveloped my soul that day, like no other grief I had ever experienced. I have had several

devastating deaths in my family— grandparents from cancer, an aunt from cardiac arrest, a friend's child from childhood cancer...and the most painful, my mother due to Ovarian cancer ten years ago. I have experienced this pain of loss and living with grief.

My brother's death though; was a loss like I've never felt before. It came blinding and forceful, out of nowhere. Knowing something else, someone else's selfish choice to drive negligently and distracted was the cause of my siblings random and tragic death caused me a slew of emotions I still grapple to deal with today... resentment, anger, survivor's guilt (why him at the wrong place and wrong time), sadness, confusion and deeply embedded sorrow have remained.

One day, four months after my brother's car crash, I read by chance in the newspaper about a group of distracted driving victim's advocates who were utilizing their grief and pain to push for change in our Minnesota laws. Their purpose was to create laws to keep drivers and pedestrians safer on our Minnesota roads. This group has become my life link, the very vital component to how I deal with my deep convoluted grief. One and one-half years after joining this group, one of our goals to make MN a Hands Free cell phone (while driving) state...came miraculously true! (Some members in my group had been fighting for this law for almost ten years since they lost loved ones.) It finally came true on April 12th, 2019. I stood with my other families victims, and we watched Governor Walz sign the MN Hands Free bill. We became the 17th state in the USA to join the crusade all over the world in taking cell phones out of the hands of drivers because they just keep killing people and contribute to distracted driving.

Our group made a difference in our state by fueling our grief into something more impactful that will save future lives. Next year, I will be back to testify again in the MN congress, to make tireless phone calls, and send a litmus of emails and letters to our legislators, all while sharing my brother's tragic death and imploring them to push for stiffer penalties for distracted drivers who cause great bodily harm and fatalities.

I will do it because it feeds my soul and releases my relentless sorrow. This is how I deal with my unsurmountable grief that has stricken me since October 29, 2017. We all deal with grief and loss in different ways...it is a personal journey

and this is my journey through my grief for the sudden loss of my brother.

--Danielle Wishard-Tudor TCF Sibling Group, Minneapolis, MN

## Open Letter to Our Siblings

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably know - since you knew 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. That we'd share our joys and setbacks, and adore each other's children.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could imagined I'd survive. 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 so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

--Mary Lamourex TCF Marin County, CA

## For Grandparents...



## Photo Album

Arthur was almost 21 years old when he died suddenly. My stepdaughter Jess has had many significant life events that her brother Arthur would have celebrated with her; her wedding, the births of their first born son and their second child, a baby girl, and her master's hooding ceremony in

education.

Jess has brought her only sibling forward with her. Jess hosts a BBQ every Memorial Day to keep herself busy during the holiday where we lost Art. She placed a candle on a chair in the front row at her wedding. During the ceremony she had my brother read a love story written by her brother Art. He wrote it when he was 10 years old about his first love, a 4th grader named Molly.

Arthur's birthday is in July. Eight years after losing Art, my anxiety at another approaching birthday without him was tamped down when Jess asked me to create a photo album. She redirected my restless energy. Jess' three-year-old son was asking questions about Art, the uncle he had never met. Jess realized she needed visual aids to explain who her brother is.

I loved creating that album of my son for my grandson. I sorted through hundreds of family photos. I visualized sitting with my grandson with that photo album telling him all about his Uncle Art.

The album is small book sized. In it are 15 pictures that were coincidentally photographed at the eye level of a three-year-old. My grandson and I talk about Arthur. They are short, easy question and answer exchanges before the young boy scoots off to other things in his busy life. The whole experience leaves Grandma with the Raspberries (I grow raspberries) a little breathless and yet beaming.

Photos are very powerful in my family. We hold on to them. We bundle them into albums of significant events. Those photo albums freeze-frame sweet memories from long ago normal days before the great sadness arrived. There is the album from Arthur's funeral that my sister presented me. She took exquisite photos. New normal life has moments worth celebrating. I pull family, friends and compassionate friends into the picture frame. I record the astonishing happiness in this different, good and sometimes sad life. These new photos are the makings of another album.

--Monica Colberg, Art's Mom, TCF Minneapolis

"You never know how strong you are,  
until being strong  
is the ONLY choice you have."

## From Our Members...

### "As I Sit Safe In Heaven And Watch You Everyday"



As I sit safe in heaven and watch you everyday,  
I try to let you know with signs I never went away.  
I hear you when you're laughing, and watch you  
as you sleep.  
I even place my arms around you to calm you as  
you weep.

I see you wish the days away, begging to have  
me home.  
So I try to send you signs so you know you are  
not alone.

Don't feel guilty that you have life that was denied  
to me.  
Heaven is truly beautiful, just you wait and see.

So live your life, laugh again, enjoy yourself, be  
free.  
Then I know with every breath you take  
You'll be taking one for me.

--Hazel Birdsall Submitted by Amy Johnson in  
memory of her brother, Eric

Do you have a favorite article, 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.

**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.

**Flash Zoom Meetings ...** are called on short notice, and are of shorter duration. The intent is to check in on each other and share, nothing more. The goal is to meet weekly but if it occurs every other week that's ok. If you are interested in joining, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739.



**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](mailto:Lynntcf@aol.com)

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month preceding your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: Jan. 1st for Feb. birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 963-4646 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 Kristy at (310) 938-2409. You can mail her a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) and she 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 Lori 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. 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](mailto:Lynntcf@aol.com) if you want to do it electronically. Thank-you for your understanding and help. TCF South Bay/LA

**Phone Friends ...** Sometimes you want or need to talk about the life and death of your child with someone that understands and can share your pain. The following



friends are on the telephone committee, and are available to talk when ever you need someone who understands.

