



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Sept. 2022 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: Lynntcf@aol.com

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be **Sept. 1st**, 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, Sept. 1st meeting will start with "Taking Time While Grieving".

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

The TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237th 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.

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

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla (310) 530-8489
j.mantyla@att.net
Leo & Connie Licciardone (310) 292-5381
ConnieStar58@gmail.com

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

The **Thursday, Sept. 1st** meeting will start with "Taking Time While Grieving". In the beginning the intensity of grief is so exhausting and painful that we often don't appreciate how much it forces us to slow down. We can't remember anything, we walk around in a stupor most of the time. We focus on our loss and the pain and often not what we can do to help ourselves. The bare minimum is all we can be expected to produce at this time. The manic feeling of being able to outrun the pain simply doesn't work. Facing the future without your child is terrifying. Worrying about the rest of your family is normal, but this is one time in your life where you need to reach out and accept the help of others as you rebuild your life. The idea of time takes on a new meaning for the bereaved. Focus on the time you had with your child and begin to realize there is no going back to life as the way we knew it. Remember, the period of time before one adjusts to their new normal varies with each of us. Join us at the next meeting as we share ways that help us adjust during this difficult time.

Take Your Time

The one phrase we hear more than any other is "It will take time for you to get over your child's death." We know that this is spoken with care and love. But little do we know at the beginning of our grief just what time means; the first time, the day time, the night time, the last time, all of these times. The one thing we can say is "take it." Take all the time you need. Grief is hard work, and we need to take the time for all of the aspects we talk so much about, and really work through it.

Take the time to feel; it is hard but worth it. We can't just push those feelings aside because they are part of who we are, how we have managed, and the life we have had. All of our life experiences combine to affect our feelings.

Take the time to talk. Talk to anyone who seems to care about you. Ask your friends and family if they will take the time to listen. If you need a telephone listener, call the National Office or one of the local chapter listeners. We have time to listen.

Take the time to read. When you read the experiences of others, you will realize that you are not alone. Maybe a special book will help you understand what is happening to you during this time we call bereavement; take the time to read

and re-read the paragraphs or chapters that help.

Take the time to take care of yourself physically. If you like to walk, jog or run, go out and use that time to help you feel better. Get enough rest, take the time to sleep late some days, or go to bed earlier if you need to. Sleeping may be an escape, but if it helps you, take the time for a few extra hours.

Take care of yourself by eating better. Try to understand that food gives you some energy and that food helps to satisfy unmet needs. Food is always better for you than drugs or alcohol, and a small weight gain or loss is not unusual. Take the time to understand what is happening to your body.

Take the time to be angry or guilty without letting these feelings ruin your life. You may think that your life is ruined anyhow and who cares, but anger and guilt turned inward can destroy your self-esteem faster than anything. Take time to sort through those feelings and acknowledge them, then let them go.

Know that when someone says, "It will take time," we can nod and try to accept that as part of our getting through these days, months and years.

Remember that someday you will take the time to help someone else, and that time will be the most satisfying time of all.

~Therese Goodrich, prior Executive Director, The Compassionate Friends National Office



Anniversaries

Seems that all of my civilian life, anniversaries were happy milestones. Matter of fact, there were two major celebrations ...a dinner and/or a present. Those were such simple times.

Now I'm in a very different place. Anniversaries are so momentous and so dreaded. They conjure up such a collection of mixed emotions. I spend so much energy bracing myself for each joyless anniversary. And then I relive everything. For days before, I remember. He was alive, I think. On the day before I relive each hour. On the anniversary date, every painful minute becomes a flashback of details. The day after, it continues and for practically a whole week I am brought to tears as wave after wave of despair overcomes me. The flood eventually subsides. Floods always do.

I write this having just returned from my Compassionate Friends meeting. I realized as we

went around the circle, that I had been absent for several meetings and that there were many newly bereaved parents attending. I thought back to my first few months and my bewilderment as parents declared the loss of their child...one year ago, two years ago, three years ago... so much agony...so many painful anniversaries. And I remember thinking back then at my own beginning and I listened to those who had endured three months, one year, two years, five years..."how did they do it?" They're different from me...they survived to be over it!" What a confused jumble of thoughts and emotions. If only I could fast forward all these newly bereaved parents to where I have come today. It's more manageable now. I want to whisk them into the future. And then I think maybe that's what Peter thinks now.

This summer marked four years since I have spoken to my beloved son Peter. It is ever a wonder to me that I go on. For my husband and me, the summer evokes one date after another... a regular endurance test of emotion. Peter's birthday is July 14th. Our wedding anniversary is August 2nd., Peter's "anniversary" a scant five days later...August 7th. As you can imagine, we go through a lot of candles in a very short period of time.

