



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dec. 2022 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Dec. 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, Dec 1st meeting will start with **"You Must Choose."**

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.

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The **Thursday, Dec 1st meeting will start with “You Must Choose.”** December is a month most bereaved families, no matter how long since the death, feel some amount of dread. For the newly bereaved the pain and confusion is overwhelming. Yet, we feel we must find the strength to do something about the upcoming holidays. It is important to remember that we will have an easier time if plan ahead and make some type of choice on how we want to acknowledge the holiday. We can try running away and ignoring it, paring it down, carrying on with familiar traditions or creating new one. What ever we end up doing, we choose to do something...and it is our choice. I hope the following articles will help you in making your own choices this year. We invite you to join us and share your thoughts on holidays and how you might choose to face the holidays as a bereaved family.

Choice

How many stomachs churn when you see store shelves already stocked with the colors of the upcoming holidays?

How high does your blood pressure rise when relatives throw hints around about “Your house or mine?” How many turn away with leaded feet and ask the question, “How am I gonna do this?”

Like every day you have lived since your child’s death you will do this holiday season, “one moment at a time.” You will search for what is important, what you want to save, what you want to throw out, what others can do for you, what you want to do for yourself. You may stay in town or leave; you may cook or go out. Whatever you do, it is your choice. But before you take the first step you have to give yourself permission to have that choice.

The first holiday season, after our son Chad died, I didn’t know I had a choice. I was numb, in a powerful lot of pain, and feeling abjectly distracted. Therefore, when asked about Thanksgiving, I just went right along with the old traditions and said yes to the familiar family dinner.

Thanksgiving Day arrived and our family drove to my Aunt’s for dinner. When we walked in there was an invisible hush that descended upon the room. Then the noise level immediately resumed with an intensity I don’t ever recall hearing before. People laughed really loud. Their movements were rushed and jerky. They wanted to know where I

got my earrings. They asked Roger how his favorite football team was doing. Everyone spoke to us but it wasn’t about what we needed to talk about! And then, they went about their routines. Mom cooked in the kitchen, Aunt made the gravy, Uncle mashed the potatoes, Cousin carved the turkey, and Dad played the guitar for the little kids. I hadn’t been asked to bring anything. They said I wasn’t needed in the kitchen. So Roger and I sat huddled on the couch alone. Finally dinner was ready and we were all called together to be “thankful.” The prayer before the meal was familiar, something we had all learned in grade school, and then we sat down to eat. No one mentioned Chad’s name, no one asked us how we were doing, and nothing was done to mark the saddest holiday of my life. We managed to eat something, keep our broken hearts and tears in check, until we could get our coats on and leave. We both cried all the way home, angry, sad, frustrated, and mad. Never again, we agreed, would we go to a gathering where Chad was not welcome.

The days passed, as they somehow do when we are grieving, and soon the orange and brown colors of the stores changed to red, green, silver, and gold. We were looking another holiday square in the face. But this time we had a choice. We had a plan! We were going to buy a special candle, Chad’s candle, and we were going to let the family know that we wanted to talk about him, that we wanted to honor him.

Melinda, my daughter, and I went shopping and we went in and out of stores trying to find the perfect candle to no avail. My heart was beginning to wonder if it could continue this search when I reached down and saw the “perfect candle.” It was a light rose color with a simple raised cross. I smiled, picked it up and turned to show Melinda who by now was at the other end of the store. Much to my glee, she was holding the exact same candle!

That Christmas Day, we waited until most everyone arrived and then showed them the candle. We told them the story of finding it and then we lit it and put it in the middle of the floor where we were sitting. We then asked everyone to write a note about Chad and we passed around his Christmas stocking and asked that they put their notes in it. As the family was doing this my “always late” Aunt arrived. As she threw open the door the candle flickered and went out, the family as a unit



looked up at her with such shock that when I picture it today, I still laugh. We filled her in about what we were doing and re-lit the candle, gave her a chance to write her note, and then moved it to a table and went about the rest of the day with the candle burning.

I know there were some uncomfortable people that Christmas, but they all went along and I am forever thankful. Those notes and that candle lighting were a comfort to my family and me. We still read the messages that were put in his stocking and light his candle.

You may choose to do what we did, or you may think of something else. The most important message is that you have a choice to make the holiday for your family and yourself something that will be helpful and healing. There will be time in the future to "go back" to tradition. *Right now* is what is important and you have a choice. Take care of you.

With love, Sue Anderson, Chapter Leader
In memory of Chad Eastside TCF, Kirkland, WA

Reduce Holiday Anxiety

The holidays are upon us. Office parties, church parties, club parties, party-parties. Pressures to buy, to bake, and to bask in the season are applied from within and without. As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality, of holidays without our children.

Newly bereaved parents are especially vulnerable; even seasoned parents can't avoid the momentary tearful-ness, the anxiety and the pain of this season completely. But there are ways to cope. Avoid loud, noisy parties. If you plan to do any shopping, do not go into stores during peak traffic times. Take a friend with you who can help you to focus on what you must buy and then leave.

