

# 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.*

## Annual Balloon Release Set for June 8

The June meeting is a special one, for it marks the date of our annual balloon release in memory of our children. Family and friends are invited to this special event and may participate by attaching handwritten messages to a biodegradable helium-filled balloon, which will be provided. After a few moments of remembrance, the balloons will be released. It is quite spectacular to watch as the balloons drift away so beautifully together. Afterward, the group will gather back inside for refreshments and fellowship. Please bring a snack or treat to share. Don't miss this wonderful event!



## 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.

### On Bringing Children to Meetings

Please remember that only older children and siblings should accompany parents to meetings. We have all lost children and having small children at meetings can be painful and distracting to other grieving parents. Please be courteous by making arrangements for child care while you attend our chapter meetings unless it is specifically stated that family and friends are invited, such as the June balloon release and the December memorial service.

### Are You Moving?

Each time a Newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 41 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved. We then pay another 41 cents to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so that your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email any chapter leader with this information. Thanks for your help.

**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.*

*Donna L. Reagan  
In loving memory of her sons  
David Reagan  
and  
Michael Reagan*

*Steve and Paige Czirr  
In loving memory of their  
daughter  
Laura Abigail Czirr (Abby)*

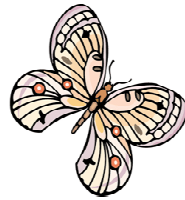
*Steve and Paige Czirr  
and  
Rob and Becky Daugherty  
and  
Leah and Wes Bishop  
In honor of Cynthia Daugherty  
and  
in loving memory of  
Laura Abigail (Abby) Czirr*

*Bob and Cynthia Daugherty  
In loving memory of their  
granddaughter  
Laura Abigail (Abby) Czirr  
Daughter of  
Steve and Paige Czirr*

*David and Pat Bush  
In loving memory of their son  
Michael David Bush*

*Mr. and Mrs. Reginald S. Lowe,  
Jr.  
In loving memory of  
Paige Gibson*

*Steve and Paige Czirr  
In honor of Joan Czirr  
and  
In loving memory of their  
daughter  
Abby Czirr*



## A Message From The Editor

*It is with great sorrow that I inform the Nashville Chapter of TCF of my decision to step down as editor of our newsletter. This is the twelfth edition that I have had the honor of creating for you. And although performing the service for our chapter is rewarding, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the required deadlines with my currently overwhelmingly hectic life. The last thing a bereaved parent wants to do is let down a group of bereaved parents who look forward to receiving this monthly bit of sunshine. I will continue to assist as needed, and wish upon my successors many fewer computer glitches and less drama than I have been bombarded with in this position. I hope that our newsletter continues to be considered one of the top TCF Newsletters in the country. I will see you all at the meetings as we continue our journey through grief.*

*Kris Thompson  
Newsletter Editor  
TCF Nashville, TN*

Bryan Houstrup and Joe Philpott at Allegra Printing & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donate the printing, collating and stapling of this newsletter each month as a gift to the families of TCF. We are very grateful. Also, a special thank you to Deanna Brown and her family who label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of their son, Marcus Dean Brown. We appreciate all of your generosity.

The bereaved father suffers severely in the lonely pew of suppressed grief. He endures not only the psychological impact of losing his child, but the fear of losing his masculine identity by publicly displaying his distress. In building an image to fit what our society expects, a man who openly reveals his emotions during a time of tragedy feels he is looked down upon in most quarters. We are taught to expect a “real” man to be strong in time of crisis, strong in time of war, strong under fire, but what society does not fathom is that the loss of a child doesn’t rank with other stress emotions. The loss of one’s child transcends the barrier of do’s and don’ts for emotional behavior.

The honest gut emotion of cleansing the soul with tears of grief is akin to lancing a wound to drain the infection. A man or a woman is entitled to the right of expiating sorrow. Men should be made aware that it is a natural response for them to experience the same emotional upheaval in grieving the death of a child that women do. In suffering a loss of such magnitude, it is also natural—and NOT unmasculine—for a man to find himself dealing with periods of anger, guilt, moroseness, anxiety, frustration, and other real and gnawing thoughts. Grieving is a period of adjustment—for men as well as women.”

