

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://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 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 14

The June meeting is a special one, for it marks the date of our annual balloon release in memory of our children. Families and friends of TCF are cordially invited to gather at our regular meeting place for this very special event.

Please plan to arrive early in order to have time to write a message to or about your child. (Paper, pens and biodegradable balloons will be provided.) The notes will be attached to the balloon's ribbon.

At 3:00pm we will walk to Centennial Park as a group for a brief ceremony of a reading and music. Following this, the balloons will be released and we will watch as they sail to the heavens until they are finally out of sight.

Immediately following the release, refreshments will be served. Any snack or treat that you can bring to share will be most appreciated. Don't miss this wonderful event!



*The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched.  
They must be felt with the heart.*

*Helen Keller*

## 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
- Drug/Alcohol Overdose**.....Ed Pyle  
712-3245
- 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

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **Newsletter Deadlines**

In order for donations and contributed poems or articles to be included in the following month's newsletter, we must receive them no later than the Wednesday after the chapter meeting. Any donations received after that date will be included in the next month's issue. Please send them to TCF, P. O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205.

### **Religion and TCF**

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.

### **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.



## **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.

### **Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 37 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we are charged 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 your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.



## ***Bring My Child Back To Me***

*Whisper, whisper, wind in the woods,  
Bring back my child, here where he stood,  
Let him laugh, let him shout, let him giggle with  
glee,  
Wind in the woods, bring my child back to me.*

*Silence of morning, dew on the grass,  
Give me peace in my soul, let this time pass,  
Let my child sit beside me, let the two of us be,  
Silence of morning, bring my child back to me.*

*Middle of night, so dark and so still,  
Let me relax and remember at will,*

*Let my child in my thoughts drift forever to see,  
Middle of night, bring my child back to me.*

*Sunrise and sunset, beginning and end,  
Give me a day with my child, my friend,  
We'll run on the beach, we'll play in the sea,  
Sunrise, sunset, bring my child back to me.*

*Memories, memories here in my head,  
Don't ever leave me, even though my child's dead,  
Keep him alive, keep him strong, keep him free,  
Memories of mine, bring my child back to me.*

*Barbara Patterson  
TCF, Conquitlam, BC*

## **Thank You, Dear Friend**

In a shaky voice I told you  
How much I had lost  
And what I'd do to get it back  
No matter what it cost

You listened patiently to me  
As I spoke of my fears  
And I know it broke your heart  
To see my falling tears

We spoke of what once was  
And of what would be  
About yesterday and tomorrow  
And the changes in me

I am a prisoner of uncertainty  
My world upside down

The life I knew as my normal  
Can no longer be found

But you took my trembling hands  
Gently in your own  
And you lovingly reassured me  
That I am not alone

The days ahead will be difficult  
Many times I will fall  
But I know you will pick me up  
And help me through it all.

*In memory of my loving son, Charlie (Rusty) Jackman,  
Whom I miss more than words can ever describe.*

*Charles Jackman  
We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2008*

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## Mother's Day...Father's Day... Graduations...Proms

Spring comes—and with it comes the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead. For those who are still going through all the “firsts” without your child, we share with you some special ways other parents have coped and managed. Mother’s Day...Father’s Day...graduations...vacations...these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories of young lives cut short. It does get better! And you can make these special days better with some planning and with encouragement from those who have already been there. Whatever the “special day” that lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your child. Share as a family thoughts and suggestions about planting a tree or starting a rose garden, donating a book to the library or school, putting flowers on the altar, lighting a special candle or taking that long talked-of vacation. Tears and moments of sadness are okay, for they are expressions of love.

Remember:

- Take one day at a time.
- Keep things simple by playing down the holidays and special days, while they are so painful.
- Change your routine from past years.
- Make plans to be “busy” during at least part of the day (go out to lunch or a movie or visit friends.)
- Give your older children some “space;” they not only feel your extreme sadness at these times, they also have their own feelings to deal with.

The anticipation is often worse than the day itself!