Avoid depressing and maudlin movies and shows. Do as much or as little as you feel is appropriate. Take "holiday breaks." Do some gardening: this is an ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Clean out the garage. Stay busy with tasks that are unrelated to the holiday rush. Send cards if you decide you're up to the task. If you're not ready to do this, don't do it. Don't put pressure on yourself to live up to the expectations of others.

Find what is right for you. Pressures from



others mean nothing. You choose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You choose the old traditions or you choose some new ones . . . maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas, as well.

Each of us learns to deal with Christmas in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. This year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is ever changing.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this and every Christmas holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose.

May we all have serenity throughout the holiday season and in the years ahead.

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

Holiday Card With A Purpose

The first Christmas after my son, Ian, died, we made up our own holiday cards with a special purpose. In each card, we enclosed a self addressed, stamped envelope. The front of the card said: "Holidays are for sharing special moments with those we love. Here are some of our favorite holiday memories."

The inside listed moments we remembered with our children such as: Sleeping in his new shoes Christmas night; Singing baby sister to sleep in the dark; The roaring sound of the VW engine that told us Ian was on his way home; "I don't know how that beer can got there." (Yeah, right!); and more ...

And we asked the recipient to: Please take a few moments and share some memories of Ian with us in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope.

Many did respond . . . and it's amazing what treasures those little scraps of paper are to us. I would not have those "stories" if I had not asked

for them. I'm glad I did.

--Becky Sharpe (Ian's mom) Gainesville, GA TCF

Ghosts of Christmas Past

In anticipation of my first Christmas morning, Mamma posed me, freshly scrubbed and curled, before the Christmas tree for my annual holiday photograph. This was the beginning of a lifetime of Christmas celebrations--each one steeped in rituals and traditions built upon those which had gone before. As a child, I delighted in the magical world created in the minds of the very young. We woke to sparkle and glitter, presents stacked high, and bulging stockings. As I grew, the magic of childhood gave way to a different reality and a different joy, but the rituals remained largely unchanged.



Marriage brought family and babies of my own. The photo albums grew and expanded as I made a career of the holidays and the memories they held. Year after year, I lined up the little ones in front of the tree--just as my mother had done before me. Each holiday celebration was an extension of former joys, other times, different places. Importance was placed on building bridges from the past into the present.

Constancy equals comfort and security. Psychologists agree that tradition is important to the development of society and to family structure. Family traditions are healthy and normal. There's only one thing wrong with tradition--it's filled with shoulds. "We should have the tree up before the 15th. We should entertain. We should shop...decorate...send cards. We should be happy..." Tradition creates purpose and connection. Tradition provides roots. But tradition magnifies the pain of our loss.

At our house, we trim the tree the first weekend in December. It's tradition. But the year Alexander died, I didn't feel like trimming the tree at all. When we did do it, as many changes as possible were made in the ritual to help me tolerate the empty space left in his absence. The children receive a new Christmas ornament each year to add to their collections. Someday these ornaments will adorn their own Christmas trees in their own homes. But what about Alex's set? Those three ornaments will never bloom into twenty and will never follow him into adulthood.

That first year after Alex's death I bought him one anyway--an angel in flight. Four stockings hang from the mantel. Do I hang Alexander's stocking, or do I put it away forever? The first year, I hung his apart from the others. But every year since, his stocking has hung with the other four. I have five children with five Christmas stockings--and I always will.

The key to surviving Christmas as a bereaved individual is flexibility and foresight. It's important to plan ahead, and it's important to anticipate the changes you will need to make. Habit is easy, and it does take a little more effort to implement creative change in holiday planning. But change and adjustment are essential for the newly bereaved. Families can spend so many years following the same patterns and routines that they forget these choices were made because they were right for their moment. But choices made under different circumstances may not be the right choices for the newly bereaved.

The early moments of grief demand new rules. Even customs "set in stone" can be bent. Festivities that expend more energy than we have to give can be skipped. Entertaining and socializing can be altered or curtailed altogether. Decisions can be delayed and new plans designed and implemented at the last minute. The bereaved can learn to be creative and flexible in customizing their holiday plans. Traditions bind families and societies tightly to one another. But altering our traditions to suit our current needs makes sense.

Each moment, each stage of life, demands its own customs and its own rituals. By building our bridges moment to moment, we link the past and present to the future.

--Joanetta Hendel Reprinted with permission of the author, who grants anyone the right to reprint this anywhere.

Creating Your Own Memorials

We now invite you to enjoy your own creativity. You may wish to adopt part of the traditions we have told you about, tailoring them to your family's tastes and needs. You may wish to venture on your own. The important thing is that rituals are part of learning to cope. We follow with a few suggestions for the Thanksgiving Feast, Yuletide, or the New Year. Most of these suggestions are adaptable for any of the holidays or throughout the entire season.

