



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dec. 2023 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Dec. 7th, 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 7th meeting will start with **"Facing The Holidays While Grieving."**

To participate in our Zoom meetings, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739 or Liccias79@gmail.com for the link.

The TCF Friends group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237th St in Torrance) at 1 PM. most Fridays. 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 7th meeting will start with "Facing The Holidays While Grieving."

Dear Friends,

It's hard when the Holiday Season comes around during a painful or difficult time in our lives. We know the pain of being without our children, but it intensifies especially around this time of year. While most people are celebrating and rejoicing in the holidays, those of us going through this grief journey often focus on the pain and sadness in our hearts.

It can be helpful to share our anxieties and listen to others who are further down this road of grief. For many of us, sharing with the group has given us the strength and comfort to help get through these difficult times. If you are having a hard time and need someone to talk to, now is a good time to use the phone friends listed on page 17 of the newsletter. Lean on your Compassionate Friends...Remember, "We Need Not Walk Alone."

Worldwide Candle Lighting Memorial Service

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 10th, 2023 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.** *The Neighborhood church can not accommodate TCF's world wide candle lighting



due to their Christmas pageant.

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

How Do I Celebrate the Holidays Alone?

How do I celebrate the holidays when I am alone? This is a question often posed to us at Alive Alone. Several of our bereaved parents whose only child/all children are deceased face this dilemma. Some are single due to being a widow, divorced or have never married. A few are only children themselves. Others live far from family or the family relationship is dysfunctional since his/her only child or all children have died.

It is so difficult to celebrate the holidays when a couple or single parent no longer has their child/children on this earth. Those with surviving children face the dilemma of the necessity of celebrating with surviving family members when the parents are so saddened due to the death of a child. Bereaved parents who find themselves now childless find the holidays very difficult to celebrate when it seems other family members'/friends' families are 'intact' and our family is now only two people. For single bereaved parents it is ESPECIALLY lonely as he/she approaches the holidays ALONE.

For those truly alone there is no one to purchase gifts for, no one to receive a gift from and no one with whom you can spend an evening or day with during the holidays. We encourage these parents to contact Alive Alone or their local support group to find someone who is in a similar situation so that they can be networked with another person like themselves. Sometimes it is possible for these bereaved persons to get together during the holiday or to travel to meet one another at a vacation site. Just having someone who understands our situation is so meaningful. It permits these parents to share their stories and their children with someone else who cares.

Single bereaved parents may also find it rewarding to work at a shelter, soup kitchen or



some local charity during the holidays.

Volunteering time at a hospital, Hospice Center, place of worship, recreation center or an institution that ministers to those underprivileged people is often rewarding. Sometimes visiting a place that their child/children enjoyed gives them peace.

Perhaps take an individual with you that would not have the opportunity to see this place or attend this event would be meaningful to the parent as a way of commemorating the child no longer with them.

"Adopt" a child or family for the holiday who has been struggling financially in your community and you will find the love and kindness that you share with someone else will be so rewarding that you may want to make this an annual tradition.

Look for other people in your place of worship or community who are also alone, perhaps he/she never married or never had children. Ask your minister, priest or rabbi for names of others who are alone. There are also several adults, which may be a couple or single person, whose children live far from them or never had children and will be alone during the holidays. These people would welcome an invitation to come to your home for a meal. You could spend an evening or afternoon with them or go out for a meal or attend an event in your community. Check with the local nursing homes for people who do not have families nearby to visit and spend some time with these people who will GREATLY appreciate your presence.

Being alone and bereaved is very difficult at any time of the year but the holidays are just excruciating. Unfortunately these bereaved people are often the ones who also have to do the inviting as others do not remember to invite them.

--Kay Bevington, Van Wert, Ohio

Heart Connections – the Bonds of Shared Grief

Divisiveness and intolerance for others' views seem prevalent all around us today. We see it in our political beliefs, social justice concerns, and health environment. It is apparent within families, workplaces, and organizations. When we are grieving the painful death of a child, grandchild, or sibling, this divisiveness creates walls that can make our sorrow even deeper. It's difficult enough when we're grieving to feel connected to the people around us, and these dividing walls can further isolate us.

