



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

April 2025 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING

will be April 3rd..., 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. → Park In EAST lot. Follow path to back patio. Meetings are held at the **EAST** end of the church. Patio Meeting room is 101 classroom. Follow signs. (Last door, first floor.)

--Please remember to park in the EAST 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 April 3rd meeting will start with "Rituals and Remembrances."

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

The TCF Friday Lunch Group offers you a drop-in- place to talk about your grief every Friday at 1. In April we will meet at El Torrito, located at 23225 Hawthorne Bl, Torrance. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming.

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Connie at (310) 292-5381.

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The **Thursday April. 3rd** meeting will start with “**Rituals and Remembrances.**” They both keep us connected to each other. Why are rituals so important in our transformation and healing? When our loved ones die, they are no longer physically with us but our love for them continues. We search for ways to feel close to them. Rituals help us reclaim some control over our grief. When we take the time to sit quietly with ourselves, we can begin to remember past times. Our thoughts shift from overwhelming pain and gives us a temporary remembrance to focus on. (Oh how precious those moments have now become.)

There are no rules when it comes to rituals that will honor our children so we have the right to make them up. Overwhelming feelings start to change with memories brought out and shared. Keep it simple. Drive by special places and incorporate the feelings those memories are bringing to light. Go to a place that was special to your child and remember **WHY** it was special. Come up with ideas that will honor your child’s memory. Planting a tree, starting a scholarship, writing or journaling, donating to a local charity or TCF in memory of your child are ways some families incorporate their child’s memory into a tangible act.

Whatever you decide to do, when you start doing them remember to keep it as simple as possible in the beginning. Whether you do it alone or start a tradition to share with others, the important part is you are keeping your child’s memory alive. Think about the feelings of pride your child would feel because of your act... this will help you in your grief more than you can imagine.

With time bereaved families find reaching out to others in any way invites a camaraderie with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and friends and families that benefits everyone. We invite you to join us at the next meeting and share what helped you on your journey with grief.

Rituals

I don’t know why rituals help us heal, but often they do. One day, less than a year after Philip had died, a friend and I met on a private beach in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

The beach was special to both of us, because the mother she had lost and the son I had lost had both spent wonderfully happy hours



on it.

We didn't quite know how to do a ritual so we made one up. We each gathered a large handful of stones, and then we sat down on the sandy beach with our stones by our sides, facing one another. Each of us in turn placed a stone down on the sand, and as we did so, we shared something about the loved one we had lost. Our anecdotes ran the gamut from happy and funny to sad and longing. We laughed, and we cried.

Gradually the stones formed a circle, and we then placed the two remaining stones in its center, in honor of Philip and her mom. We stood up, hugged, and went to have lunch at a favorite place nearby. There we shared photographs and more memories. By the time we parted, we both knew her mom and my son were happily alive in both our memories. And we felt wonderful for having celebrated their lives together.

After I moved to California, I met my dear friend Nell at the first TCF Marin meeting I attended. And ever since, on the birthdays of our sons and on the day they each died, Nell and I have gathered at a special beach to do our own ritual, similar to the first but unique to us. We like to toss flowers into the ocean in honor of John and Philip. Nell often brings something to read, which I like and will do in the future, too. We, too, laugh and cry. We often, but not always, do the circle of stones. I love that I'm getting to know her John, and that she is becoming acquainted with my Philip. Though our two beloved sons died, their spirits, their humor, their extraordinary creativity and their love are very present in these gentle sharing times.

I encourage you to do whatever rituals are helpful and easy for you. Feel free to borrow ours. May whatever you do to celebrate and remember your child’s touch and bring ease to your heart.

--Catharine (Kitty) Reeve

TCF Marin and San Francisco Chapters, CA
In Memory of my son, Philip

Mourning Is My Mode

Today I realized that I have become a shell of the person I once was. What would my child think of this? I am alone, my only child is gone, yet I know he would not be pleased with the way I have isolated myself, wrapped in invisible crepe, sheltered by a mental wall. This is not the mom he knew. I am someone different now. What am I to do with this? I feel like a lonely, mourning swan,

swimming endlessly from shore to shore. I have no direction, I want no direction, I just keep moving with no purpose. I must get a grip on myself. I know my motions must take on some meaning. I look to others for help. Yet I realize that if I do not reach out and help myself, I will crash on the rocks with the raging tide.

I decide I will add one new thing, one new event, one new person or one new writing to each day. I will reach out to others. I will force myself to move slowly back into life. I will spend some time with my family. I will enjoy their children. I will mentor a child. I will start putting my thoughts into a written form.

I begin to do these things. I feel better. I attend another meeting of the parents who have lost their children. I feel as if I do belong here. It has been four months since my son died. I am overwhelmed.

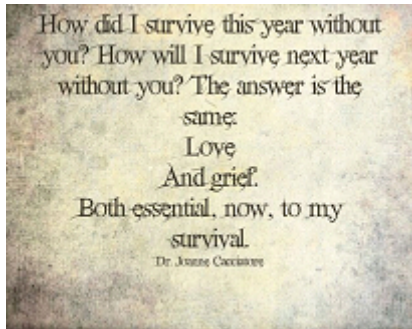
--Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son,
Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Another Death Anniversary

It has been three years since my son died.