But time does indeed tell a lot. Though I marvel that I endure...I do. Though my grief hasn't abated as I originally thought it would, I have become expert at managing the pain. This particular summer has brought home an inescapable fact of life. Time flies. Everywhere I go, this summer more than ever, I've listened to people remark on how fast the summer has gone. I wonder. Has it?. Has this summer gone faster than most? Four years ago I thought time stood still. I would sit on the edge of my bed for what seemed like a few minutes, transported by despair. Then I would look up and discover the afternoon would be almost gone. Where had the time gone?

Now, four years later I find there is hardly any time at all. My days are filled with as much activity as I can cram into 24 hours. I realize that no one gets out of here alive, there is so much to do and so little time...and I am comforted to know that. However far away or ahead of me Peter is, I am rapidly gaining on him.

So I go on. Racing along at 78rpm. Slowing down only briefly for a few weeks in the summer when the pain of another clump of anniversaries clogs my path, chokes my breathing and time

seems to stand painfully still for one more cosmic moment.

~ Marie Levine, 1997

Epilogue: re-reading this, now as I am about to commemorate the 28th anniversary (!) of Peter's passing brings on a whole new set of thoughts. The pain has most definitely abated. The commemorative days do still bring on a particular sadness for all that might have been. The longing and the missing is as intense as ever. But as I close in on old age, I relish the days more and find some inexplicable comfort in knowing I grow closer and closer to reuniting with my guys. I'm once again delighted by a beautiful sunny day, puttering in the garden, sharing a laugh with friends, being an observer more than a participant—I marvel at how I have restored my life. And I pray I can assure my Compassionate Friends that they too will again one day, find joy in their lives.

-- Marie Levine, 2021

The Storm of Grief

It comes like a huge thunderbolt— shocking and deafening you to all else around you.

Suddenly the world that had been so bright is

black and desolate. There seems to be no hope. The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come and you are torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passer-by's can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it- and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones—the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to slow showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable. Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow—a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever



end, but I believe, as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer; we will see more rainbows; and the flowers will bloom more and more. Perhaps it is even good to have a shower now and then—to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

-- Mary Jo Pierce, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Embracing The Invisible Kinship Of The Compassionate Friends *

Every morning following the death of my son I awoke and thought, “my child is dead.” The enormity of that realization each morning was crushing, the momentary shock was like a knife in my heart. I would drag myself out of bed and shed silent tears. My life was forever changed: my only child’s life had ended. The unfairness would rock me into hyper-consciousness as I began my day. Living was a major effort. Initially I could only cling to my sanity. After the shock passed, the depression and anger had me in a vise grip. My moods would swing every morning, afternoon and night. I would retreat into myself, irrationally lash out at others and then retreat back into myself. My mind would wander, I made silly mistakes in my work, I couldn’t recall names of people who had been in my life for years and my word retrieval was at the bottom.

After two and half months of this grim routine, I attended my first Compassionate Friends meeting. A friend drove me and guided me along into the meeting. I was in a haze. The only contribution I could make was to tearfully say my son’s name. But I continued to attend. As the newly bereaved, I was given the gift of wisdom from those who had been on this journey much longer than I had been. After several meetings I began contributing little bits. I still wept each time I talked, but I was talking. This was a major breakthrough for me.

Despite the negativity that enveloped me as I let go of my life before the death of my son, I continued to attend The Compassionate Friends meetings. I missed my son’s ability to soften the vitriolic attitude of others who were in his life. Now I was on the firing line. I began sharing my experiences, the horrors of being sued for the wrongful death of my own child and the ache I felt for a once normal relationship with my son’s children. Life was forever altered...for my

grandchildren and for me. The “wise ones” guided me along this path of grief. I learned to live in the moment. I learned to place no expectations on others. I learned that once burned is twice warned in human relationships. I learned that I could survive if I chose to do so. I also learned that to extend my compassion to others was to participate in my healing.



Eventually I wrote an article for our Compassionate Friends newsletter and gave it to the editor. Then I wrote another, and another, and another. Then I began printing the newsletter. Each step, each little contribution brought me closer to sanity. I was participating in the effort

to help others in their journey of grief, and in doing this I was helping myself on the journey. I was working with those who had made this journey and survived. Perhaps I, too, would survive.

Then I was asked to be the editor of the newsletter. At first I was fearful of this responsibility, but then I realized that I could, in some small way, help others whose children had died. And in offering that help, I could further my personal healing.

