

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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**The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.**

*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month in the HCA building on Park Plaza just north of Centennial Park off of 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, North. Inside, you will see our sign and someone will greet you. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend*

## Guest Speaker Joan Bruce With us for April 13 Meeting

Joan Bruce is a Grief Recovery Specialist having received her certification from the Grief Recovery Institute in 2007. She also holds a Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Trevecca Nazarene University. Joan is currently employed by the Babb Center in Hendersonville, which provides a variety of counseling services for families. She will be speaking on “Unraveling Powerful Emotions” dealing with emotions like pain coming in part from the emotional incompleteness of the relationship—things you wish had ended better or differently, or from the expectations, hope and dreams for that person’s future that will not come to pass. Plan to be present at 3:00 pm to hear her.



### Phone Friends

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can't reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

- Accidental Death** .....Mike and Paula Childers  
646-1333
- AIDS**.....Joyce Soward  
754-5210
- Illness**.....David and Peggy Gibson  
356-1351
- Infant**.....Patti Drexler  
834-8892
- SIDS**.....Kris Thompson  
931 486-9088
- Murder/ Suicide**.....Joe Ladd  
361-7996
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley  
237-9972

**Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We Need Not Walk Alone.**

## BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

### Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may call the Crisis Center at 615 244-7444.

### Sharing

Sharing is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. The parent support group meets the second Thursday evening of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave).

### Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

The first Thursday of each month, an ongoing support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674. For general grief (loss of parents, adult siblings, etc.) call 615 963-4732, leave a message and a counselor will return your call.

### Times for TCF Videos

Do you have a question about what you're feeling? This informative thirty-minute program about grief and The Compassionate Friends can be seen on Channel 19 (Community Access Channel) in the Nashville area. Two videos are shown, with a break between them giving information about the Nashville chapter. The program may be seen on Mondays at 2:00 P.M., Tuesdays at 8:30 A.M., Wednesdays at 10:00 A.M., Thursdays at 7:30 A.M. and Fridays at 11:30 A.M. and 5:00 PM



## CHAPTER INFORMATION

### The Birthday Table

In the month of your child's birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child's favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you'd like to bring. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth and for us to become better acquainted.

### The "Let Us Remember Them" Listings

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the "Let Us Remember Them" list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you have not been able to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like your child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. You may drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at [tcf@tcfnashville.org](mailto:tcf@tcfnashville.org). We'll be glad to include your child's name. You need notify us only one time.

### Newsletter and Donations Deadlines

Remember that all newsletter submissions and monetary donations need to be received no later than the day AFTER the monthly meeting. Any suggestions for improving the newsletter are always welcome.

### Religion – A Continuing Theme

The principles of The Compassionate Friends state that TCF reaches out to all bereaved parents across the artificial barriers of religion, race, economic class or ethnic group. Further, TCF espouses no specific religious or philosophical ideology. Despite our nondenominational status, many writers indicate that they have found comfort in their faith and some have shared their anger and loss of faith. The opinions and beliefs expressed in letters, articles and poetry are those of the contributors.

**NOTE:** TCF Nashville Newsletters are now available on our chapter website. <http://www.tcfnashville.org>

## Gifts of Love and Remembrance

The following voluntary donations will help The Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow. Thank you.

*Oddie Bryant Jones  
In loving memory of her son  
James (Jay) Jones, Jr.*

*Burton and Linda Cooksey  
In loving memory of their daughter  
Shannon Cooksey James*

*Bandy and Donna Wenning  
In loving memory of their daughter  
Laura Kathryn Wenning*

*Robert and Jan Kidwell  
In loving memory of her son  
Taylor Allen Daniels*

*Vicki C. Little  
In loving memory of her daughter  
Cam Mantle Davis*

*Emma Mathis  
In loving memory of her son  
Gary Dale Hamilton*

*Paula K. Childers  
Through a donation to the  
United Way of Williamson County*

*Mrs. Victoria R. Roark  
Through a donation to the  
United Way of Williamson County*