On the anniversary of his death, I went through the morning saying very little. In the afternoon I left work and went for a drive. I drove past the park we used to love for those special talks and special events. I drove past the high school he attended. I drove around the neighborhood thinking of him peddling his heavy-duty bike as he delivered his papers seven days a week. I remembered the good times and some of the "teaching moments". I drove past the first house that he bought and remembered how proud he was of his purchase and all the work he did making that house a home for his child and wife.

As I drove, I felt the deep burning in my eyes of tears so long repressed. Has it really been three years since he left us? I remembered the day he died, the days that followed his death and months of withdrawal after his memorial service. I remembered all the firsts....the first Christmas, the first Easter, the first Mother's Day, the first birthday, the first Thanksgiving and the first anniversary of his death. I remembered the agony, the heartache, the gut churning shock of losing my child to death. How did I survive this? I wondered why I am still



here.

How can any mother whose only child has died begin to get a grip on sanity? Have I gotten a grip on sanity? How could I accept losing my son's daughters to the long-term, seething hatred of my husband and me by my former daughter-in-law? How did I endure the protracted pain of the wrongful death suit she filed against my husband and me in the accidental death of my child? What did I say in all those depositions? Who were those lawyers? Were they thinking of my child or just the money they would receive? How can I help my child's son as he moves forward into adulthood?

How do I take the endless days of longing for my child's voice, his hug, his special "I love you, mom"? How can I stand hearing other parents talk about taking flowers to their children's grave or putting candles next to their child's urn, when I don't even know what my former daughter-in-law did with my son's cremated remains?

The answer is not simple, yet it is not complex, either. The answer is in honoring my child in a way that exemplifies his life – gently, persistently and without reservation. The twisting road to this discovery has been made much smoother with the help of my Compassionate Friends group. I listen. They talk. They listen. I talk. The dialogue has grown to be part of who I am now. The conversations help me to chart my way on this stormy sea that is now my life. Without these gentle, understanding parents, I probably would have lost my mind. But they are there for me, month after month. They are there daily if I need them. They help me, and I help them. Each of us does our best in the hope of giving and gaining peace and solace.

I finished the anniversary day by purchasing a small wind chime. I took it to the little bench and marker that are surrounded by a small garden which our Compassionate Friends group maintains in memory of our beautiful children. When I hung it on the branch of a bush, I listened as the chimes sang their beautiful song...a song for my child. Briefly I thought that someone might take it. But then I thought, I don't care. This is for today. This is my way of reaching out to my son today...on the third anniversary of his death. If it's gone next week, I will be sorry, but it won't matter. I have honored my son on this sad day. The gentle song of these chimes will float upwards and reach him today. That is what matters. It is in this little garden that I visit my son today. This is where a little bit of

peace touches my soul. Once again, I thank my Compassionate Friends for providing an answer.
-- Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy, TX

Create A Memory Garden



The physical activity of working and tending to a garden can give comfort and quiet time to remember special memories that you once shared. Creating a memory garden will help you feel closer to those you lost and create a tribute to the one you loved. To begin a memory garden, find a private place or choose a location that has meaning. Remember to plant from our heart. Choose plants that evoke memory, fond regards and celebrations of life.

Things to Consider When Creating Your Garden:

- Start simple. Plant a few things each year.
- Plant their favorite flowers or choose flowers that you loved or has special significance and plant those.
- Plant during their favorite season and choose flowers, plants or trees that are in season at that time. For example if they loved spring, plant bulbs.
- Plant the flower of their birth month, namesake plants, or plants that represent their initials. Select flowers in colors that he/she loved.
- Choose flowers with their favorite fragrances or certain scents they loved. Example, if they loved the smell of lavender, include a lavender plant in the garden.
- Select flowers or plants with special meaning. For example, pink carnations mean "I'll never forget you". And yellow roses represent friendship. Roses also have names that might describe your loved one.
- Include statues and remembrance gifts throughout the garden. If they loved dogs, include a small statue of their favorite breed.
- Add a small plaque or stepping stones describing what in the garden has special significance, or why it reminds you of your child.
- If possible try to include a bench in the area. This way, friends and family have a place to sit and reflect on special times that were shared.
- Your memory garden project can be just yours or involve the whole family. Not only could the best "memory flowers" be chosen, but once in bloom, flowers could be pressed as memories for the

family album or scrapbook.
--TCF St. Paul newsletter

Spring Cleaning

We used to live in a townhouse, one of those inventions designed to minimize housekeeping chores, mortgage payments and a tendency to accumulate more things than one needs to cross the Sahara in summer. We moved there because I liked the idea of no yard work, and we would be unburdened by conversations of "It's-Saturday-so-mow-the-lawn." I hate housework (it hates me too!), and we wanted a less complex life.

Smaller places do have a certain appeal... especially during the "It's Spring and that means let's-get-organized-around-here-and-throw-out-all-YOUR-stuff" mood that tends to permeate the months of March and April.