Excerpt from *Recovering From the Loss of a Child*  
by Katherine Fair Donnelly



### ***Again, Congratulations, Seniors!***

*To all the graduating senior  
siblings in the Nashville Chapter,  
we extend our sincerest  
congratulations  
and best wishes for a bright,  
healthy, and successful future.  
Your TCF moms and dads  
are very proud of you.*




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### **Don’t Forget!!**

Registration is now open for the National Conference 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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*“Everyone can master a grief but he that hath it.”*

*--Shakespeare*

*A friend said to Socrates who had wept for his dead son, “Why do you weep?  
Nothing can bring him back.” Socrates replied, “That is why I weep.”*

## Dads and Daughters

**M**y mother died when I was seven, so a special bond grew between my father and me. During those next years, it was he who ironed his little girl's school dresses each night, he was the one who would say, "look it up" when I asked a question, or "you try first," when I wanted a word spelled. He was there for me when boyfriend troubles brought the tears, and then later, for my wedding, he lovingly decorated our home with ivy from our yard.

One day, several years after that, he called from his retirement home in Florida just to chat. Our three little girls scampered around me, creating a background chorus both distracting and dear. As we were saying our goodbyes, my dad commented, "Darling, you don't know how much I love you." I looked at our children and replied, "Yes, Daddy, finally I do know—now that I have children of my own." Two weeks later that dear man's heart stopped, and he was gone.

Although that conversation came back to me many times in the ensuing years, never so poignantly as when our oldest daughter died fourteen years later. Oh, yes, Daddy, I do know how much you loved me!

For twenty-three years, I watched my husband work long hours to provide financial security for his offspring, and then come home to play with them, answer a million questions,

teach them, by example, to love and do for others, and dole out daily portions of hugs and kisses. When he built a go-cart, they had great fun on it; he took them to find fossils in an old dry quarry, helped them search out pottery shards at a recently discovered Indian ruin, went sledding with them, and generally stimulated them to be open to the adventures of life.

It takes a great deal of strength for parents to continue working during times of stress. He was no exception. During our daughter's terminal illness, he would come to the hospital before work to say good morning and fortify me with coffee. During the day, he'd stop in again, often bearing a little surprise for her, and then after work, he'd bring my dinner from a restaurant in order for me to remain with her full time. Mid-evening, when most folks were settling down to relax, he and our youngest daughter would return home to do laundry and take care of nightly household chores.

When our sweet girl died, he attended to the myriad details with typical devotion, easing the way for the rest of us. I don't know how he did it all. Even if his tears had not mingled with mine, I'd still be aware that his pain matched mine; and, as with my own father, of how much he loves his children.

Oh, yes, I do know.

Peggy Gibson  
TCF Nashville, TN

## *A Father's Grief*

*I never believed I would see another season change with gladness.  
I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears.  
I never expected to actually laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face.  
I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die.  
I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise.  
I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return.  
But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you, too, will come to understand  
that life goes on—that it can still have meaning—that even joy can touch your life once more.*

Don Hackett  
TCF, Hingham, MA

**Grief is like weeding a flower garden in the summer.**

**You have to do it over and over again until the season changes.**

Fay Harden  
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL  
(Songs from the Edge)



## 31<sup>st</sup> National TCF Conference—2008 Nashville, Tennessee

Visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) to register online and receive the most up-to-date info.

Reminder: After June 6, the registration fee for the conference will increase to \$100, so be sure to register as soon as possible to avoid this extra cost.



**Keynote Speakers, Workshops, Sharing Sessions, Activities  
Bring Healing Experience to Nashville, Tennessee**

### Keynote Speakers

- ♥ **Dr. Frank R. Lewis**—a surviving sibling, speaker, author, and pastor who for 10 years led the sibling support group of The Compassionate Friends of Las Vegas.  
(Friday opening speaker)
- ♥ **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*.  
(Friday afternoon banquet speaker)
- ♥ **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.  
(Saturday evening banquet speaker)
- ♥ **Ann Hood**—bereaved parent, is the award winning author of nine novels including *Comfort: My Journey Through Grief*.  
(Sunday closing speaker)

### Important Notice: Additional Overflow Hotel

TCF has negotiated and added an additional room block at the Courtyard (Marriott) Nashville Airport (this is not the same hotel as the Nashville Airport Marriott Hotel). The Courtyard (Marriott) Nashville Airport is located approximately two miles from the airport at 2508 Elm Hill Pike and there are regular shuttles between the airport and the hotel. Details of shuttle service between the Courtyard (Marriott) and the Sheraton Music City Hotel are being worked out, but will be available. Room charge is \$95 for one to four persons and is available for persons staying July 17-20. Call 800-321-2211 for reservations or locally 615-883-9500 and mention you are with The Compassionate Friends. Cutoff date at this special rate, if rooms remain available in the block, is Thursday, June 26.

## If Only They Knew

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid, I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For 26 years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self-indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, it's not in self-pity for what I have lost; I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, ... for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death; if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: "time heals...you'll get over it...it was for the best...God takes only the best," and realized that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we try to stand in the shoes of others. If only they knew that we will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

Jan McNess  
TCF Victoria, Australia