*Roger and Deborah Wiseman  
In loving memory of their son,  
Ryan Wiseman*

*Tim and Laura Madden  
In loving memory of their son  
Bryan Madden*

*Bill and Betty Gore  
In loving memory of their daughter  
Sherry Gore*

*Jerry and Loretta Winters  
In loving memory of their son  
Don Bruce Winters*

*John and Georgia Warren  
In loving memory of their son  
John David (Johnny) Warren*

## 2008 National Conference - Nashville, Tennessee July 18-20 Sheraton Music City

Registration is now open and you can register online at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Click on the conference logo on the right side of the page. There will be more details posted soon, and as always, there is an outstanding lineup of speakers and singers for this event. The Special Speakers scheduled for 2008 are:

**Dr. Frank R. Lewis**—surviving sibling, speaker, author, and pastor who for 10 years led the sibling support group of The Compassionate Friends of Las Vegas. Frank Lewis has spoken to the Nashville TCF chapter, and is currently the pastor of First Baptist Church Downtown Nashville.

**Bruce Murakami**—whose remarkable story about how he has bonded and teamed with the drag racing teen who ended the life of his wife and daughter was made into the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie *Crossroads: A Story of Forgiveness*.

**Darrell Scott**—whose daughter was the first to die at Columbine was inspired to start "Rachel's Challenge" in her memory, a program so far presented at more than a thousand high schools designed to inspire kindness and compassion.

**Ann Hood**—bereaved parent, is the award-winning author of nine novels including *Comfort: My Journey Through Grief*.

Next month we will present a list of the outstanding singers and musicians who will be performing at the 2008 Conference.  
**Don't Miss It!**

## Daffodil Time

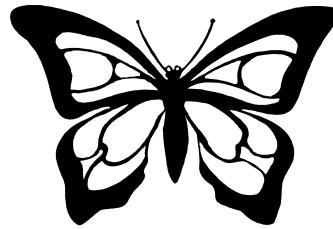
Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, rush, never stopping to “smell the roses.” We are afraid that if we stop, or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we’ll drop down to that black hole of grief again – so we don’t stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade, we had to memorize some poetry. I still remember lines from the poem *Daffodils*: “*When oft upon my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, they flash upon that inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude.*” For a couple of years after my daughter’s death I could not, I would not, allow myself to get into a vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn’t daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye. It was always my daughter who was there...and then there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw, open wound.

Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant and pensive moods, I can see the daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more than bittersweet, but it is bliss as those memories flash upon my inward eye. I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do not like it, but I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in vacant or in pensive mood, I am careful that the memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones and not the sad ones. They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns that hide just below the beauty. But I can do it now; I can take the time to “smell the roses.” So can you. Try it. Try in small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself, to your family, and to your child. Take time to smell the roses. Slow down and let your memory take over. That helps you heal.

Tom Crouthamel  
TCF Sarasota, FL



## On The Carousel

My eyes once again begin to focus through this vale of sorrow as the carousel circled around me. My attention was drawn to a small child staring in my direction. He had a kindly, bright and cheerful visage and was riding all alone. He gestured to me to join him. “Come with me on the merry-go-round,” he shouted. “Join me and let’s have fun. Don’t let us pass you again before the ride stops and it’s too late to get on.” For a brief instant I stood frozen in space, unable to move. Then as if a huge magnet were attached to me, I was drawn to him, finding myself at his side. “Take my hand,” he said. I reached out and held his hand as he gently guided me closer to him. An infusion of warm energy surged through my body and soul as the child held on to me. He smiled at me as if to say, “Everything will be alright.” I looked into the boy’s soft smiling eyes and was overcome by a feeling of calmness and serenity. I looked around at the others enjoying themselves and for the first time in a very long time I was able to clearly see what was happening. I, too, felt the joy and happiness as we rode that carousel together. I turned back to the child as he rode up and down on his horse with my arms tightly embracing him, once again looking at his smiling face. It was then that I clearly understood that his feeling of joy was meant for me, now knowing that I, too, was ready to join the others riding up and down on the carousel.

Nathan S. Berman  
TCF Rockland County, NY

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Registration is now open for the National Convention to be held right here in Music City!

You can register online at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

Click on the conference logo on the right side of the page. There will be more details posted soon, and as always, there is an outstanding lineup of speakers and singers for this event.