When you only have one closet, cleaning it takes a minimum of time. Opening the door starts the process, and if you are clever, you will stand with an open trash bag as you pry open the door. Always do this at 2:00 a.m. when the other nearby occupants in your town home are asleep, or during those few quiet moments of solitude you get after announcing that Dairy Queen is having a twenty-minute-only-special, and you have (thoughtfully) placed the keys in the car.

Designed by some psychologist in an effort to help patients rid their psyches of old memories, useless information and general "clutter," spring cleaning has become an American phrase most often associated with grief. It is a painful process, this sifting and sorting of all the things that tell us (and the rest of the world) who we are or were.

There are as many ways to spring clean as there are homes and hearts and minds and spirits that need "adjusting" (a real psychological term thrown in just to remind you that I am a professional too!)

How many times have you been told "It's time to move on," or, "It's time to get back to normal," or, "You mean you haven't gotten rid of that yet?" (That can refer to a multitude of things such as his favorite pipe, her bathrobe that the dog attacked during one his "spells," or an odd assortment of baseball cards, used gum wrappers and dirty socks that were secreted under the bed, left behind for you to find and cry over.

How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to spring clean! How come everybody

else knows when it is time for me to open that closet and sort through all those memories, trying to decide which ones to keep and which ones to pass on to the Salvation Army? How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to get back to living?

I am spring cleaning. I am sifting through the “stuff” that made up my loved one’s life and I am learning to let go of a few things...slowly.

When we moved to a townhouse, we thought life wouldn’t be so complicated. I wouldn’t have to go out into the yard and remember how wonderful it was to enjoy the first spring flowers...with him. I don’t want to cut the grass, because we loved playing in it, tickling our bare toes and laughing our way through spring into summer. We moved to a town house so we couldn’t keep everything forever. It doesn’t stay around anyway, so why have storage space? Why have cupboards that no longer need to hold cereal that turns the milk blue, or closets that no longer need to hold baseball shoes, bats and crumpled homework pages? Why have room for memories?

WHY? Because, I can’t live without them! Spring is a time for spring cleaning, for sifting and sorting and re-reading and remembering. Spring is a time for things to go and things to stay. We just have to decide which ones do what. Spring is a time for renewal, when the earth begins to defrost after a harsh and bitter winter. It doesn’t matter when your loved one died; it does matter when you begin to let spring back into your life. It does matter when you open that closet and let the memories come out, along with the hurts and the hopes that you buried one day not so very long ago.

You never know what you are going to find when you start spring cleaning. You might discover treasures you had long forgotten, or the tax papers you needed, or the Easter egg no one found last year. You might find a few bits of joy lurking under the bed (we found dust bunnies). What fun to remember how that stuff got there or who might have been hiding under the bed when you were looking for volunteers for trash patrol!

When we lived in a town house, we thought that maybe, in a few years, we could stretch out into something a bit larger (and have a maid, too!). Maybe we would just start a little patch of grass out front, plant a seed or two in a clay pot on the patio, and live with what we have. Eventually, my house got larger, and my heart has grown, too!
-- Darcie Simms

April Reflections

Spring - Easter - Passover

Spring means new growth, flowers, green grass, butterflies, budding trees and with this comes hope for the future. Easter reminds us of a life hereafter and the children’s laughter fills our hope as they engage in Easter egg hunts and Easter bunnies.

Passover remembers the ones no longer with us— and as we mourn their loss we understand that the life of the dead is now in the memory of the living.

Lent often brings up talk about “giving up things” - I would prefer to hear people say what they are doing for others, for Lent. Forgiveness could be a start, followed by love. Add also patience, understanding and friendship. It’s better to be less critical of others and more loving instead.

Priorities can change. One of our bereaved parents observed how her priorities have changed since the death of her child. She used to find it important to shop for material things. She told us about a recent day; as she was about to leave the house her grandson wanted to show her something, but she said she didn’t have the time right then. After a moment, she reconsidered and said, sure she had time.... How many of us forget it only takes a few minutes or a smile, to make someone else’s day. Bereaved parents know more than anyone we might not get a second chance. So tonight, when we turn out the light and reflect on the day, I hope we all can say “this was a good day not only for me but for the kindness I showed to others”.

--Othell Heaney TCF, Brandywine Hundred, DE

The Compassionate Friends is for Sharing

Many people may think that meetings of The Compassionate Friends consist of bereaved people who sit and cry most of the evening, but that is certainly a misconception. It is normal to shed tears as we talk about our child’s death, and we would expect a newly bereaved person to cry. We understand that completely. But we don’t just sit and cry. Would you believe that most of the time we spend in our sharing group circle we may enjoy hearing others’ stories about



their children, or even sharing our own? Our meetings are usually about our memories, our questions and also telling what has helped us to cope with it all. We all have ideas that we share with others in the hope that they may reach a point of "good memories" instead of bad memories of the child's death.