It’s been 2 years, 8 months and 10 days since my son, Todd, was killed in a car accident. My husband, who was driving, has worked very hard to retain his sanity. I have learned to help him in that struggle. I have learned to accept that my relationship with my granddaughters was forever relegated to pure insignificance after my son died. I have learned that money is the alpha and the omega for some people and the pain they inflict to get money is justified in their minds. I have learned to accept life as it comes. I am the director of my life and no others.

How am I traversing that road from pure shock to accepting new normalcy? How do I keep my child with me and let go of the horrifying, life altering changes associated with his death? How do I deal with the stupefying actions of others that followed my son’s death? The answer is as simple and as complex as the grief and compassion that lives within each parent whose child has died. Through the efforts of the “wise ones”, I found comfort and hope. The comfort offered by those who have lost a child is unlike any other we will experience. Their loss is the same as ours: the

unspeakable, the worst nightmare, the darkest feature of every parent has now transformed into their reality. Their compassion is real. Their suggestions are gentle. Their wisdom comes over time and is the culmination of experiences which bring the realization that each of us progresses at a different rate, grieves in a different way, and deals with life from a different perspective. Those who have been here and choose to return, to relive the pain of their child's death in order to help others are the nucleus of our organization. And so, as each day goes by, I learn from others that I must learn for myself. My truth is unique. Each truth is unique. Each parent is unique. Each child is uniquely remembered by bereaved parents and every member of our Compassionate Friends group.

I realized this week that my first thought of the day doesn't overwhelm me like it once did. My child lives in my heart. I have learned to live that reality. It is my hope to help other parents find this tiny vestige of peace.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX

Labor Day

The unofficial end of summer. The time by which we need to have new school clothes and supplies. The time to begin meeting new teachers and new friends.

The time to, what? Watch with tear-filled eyes as the bus picks up other children for school, but no longer stops by our house. To see other parents standing with their eager little ones, waiting for that first school bus ride to the "big" school. To see tears of joy in the eyes of other parents through the tears of pain in our own.

Watch with anxious anticipation as the kids begin middle school. New experiences, new expectations, new fears. Time to wonder if we told them enough to keep them safe from peer pressure. Time to wonder if we are giving them too much freedom or not enough. Time to learn that saying "I love you" must be done in private. Time to realize that with us, "I love you" will always be said in silence.

Time to watch our teenagers experience high school and its freedoms and decisions. Time to hand over the sports coaching to someone we don't know. Time to wonder if our child is taking

too many academic hours. Time to wonder what temptations await our children. Time to wonder about that car they bought. Time to realize all these things are happening to some other parent.

Time to buy single bed linens for the college dorm. Time to buy a new computer to take to school and keep the old one for us. Time to get an extra credit card for the student, "just in case." Time to give last minute instructions about calling home every Sunday night. Time to listen to other parents talk about these experiences.

No, for us, Labor Day is just that - a day to labor through the memories left behind by the loss of our child, a day that truly signifies the end of the summer of our life.

--Sondra Wright, TCF, Atlanta

My Beautiful Daughter, Madeline May

On November 17, 2018 my precious daughter Madeline tragically passed away of domestic abuse in her home in Brookfield, Wisconsin. She was just 10 days away from getting away from the abuser and starting over and moving home with us here in Edina, MN. He had previously attempted strangulation just 7 weeks prior, and had a restraining order and an ankle GPS monitoring cuff put on. She had a new job in Stillwater and was looking forward to being safe here and starting a new life in Minnesota with myself, her step-father Mark, her sister Marlena and 2 brothers Maxwell and Manning. Her estranged husband illegally removed his monitoring cuff that evening and tragically took her life.

The trial was scheduled for April 2020. However, because of Covid the new date was September 2020 in Waukesha Wisconsin county courthouse. It was a very difficult and exhausting long 10 days. Finally, on October 16, 2020 he was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole on all nine counts against him. We now had justice for my daughter Madeline's tragic death and murder.

Justice does not get her back, nor alleviate this horrendous experience in my life. No words or verdict can describe the hurt she had endured, and the hurt now in me. She is forever a part of me that is gone forever. I miss her every second of the day, with every breath I take, with every beat of my heart. She continues in making me so very proud in being her Mother. She is my first child, my first experience of unconditional love!



My love for her is never ending!
 Help in sharing awareness of domestic abuse!
 --Lisa Orfield TCF Mpls, MN

Helping Someone Survive

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that a person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope, can temper considerably the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by a pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words: "Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."
 --Victor Passchin

How Men Hurt and Grieve over Miscarriage, Too

The first time Justin Salinger and his wife experienced a miscarriage was one of the worst days of their lives together.