Developing a new ritual takes planning, care

and love. The thought you put into it will reap you many benefits in the days ahead.

1) The living Christmas tree—most nurseries and Christmas tree vendors now sell live evergreens that are ready to be planted in the yard after the holiday season. Planting new life to commemorate the meaning of the love in your life can be shared with family and friends, who may also be invited for refreshments or a meal after the planting ceremony.

2) Making a Toast to honor your loved one—create a special toast to your loved one, using your favorite wine or beverage. This can be done on any of the holidays when the family is gathered together, or even when you are alone.

3) Purchase or make a memorial candle which will be lit each morning or evening and extinguished only before bedtime throughout the holiday season.

4) Place a single flower on the table in honor of the "presence" of your loved one.

5) Observe a moment of silence or prayer before the meal or at another time you deem appropriate.

6) Spend some time together as a family with the family album. Make it a special celebration when the past is discussed, reviewed, and relived.

7) Reserve some time to tell a favorite story at the table about your loved one. This could accompany the special toast to your memories.

8) Buy a Christmas present for your loved one, in the form of a gift for the home which will have a special place or take on a special meaning for the holidays to come.

9) Buy or create your own Advent calendar. You may wish to place a photograph of the members of the family or close friends behind each window from December 1st to December 25th. This tradition anticipates coping slowly, day by day, as the season passes

10) Garnish your tree this year with fresh flowers, berries or other products of nature.

11) Create luminaries to line your sidewalk or driveway. These are a Mexican tradition and are simple to make, yet lovely as they light up the night in a soft glow. All you need are brown paper sandwich bags, small candles, and sand. They signify a warm welcome.

12) You may want to decorate the altar at church in memory of your loved one.

13) Make a donation to charity in the name of your loved one or help a family in need by providing Christmas dinner for them or sending small gifts for the children.

14) Set aside a time before opening gifts to discuss the values you share as a family and how your loved one contributed to the quality of your life.

15) Using fresh flowers or fruit to garnish your tree, table, or to be used in decorating the home. The apple is the symbol of life. The pineapple is the symbol of welcome and hospitality. You may choose to use these two items to let your friends and family know that they are welcomed in your home this holiday season. There are also ceramic apple ornaments available now and you could use them to paint the names of each of your family members on them and give them as a gift. You might also want to paint on the name of your loved one and give it to each family member in memory of that person.

16) You may choose to make or use a special table setting or flower arrangement as you plan your holiday gatherings.

17) Give a special picture as a gift—perhaps a family favorite that has been restored and put in a special frame. You may choose to place a single rose, the symbol of love, next to the picture of your loved one and put it in a special place.

18) Candles can be used in various ways—a single candle lit at a certain time each night. A candle next to the picture of your loved one could be placed on the mantle or on a special piece of furniture.

--Author Unknown

The Necessary Magic Of Christmas



Halloween is long gone. Thanksgiving swept up in a flurry of turkey wings, and Christmas is just around the corner. It's that time of year when bereaved parents begin a collective shudder at the thought of enduring another holiday season.

Many will be thinking: Christmas, who needs it? Who needs the hassles of shopping for just the right gift which will be returned anyway. Who needs fighting the crowds, and baking endless batches of cookies with all the unwanted calories. Who really needs the Christmas carols that only bring more pain instead of joy? It's enough to make you want to run away and hide until January, and to let the rest of the world frolic with Frosty. And yet ... there is something to be said about the first snow fall on Christmas Eve, or hearing your grandmother's favorite Christmas song being played at the mall.

There is something about Christmas that can comfort a soul in pain, and it could be little things, such as a surprise phone call from your friend of twenty-five years, calling all the way from Australia just to say hello. Or perhaps it is a loaf of banana bread from a shivering neighbor over the back fence saying "I care, and I'm thinking of you." When all is said and done, maybe we bereaved parents really do need the necessary magic of Christmas. We need to let some of the wonder creep into our lives and soothe our battered hearts and look at the holiday for what it truly is—a time of love, remembering, and yes, even the weeping.

It is a time to think about possibly starting new traditions. Instead of writing Christmas cards, create a family newsletter. Decorate a special ornament and paint your child's name on it. Attend a concert, and take a friend. Rent a cabin in the woods and take the time to enjoy nature and let your thoughts and tears flow freely. Christmas can be a time to honor our child by embracing what we have, and by celebrating their lives instead of living their deaths.

Most of all, we can remember that nearly 2,000 years ago, two parents in Bethlehem were celebrating the birth of their own precious Son, only to become bereaved parents themselves 33 years later.

From our house to yours, may you find peace and blessings this holy, holiday season.

--Sandra S. Van Orman TCF, Tacoma TCF Chapter, Pierce County WA

The Older Child

For so long I've wanted to write about being the bereaved parent of an older child. How my heart is broken just as if he had been still-born, died in infancy, as a youth, teenager or young adult. Leland was 42 and one of the above, but he was my child.