A support group should be very comforting and welcoming to those who attend and should always have non-judgmental members. We are less concerned at how the child died (even though we do care) and we are more concerned that we be there for the parents, siblings or grandparents who need us. They have a desire to talk and share about their loved one. We want to let them lean on us in their time of pain, just as we had others before us who let us lean on them. It does come full circle.

--Jackie Wesley TCF, East Central Indiana & Miami-Whitewater chapters

The Waves of Grief

Grief is like the ocean tides with their constant ebb and flow. Sometimes the tides are quiet sometimes the strong wind blows.

The pain is like the ocean waves that roll way out in the sea.

Sometimes the motion is gentle and lulls me into a sense of complacency.

But then from out of nowhere treacherous storm clouds fill the air. The sharp, white foam waves lash over me and overwhelmed me with despair.

Just as a vicious storm waves battering the rock will eventually etch their mark, so too, the ravishment of pain and grief, have taken a toll on my heart.

--"Living With Loss," livingwithloss.com

"Unless you believe'
you are worthy of reconciliation
and healing your suicide grief,
you will question it, inhabit it,
deny it, or push it away."

--Alan D. Wolfelt

Disenfranchised Grief

There is a particular type of grief that sadly more and more parents are suffering from today

called "disenfranchised grief." Counselors and therapists also refer to it as "stigmatized grief." The children of these parents died from suicide, drug related overdose, and aids.

These bereaved parents are often scorned, ostracized and denigrated. Many receive little or no support from family, friends, co-workers and society in general. With unspoken words, the world casts a pall of blame and shame on these individuals with the unspoken implication that if they had been better parents they could have somehow prevented such a tragedy from occurring. Many people never hear their friends or loved ones mention their precious child's name again. They generally do not receive the same level of support that accidental and natural cause deaths do. This exacerbates the grief process.

This ever increasing phenomenon has very little literature or research available at this time to aid these parents in their journey through grief. As members of TCF we need to be especially tender with these parents. We can embrace them and welcome them to share the stories about their children. The heartbreaking circumstances under which these children died do not define their lives as a whole. We all loved our children dearly and were the best parents that we knew how to be. If it were otherwise we would not need TCF and the support it gives.

--Janet Reyes

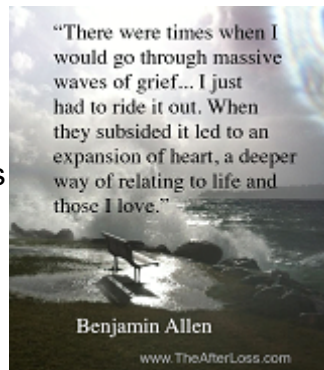
What They Don't Tell You about Child Loss

They don't tell you that you'll never be the same—not that you won't ever feel joy or love the life you have—but that it changes you. They don't tell you about the countless sleepless nights and the not knowing why, holding your thoughts captive and the guilt that threatens to creep in.

They don't tell you about the hole that can never be filled or replaced mostly because you never ever want it to. You don't want it to because you hold space for your child, and you don't want that to ever go away.

They don't tell you about the questions ... How many kids do you have? How old are your children? Are you going to try for a girl or a boy? When are you going to have another?

They don't tell you about the looks people will give you once you tell them your baby has died. They don't know what to say or do. Neither do you.



They don't tell you about the endless tears,

But ... they also don't tell you that you will smile. You will smile at the wildflowers as the sun shines and the warm sun kisses your face. That you will laugh as you watch your other children grow and become the goofy, loveable, amazing humans God created them to be.

They don't tell you that you will gain compassion like none other for those who are hurting because you've been there and you can feel deeply what they have felt—and in an incredibly difficult way, that becomes a gift.

They don't tell you that you will see life differently... More beautiful, more sacred, more precious because this time is all we have. They don't tell you that every day you will dream about seeing your baby again, about holding her, about being with her. Heaven feels a whole lot closer. Not that you don't hold all these earthly moments sacred but that you have a treasure like no other to look so forward to.

To the child loss mamas, you are a special kind of beautiful, and I pray you know you are not alone.
--Kristen Murphy

Newly Bereaved...

There's No Wrong Way to Grieve

Death comes in so many shapes and sizes. Sometimes it's quick and extraordinarily tragic circumstances. Sometimes it's slow, painful, and drawn out. In all the different ways death affects our lives, grief is the same. Grief is an angry beast unlike any other, and let me assure you, there is no wrong way to grieve. There is no wrong emotion to feel. In fact, you will most likely feel everything and nothing at the same time.

You will feel angry, like the universe stole something so precious from you while simultaneously ripping out a piece of your heart, leaving a gaping void that not even Duct Tape can fix. You will feel the most intense sadness rush in, attacking every happy thought, crushing them with Hulk hand fury. This sadness may last minutes, hours, days, or weeks. But hold on, because just as quickly as it began, it will end.

Breathe. You will feel nothing. Numb. Lifeless. The simple acts of feeding and dressing yourself should be commended. You will find that it takes superhuman strength to get out of bed and face the day.