Lori Galloway (chapter co-leader).....(760) 521-0096  
 Connie Liccidone (chapter co-leader).(310) 292-5381  
 Bonnie Mantoya (chapter co-leader)..(310) 530-8489  
 Linda Zelik.....(310) 370-1645  
 Mary Sankus.....(310) 648-4878  
 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed.

Orange Coast/Irvine: (949) 552-2800 1st Wed.

Orange Co./Anaheim: (562) 943-2269

Pomona/San Gabriel: (626) 919-7206

Redlands: (800) 717-0373 3rd Tues.

Riverside-Inland Empire: (909) 683-4160

San Fernando Valley: (818) 788-9701 2nd Mon.

South Los Angeles: (323) 546-9755 last Tue

Ventura Co. TCF: (805)981-1573 1&3 Thurs.

Verdugo Hills: (818) 957-0254 4th Thurs.



### Local Support Groups...

**Family & Friends of Murder Victims:** Rose Madsen, (909) 798-4803 Newsletter and support group, e-mail Roseydoll@aol.com

**Alive Alone:** For parents who have lost their only child, or all their children. 1112 Champaign Dr., Van Wert, OH 45891 Newsletter available. www.Alivealone.org

**Survivors of Suicide:** Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Rick Mogil (310) 895-2326 or 24 hrs: (310) 391-1253

**Our House/Bereavement House:** Support groups in LA & So. Bay (310) 475-0299 Also Spanish Support Group, Loren Delgado 310-231-3196.

**Pathways Hospice:** Bereavement support and sibling group. Bill Hoy (562) 531-3031

**New Hope Grief Support Community:** Grief support and education groups for adults and children. Long Beach, CA 90808, (562) 429-0075

**Providence Trinity Care Hospice and the Gathering Place:** Various bereavement support groups including support for loss of a child, support group for children 5-8, 9-12, and teens. (310) 546-6407

### Torrance Memorial Bereavement Services:

(310) 325-9110 Weekly grief support.

**The Lazarus Circle:** Monthly grief support. Meets third Thurs of each month, 6-7;15 at First Lutheran Church, 2900 W. Carson St. Torrance

**Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss:** Contact:

Megan Heddlesten (800) 821-6819

**Walk with Sally:** Cancer loss bereavement & art therapy for children- Monica Fyfe (310) 378-5843

**Camp Comfort Zone:** Year round Bereavement Camp for Children [www.comfortzonecamp.org](http://www.comfortzonecamp.org) (310) 483-8313. 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.

### 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.

### CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS: Lori Galloway, Connie Liccidone & Bonnie Mantoya

CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Kristy Konopasek

WEBSITE: Leo Liccaridone

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Linda & Joe Zelik	Lori Galloway
Marilyn Nemeth	Crystal Henning
Cheryl & Bill Matasso	Lynn Vines
Nancy Lerner	Kristy Mueller
Connie & Leo Liccaridone	Kitty Edler
Sandra & Eddie Myricks	Susan Kass
Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla	



Anyone from our chapter who wants to help is invited to become a Steering Committee Member. We get together quarterly to discuss chapter business, upcoming events, suggestions, and ways to improve our chapter. Our next steering committee meeting will take place on Saturday, Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> from 3-5 PM. Leo & Connie Liccaridone will be hosting the meeting at their house. Please call for directions and to let us know who is coming.

**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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support)

**MONDAY--**

6:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation  
7 AM 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. When making a donation, please make checks payable to The South Bay/L.A. chapter.

Mail to: The South Bay/LA chapter of Compassionate Friends  
P.O. Box 11171  
Torrance CA 90510

In loving memory of Dominique Oliver, May 1985 - March 2002 and Brandon Armstrong, July 1995 - July 1995. Love, Mom

In loving memory of Andrew Sakura, March 1990 - March 2008. From Bruce and Karen Sakura

In loving memory of Tamara Boyd, Dec. 1965 - Dec. 2000. From Mom, Gloria Jones

In loving memory of Jonathan Paul Schubert, July 1965 - Dec. 2006. I miss you every day, my son, a warrior for Justice for the most needy. Mom

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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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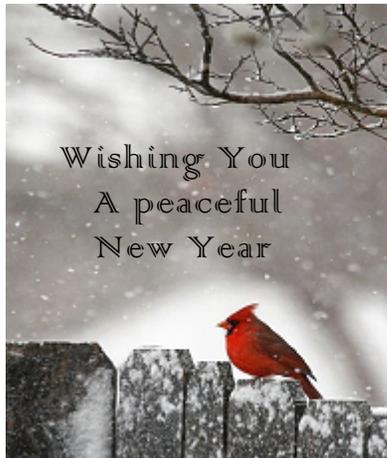
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

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

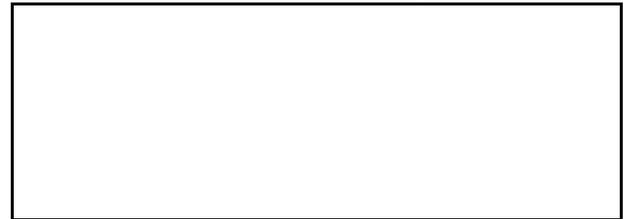
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**January 2022**

**Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly**



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO**

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

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,  
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,  
just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.  
We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief  
so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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