At the holidays I think so much of him. He loved Christmas and would have bought and wrapped all his gifts early. The decorations would be ready and he'd be eager to start putting them up right after Thanksgiving. In this way he was like a kid again.

Too often when we hear of bereaved parents we think of a young person or infant. We forget that we are parents of children no matter the age. I read the obituaries now, looking for adult children,



and seeing the parents as survivors. And my heart aches for them as I know what they are going through. Their hearts are as broken as mine is, and it will never heal. Sure, time makes the pain less intense, and the tears come less often. But the hole in my heart is still there and always will be.

Too many parents of older children who have died are reluctant to join groups such as Bereaved Parents or Compassionate Friends. We often feel that we can tough it out alone or with family. And the small numbers of older parents at these meetings make it even harder to attend. I wish it were different and the word was out to any bereaved parent that all are welcome no matter the age of the child. He or she was their child.

Whenever I talk to the bereaved parent of an older child, I feel such a closeness, and I can empathize with them because I know that our pain is just as great as any bereaved parent. We just seem to be sitting in the shadows more. God bless us all.

--Linda Bishop, Excelsior Springs, MO, mother of Leland Sharp, 1962-2004,

13 Different Ways Suicide Loss Survivors Get Through the Holidays

Editor's Note: If you experience suicidal thoughts or have lost someone to suicide, the following post could be potentially triggering. You can contact the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741741.

The holidays can be a difficult time for folks who have lost a loved one to suicide. When you're struggling to figure out how to live life without your loved one, holiday traditions can feel heart-breakingly painful without them there to celebrate with you. There's no "right" way to get through the holiday season after experiencing suicide loss, and a lot of getting through means finding a "new normal" that works for you.

We wanted to know how people make it through year after year, so we partnered with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and asked suicide loss survivors to share some things that helped them get through the season. Here's what they had to say.

"Since my husband died by suicide in March 2016, my kids and I have gone to downtown Denver and helped the homeless... donating blankets, jackets, gloves, hats, etc. It's been a great way to give to those in need, but has also been very therapeutic for us too." — Terri B.

"I lost my son to suicide in 2011. Every year, I make sure to put the funny ornaments he made as a little boy on the Christmas tree. So I have a popsicle stick Star of David (we're Catholic), a thumbprint reindeer, a clothespin reindeer — notice a theme? They bring tears, joy and laughter in celebrating his memory." — Kathy T.

"We have a tree decorated with things that remind us of my son, and candle holders that have his name engraved on it that we light over the holidays. I also still send out Christmas cards with a stamp of a dove by our names, and a picture or tribute to my son on the back." — Irene L.

"Christmas was mom's favorite holiday. I try to do the things she used to love to do. Even wear Grinch boxer shorts outside of my pants, dance around the Christmas tree while listening to Alvin and the Chipmunks sing Christmas songs. That is how I choose to remember her." — Charity E.

"There is always a night I sit in the dark family room alone with just the glow of the Christmas tree and I talk aloud to my dad. I reflect on the year and tell him he is still loved and missed. It brings me peace." — Teresa B.

"Today, if I don't feel like decorating or putting up a tree, I don't. If I don't have the energy to bake extra goodies, I don't. I have found, especially in the past few years, that paying it forward has made things easier. It's helped the healing process more than I can explain. Working a soup kitchen, adopting a family, spending time at the assisted living home. Giving back has been the biggest gift and I've finally found the courage and strength to move forward in that grace. It certainly hasn't taken the pain away, but it's made it much less raw." — Cheryl O.

"My son died in November 2001. That Christmas my daughter and I went to Texas to be with family during the holidays. Before Christmas day I went out and bought a candle in my son Blair's favorite color and a scent I thought he would like. Christmas morning we put that candle up on the mantle and lit it. It stayed lit all day. No matter where you were in that room, you could always catch a glimpse of the flame. Before long, the entire house had the scent of that candle all through it. Blair was there in every glance and every breath. That candle burned all day. My sister kept that candle for the longest time. She said it was her reminder of her nephew and she couldn't get rid of it. That first year was really hard, but every time I see a candle it reminds me that my

boy is right there — his light shining on me." — Barbara A.

"This year we are putting up a special tree for Al. All of it's ornaments are ones that remind us of them. Their favorite foods, movies, inside jokes we have with them. Not to mention it's a rainbow tree!" — Claire H.

"Listening to the South Park Christmas album (Mr Hankey!) over and over. That's the only holiday music I could stand. Part of it was that the songs helped me remember fun times with Jed... part of it was the pure comedy of the album. Definitely not conventional, but it's how I coped." — Emily H.

"It's been 13 years since my son Jared died by suicide. For several years my husband and I traveled every other Christmas. The other years we did the traditional things with families, but just knowing I would have the next year 'off' was a relief. Now we see family each year and it's OK. Doesn't mean there aren't hard times, though. I rode through our neighborhood just yesterday looking at Christmas lights and crying." — Carol J.