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## A Thought For Today

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word—PATIENCE; patience with yourself, who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare. Having patience with your spouse, who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day, patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt, with hollow advice and logical words. And patience with time, for it takes time to adjust and time can move so slowly. PATIENCE!

Rose Moen  
TCF Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

### Recipe For Spring

*May is for mothers and June is for brides  
Life is for living when gladness abides  
Live happily ever after is what they all say  
And then there is tragedy on that fateful day.*

*The first months are numbing, we fight to survive  
It's hard to believe that we're really alive  
For the pain's so intense, makes it hard just to breathe  
A fate such as this, no one should bequeath.*

*"Go find a new normal," the experts all say  
But it's so hard to do, if we could just find a way  
By talking with others, it helps us go on  
From out of the darkness, into a new dawn.*

*Take stock in your memories in this spring month, like May  
Perhaps in some June you'll find a new day  
"Helping is healing," so try to reach out  
Volunteer your efforts, that's what life's all about.*

Lionel Chaiken  
TCF Potomac, MD

### I Remember Another Spring

*Each year when azaleas bloom,  
I remember another spring.  
That one wore a pall.  
The rain would not stop.  
It poured into the open grave of my son.  
It poured deep into my heart.  
I was sure it would never stop.  
It did, though I sometimes wished it hadn't.  
I was stuck between forgetting and remembering.  
Remembering won.  
Now I see his face in the azaleas.  
They bloomed that spring while he died.  
I no longer hold it against them.*

Fay Harden  
TCF Atlanta, GA

### Crocus

*In the front garden, close by the door,  
Bloom golden crocus, they've been there before.*

*When you were quite little, so young and so small,  
We planted some dozens one day in the fall.*

*They slept over the winter, there under the snow,  
Then in the springtime, bloomed with a glow.*

*You learned about flowers, how they sleep and they grow,  
You loved so to find them peeking out from the snow.*

*You had such a wonder, you loved life so much!  
Do these early blossoms remember your touch?*

*They'll bloom there again, year after year,  
A small drop of sunshine, a small golden tear.*

Joan Schmidt  
TCF Central Jersey

### From One Who Knows

*I promise you, my friend, I promise you  
That you will feel the warmth of spring again  
That you will touch the hands of children  
And the lips of lovers and the tenderness again.*

*But here and now, my friend, I promise you  
Small consolation:  
Some morning you will see beauty in your sorrow,  
Comfort in the wealth of love remembered,  
Courage in the aching tide of days.*

*I promise you, my friend, I promise you  
That you will understand someday  
Someday this pain which taught you what depth and height  
and greatness and devotion on life can hold.  
Your life, my friend.*

Sascha Wagner  
TCF Des Moines, IA



## What Do I Tell My Children?

An incident that happened years ago reminded me once again that coping with my brother's death is a learning process that will continue for the rest of my life. I was shopping for a coat when I heard a little boy question his mother, "Why do I have to stay so close?" She answered him with the all-too-familiar answer, "Because." As I drove home, I began to think about the question the little boy asked. Why? Only a three letter word, but such a huge question.

I remember when I was in school that we students needed to understand everything. We were supposed to know how things worked. We were taught to question everything. I nearly drove my Latin teacher crazy with my need to understand the conjugation of verbs. "Why that way?" I kept asking. "It makes no sense!" The teacher never answered why; he just insisted I learn those irregular verbs. He taught me a lot more in class than just Latin. He taught me about life. He taught me that sometimes there is no why, there just is. That was a difficult lesson to learn. I wonder how I'm going to teach my children. I know I'll have to. Someday, my children are going to ask where my brother, their Uncle Freddy, is and why he is not with us. What do I say when my children ask me where my brother is? How do I explain something to my children that I still cannot explain to myself?

How are we, Freddy's family, supposed to explain murder to our children? How do we explain that there are some horrible people in this world? How do we make them understand that there are people who commit horrible acts and not make them afraid of life? How do we let them know their uncle was a good and wonderful man and still is in our hearts and memories? How do we let our children know how much their uncle would have loved them?

How do we do this? Is there a way? Why should I even have to worry about this? Why? Sometimes there is no why, there just is.

Karen Peterson  
TCF Franklin Lakes, NJ