The Compassionate Friends credo begins with

these words:

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.

Uniting people who share this deep grief was the premise that started The Compassionate Friends. The death of our brother, sister, child, or grandchild permeates all aspects of our being. It's something that can't easily be explained to those who have not experienced it, while those who have, possess a deep and compassionate understanding that requires little explanation. The bonds within our TCF community can bridge these chasms we see around us. Rather than being further isolated in our grief, we can feel surrounded by understanding, community, and shared hope that can be lifesaving during this time.

While none of us would choose to be a part of this community given the reason that brought us, we are connected at a deeply meaningful level. It's hard to see someone across the table with a similar loss and stay in a place of intolerance and anger. When we remember what binds us as a group and honor our shared losses, we focus on supportive and comforting connectedness. When we reach for the love in our hearts that's bolstered by our shared sorrow, we can model a greater energy that's needed in our world. Our child, grandchild, or sibling who died and brought us to TCF is honored each time we choose this path of connection through our differences rather than more division because of them.

—Shari O'loughlin

The First Time I Laughed

I paused and thought to myself, how can I be laughing? My son is gone and I'm laughing. I felt guilty. But then I realized my laughing didn't mean I have forgotten he was gone. It didn't make the pain in my heart hurt any less. It didn't make me not miss him any less. What it did mean is that I was still alive and that I could miss him, be heartbroken and in pain, but still experience joy. Brian had a mother who was full of life, who was ditzy, funny and who didn't take life or herself too seriously.

What kind of mother would I be if he was looking down from Heaven watching me



deteriorate? Brian hated when he saw me upset. I know he would not want me to live the remainder of my life in sorrow every single day. I had to accept joy and happiness again, just like I had to accept the sadness and pain.

I had to accept that while I was sad and crying that at the same time it was okay for me to laugh and enjoy life. Not an easy task to do hand in hand. It literally is like being on a roller coaster, which is funny because I hate roller coasters. Brian, for years, tried to get me on one, but that's what this journey is like. One minute I can be laughing having a good time, and a couple hours later am on the couch crying because I miss my son so much.

It took time to accept and truly understand that for me, in my life now, that sadness and happiness go hand in hand with each other and that's okay. It was okay for me to cry, but it was also okay for me to laugh. I wasn't betraying my son or his memory by still enjoying life. Because of the relationship I have with my son, the opposite would be true. I would be dishonoring him, our relationship, the bond and love we have, if I chose to crawl into a ball, hide in a dark room, and let what is the remainder of my life pass me by. Our love is too deep for me to allow that to happen. The first day I laughed after Brian's passing was the day I realized there was H.O.P.E.

--Lisa Heath, lifted from Quad City IL TCF

Suicide Loss Survivors' Bill of Rights

I have the right to be free of guilt.

I have the right not to feel responsible for the suicide death.

I have the right to express my feelings and emotions, even if they do not seem acceptable, as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.

I have the right to have my questions answered honestly by authorities and family members.

I have the right not to be deceived because others feel they can spare me further grief.

I have the right to maintain a sense of hopefulness.

I have the right to peace and dignity.

I have the right to positive feelings about the one I lost through suicide, regardless of the events prior to or at the time of the untimely death.

I have the right to retain my individuality and not be judged because of the suicide death.

I have the right to seek counseling and a support group to enable me to honestly explore my feelings

to further the acceptance process.
 I have the right to reach acceptance.
 I have the right to a new beginning.
 I have the right to be.
 -- Joann C. Mecca

For My Daughter

I love you now, as I so loved you then
 your Spirit is with me forever
 When you were born all of heaven sang out
 Joyous that we were together
 Your eyes twinkled bright as a billion stars
 Your lashes brushed sweet angel's kisses
 As you snuggled so warmly against my neck
 So serenely, you gave me such bliss
 As I stroked your head, very gently My Dear
 Your hair felt as soft as down feathers
 Your fingers, so tiny, wove tightly with mine
 Rainbow's end couldn't give me more treasure
 I remember you now, I'll remember you when
 every day and each night begins
 You're a part of my soul, every beat of my heart
 I promise, My Darling, Amen
 --Karinelyn Paul Bloomfield, CO TCF

Newly Bereaved...