"Third Christmas without my brother. We decorate his grave. We pick out an ornament for our tree (my boys do not always agree so we get both). We tell stories that 'Uncle' did, we play games and just all around talk. It doesn't always help, there are bad days — those we just trudge through watching movies." — Seth B.

"This December makes 11 years since I lost my best friend to suicide. We were 12 when she died, and it ruined the holidays for me, for quite a while.

Now, I've made a tradition to paint my nails purple for the holidays. Purple was her favorite color, and she always had her nails painted purple. I swear she had 20 different shades of purple polish. She said it made her happy to look down and see such a pretty color. Now, it makes me happy to look down and be reminded how incredible she was, and how she found beauty in all the small things." — Karle H.

"This will be my 18th Christmas without my baby brother... And my 6-month-old son's first. I have been thinking about starting a tradition where every year I give my son something for Christmas that was once my brother's... A 'gift' from his Uncle Dave. Though he will never meet him in this life, I hope with all my heart that he will still *know* him." — Kristen A.

If you are struggling with the loss of a loved one to suicide this holiday season, you're not alone. Excerpts from themighty.com/topic/grief



Infant Loss and The Holidays

There is no question that the first holidays after a baby dies are difficult, just as it is with any person who dies. The first year without my grandfather (who died December 8th) at Christmas was difficult for all of us. But with an infant, it's different. Holidays, especially Christmas, are supposed to be about the kids. It's about their joy. My daughter Rebecca would have been 6.5 months old at her first Christmas-- the perfect age to love the paper and the boxes far more than anything they contained.

The first Thanksgiving after my daughter died, my now ex-husband and I took the escape approach to the holidays. We didn't normally visit family for Thanksgiving, so instead we took a week long hotel camping trip to west Texas and east New Mexico to see Big Bend, El Paso, Guadalupe Mountain, Carlsbad Caverns, and White Sands.

We spent Thanksgiving Day with a friend's parents who were on their own, too, since the grown children lived in other cities. When we got about an hour outside of Austin, my ex broke down over the fact we were taking the trip without Rebecca. I tried to point out to him that if she had lived, we wouldn't have taken the trip because there was no way I was taking a six month old on a road trip and caving, but my point was moot. His distress was just another part of grieving her absence. She wasn't going to be with us no matter what we chose to do that Thanksgiving.

On Thanksgiving day, I got a positive pregnancy test. By Christmas, I was deep in the throes of all day sickness (falsely called morning sickness by some twisted soul). We also had two foster dogs in addition to our two canine family members; one of the foster dogs was very sick with what turned out to be distemper. The message that our families gave us that year was painfully clear: They didn't want us to come visit them for Christmas. That was one of the hardest parts of the holiday. It felt like no one wanted to see us because it would have forced them to deal with their grief about our absent daughter. If we didn't show up, they could pretend the whole thing never happened. The following year when our subsequent babies had safely arrived we were welcomed back in the fold. But that first year after her death, we were *persona non gratae*. We were harbingers of death.

In years since then, we've done various observances to keep Rebecca's memory alive and

part of our family celebration. We have several Christmas ornaments given to us over the years by various friends that commemorate her life. We put an angel teddy bear on top of the tree. When the kids were young, we took Christmas pictures with an angel teddy bear (pictured above) in them, too, to symbolize her absence. We often adopt a child who is the same age she would have been the same age through a social relief organization to provide gifts in her memory.

Honestly, though, that first Christmas hurt like hell. There's nothing that can stop that pain. All the remembrances help a slight bit, but there is nothing to fill the absence of a loved one. The only thing to do is feel the pain, grieve the loss, and know that one day things will be different. Each "first" is incredibly hard. One day, though, the pain will no longer feel so hellishly deep. There comes a point where if one does intense healing work, the memory of a loved one lost too soon can bring happiness rather than agony.

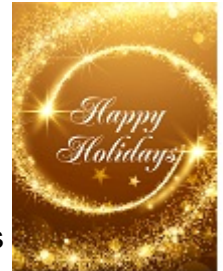
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Newly Bereaved...

The Holidays

With the changing of the seasons
The holidays come once more
Busy shoppers, joyous laughter,
Pretty wreaths hung on the door.
Though I pause in the twilight hour
And hear the children play
My joy is forever silenced
By that dreadful day in May.
My love of the holiday season
Now lives in another time
Memories of past Christmases
When all in my life was fine.
The tree lights no longer sparkle
My heart is cold inside
My holiday joy ended
The day my only child died.
I stand outside now looking in
To a world I no longer know
My tears flow like a river
And melt the falling snow.
I turn now to the meaning
Of what Christmas really is
My pain softened by believing
In spirit, he will always live.

--Vicki Tushingham, Los Angeles



Seasoned Grievers...