The Santa Rosa, California, couple had spent months imagining what and who their baby would become. In an instant, those hopes and dreams were gone. They wept. They cursed fate. They wondered again and again: Why us? Why our child?

When a couple experiences pregnancy loss, the man can suffer from grief, too, but men have only started talking about it recently.

Friends and family members showed up to support them in their time of need. They cooked meals. They brought flowers. It was an outpouring of empathy like nothing either of them had ever seen. Yet about halfway through the grieving process, Salinger noticed something peculiar: While everyone wondered how his wife was doing,

very few loved ones asked about him.

In that moment of sorrow, Salinger, 36, felt totally alone. "When you have a miscarriage, there's this idea that it's not as real for the man because we're not growing the baby inside of us," said Salinger, who, along with his wife, has lost six pregnancies. "We're conditioned not to express emotion and to give our wives space to feel grief and pain. The truth is that we're hurting, too."

It turns out Salinger isn't the only man to experience this sort of isolation after a miscarriage; anecdotally, many men catch the same vibe.

This phenomenon is the subject of a new book that hit bookshelves July 6. The book, titled, "Men and Miscarriage: A Dad's Guide to Grief, Relationships, and Healing After Loss," was written by married partners who have become accidental experts in childbirth tragedy. Over the course of their 15-year marriage, authors Aaron and MJ Gouveia have weathered four miscarriages and a medically necessary abortion. Both husband and wife experienced monumental losses. Until recently, Aaron's remained unaddressed.

Aaron Gouveia states "I say this unequivocally: The person carrying the pregnancy has a tougher time with miscarriage because it's happening to their bodies," Aaron Gouveia said. "That doesn't mean there's not room to talk about men and non-carrying partners in this scenario. We need to move out of the shadows."

Excerpt from Journeys Bereavement Program
 --Parent Support Of Puget Sound newsletter

Seasoned Grievers...

Birthday Card

Some time ago I wandered into a greeting card store. My son's birthday was next month. I scanned the sections, Mother, Father, Son, Daughter, etc., and found a card. The graphics were sweet... tall kid surrounded by friends and family, everybody smiling. The card text was missing periods. In his youth my son wrote long sentences with no periods. This card was perfect for him! It read: "There once was a son who was loved by everyone He was gifted and smart With such a big heart. He's the best son you could find" (open the card) "And I'm so glad he's mine! Happy Birthday." The card came home with me.



I read it again and again. It was an impulse buy. Was this off balance? Am I OK? It cost \$3.29 plus tax. What do I do with it now? I pushed that hesitation away, opened the card and wrote "Love you, Art," and signed it "Mom." I added the date and wrote "See you sometime... One day." I tucked it into a dining room drawer full of family cards given and received over many years. Three years later I found that card as I was looking for another card. This time I smiled and pinned the card to my desk lamp where I see it every day. I fully accept purchasing a birthday card for my tall, friendly 20-year old son who died 15 years ago.

Readers not familiar with child loss will find this story "absurd." Webster's Dictionary defines it as extremely poor reasoning, ridiculous, nonsense. Compassionate Friends find nothing wrong with a bereaved mom purchasing a card for a son or daughter who died years ago. Sometimes Compassionate Friends and everyone else live on opposite planets. I can live with that. Parents love their children. Siblings love their siblings. We will always remember them and honor them, especially on their birthdays.

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

Newly Bereaved...

"Should Haves" And Regrets

"There were things we could have done after David's death, like have a special service of celebration. But we didn't. I've never regretted that decision, nor any of the others. Thankfully, we made a commitment to each other to live with our decisions and not regret what we should or could have done." [Jim Nelson, in loving memory of his son, David]

Sometimes we may dwell on the decisions we made around the time of our loved one's death. We think about what we could have or should have done, playing out each new scenario in our minds. The endless possibilities represent mysteries we can never solve.

Yet regardless of whether our decisions were ultimately the best choices or not, spending hours berating ourselves about the past is not helpful. Our regrets prevent us from living in the present, and may prolong our grieving and intensify the sadness of our loss. We need to forgive ourselves

for any decisions or actions we regret, and let go of them.

In the beginning we need to say to ourself "I will be kind and forgiving to myself. The choices I made were the best possible decisions I could make at the time."

--Lifted from Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

For Friends and Family...

... This Is What It Is Like. ...

This is what it feels like to live without your child: "I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me.

Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily and I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me. Say nothing. Do not offer a cure. Or a pill, or a word, or a potion. Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me.