Some days you will feel happiness. You will remember the good times and wonderful memories you made. You will laugh at their quirks you miss most, like the annoying way they would slurp the last bits of ice from their favorite Sonic slushy, or how they insisted on singing along to every song in their favorite songs. You would trade anything to hear that slightly off-key harmony just one more time.

More often than you might think, you will forget they are not here anymore. You will go about living your normal everyday life, need to ask them a question and as you pick up the phone to call ... BAM! Reality punches you square in the face with epic force. The pain will rush in again, crippling you for a moment until your brain can negotiate with your heart and allow you back into the present. This will leave you with crippling anxiety and depression which there will be no cure.

The emotions and feelings you will experience are innumerable, but rest assured, you will get through each one and each one will make you stronger. You will reconcile your overwhelming pain and have more moments of peace. You will overcome your bitter sadness and experience joy. But you must never forget these feelings. Truly embracing your emotions is a powerful tool that takes courage and time. Use them to allow yourself to keep living. And most importantly, never forget that the beast of grief has many faces.

There is no wrong way to grieve, so never apologize for what you feel in the moment. One day, you may even be able to help someone else with your voice.

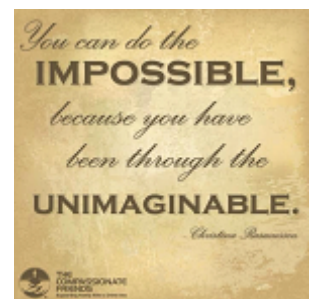
--Jessica Grillo

Seasoned Grievers...

Moving Through The Grief of Losing A Child

I was a woman like many others; focused on my five children and family, living a quiet life on Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington. And then, in August 2004, our lives changed. That night, eight teenagers piled into an SUV and took a midnight joyride. My 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed.

The thought of losing a child— if “losing” is the correct verb— had never crossed my mind.



Tragedies, as such, were something that happened to someone else, something you read about in the paper or heard from a neighbor. Nothing could have prepared me for the deep pain...but nothing could have prepared me for the peace that now permeates my mind and heart.

The shock sets in; everything moves in slow motion as if time comes to a halt, and time has halted. An acquaintance delivers a candle on day six with a card inscribed, "Place this candle in your kitchen. Each night while you prepare the family meal, know that the shimmering of the candlelight reflects the child who now lives within you." A lovely thought. Eight years later, I still light a candle on my kitchen windowsill. My child lives within me now.

The days turn to weeks. Friends surround you, keeping you busy, your mind occupied. Absorb their kindness. Accept their help. Eliminate expectations. Learn to be gentle with yourself. Give yourself space. Make room for quiet. Always remember that grief is personal, as is death. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve.

Seek out therapy. You may be ready. Share your story and connect with others. Surround yourself with those who will listen, not necessarily those who will offer advice. For it is when others listen that we can sort out our thoughts and settle our mind.

Your inner strength seeks you out, sometimes sooner in the process, sometimes later. That strength moves you forward— tiny steps in this process.

Let the memories fill your mind. Let yourself laugh again. Smile. Sing out when a favorite song you shared plays on the radio. Let your heart awaken to the joys memories bring. Pay attention to the synchronicity and patterns in your life. Pay attention to your intuition. And pray. It doesn't matter what you believe. Just ask, notice, and respond. Faith, hope and love all intersect. Maybe things will begin to make a little sense, just maybe.

Look to your children who live. Note their resilience and strength during this epic period of trauma. Let their sense of life and hope inspire you. When the pain returns, and it will, allow yourself to go to the depths of that pain. Cry. I promise, you will be okay when you resurface.

And as you move towards years four and five, you will learn that yes, life has been a living nightmare, and it is okay to admit that. Realize that as the years pass, you will learn to weave your loss

into your daily life. Accepting the loss of a loved one is to release, but not erase. To hold. But not to hold the pain.

As year five turns towards eight, my hope is that you can slowly wrap yourself around the idea that you can celebrate life and celebrate death. Death and gratitude can go hand-in-hand. Just possibly, it is those who have passed before us who are our greatest teachers. Remember always that you never walk alone because the life of someone who passes lives on in the love you shared.

-- Caroline Flohr author of *Heaven's Child*

Looking Forward...

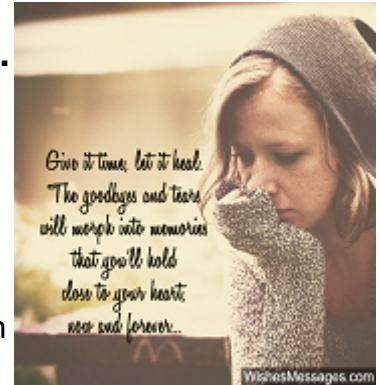
Survivor

She walked into the room, her memory seared into my mind. I will never forget her face — the pain was excruciating, raw, all surrounding and all encompassing. She held her down parka around her like a blanket that could keep out the mind-numbing cold, unimaginable pain, emptiness and sadness that went to the core of your heart and soul.

Three years later I saw her at The Compassionate Friends — she had survived! Her hair and nails were done, the blanket of protection was not on the surface, though always will be a part of her, but more hidden. Loss of a beloved child is a scar that time can cover but never erase.