One Little Candle

I lit a candle tonight, in honor of you
 Remembering your life
 and all the times we'd been through.
 Such a small little light the candle made
 Until I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.
 All the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain
 What a garden they grew, watered in human rain.
 I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in
 hopeless despair
 But then your memory sustains me, in heartaches
 repair.
 I can wait for the tomorrow, when my sorrows ease
 Until then, I'll light this candle, and let my memories
 run free.

--Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta

For Friends & Family...

A Thoughtful Way to Remember

One of the ways family and friends can help TCF is to make a donation in their loved ones name. We are grateful for the faithfulness of parents, grandparents, and others, who, by their Love Gifts, memorialize their children who have died. These donations allow us to offer resources (this newsletter, books, brochures, and pamphlets) to assist bereaved parents and siblings. They also allow us to provide information to care professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. Love Gifts are just that, Gifts. They are not required, but they are very helpful and very much appreciated. You can use the form on page 19 to include a personalized tribute.



Helpful Hint...

Draw strength from the holiday traditions of your past; hope from the changes you make for the present; and from them both, faith in your ability to handle the future.

--Shirley Melin, TCF Aurora IL

Welcome...

Welcome New Members ,
 Attending your first meeting takes courage. We know this and it is always hard for us to say "welcome" because we are so very sorry for the reason which made you have to attend The Compassionate Friends (TCF) meeting. However, we are glad you found us. We cannot take away your pain, but we can offer our friendship, compassion, support, and hope. We ask only that you please try to attend at least three meetings before you make up your mind, "This isn't for me." With TCF, you'll have a chance to meet others who are making the same journey and you'll discover that special bond that occurs when you are with others who truly understand.

Book in Review...



Not Just Another Day Families, grief and special days by Missy Lowery. Covers the more common holidays and gives good ideas for including children in celebrating birthdays and Christmas. Includes a list of things to do to take care of yourself

for a month! (This is our number one selling book during the holidays.) Code: NJAC

www.centering.org (Grief related books are available from the Centering Corp. Call (402) 533-1200 for a current catalog. Remember to tell them you are a member of TCF for free shipping.)

Holidays

The Holidays bring memories of past happiness, and the sorrow of the "never will be"
 We hope you will find the time for yourself;
 The time to reflect on the past joys;
 The time to center yourself;
 Time to cry;
 The time to cry and clean your heart of the agony which builds;
 And the time to say,
 "Happy Holiday" to your child.
 Somehow they will hear and will know.
 --Ray & Lynn

**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 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

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

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

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

Bettina Mia Embry
Born: 8/65 Died: 4/22
Parents: Larry & Elena Bruns

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 Waldstein

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 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

John Paul Mc Nicholas
Born: 12/89 Died: 11/20
Parents: John & Leeann
Mc Nicholas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reyna Joanne Monje
Born 9/98 Died: 4/21
Mother: Debbie Trutanich

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Natalie Rose Nevarez
Born: 5/90 Died: 11/14
Parents: Gregg and Alison
Nevarez

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

Lilly Parker
Born: 12/15 Died: 1/17
Mother: Nicole Kawagish

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 Puliselich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/18
Mother: Maria Puliselich
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: Alexander &
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

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

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

Nicholas M Sinclair
Born: 1/80 Died: 2/22
Mother: Suzanne Sinclair

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

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

Jamie Taus
Born: 5/85 Died: 5/21
Sister: Jackie Taus
Mother: Susan Taus

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

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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...**The Season of Obligation**

The festive season is almost upon us again, "silly season," the season of joy and goodwill-, of parties and celebration. Some of us like to call it the season of obligation. We are often obliged to seem happy and joyous.

Obligated to be nice to people we haven't liked all-year, people whose lack of sensitivity to our grief we have been expected to tolerate. We may be obliged to acknowledge religious celebrations, when all we ask is, "Why?"

Don't people realize how painful Christmas and all this "ho ho ho" is. Well-, no they don't. They don't know how those empty places at the Christmas table leave such a void in all of us.

Many people start Christmas day with a champagne breakfast,

while some of us visit the cemetery and are then obligated to face the festivities.

I will never forget one response when I expressed dread of Christmas Day. "It's not a very happy time for us," I said. "You see, two of my brothers have died, five places instead of seven for our table is fairly painful for us." "Oh well five is better than none, just eat, drink and be merry" came the response.

As a grieving brother or sister, helplessly watching our parent on top of our own usually guarded grief, is a very painful experience. It can sometimes be agonizing to bear. As most of our friends live it up, we are faced with a miserable time in our own grief, often parenting our parents through a very emotionally draining time.

For the shift workers amongst us "having" to work (or begging to!) is often a good escape from the obligation of it all. If this is your first Christmas, our hearts go out to you. But no matter how long it has been, please be gentle on yourselves as we all brace ourselves for yet another special time without our special people.