Please be gentle with me. And I will try to be gentle with me too.

I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path.

Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am even able to smile again, the pain is just beneath the surface.

There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my



way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged, so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more— hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child— or an elderly person struggling with the door— abused animals crying out in pain.

There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers— and fathers— and grandparents— and siblings and partners won't wake up one day with everything "okay" and life back to normal. I have a new normal now. (As time passes, I may discover gifts, and treasures, and insights but anything gained was at too high of a cost when compared to what was lost.

Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder.

So don't forget that I have a child whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything as C.S. Lewis said. Don't forget to say, "How are you really feeling...?" Don't forget that even if I do have living children, my heart still aches for the one who is not here— for I am never quite complete without my child.

My child may have died but my love — and my motherhood— never will."

-- Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

Helpful Hint...



"People will tell you to 'move on.' Instead, think of your life as 'moving forward', forward WITH your loved one beside you in spirit and in your heart. It's unthinkable to move on without them. They are forever with you, closer than you know."
--Ashley Davis Bush



Welcome...

With The Compassionate Friends, individuals and families can find support and care after heartbreaking losses. When TCF members have the opportunity to share their experiences, they learn ways to process their painful grief, identify healthier coping techniques, and meet others who are further along to hear how they have managed and are learning to live meaningful lives.

Whether participants attend our in-person chapter meetings, virtual support programs, national conferences, and events, or find something supportive in our educational materials and newsletters, a uniquely caring community is there for them.
--Central Iowa Chapter TCF

Book in Review...



The Gift of a Memory by Minneapolis author Marianne Richmond. The prose is subtle and on point for newly bereft family members. The book reminded me of what we do at TCF meetings. We offer each other the gifts of memories with our loved ones. We recall the sad facts and in time with healing, we begin to share the silly fun that we experienced with that child or sibling. Memories shared become more precious. They are not what's left of someone in our past. They become what we carry forward in our lives.

--Monica Colberg, Art's Mom and Chapter Leader
TCF Minneapolis, MN

Think of your child, then, not as dead,
but as living; not as a flower that has withered,
but as one that is transplanted,
and touched by a divine hand,
is blooming in richer colors and
sweeter shades than those of earth.

--Richard Hooker

Ask My Mum How Is She

My Mum, she tells a lot of lies.
 She never did before.
 From now on until the day she dies,
 she'll tell a whole lot more.
 She used to tell the truth a lot,
 but now it does not matter.
 I died and went to heaven,
 her life is all a shatter.
 Ask my Mum how is she,
 and 'cause she can't explain,
 She will tell a little lie,
 'cause she can't describe the pain.
 Ask my Mum how is she,
 she'll say "Yes, I'm fine!
 She wants to beg, "please help me,
 I can't find that boy of mine!"
 Ask my Mum how is she,
 she'll say "I'm alright."
 If that's the truth then tell me, why does she cry
 each night?
 Ask my Mum how is she,
 she seems to cope so well,
 she didn't have a choice you see,
 nor the strength to yell.
 You think you know the feeling,
 but this just cannot be.
 For even though you loved me,
 you didn't love as much as she.
 He will smile and tell you,
 "It's okay. God has a plan."
 But she will turn away and cry,
 'cause she just can't understand.
 Tell a joke and she will laugh,
 but she is not okay.
 She wants to share the joke with me,
 it will not be today.
 I watch, from here in heaven,
 her distress disturbs my peace.
 Will someone please take care of her,
 and thus take care of me.
 "Someday you will feel better.
 "Yes, I will" she lies.
 She knows this will not happen,
 until the day she dies.
 "I was oh so lucky! I had him all those years!"
 (They passed in but a minute,
 I shed so many tears).
 As my Mum how is she,
 she'll say "thank you, good."
 She cannot tell you how she feels.



Oh how I wish she could.
 Ask my Mum how is she
 "I'm fine, I'm well, I'm coping."
 For God's sake Mum, just tell the truth,
 just say your heart is broken.
 Ask my Mum how is she.
 "I'm well. I'm good. And you?"
 I shake my head in heaven, it simply isn't true.
 She'll love me all her life,
 I loved her all of mine.
 But if you ask how is she,
 she'll lie and say she's fine.
 Her carnival is over,
 she's stepped off the carousel,
 But, to save you feeling badly, she'll say
 "Thanks. All is well."
 My Mum. She's not gone mad yet,
 but oh so very nearly.
 Don't ask my Mum how is she,
 ask how is she, really.
 I am here in heaven,
 I cannot hug from here.
 If she lies to you don't listen,
 hug her, hold her near.
 On the day we meet again,
 we'll smile and I'll be bold.
 I'll say "you're lucky to get in here Mum,
 with all the lies you told!"
 --by Joann and Shelley Burr, TCF Australia
 In loving memory of their son and brother, Simon
 from their book "If only I had Known"

Grief

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

But I'm learning there is no other side.
 There is no pushing through, but rather
 there is absorption, adjustment, acceptance.