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 un-changed. 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

Seasoned Grievers...

A Tree Full Of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with Yule adornment. Not a corner of the house was safe from this self-proclaimed Christmas Freak! One year we even hung assorted ornaments on a fake palm tree, lovingly dubbing it the "Bahama-Mama" tree, because in our family one Christmas tree was never enough. The kids even had small tabletop trees in their rooms. Our upstairs tree was the decorator tree, the one with the fancy, color-coordinated ornaments, to be handled by no one but me. The downstairs tree was the family favorite and trimmed by the children. Hanging from its branches were the ornaments that I had purchased every year for each of them from the time they were born. I always looked forward to finding just the right one that would represent their individual interests at that particular time in their lives. But as each of us knows, the holidays, as we knew them, forever changed after our precious children died. And so it was for us the Christmas of 1995, our first without Nina's shining presence. I was quite positive that I would never decorate again. It was far too painful.

Yet, something happened three Christmases ago. One night I lay in Nina's daybed, staring at the ceiling thinking Scrooge-like thoughts, wishing it was January 2nd and I could put the holidays behind me for another year. Suddenly, I found myself rise from her bed and walk to the closet where all the holiday paraphernalia was stored. I searched furiously until I found what I was looking for-- a box marked "Nina's Xmas Ornaments." I brushed away the collected dust and carried it up the stairs to the corner of the living room where a forlorn and neglected-appearing 2-foot tree stood. I recall sitting on the floor in front of the tree, sighing deeply, and gingerly opening the box, I was



afraid what the depth of my emotions would be when I saw those long untouched ornaments of Christmases past; afraid of the feelings that I had learned to hide so well from the rest of the world; afraid the floodgates would open and the tears would never stop.

I carefully lifted the cover and tenderly held each one in my hands. I found myself recalling the beautiful memories of previous Christmases when my beloved daughter was alive. There was the pink and white checked fabric baby buggy with pipe-cleaner handles of her first Xmas, followed by Teddy bears with Santa hats, and crocheted Sesame Street characters from her toddler days. There were the priceless picture ornaments taken by her nursery school teacher showing 4-year old Nina with the then-blond, wispy hair and blunt cut bangs grinning back at me. There were the handmade ones from early grade school that she affectionately created with felt and glitter; the violin and piano ornaments symbolizing her musical attempts; the self-explanatory Shop-til-You-Drop ornament; the more sophisticated ornaments for a teenage Nina, and finally the last one before her death at 15-years-old commemorating her reign as our city's Miss Teen.

I gently held them, reliving the stories behind each one and savoring the precious memories they brought with them as I placed them on the tiny tree. I then unearthed from hiding the ornaments bought after her death. Even then, I couldn't bear to stop buying them for her. There I found dark-haired angels and butterflies of every shape and color, now symbolizing her new and eternal life, and appropriately hung them alongside the others. Though tears fell as I cautiously placed them on the bare branches of the tiny tree, I felt familiar warmth radiate through-out my body, thawing the coldness in my heart and soul.

I smiled, knowing in my heart that this was a Christmas gift coming directly from Nina. I felt it was her way of telling me that perhaps it was time to find some peace and hope again in the holiday season. Not that it would or could ever be the same as it was before, or that I would ever stop missing her presence, but perhaps now begin to remember some of the joy found in priceless memories of holiday's past.

If you are in the early years of your grief, you believe you will never again feel any amount of enjoyment in the holidays. However, allow myself and other seasoned grievers to be the bearers of

hope. At one time we felt just like you. When you feel ready for even a spark of pleasure in the holidays, let it return to your heart again. I sincerely believe our children want us, in time, to accept their spirit gifts of renewed joy, peace, and hope sent to us from them with love.