There was a smile and conversation. Slowly the layers of indescribable pain are peeled away, one moment, one hour, one day, one week, one month, one year at a time. She survived, and life somehow goes on with our memories, stories, tears and deepest love that death can not take away.

--TCF Minneapolis, MN member



Friends And Family...

Thank You For Understanding

After my son, Eric died, I was devastated and expected my friends to be there for me. After a couple of months I realized some of them were...some weren't. Looking back four years, I have gained some perspective about this. Yes, it was hard having to suffer the additional loss of

friends when people shied away, as if you had some contagious disease they might catch. After all, our families were so similar, and if my son could die, so could theirs. Seeing me, made that realization all too real for them. Not knowing what to say, or being afraid to say the wrong thing made them uncomfortable...it was easier for them to distance themselves. I'm sure they weren't trying to be cruel, they just wanted to stay in their "safe" little world and not have to visit their own vulnerability.

On the flip side, I want to thank those friends and family member who took the time to listen as I poured out some of the pain. Their ability to sit with me while I cried out in my sadness and frustrations helped me to not feel so helpless.

They encouraged me to reinvest in life again when I was exhausted from grieving. They gave me the emotional support I truly needed. No, they couldn't make it okay, but they could help me deal with my new life as a bereaved parent.

And a special thanks to my new friends I found in a general grief support group we attended. Together, we leaned on each other and came to the conclusion that we needed to start our TCF South Bay/L.A. Chapter. We got it going, and through TCF, I have met new friends who truly understand what you go through when a child dies. I will forever be grateful for you, as we traveled this journey through grief together.

--Lynn Vines, TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

Book In Review...



Flowers on a Child's Grave by Lisa Epperson. A collection of heartbreaking stories from 14 families that had to face the devastation of losing a child and how they continued to live. This is a perfect resource for someone going through the pain and anguish of losing a child.



Helpful Hint...

"Our heart knows there will be no more new memories, that is why we hold and cherish those we have so dearly. It is the love remembered that gives us hope in the midst of our sorrow."

--Marie Hofmockel

Welcome...

As members of The Compassionate Friends, we understand what you are experiencing. Like you, we have also lost a dearly beloved child. We share your pain, and while every journey through grief is unique, we are here to support you. We welcome you to attend our meetings and see for yourself how helpful they can be.

Attending your first meeting takes courage. We know this and it is always hard for us to say "welcome" because we are so sorry for the reason which brought you to us... However, we are glad you found us. Coming to meetings allows you a chance to meet others who are making the same journey. You are never required to speak, but often, listening to others talk about what helped them on their individual grief journeys is very informative, and will help with some of the never ending questions we all have to come to terms with in our loss. TCF helps you learn different strategies for coping with grief. Bring a partner or friend to lean on if you wish.

The special bond that occurs when you are with others who truly understand the anguish you are facing is invaluable. Every meeting is different and we may have a topic to get us started but it quickly transcends into any questions and feelings you are experiencing. Give TCF a chance. We need all the help we can find during this difficult time.

--Lynn Vines South Bay/L.A. CA

The Child That's Not There

The child that's not there
Takes up every piece of me
The child that's not there
Consumes my every thought
The child that's not there
Makes me feel like I failed
The child that's not there
Took away a main reason for being
But

The children that are there
Still somehow bring me joy
The children that are there
Still need my love
The children that are there
Don't need any more grief
The children that are there
Force me to go on.

--Tricia Palmer TCF Tidewater, VA



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brian Daniel Edelman
Born: 5/86 Died: 8/23
Father: Ray Edelman

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alexandra Chi
Born: 2/03 Died: 12/24
Father: David Chi
Parents

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nicolas Frank DiMarco
Born: 9/89 Died: 9/22
Father: Frank DiMarco

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zachary Hyun Joon
Jeong
Born: 12/24 Died: 12/24
Parents: Ken Jeong &
Cydne Shapiro

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christopher 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

David Reade
Born: 4/72 Died: 9/23
Brother of Bobby Reade

Ronald Reade II
Born: 9/69 to 8/23
Brother of Bobby Reade

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

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

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

Christian Saylor
Born: 10/90 Died: 10/24
Parents: Jeff & Coco
Saylor

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

Julie Catherine Thomas
Born: 1/80 Died: 9/2023
Mother: Mary Thomas

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

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

Mark T. Vasquez
Born: 5/75 Died: 5/11
Parents: Manuel &
Blanca Vasquez Jr.

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

Adam Michael Wechsler
Born: 3/2003 Died: 11/23
Father: Zach Wechsler

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

Ryan Yorty
Born: 4/81 Died: 5/84
Mother: Denise Gonzales

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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

Vincent Zuniga
Born: 1/99 - Died: 10/24
Parents: Shonnie Allen & Eddie Zungia

* 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...**Laughing Through the Tears**

They say that laughter is the best medicine, but that's really only part of it. It is the sense of connection and community that comes with laughter. It is comforting knowing that there is someone else who knows how you feel, who has felt the same way. Being able to laugh with someone else about a shared experience makes it that much less lonely. As unique as each of our own losses is, and however personal our individual grief processes are, there many aspects that are universal.

