

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org

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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 25th 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.

Candlelight Memorial to be held December 13 at 3pm

We will be honoring our beloved children this month through our annual Candlelight Memorial Service. It is held in the auditorium of the HCA building where our monthly meetings are held. Family, friends and siblings are all invited to this event.

During the ceremony, you will see our children displayed upon the movie theater-like screen. As the children's names are spoken, parents are given an opportunity to come forward and place a candle in front of a photo of their child on the stage. Please remember to keep photos 5x7 or smaller as space is often at a premium.

We ask that families bring a dish of pick up foods to share. Feel free to share desserts, meats, vegetables, or anything that might have been a favorite for your child.

Come join us in this difficult holiday time.

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

*The past is part of us
And our future.
He who tells us to forget
does not understand
the past
or
the future.
Sascha*



2009 Worldwide Candle Lighting In Memory of All Children Sunday, December 13

TCF invites you to join in this special day of remembrance by lighting a candle at 7:00 P.M. wherever you are.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

December Candlelight Memorial – An event that you don't want to miss !!

For December's monthly meeting, we invite you to send a photo of your child to be digitally displayed on the big screen in the auditorium of our usual meeting place. This year it will be Sunday, December 13. **See page 7 for important deadline information. PLEASE NOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FIRM DEADLINE-December 5, 2009.** Much work goes into the power point presentation, so late entries cannot be accepted. Please submit your form and photos now!

Picture Name Tags

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that **there is no charge**. A big thank you to Lamar for giving so unselfishly of his time and talent.

We Need Your Help

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child's name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. David Gibson, our outreach chairperson, will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Help for Bereaved Children

The Grief Center at Alive Hospice now provides individual counseling for grieving children and teens, as well as their family members. Also, **an ongoing children's support group is being offered**. For further information, please call Lauren Thurman, CMSW, Children's Grief Counselor, at 615 963-4829.

Other TCF Chapters

There are several other chapters of The Compassionate Friends you might want to know about. Anytime you are in their vicinity or feel the need to talk with other bereaved parents, feel free to attend their meetings. Also, when you personally know a newly bereaved family in one of these towns, please call the chapter number and give them the information so they can make contact with the family. To locate a chapter, you may call the TCF National Office at 1-877 969-0010, or go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on chapter locator.

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 963-4674.

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).

The Promise

*Your birth brought me starshine, the moon and the sun;
My wishes, dreams gathered round my little one.*

*My life became sacred, full of promise and light,
All wrapped in the child who brought love at first sight.*

*The years of your living filled with laughter and tears,
Excitement, adventure, some boredom, some fears,*

*But ended too quickly, ahead of its time.
The loss so horrendous, such heartbreak was mine.*

*But from the beginning, one thought rose so clear;
Never would your death erase the years that you were here.*

*I would not be defeated or diminished by your death;
I would hang on, learn to conquer, if it took my every breath.*

*For if your death destroyed my life,
Made both our lives a waste,
'twould deny your life's meaning and all the love you gave.*

*I vowed that years of sadness
Would change, with work and grace,
To years of happiness, even joy, in which you'd have a place.*

*Memories of you, like shining stars
In the patterns of my soul,
Are beacons flashing light and love,
and with them I am whole.*

*In your honor I live my life, now living it for two.
Through all my life, you will too.*

*--From Stars in the Deepest Night
Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
TCF Marin County, CA*

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

From Handling the Holidays by Bruce Conley

Can You Hear the Music?

*Can you hear the music?
No, not with your ears—with your heart.
It may be too soon for you.
I remember—I have not forgotten.*

*Your pain is real. Your sorrow is ever present.
Your days are empty. Your future is uncertain.
There is no music. I remember how it was.*

*The sobbing of your broken heart and
The screams of your anguished soul
Over shadow the music.
It is still there although you may not hear it now.
I didn't. I remember how it was.*

*Friend, will you trust me?
You will hear the music again.
But you must want to hear it.
It may not happen for a while.
It may come in subdued tones and single notes at first,
And later more notes, then chords, then measures.
Embrace it, and allow the melody to form.*

*And some day, my friend, you will look back
And discover that the symphony of life
Has returned to you.*

*Lamar Bradley
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Christmas Memories

*When snowflakes dance on winter winds
And colored lights shine Christmas cheer,
When children's laughter fills the air
And family gathers from far and near,
I try to celebrate with them
And not let my hurting show.
But the empty space within my heart,
At this season, seems to grow
'Til oftentimes it fills the days,
And many nighttimes too,
With aching thoughts and memories
Of Christmases I spent with you.*

*Yes, memories do hurt, it's true
But I have this feeling too.
I'm so glad I hold these memories,
For with them I hold part of you.
So for now, I'll wipe away the tears
And join with loved ones dear
To celebrate this Christmas time,
For I know that, in my heart, you're here.*

Arden Lansing
TCF, Monmouth County, NJ

Christmas Thoughts

Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels and stars and beloved carols...

Beyond the presents, the shopping, the baking and cooking...
Beyond all of these sights and sounds of Christmas...

Beyond all of these—there is hope—hope for the bereaved parents—even at Christmas, one of the most, if not the most painful times of the year, there is an essence of hope. HOPE! It is hope that sustains us through the days of grief and anger and frustration and loneliness.

The hope is that someday the pain of the deaths of our children will be eased. The hope is that someday our smiles will be real. The hope is that once again we will laugh and love and also cry completely without fear and hollowness. It is the hope that someday we can remember our children with a tenderness merely tinged with sorrow and not overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you, I would hope: peace, compassion, love, sympathy, understanding, sharing, and listening. In the sharing of our grief with one another, and in the emotional support we give to one another, we receive and understand all of these gifts.