With peace and gentle thoughts through this holiday season and always,

Cathy L. Seehuetter

TCF St. Paul, MN In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Friends And Family...

Little Ditty for a Support Group "Junkie"



Chat rooms, grief books, support emails, some heavy and some light, have kept me from feeling isolated especially late into the night.

As I sit at my computer by the window reading and responding to my "new kin," passerby neighbors who may see me have no idea what lies within.

Outward appearances are so deceptive, I have to give a smile, but I get such comfort here in this transparent world, if only for a while.

My new unseen friends are a lot like me, and they span across the globe, It's amazing how comfortable I am "chatting" with them as I sit here in my robe! Inventions may come and go and we all have our favorite one, For me it's the Internet which I use to help me deal with the loss of my son..

I'll send this little ditty to all my friends who I'll never get to meet but on whom I lean, And I'd like to say thank you and God bless us all, who read this on their screen.

--Alice Stephens Colin Stephens mum, United Kingdom Sorry to pester you all again but I had to respond to the "Wonderful 'Ditty'!!! that Alice wrote, it rings so true.

Its 8:30 Sunday morning, I am in my robe, fireplace is on in the next room and I have large cup of coffee next to my mouse, Christmas music

is softly playing and I prepare to greet and share with my "new kin." Alice your ditty said it so well, thanks for sharing it. While so many are preparing to go to church I still sit here in my robe and my wife yells down "get off the net! your eggs are getting cold." I say 'just a minute Hon I'll be right up and twenty minutes later I head upstairs and warm my eggs in the microwave [what a wonderful invention].

I am sorry, but I feel more connected to God and his goodness as I communicate with my bereaved brethren on the net than I do going to church. Going to church does not make you a good Christian anymore than standing in a garage makes you a car. I still go to church on occasion and applaud those that do but it is not a scheduled part of my life.

I have just started my 17th year without my precious 9 year old son Kelly. The first 10 years I did not have the Internet, surfing was something done in the ocean and I grieved in the solitary confinement of my soul and the letters written to my son. The world had long forgotten this beautiful child as did our larger circle of family and friends. I had never heard of TCF or BPUSA. My only connection to my distant "kin" was a wonderful newsletter call Hope for the Bereaved that connected me to other grieving parents and our secret society of pain. The world had thought I had moved on and finally 'gotten over it." By outward appearances it looked as if I had.

It was about that time that I started to compile things for a manuscript to attempt writing the book I had promised Kelly I would write. Typing on my 'Brother' typewriter so fancy it even had 'spell check' (another wonderful invention) and I proceeded to put pain to paper as I said I would. Secretly on the night shift at work I used their computer more and more as the book was taking form. Seeing that the computer document programs left my 'Brother' in the dust I purchased a computer for home. I could now cut and paste to my hearts content and type away madly without thoughts of correct spelling and the familiar smell of "white out."

The book was actually taking a tangible form, you could now hold my grief in your hands. I became my own grief group as I immersed myself into so many forbidden memories and I processed my grief once more. Digging into these old memories and reflecting upon them released so many more that I had long forgotten; that were

collecting dust behind grief's door. Soon Kelly became alive again and I could feel my heart swell, emerging from my prison and out of my "gotten over it" cell. Let me feel the pain, this farce has gone on long enough.

The book soon became a reality and was actually in a few stores and I was even asked to come to speak at some local church grief groups, it was then that I heard of TCF.

I signed up for Internet service and found out what surfing the web really meant. It opened a whole new world of sharing and caring and I found many grief sites, message boards, memorial pages and a plethora of services that connected so many grieving hearts from all over the world. I soon found myself traveling and conducting workshops, helping to heal and give hope to so many bereaved parents. I had no idea the enormity of child loss and no longer felt that I was alone in my continuing pain of learning to accept the unacceptable. There are lots of us out there just a key stroke away. So I now sit at my computer on Sunday mornings and some days late at night and go surfing to share with my "new kin" from Atlanta to the Netherlands, from Denver to Wales and together we find comfort in those who truly understand. Thanks again Alice.
--Love and light ...Mitch Carmody heartlightstudios.net

Welcome...