And grief is not just something that you complete
 but rather you endure.
 Grief is not a task to finish, and move on,
 but an element of yourself.
 An alteration of your being,
 a new way of seeing,
 a new definition of self.
 ~Gwen Flowers



Our Children Remembered



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

Josue
Born: 3/04 Died: 6/07
Mother: Elizabeth Centeno

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

Cheiann 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 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

Robert Justin Fields
Born: 1/00 Died: 1/00
Parents: Loree & Bob Fields

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

Bryce Patrick Fisher
Born: 10/86 Died: 8/21
Mother: Nancy Goodson

Miles Andrew Gallas
Born: 2/89 Died: 3/21
Mother: Denise Gallas

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

Jillian Nicole Katnic
Born: 3/87 Died: 10/18
Mother: Debbie Hughes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jesse Hernandez
Born: 2/90 Died: 11/22
Mother: Joann Hernandez

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jason Christopher Jenkins
Born: 4/86 Died: 11/20
Parents: Alvin & Caprice
Jenkins

Emma Nicole Lerner
Born: 11/99 Died: 7/06
Mother: Nancy Lerner

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

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

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Edward W. Myricks II
Born: 4/72 Died: 10/11
Parents: Edward & Sandra
Myricks

Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

Lisa Nakamaru
Born: 12/93 Died: 10/14
Mother: Grace Nakamaru

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

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

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

Richard Paul Negrete
Born: 6/43 Died: 2/04
Mother: Sally Negrete

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

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

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

Stephanie Sue Newkirk
Born: 12/67 Died: 10/15
Mother: Cindy McCoy

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

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

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

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

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

Nicholas Sinclair
Born: 1/80 Died: 2/22
Gerald Slater
Born: 2/71 Died: 8/94
Parents: Bob & Gwen Slater

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

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

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

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

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

Sally Anne O'Connor
Born: 12/62 Died: 2/11
Mother: Grace "Darline" Dye

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

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

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

Isabella Ofsanko
Born: 6/97 Died: 10/15
Mother: Desiree Palmer

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

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

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

Dominique Oliver
Born: 5/85 Died: 3/02
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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...**Finding Myself Again***

In July 2002, I was just two years into my burgeoning stand up comedy career when my only brother, Russell, who was about to embark on his own career as a pastry chef, was killed in a car accident. He was 21. Just hours after his death, my dad asked me what kind of funeral he would have wanted. I told him I had no idea, I just knew the cake afterwards had better be amazing. And chocolate. That's the thing about the immediate aftermath of grief. You find yourself having surreal conversations about things like cake in the context of one of the most devastating moments one can experience.

That first year was something of a daze, to be honest. I watched myself living in slow motion a lot of the time. I performed comedy almost every night, in-between handing out show fliers and screaming at strangers in Times Square, followed by hanging out and drinking all night with other comedians and the occasional drunk audience member. On the surface, I was getting by. But I was lost. I wasn't sure who I was anymore without my brother. I was actively leading something of a double life, telling jokes and presenting a version of myself that didn't represent what my life suddenly was. My whole world view had been turned upside down; my ways of interacting with life fractured.

I never talked about Russell on stage. I kept my material to surface level jokes about smoking pot, drinking and thoughts on pop culture. I was desperately trying to hold onto a version of myself that no longer existed. And it wasn't working. Offstage was no easier. Grief is so often swept under the rug, and we are encouraged to engage in it privately, if at all.

Sibling loss in particular is one of the most under-acknowledged losses, in my experience. We are often called "the forgotten mourners." For good reason. There are more books about pet loss than sibling loss. People seemed insensitive, almost dismissive to my grief, which was further isolating. The first question I often got when someone found out I'd lost my brother was often, "How's Your Mother?" It was rarely followed up or paired with, "How are YOU?"

People said I had to be strong for my parents.

They just lost a child, it must be very hard for them. Fortunately, I had the wherewithal to push back a little. I rarely let anyone off easy. I would often say, "Yes, I imagine they are doing about as badly as I am."