This summer will mark 22 years since the death of my brother Russell, and it has been my sense of humor and my willingness to share it with others that has kept me sane, kept me connected to people, and kept me laughing despite all I have to cry about.

I decided I wanted to be a comedian when I was 9, so most of my adult life has been filtered through comedy. I have always looked for the joke as the

silver lining in the darkness. Even when Russell died, my first instinct was to process my thoughts through a joke. Russell was a pastry chef. When my dad asked me what kind of funeral he might have wanted, I replied, "I have no idea, all I know is that the cake afterwards has to be amazing.

In the week after Russell died, while we were sitting Shiva, my best friend asked, "How long before I can make fun of you for this?" I laughed right away, because I understood exactly what he meant: how long before we can talk about this the same way we talk about everything else?

For me, being able to joke and laugh about the experience of losing Russell has been one of the ways that I have found for normalizing the conversation. Despite the fact that we will ALL go through loss at some point in our lives, we rarely talk about it, so we often feel alone in our thoughts. Unable to express how we are feeling. I was lost in my own head a lot.

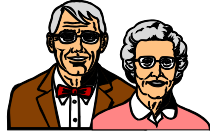
The first book on grief I read in the early days of my loss was "I'd Rather Laugh: How To Be Happy Even When Life Has Other Plans For You." Written by Linda Richman (the actual real life inspiration for Mike Myers Coffee Talk character on SNL) In the book, Linda talks about how after the death of her son Jordan, she would take a bus into Manhattan every day from Queens – with no appointments, nowhere to be – just waiting for someone to strike up small talk with her so she could unload her grief on them. "Oh, nice day we're having." "Oh really? My son just died in an automobile accident, what's nice about today?!"

She would do this 10-20 times a day, just ruining peoples' day left and right. This made me laugh so much. I got it. As crazy as this behavior is, I understood EXACTLY what she was saying, what she NEEDED to be expressing so bluntly. Even she acknowledged that it was an extreme reaction to what she was going through, but it was refreshing to hear someone so openly expose their own fears and needs. I needed to laugh at the absurdity of it all, and I understood then that I always would, even if I had no idea how.

I feel incredibly lucky to have found people who I am comfortable laughing OR crying with. My ever widening circle of TCF Sibs continue to remind me that I am not alone. I will always feel Russell's absence, and I will likely always yearn for what cannot be, but I will also always laugh a little when I hear him making fun of me in that sing-songy way kids do, "Ha-ha, you have to go to group therapy!"
-- Jordon Ferber

For Grandparents...

If You Were Here



If you were here we could go shopping. If you were here I could take you for rides to the woods, where you could hear the birds and see the squirrels. And with luck, a deer, a raccoon, and some of the other neat animals that live in the woods. If you were here we could sing songs and play games. If you were here you and I could watch the sunset and you could ask, "But Gramma where does the sun go? Doesn't it go out when it goes in the water?" If you were here we could do all the little things that people take for granted. But most of all—if you were here I could kiss and hug on you. I love you Kayla.

--Gramma of Kayla Nichole Ramsey
TCF, Tampa FL

From Our Members...



TCF National Conference Is A Healing Experience

I was hesitant at first... I couldn't afford it, it was a long way from home in some big fancy hotel and I didn't

understand how much it could possibly help me. Many reasons to avoid attending, even though my TCF Friends were going and thought my excuses weak.

Boy, am I glad they convinced me.

The National Conference is a special place for bereaved families. A wealth of understanding and learning crammed into a weekend of sadness, hope, remembering and growing into the next phase of our lives that shouldn't be missed. Two other TCF families knew what they were doing when they coaxed me into attending the second year after my son died. Although leery and unsure, our whole family went. Looking back I truly believed I crammed a years worth of healing into that weekend. It was a beautiful and uplifting experience I personally wish every bereaved family would benefit from.

As you've heard many times, everyone grieves differently and there is no right or wrong way to go about it. But from having had the experience for the next several years I saved and looked forward to attending every summer. Expensive, but totally worth the costs involved, the National conferences

and the conviction of becoming a better person instead of a bitter one was one of the best things I did for my own sanity.

Give the conference a try. There literally is something for everyone to connect with. Kids events, Sibling specialities, fabulous accommodations, and the ease of just being able to take the time to adjust to our new roles as bereaved parents is helpful to everyone.

There are no wrong choices. If you don't like your first workshop choice, try another workshop. Rest and gain emotional strength in the serenity room to tackle the next event. Browse the gift shops and bookstores for informative bereavement material, memorial ideas and souvenir. From the opening ceremony to workshops, key note speakers, banquets and special performances, to the candle lighting program and walk to remember, you find yourself swept away in a place that puts healing your broken heart your first priority.

--Lynn Vines TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

In this Place

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled a dreadful distance. You have come, seeking solace, understanding, hope, threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.