-- Shayne Parfrey, TCF, Victoria, Australia in memory of brothers Jawod, 18 & Dean, 10

Things Will Never Be the Same Again

Christmas will never be the same again. Life will never be the same again!

I remember my last Christmas with my brother, Chris. He was a senior in high school, recently accepted to USC, the college I was to graduate from five years later, without him. It was going to be his last Christmas at home, before he went off to college. What we didn't realize was that it really was going to be his "last Christmas at home".

He gave me sapphire earrings, the ones I wear everyday of my life. I can't even remember the gift I bought him, but I do have a picture of us in our customary places on the sofa; our arms around each other, pajamas on, smiles so big they stretched across the room...like a frozen moment in time.

Life goes on for the rest of the world, but we, the mourners, find ourselves back at the starting gate, beginning life over again. We have to learn how to live a new way, without a significant relationship—our brothers and sisters. This is not an easy task, and the challenge of the holidays is upon us once again. For my family, each Christmas since our last with Chris has been a trial and error process.

Traveling, changing traditions, going back to old traditions - all forced efforts and struggled attempts to "make it through the holidays". Personally, I have found more comfort in embracing the old traditions rather than running away from them.

We, as a family, have formed new traditions that blend with our old ones. We have breakfast on Christmas morning with another bereaved family, which has become a comforting new custom. While opening gifts, I prefer to sit alone on the sofa Chris and I used to share because I just can't imagine it any other way. It took us a couple of years before we felt like decorating the house, or having guests over and before we could do a lot of the old traditions. But when we as a family were ready, we did them - but always a little bit differently.

Now we have a collection of musical note and angel ornaments that fill their own tree, and each one is in Chris' memory. This year we decided to fly to Texas to be with my sister's family, because none of us wanted to be alone. So we continue the trial and error process.

No matter, what you decide for yourself to find your way through the holidays, I do hope that you create a way to include your sibling in your plans. Write a poem, share a story, paint a picture, sing or play a song, eat your favorite ice cream, or bake goodies in their memory. Even purchase a gift that you would have bought for your sibling and give it in his or her memory to a special person.

By finding a personal way of incorporating each of our siblings during the holidays and every day - they will continue to influence not only our

lives, but the people with whom we come in contact, thus continuing their legacy and memory for years to come.

My wish for each of you this holiday season is that you will have an abundance of preciously wrapped gifts to give and to be received from each one in your family. Not CD's, or toys, or books, or things - but memories of your brother or sister, ones that are special and thought of often, or ones that were near to being forgotten. Share these with someone, if you can, and have them share their memories with you. In this way, our brothers and sisters will remain near in our thoughts and in our hearts as we continue to find our way through this adventure called life.

-- Michelle Dyck Pasadena, CA

For Grandparents...



Grandparents Grieve Too

Some people may forget
 Grandparents grieve too
 They watch their children grieve
 And don't know what to do
 They try to make things better
 But sometimes it makes it worse
 Their grandchild should be driven home
 Not driven in a hearse
 They have not just lost a grandchild
 They watch their child in pain
 They hold it all together
 But their grief isn't the same
 To see your child hurting
 For the baby they have lost
 They want to take the pain away
 From those they love the most
 They speak words of encouragement
 From their wise words of wisdom
 In time you will get stronger
 And your child not forgotten
 Sometimes they might not show us
 The pain we want them too
 But I assure you they are hurting
 Just as much as you
 But themselves, as a parent
 Feel they must stay strong
 Their own child is grieving
 And the process is long
 It's not a case of taking months
 It's a case of taking years

But every step along the way
They'll be there to wipe your tears
--Natalie Calvert



From Our Members...

Light A Candle For Love

It doesn't snow in Louisiana. There are palm trees out my window and the boat is gently bobbing at the dock in my back yard. There is a snow shovel in the garage (left over from Missouri).. but, I don't think I'll be using it this year. It doesn't snow in Louisiana. How can you have winter if it doesn't snow?

I'm out mowing my lawn, and the rest of the world is shoveling snow. - how can you have holidays like this? I miss the snow. The holiday pre-season hoopla in the stores seems a bit silly when the temperature is in the 90s. But, whether we're ready or not, it's time.

Time to think about decorating the yard for the holidays. What will I put up this year? We're new in the neighborhood and want to make a good impression. Does everyone string colored lights around their boat dock?

Should we decorate the palm trees with those giant inflatable ornaments? Should we go electric this year, or will a single candle in the window do? I guess I could toss some tinsel over the air conditioner, but it won't be the same. It never is... is it?

It's hard to know just what to do when you're new. Being new in the neighborhood is a lot like being new in grief. You're not quite sure why you're here, and you can't find anything. You know you're missing something, and nothing seems to fit in its place anymore. Your ears and eyes are too filled with "goodbye" to begin to say, "hello." It's a strange time, made stranger by the fact that it isn't even going to snow!