Compassionate Friends Help the Living Live



To some, it may seem that participation in The Compassionate Friends is dwelling on death. It isn't! Compassionate Friends is a positive experience that says you recognize that death is a part of life and as such, must be given the necessary attention.

Death comes to everyone at some time in their lives. Even after someone close to us dies we must go on living or die, too. Compassionate Friends wants to help you go on living. We want to help you bridge the gap that death has made in your living.

When there is death life ends for that person. And for a while, lives of those left behind seem to end, also. Our society still often isolates the dying person and unfortunately, it also isolates the bereaved person. We want to provide a place for the bereaved. A place to heal, to grow and to "become" again. A place to learn about grief and its repercussions. A place to be accepted and

understood. A place for the living to live again to take control of lives that seem to be out of control during bereavement.

Compassionate Friends will be there when you need them. For as long as you need them. We take the words, "compassionate" and "friends" seriously.

--Fay Harden, TCF of Tuscaloosa, AL

Helpful Hint...



Sitting on my porch, sipping coffee early one morning, I was entertained by two little birds flitting about, they appeared to be gathering up small twigs and such. They would fly away, but then quickly return, and repeat this process. I began to realize I had not seen them during the colder months, and pondered their habits and where they actually go. I decided to Google it. It said "they move from areas of low and decreasing resources to areas of high and increasing resources." Wow, it hit me, that's exactly what I did in the aftermath of my tragedy. I have long carried guilt for "shutting myself off" in some ways, for "avoiding places, people" in some cases, and in the many ways "I've changed". But, similar to the little birds, isn't it instinctual? To move from areas of little support or help to areas that offered aid in healing, and hope that we could survive and live.

Aaawwww, so grateful for the reminder that it is right and good to follow our heart. Give yourself permission to find the place of healing. And know we stand with you.

--Michelle Thomason, TCF, Portland, OR

Book In Review...



Love and Remembrance: A journal for Bereaved Parents by Margot Burkle. Margot, a bereaved parent, created this healing journal. A meaningful journal/family keepsake that includes thoughts from mom and dad, siblings, and grandparents, pages for special memories, footprints, handprints, and memories and reflections. Available on www.centering.org \$7.95

Those we hold most dear
Never truly leave us.
They live on in— the kindness they showed,
The comfort they shared,
The love they brought into our lives.
--Isabel Norton, San Antonio, TX

How Long Will I Hurt

How long will I hurt
 And carry this pain
 That seems to come and go
 Like a summer rain
 How long will I cry
 With my heart breaking in two
 How long will it hurt
 That I live without you?
 How many years
 Can a heart feel like this
 Knotted up and tight
 Like a boxer's fist
 How long will I think
 Of how things used to be
 When we were together
 Just you and just me
 How much can a mother
 Stand this type of pain
 That comes on as quickly
 As the warm summer rain?
 To hurt is to love
 Those who are not here
 To love is to hold
 Memories we hold dear
 I will hurt forever
 This I now know
 And cc.' softly
 Like a soft winter snow
 How long will I hurt?
 As long as I love....
 The child God sent to me
 From heaven above
 My hurting will stop
 When it's my turn to leave
 I'll depart this world softly
 Like a warm summer breeze
 And Glory will be the day
 When were together again
 Mother and child
 My love has no end

--Sharon Bryant In memory of Andy Dunbar
 1972 - 1977 TCF Website



Reflections

The sun does rise each morning,
 shedding its light on a sleeping world.
 My eyes revel in its glory—the
 way the dew glistens on each blade of grass, the
 morning mist lingers in the valley.

This day will come and go, as it does each day,
 and he will no longer walk the earth.

Time has not stood still because of his passing,
 and it saddens me so.