Friends were difficult to deal with, as well. Those who knew me before Russell died had a hard time dealing with the new version of me, a darker, more troubled version of myself. My parents started attending The Compassionate Friends, and encouraged me to come, as they had an active siblings group as well. I resisted for a while, but I ultimately went to a meeting, if only to shut them up. My feeling was, it wasn't going to be helpful, and we'd never have to speak about it again. Ironically, years later, my parents no longer attend and I now run that sibling support group.

This is really when things started to change for me. I had found a place where my feelings were validated, where my struggle was acknowledged, and my process was not judged. A place where I met other people going through a similar process who told stories of their own that I related to, where I wasn't alone. I could even joke about it in my group. Finding humor in the uncomfortableness of grief and death in general has been extremely cathartic. It has allowed me to talk about my grief and my loss in the same way that I talk about everything else.

It was when I started to embrace this new version of me that I started to see real progress. When I let go of wanting to go back to being the person I had been, I was able to start getting to know this newer me. Not the old me. A new, still heartbroken version, who had found a way to go on.

In the intervening years, I started a podcast called *Where's the Grief?* in which I interview comedians and other creative types who have also experienced tragic loss. (I often remark that it's not ALL comedians, I do interview other sad people too.) It felt like I had finally "come out" as a bereaved sibling, proud of finally being able to talk about my brother without making it weird. And in doing so publicly, I started to see how much of a universal experience grief and loss can be.

Showing all the different versions of what grief looks like, and sharing those conversations with others in need who are perhaps at an earlier stage of their journey has been very rewarding. To show

other people that it's OK to do it however it works for you, is also to re-affirm it for myself.

Society in general does not deal with the extremes of grief well. Because there is no blueprint, I often thought I was doing it wrong. People expect you to "go back to normal" at some point. People seem to think there's a standard timeline for healing. They will ask, when it's clear you're still struggling well past whatever that time frame is, "STILL? Aren't you over that yet?" They say, "Your brother wouldn't want you feeling this way." Oh really? NO shit. What incredible insight. I wanted to say to those who were disappointed in my grief process. You think I WANT to feel this way? I don't! But this IS how I feel. Also, Russell isn't here, so he doesn't get a say.

In the early days, grief was so hard because it was so unfamiliar. I was constantly blindsided by it. It would come out of nowhere. Standing in a supermarket staring at a carton of Apple & Eve apple juice. Hearing one of his songs (P. Diddy, Bad Boy For Life) blaring from a car radio. Even



passing a spot in the neighborhood that held the most mundane of childhood memories could be an emotional roller coaster. For me, one thing I've learned is that it's only by acknowledging how I feel that I can DEAL with it. I have found that over time, simply by doing that, the

moments of intense grief pass much faster than had I repressed them or ignored them altogether.

There are still moments that come out of nowhere, but I'm much better equipped at managing them. The knowledge that dealing with Russell's absence in my life is a lifetime process is a lot different than the scary thought in the early days of wondering when this pain would go away.

Now I know. Loss does not go away. I am now into my 20th year of grieving - not just for my brother and the life he didn't get to lead, but for the life I knew as well. I lost a part of myself in the process, and while it took time, I feel like I have finally gotten to a place where I feel like myself again. I have done it by really allowing myself to feel all the feelings, to acknowledge my pain, to incorporate this into my life. I will ALWAYS miss my brother, and I will ALWAYS wonder what he'd be doing if he were still here, what WE would be doing together. But as time has gone on it's not as scary or deeply distressing that it will never go away. It's a reminder that my memories and my

feelings about my brother will ALSO never go away. I will always strive to find ways to be more happy and grateful to have had Russell in my life in the first place, than to be soul crushingly depressed that I have to live the rest of my life without him. In a way it's a conscious choice I have made. I don't always succeed, but the knowledge of the possibilities gives me hope for my future.

--Jordon Ferber, TCF Siblings, Manhattan, NY

For Grandparents...



Another Death - How Much Can a Family Take?

After three family members died in a row I thought I knew a lot about multiple losses. I never suspected, even for a second, that life had more to teach me. Last week my former son-in-law, the father of my twin grandchildren, died in a car crash. I can hardly believe he died the same way my daughter died.

When I heard about the fourth death in the family my mind zapped back to the first stage of grief – shock and disbelief. I was overcome with grief and sobbed for my daughter, father-in-law, brother, former son-in-law, my grandkids, and myself. Then I stopped sobbing. In fact, my mind raced forward to the final stage of grief – acceptance.

Judith R. Bernstein, PhD, writes about the stages of grief in her book, "When A Bough Breaks." Many researchers believe the stages of grief that Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified, she notes, but "all agree that these stages are completely flexible and there is no such thing as orderly progression." I understand her point, indeed, I lived it.