Everyone else is busy decorating their yard and their boat dock, but mine remains plain and bare. I thought about putting up glowing plastic penguins and setting Santa up in the front yard: but it all seem so out of place here in the land of no snow. Maybe we'll just forget it this year.

Maybe you've decided to leave your house and yard bare this year, too. Not because you moved to the swamp, but because nothing seems quite right this season - in your house or your heart. Can you ever be happy again? Will

the sights and sounds of the holiday season ever touch you again? Will the emptiness always be this big? No. Nothing stays the same, not even grief. Just as I am busy unpacking my gypsy bag in another new place; you, too, are trying to figure out where to put things this year - in a new you. It's hard to find new places to stash the old memories. And besides, those memories hurt! Hurt too much to put them away, and they hurt too much to keep them out. How are you going to make it through the holidays? Be patient with yourself this holiday season. If you can't decorate the yard, then decorate the house. If the house seems too big to tackle, then decorate a room, a corner, a table. But whatever you do, don't lose the holidays completely.

It may not snow in Louisiana, but I'm going to have pink flamingos in the front yard, holding a giant greeting card. It's not the same, but it IS something. I refuse to lose the joy of holidays past and the anticipation of holidays future just because....

I may not get any cookies baked this year, or the cards written, but you'll see those pink flamingos out in front, and you'll see a tiny candle in the window. No matter how shattered your life, how fragmented your dreams, there must be light somewhere - there must be hope somewhere. It must be snowing someplace, even if I'm not there. As long as I know it's winter somewhere, as long as I know there is joy someplace, then I know it will come to me again (and to you as well!) We just have to hang on tight and believe. Believe in whatever you choose, but at least light a candle this holiday season; and remember the pink flamingos in my yard (flashing out a "Happy Holidays" greeting) and remember the joy that used to light your own heart. Light a candle for hope, for remembrance. No matter where you are, or which holiday it is for you, light a candle for love. It is the greatest light of all!

—Darcie Simms, reprinted from Bereavement Magazine www.bereavementmag.com
-- submitted by Barbara McClatchey



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As

candles are lit on December 11th, 2022 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

Editor's Note: Since our chapter will not be having its own Candle Lighting this year, we encourage you to join in virtually at the National Office's observance.

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

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: Nov. 1st for Dec. 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 our 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.

We also welcome "book reviews". If you have read a book which was helpful on your grief journey, please let us know. Send book reviews and other articles or poems for submission to the newsletter to Lynntcf@aol.com Also, a friendly reminder, if you have books at home you have checked out and are finished reading them, please remember to return them to our library.

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
- 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
 healingafterloss.org
 survivorsofsuicide.com
 taps.org (military death)
 save.org (suicide/depression)
 pomc.com (families of murder victims)
 grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)
 www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)
 Griefwords.com (for grandparents)

opentohope.com
 webhealing.com
 alivealone.org
 angelmoms.com

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

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 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--

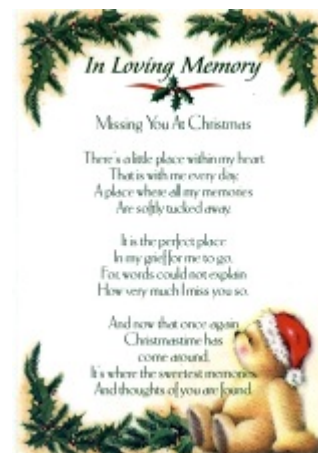
7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings (open depending on moderator availability)
 5 PM PST: Loss to Substance Related Causes
 5 PM PST: Pregnancy/Infant Loss
 6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

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 Mathew Hales Clifford, Jan. 1980 - March 2015. A precious gift from God, who brought sunshine and happiness where ever he went. Remembered every day with love. Safe in the arms of your creator until we meet again.

Love You Forever, Mom

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

Love Mom

Hello, Just a little thank you for sending your newsletter to us...It has been passed on to many people over many months and was so helpful. – Rita Dykstra

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.

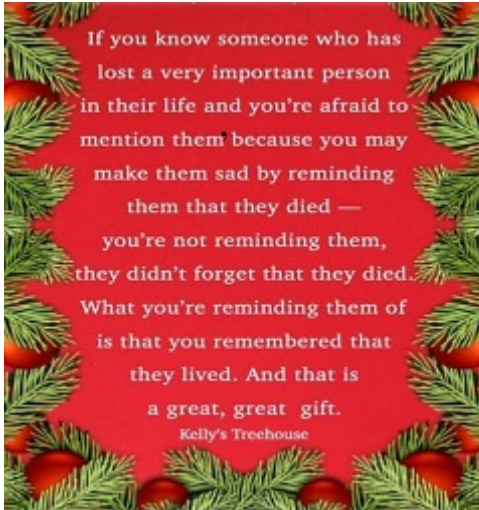
**When making a donation, please make checks payable to:
The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.
Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171, Torrance, CA 90510-1171**

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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December 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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If you no longer wish to receive this mailing, need corrections, or
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