I take this day as a tribute to his brief existence—to
 mourn my loss, to reflect on what might have been
 had the wind blown gentler on his flame that day.

I pause to watch the morning come and go,
 breathing a sigh for the cruelty life has shown.

A single tear I will shed for my loved one whose
 departure from this world was so long ago.

To feel his existence was not in vain.

I whisper a prayer for his extinguished flame and
 hope that we will meet again one day in a place
 whose morning show will be more lovely
 than the one I now behold.

-- Stacie Harper TCF, Atlanta, GA

First Christmas

It can't possibly be Christmas
 without her being here.

Yet the world is singing round me,
 joyful tidings and good cheer.

Though I try to put on armor
 and brave the sights and sounds,
 a few moments worth of shopping,
 and the tears are spilling down.

I pray for strength to do it,
 find a path through holidays,
 look for shortcuts, good ideas,
 some directions through the maze.

Then I find at last the answer:
 I'll include her symbolically.

And the giving becomes perfect;
 her love's flowing down, through me.

--Genesse Bourdeau Gentry from Stars in the
 Deepest – After the Death of a Child

Presents For Me

A hot cup of tea on a cold afternoon,
 shared with a friend in a warm sunny room.

A new pair of slippers all snuggle and warm,
 the old ones were faded and tattered and torn.

A call to a friend when there's shopping to do,
 someone to talk to and see the job through.

A quick walk 'round the block' when feeling forlorn,
 all empty and barren like a picked field of corn.

I'll do something for me, one small thing each day,
 until I can face your being away.

--by Karen Howard From "Handling the Holidays"



Toy 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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: 1/22
Parents: Loree & Bob
Fields



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grandmother: Dorothy Match

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

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



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

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

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

Lindsay Nicole Pollack
Born: 6/94 Died: 11/23
Mother: Daphne Carroll-
Pollack

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dax Jordan Quintana
Dantas De Oliveria
Born: 6/17 Died: 8/17

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

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

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

Parents: Alexandar &
Sanderson Quintana
Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Steven Thomas Pack
Born: 8/91 Died: 3/20
Parents: Tom & Lisa Pack

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

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

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

Lilly Parker
Born: 12/15 Died: 1/17
Mother: Nicole Kawagish
Father: J.D. Parker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christopher Zuchero
Born: 5/85 - Died: 5/22
Parents: Mike & Shelly Rudeen

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

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

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

* 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.

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

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

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

Birthday Tributes...



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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

Sorry, no tributes were
submitted this month.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Siblings...



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

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

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

Climbing Lessons

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

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

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

A visit to Bergman
Michigan was always fun
for my brother and me
especially in January
when the snow was
deeper than we were tall.
Bergman is at the edge of
the Porky Pine mountain
range so escarpments
loomed a hundred yards

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

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

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

from the back door. We were rock climbers before it was a sport.

One year we escaped the stifling adult atmosphere of the house and plowed through the drifts to a small rock outcropping about 200 feet from both the house and the mountain. We quickly decided to climb the face which proved challenging wearing snow suits, gloves and boots. Climbing went fine as we pulled each other up to the next hand hold or jumped from one small ledge to the next, but we were not satisfied with reaching the top.

We decided that the snow was deep enough that we could jump off and so we did. I landed in a little trouble. I was so deep in the snow that my boots stuck and when I escaped, my boots were still held prisoner. Panicked we retraced our steps to the house, me in my socks. Poor dad grabbed a shovel and waded through the huge drifts trying to find my boots. A man cannot walk where little kids can. The rescue almost killed him. Dad ended up crawling on top of the snow, digging out the boots and crawling back.

My aunt put my brother and me in a hot tub and made hot chocolate and cookies for us. Dad had a shower and a nap. We all gained a new story for the Christmas table.

The thing is you and I are like those little boys off on an adventure, unaware of the danger, needing help, finding comfort. We have no idea of the risks encountered while climbing our fears and pain. We cannot guess the consequences of jumping into the

snow, into life, into hope. Helping us is a formidable challenge. But most of all, love can provide the comfort and security we need.