Carole Ragland
TCF, Houston/West TX

Chanukah Is Here

*I see the candles glow,
Red, pink and blue.
But you're not here
To see their pretty shadows.
I shop for gifts.
And this year, again,
Once more,
I won't be in a quandary
Of what to buy.
I give you my love,
My precious son,
For that is eternal.
And once again,
It will have to do.*

Ginnette Kravet
TCF, Central Jersey

Chanukah and Christmas

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them. But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society, which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

Dennis Klass
TCF, St. Louis, MO

*When the time comes
For lighting festive candles,
Let them remind you
Not only
Of what you lost
But also
Of what you had.*

Sascha Wagner
TCF, Des Moines, IA

Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together — and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those “spirit gifts” are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I’ll hear his voice “Pay attention, Mom.” (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

Catharine (Kitty) Reeve

TCF, Marin Co. & San Francisco, CA

First Christmas

*It's can't possibly be Christmas
without her being here.
Yet the world is singing round me,
joyful tidings and good cheer.*

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

*I pray for strength to do it,
Find a path through holidays,
Look for shortcuts, good ideas,
Some directions through the maze.*

*Then I find at last the answer:
I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect;
Her love's flowing down, through me.*

From *Stars in the Deepest Night
After the Death of a Child*
Genesee Bourdeau Gentry

Holiday Gifts For Children Needed

Each year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts to them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to help this year, you may participate by bringing UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 13 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

Gifts:

CD Players
 MP3 Players
 Gameboy games (teen rated)
 Playstation games (teen rated)
 Costume Jewelry (like that found in the malls at Claire's)
 Remote control cars and planes
 Girly things like journals, gel pens and scrapbooking items
 Model cars
 Gift cards for the malls
 Board Games
 Baby and Barbie dolls and accessories
 Lego sets
 Trucks
 Disney movies (DVD and VHS)
 Watches (boys and girls)
 Gift cards for Best Buy and Circuit City

Stocking Stuffers:

Matchbox cars
 Small notepads
 Pens and pencils
 Candy
 Jewelry
 Hygiene products
 Billfolds and wallets
 Cute little change purses for girls
 Makeup items
 Socks
 Gift cards to places like McDonald's or Burger King



Once again, remember, these items may be brought in gift bags with tissue paper, but DO NOT WRAP the gifts. Youth Villages staff does the wrapping as it helps them to more evenly distribute the donated items.

How Many Stockings Shall I Hang?

What a torment! Funny how you worry what your friends will think. For days I worried...and finally hung three stockings on the fireplace and laid one gently on the mantle.

But that was last year. This year I shall hang all four above the fireplace. For this year, the confusion of my mind has found new answers with conviction. Whether my oldest daughter lives in Tucson, or my youngest son is dead – these are my children – our family – and as long as we hang the Christmas stockings, we shall hang them all – with love.

Shirley Melin
 TCF, Hinsdale, IL

Only December

*Feelings heavy
tears and tears.
Will the darkness last?
Or is it –
only December?*

*Hadn't past months
brought peace and hope?
Where is the strength
of October –
and November?*

*Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,
Cards from friends,
Happy times in seasons past.
We remember.
We remember.*

*Will January bring
light at last?
Will we be stronger then,
for making it through
this December?*

*When people ask
How I'm doing, I say,
"Well,
You know,
it's December..."*

*From Stars in the Deepest Night:
After the Death of a Child
Genesse Bourdeau Gentry*

The holiest of all holidays are kept by ourselves in silence and apart—the secret anniversaries of the heart.

Longfellow

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 13, 2009

Regardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 5, 2009. Do not send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

**Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174**

Instructions: A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year. **Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

- _____ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)
- _____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.
- _____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.
- _____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name _____ Phone _____

Thoughts for the Bereaved during the Holidays

Plan Ahead. Bereaved individuals who experience the most difficulty with the holiday season are those who have given little thought to the challenges they will encounter. Consider ahead of time what may be expected of you, both socially and emotionally, as well as your own preferences.

Accept Your Limitations. Grief consumes most of your available energy no matter what the season. The holidays place additional demands on your time and emotions. Plan to lower your expectations to accommodate current needs.

Make Changes. Your circumstances have changed. Expect to make necessary alterations in holiday plans to accommodate those changes. Consider changing your surroundings, rituals, and/or traditions to diminish the stress. Serve notice on family and friends that this year things may be somewhat different.

Trim Down to Essentials. Limit social and family commitments to suit your available energy. Shop early or use catalog sales. Reevaluate priorities and forego unnecessary activities and obligations.

Ask for and Accept Help. Accept offers for assistance with holiday shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc. Chances are loved ones are looking for ways to lessen your burden at this time of year. Allow those who care about you to offer their support in concrete ways.

Inform Others of Your Needs. Give family and friends the tools they need to help you through the holidays. Be specific about your preferences and desires, and keep them up to date when those needs change.

Build in Flexibility. Learn to “play it by ear.” There is no concrete formula for learning to deal with loss. You are the foremost authority on what is best for you, and your needs may legitimately change from day to day. Accept the fluctuations that must occur when walking in unknown territory, and learn to take each moment as it comes.

Give Yourself Permission “To be.” Allow breathing space and expect fluctuations in mood and perspective. The bereaved work overtime. Not only is life more complicated, but all energy is siphoned into mental and emotional resolution. Grieving is nature’s way of healing the mind and heart from the greatest injury of all. Allow yourself the privilege of limping till your wounds have healed and you can learn to run again.

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November/December 1989