In this place you can relax and breathe . . . the coats of others' expectations taken off. Walk into these few days as into an oasis where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed. In this place all names can be spoken; in this place each one's story can be told. We will not be discouraged by your sorrow; in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting; we do not count how many tears are shed. Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage, for the long and winding road we see ahead.

And those we love are pleased we are together, smile down on us, and bless these days, glad for every tiny step we are taking as they send their light to guide us on our ways. Traveling with us as we journey onward, sending strength for what the miles may bring, they are a part of everything we do that matters – in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

--Genesse Bourdeau Gentry for the 2004 Compassionate Friends National Conference in Hollywood, CA on 7/23/2004

Hotel and Conference Registration Now Open

We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 48th Annual National Conference in Bellevue, WA!

TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief. Participants create friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

A Sampling of Workshop Topics Include:

Parent's Grief, Sibling Loss, Grandparent's Grief, Loss of Only/All Children, Workshops specific to the type of loss such as suicide, homicide, miscarriage, substance related causes, and more.

Creativity in grief, Early grief experiences as well as long-term grievers, Grief with or without spiritual or religious beliefs, and more

Registration Includes:

Friday Morning Opening Session
Friday Luncheon Banquet & Keynote Session
Friday Evening Special Session
Saturday Evening Banquet, Keynote Session, & Candle Lighting Program.
All General Sessions Workshops
Sharing Sessions
Special Performances
Sibling Sunday
All Activity Rooms

Registration Rates:

Adult Registration \$360 special opening rate \$265
(*special opening rate ends April 18th at midnight, PST*)

Active Military/Student Registration \$285 special opening rate \$190
(*special opening rate ends April 18th at midnight, PST*)

Child Registration (9-17 years old) \$240 special opening rate \$145
(*special opening rate ends April 18th at midnight, PST*)

Hotel Accommodations:

This year's conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue. Reservations can now be made

online at TCF's dedicated reservation link. Our discounted room rate with the Hyatt is \$165 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in Bellevue! Reservations and more information available at www.compassionatefriends.org

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: April first for May 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.



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 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.

Leo & Connie Licciardone (chpt. leaders)....(310) 292-5381
 Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla (chapter leaders).....(310)530-8489
 Lori Galloway.....(760) 521-0096
 Linda Zelik.....(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) 236-3635, 4th Thurs.
 Spanish speaking: Mary Trujillo (323) 347-9469

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: (800) 821-6819

Walk with Sally: Cancer loss bereavement & art
 therapy for children. (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
survivorsofsuicide.com	alivealone.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	M.A.D.D..org
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)	

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 Mueller

WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone

Steering Committee Members:

Linda & Joe Zelik

Marilyn Nemeth

Bill Matasso

Nancy Lerner

Connie & Leo Licciardone

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla



Lori Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Kristy Mueller

Kitty Edler

Susan Kass

National Office Information: Compassionate Friends
 E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly
 e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's
 going on with the organization and its chapters. We
 encourage everyone use the valuable information it
 holds to help you in your grief. To receive TCF's
 e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting TCF national
 website at <http://compassionatefriends.org>. and filling
 out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

The National Office of TCF... has an ongoing support
 group for parents and siblings online. For a complete
 schedule and to register for Online Support, visit
<http://compassionatefriends.org> and follow the directions
 to register. There is also a closed group chat 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

A Special Thanks to Staples for their help in printing



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. **In honor and in remembrance of you child, please consider a donation to our chapter.**

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

No Donations were submitted this month.

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.

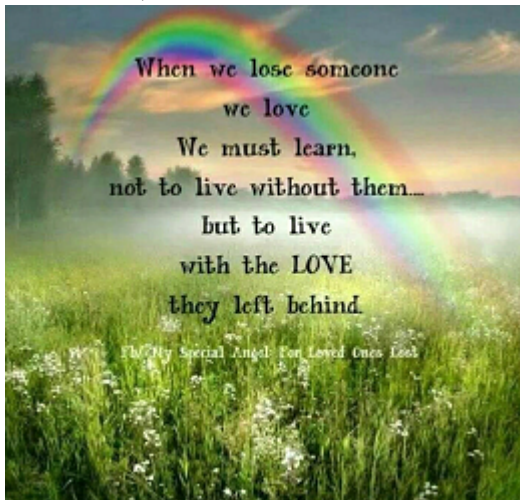
In loving memory of _____ Birth date _____ Death date _____

Tribute _____

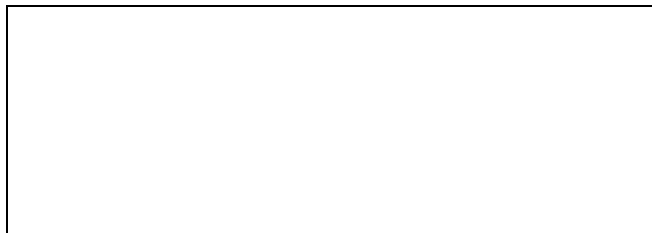
We are always working a month in advance. To include your donation in the next newsletter we must receive it by the first of the month, otherwise it will appear in the following issue.

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

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April 2025

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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.