So, if you know where the hand holds are, guide me. If I am buried and trapped pull me out. I know helping is an overwhelming challenge, but in the end hot chocolate, cookies and hugs will set me up to try again. Life is not nor can it be about staying safe on the couch. Some will tell you playing in the snow is dangerous. Living is always dangerous, but there is no joy in hiding. Fear and pain cannot win. We need to leave that stifling room and return to the living, to life, to joy. With help and courage we can take the steps necessary to celebrate life rather than spend our lives cursing death.

-- Keith Sweet

To All Siblings...

Be guided by the reality that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holidays after your sibling died. Do what you need to do to get yourself through the holidays.

We grieve differently than our parents do. Yes, we need to respect their grief, but we need to remember ours. Our siblings would want us to laugh and sing along with the Christmas carols, but we just may not be ready yet. Guilt? Oh, yes, we will feel that this holiday season. But we may also celebrate their lives in our own special way.

Whatever you choose to do, do what's good for you.

Everyone is at a different stage in their grief. The holidays make the reality of loss even harder. I hope this holiday season you can find peace and love in memories. Please know you are not alone.
-- Vera, Sara's sister, TCF, Kansas City, MO

On Second Thought...

Dear Lord,

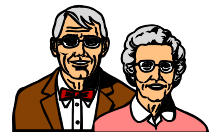
You don't know me. We've never talked. It's not that I don't believe in You— it's just I never really included You in my life. Now I'm here asking a favor.

You see, my little brother was killed the other day— so he'll be seeing You soon. I never took the time to tell him how much I loved him or how much he meant to me.

When you see him, will You tell him for me— on second thought— never mind; I think he knew it all along, he was that kind of guy. Thanks anyway, Lord.

--Cheryl Larson, TCF, Pueblo Ark Valley

For Grandparents...



Fighting Grief When it Grabs You by the Throat Again

I wasn't prepared. Nope. I wasn't prepared for grief to grab me by the throat at my granddaughter's wedding. Before the service my surviving daughter, a family therapist, handed me some tissues. "Brace yourself, Mom," she advised. "They are going to show photos of Helen." Minutes later the photo montage began, photos of my

deceased daughter holding her newborn twins, photos of the twins as toddlers, when they were older, and similar photos of the groom.

As the photos changed, I reviewed seven years in my mind. In 2007 my grandchildren's parents died from the injuries they received in separate car crashes. My daughter, the twin's mother, died on a Friday night in February. Two days later my father-in-law succumbed to pneumonia. Eight weeks after that my brother, and only sibling, died of a heart attack. The twin's father died in the fall. His death made the twins orphans and my husband and me GRGs, grandparents raising grandchildren.

When the twins moved in with us they were 15 years old. Now my granddaughter was getting married, her brother was an usher, and my paralyzed husband was going to escort the bride down the aisle. Tears trickled down my cheeks. The bridal party processed down the aisle, with my husband and the bride last. My smiling granddaughter held onto her grandfather's arm, a picture to remember for life, and I cried harder. People who knew our story were crying too.

Just when I least expected it, grief had caught me off-guard, yet I was determined to get my feelings under control. Grief feelings come from love, and that was something to celebrate. I knew I had the mental power to fight grief and I had to jump-start that power and act quickly. My enemy, grief, was not going to claim this day.

I thought about joy. In photo after photo, joy radiated from my daughter's face. She adored her children and, though she was a composite engineer with a full-time job, her children always came first. Equally important, she was a good role model, taught the twins right from wrong, and gave them guidelines to follow in life.

I thought about the twins. They had worked hard, set goals, and achieved them. Both of my grandchildren graduated from college with high honors and Phi Beta Kappa. These days, many college graduates can't find jobs. Thankfully, both of the twins found satisfying, promising jobs.

I thought about my husband's courage. My husband's aorta dissected a year ago. Surgeons operated on him three times in a desperate attempt to save his life. His life was saved, but he suffered a spinal stroke during the third operation, and his legs are now paralyzed. Yet, he escorted the bride down the aisle with poise and confidence.