To go from disbelief to acceptance in two days was amazing. How did I do this? I may never fully understand the process, but I think it happened because I have studied grief, have the experience that comes with age, and good coping skills. One coping skill is sticking to a routine as much as possible.

I am trying to get my grandkids to stick to their routine. We had planned to have Thanksgiving dinner with the extended family and the kids wanted to do this. Twenty-three family members gathered around various tables and I saw them

"close ranks" to help the kids. But the kids wonder, friends wonder, and we wonder why both of their parents died.

As I have done before, I turned to Rabbi Harold Kushner's book, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." Nobody knows why four family members died in nine months, but if you believe Rabbi Kushner, bad things happen randomly. "They do not happen for any good reason which would cause us to accept them willingly," he writes. "But we can give them a meaning."

I am giving new meaning to life by caring for my grandkids. This care includes healthy meals, clean laundry, shopping service, taxi service, attending concerts and sports events, and listening. When my grandkids share their thoughts with me I listen as though their lives depend on each word.

I am giving new meaning to life by writing about my losses. During the last week I discovered something important about myself. One of the reasons writers do what they do is to gain understanding. I thought I was writing about multiple losses to recover. Now I realize I am writing about multiple losses to survive.

If you have suffered multiple losses I hope you give new meaning to your life. You may find meaning in caring for children, grandkids, or a remaining parent. Donating to a religious community or a health organization may also give your life new meaning. I have been humbled by the kindness of family, friends, and strangers. Their kindness has brought new meaning to my life.

This moment in time – my grandkids' high school and college years – will define my life. I will care for my grandkids until I take my last breath. Despite the pain of multiple losses I feel blessed. Multiple losses have taught me that every moment is precious and I will not waste a single one.

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www.harriethodgson.com



From Our Members...

Always at summer's end, there comes that moment when memory brings to me, gifts from the past. I see your faces then, glistening in the sun. I hear your laughter then, shared by the wind. And in that glint of time I feel you near again, as you were, long ago, at summer's end. ~ Sasha Wagner

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

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month preceding your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: Oct. 1st for Nov. 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 Connie at (310) 292-5381. 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 money



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.



Connie Licciardone (chapter co-leader)....(310) 292-5381
 Bonnie Mantyla (chapter co-leader).....(310) 530-8489
 Lori Galloway.....(760) 521-0096
 Linda Zelik.....(310) 370-1645
 Mary Sankus.....(310) 648-4878
 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 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 (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)

grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)

www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)

Griefwords.com (for grandparents)

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Staples for their help in printing our newsletters

each month and to The Neighborhood Church for the use of their facilities for our meetings.

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS: Leo & Connie Licciardone and Jarmo & Bonnie Mantoya

CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Licciardone

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Kristy Konopasek

WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik

Marilyn Nemeth

Bill Matasso

Nancy Lerner

Connie & Leo Licciardone

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla

Lori Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Kristy Mueller

Kitty Edler

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. 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

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.

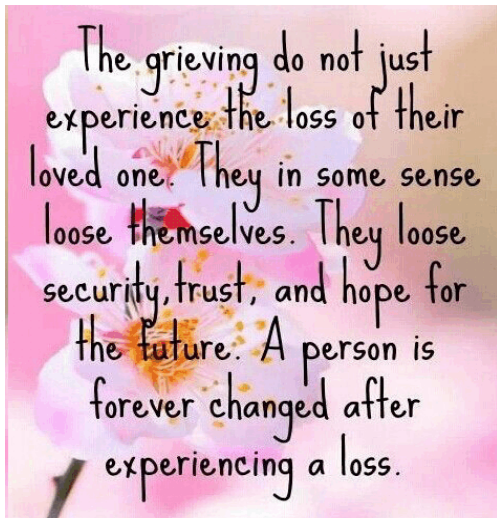
**When making a donation, please make checks payable to:
The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.
Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171, Torrance, CA 90510-1171**

In loving memory of _____
Birth date _____ Death date _____ From _____
Tribute _____

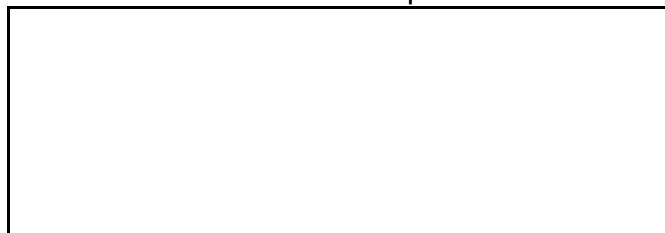
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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September 2022

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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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please contact us.