I thought about what I learned from grief. Because I am a non-fiction writer, I am always doing research. Grief changed the focus of my writing from health/wellness to grief healing. In the process, I learned about traumatic loss, multiple losses, secondary losses, anniversary reactions, and more. Knowledge is power and I knew I had the power to combat grief.

Describing this process took longer than living it. All of this thinking happened in seconds. I brought my thoughts back to the moment – my smiling granddaughter in her strapless wedding dress, my grandson standing with the groomsmen, my distinguished husband, who was glad to be alive, and all the family members and friends who were at the wedding.

Grief can be quiet for months or even years, then rise up and grab us by the throat when we least expect it. You may be caught off-guard like me. Still, we have the power to fight grief. We may counter negative thoughts with positive ones. We may draw upon happy memories. We can tap the love we have for our deceased ones. We learn and re-learn a powerful truth: Love is stronger than death.

--Harriet Hodgson

From Our Members...



The Grocery Cart

Shopping. Not easy for the newly bereaved. Not easy for the old timers sometimes. Too many memories in those aisles. Grocery shopping tells a lot about people. The other day I looked into the faces of my fellow cart pushers. The more I looked the more I saw. Stress... worry... pressure. Mostly they seemed hurried, tired...even sad.

I began to wonder how often I take the time to REALLY LOOK at the people in my home. At dinner that evening I quietly studied the face of my husband...his rough, hard working hands. I looked at his shoes and wondered where his feet would take him this coming year...and how much would be sorrow and how much would be joy. And even....would he be here for all of next year? It was then that I made my only resolution for the year It is to look, REALLY look at the faces, hands and feet of the people in my life who are still alive and with me.

And not just look...but listen to the sound of

their unique voices...and put that in my memory box. Fears that bereaved parents suffer from are: "Will I be able to remember the sound of his/her voice?" and "Will I forget what he/she looked like?" I know I wish I had looked and listened more to my son...before he died.

Maybe this is one resolution that is worth keeping...while we still have time.
-- Alice Monroe Submitted by Linda Curtis

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, the people and topics change and need to talk or share fluctuates between each meeting. 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: Dec. first for Jan. 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 if you include your name. 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.



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) 963-4646 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, sibling or grandchild 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.

Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsof suicide.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	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.

Save The Date: July 12, 2024 - July 14, 2024 The 47th TCF National Conference will take place in New Orleans, LA from July 12th to 14th, 2024 More info to come.

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





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 Compassionate Friends 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 Eric Vines, July 1977 - July 1991. As Christmas nears so do the many memories of your short 14 years with us. As I make a year-end-donation to our chapter I think back to those horrendous days when our chapter was first starting out. The never ending pain and uncertainty...the fears of forgetting even the smallest detail of your life...the fear others would forget. But as with many things in grief, the anticipation is worst than the actual event. With hindsight, I can safely say "I love you as much today as I did back then. The pain has softened and blended with my "new normal" and I am content with how far I have come. Life is not what I envisioned in the beginning, but it is mine and I take full responsibility for it. Merry Christmas Eric, I love you, 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 _____

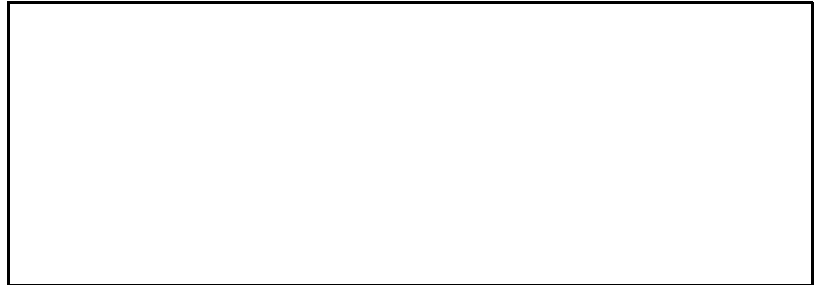
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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