TCF, Fox Valley, Aurora, IL

*Happiness is like a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it eludes you.  
But if you turn your attention to other things, it comes and sits softly on your shoulder.*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

## The Compassionate Friends 32nd Annual National Conference August 5 – 9, 2009 Portland, Oregon

Registration forms will be available at a chapter meeting or may be found on the TCF Home Page ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org))



## *A Balloon Tribute*

*A balloon is a symbol,  
A reminder of our own childhood past,  
A reminder that we were all children once.*

*A balloon changes and grows as it is blown up.  
Childhood is also a time for change and growth,  
Although for us, part of that time is a frozen memory.*

*A balloon suspended in air between heaven and earth,  
Kept here only by the ribbon in our hand.  
Another reminder that life is the ribbon  
that binds our spirits to earth.  
How tightly we cling to that ribbon at times.*

*The time we hold the balloon is short.  
Painfully, we remember the time we held our children  
was too short.*

*The balloon will be gone before we really have time  
To enjoy it.  
And for some of our children,  
life was over before it really began.*

*The act of letting the balloon go is symbolic, too.  
This time, a deliberate and conscious act.  
Quite unlike those circumstances past  
That made us struggle with letting go  
of our precious children.*

*As the balloon rises swiftly and sails out of sight,  
Another reminder that one day, we too, like the balloon  
Will pass to another place—our new destination.  
A place more beautiful and perfect  
than any of us can imagine.  
And that hope gives us courage to face a new day.*

*So, from outstretched arms that ache to hold you once again  
And a broken heart that knows this side of heaven,  
they never will  
We send you this symbol of our undying love and affection.  
Because you were, and will always be  
Our precious children.*

*Lamar Bradley  
TCF Nashville, TN*

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## **Seasons Change and So Do We**

**S**pring is a time of renewal, nature's loving promise of eternal life. So many things about our child will never die—the light in young eyes that came with a smile, the warmth of a hug, the joy we experienced as we watched the child discover and grow. These things came from our love—our love and our child's love. Is there a way to take back love or the memories of it? Once experienced, love is eternal, just as the awakening of each season occurs over and over and will always be so.

We can do some things even in our state of depleted energy. Touching growing things can rejuvenate a battered heart. Try planting a small flower bed or a pot of special flowers in memory of your child. Tend it with love, and watch it respond. It will give you pleasure and closeness with your child you can experience no other way. The strength to face your bereavement will grow with the plants.

Planting, tending, and enjoying is a salute to our child and to the way the world is planned for eternal renewal and change. Perhaps it says we don't have the energy to recover even for a limb pruned by the clippers. When the grass is mowed down, it's not back to its original height in the morning. If nature heals slowly, maybe this is the way set up for us, too.

Each season invites us to experience its cycle, its pattern, which, while it involves change, and yes, even death, is a promise that as one stage of our lives turns into another, there can be beauty and joy mixed in with pain and loss. We do not believe when the trees bare themselves in the fall, there will ever be green leaves again. So, with the arrival of yet another cycle, touch, see, smell, taste, and perhaps enjoy nature's renewal. The eternal cycles are a promise that nothing ever goes away permanently. They speak to us of strength for change and immortality—our own and our child's.

*Elizabeth B. Estes  
TCF, Augusta, GA*

## *Dads Need Hugs, Too*

When a child dies, everyone has such compassion for the mother. Months after the death, people still ask how she is doing. There is always a shoulder available for her to lean on to release some of her pain.

Let's not forget the father. The child was a part of him, too. That child was his son, to play ball with, coach in sports, watch sports with, or collect baseball cards. Or she was his daughter, his princess, the most beautiful girl that ever lived. Daddy's perfect angel.

Fathers hurt deeper than mothers sometimes because there is no release for their pain, no one there to listen to them say, "I feel terrible. I miss my child so much." Or "Today reminds me of when ...." The longer fathers keep silent, the more hurt they have to keep inside, pushing it deeper and deeper to make room for more.

The next time you see a father that has lost a child, don't forget to ask how he is today and give him a hug or just put your hand on his shoulder to let him know you see his pain. Dads need hugs, too.

Kathy Hunsicker  
TCF Lehigh Valley, PA

## *A Father's Hands*

*My hands are aged and have worked on much,  
The years of calluses make them rough to the touch.  
Their strength has diminished through time,  
Working in wood, yards, often covered in grime.*

*They held hoes, rakes, hedge trimmers and more,  
Handling the hard jobs no matter what the chore,  
They have known the feel of heat and cold,  
And now are starting to feel just a little old.*

*They have also known the joy of combing silky hair,  
Our daughter tolerated my styling attempts from her chair.  
They often held her hand while walking with her as a child,  
And later willingly pushed her wheelchair, the ride was wild.*

*Often they were held against hers to compare the size,  
She was proud of her large hands, much to everyone's  
surprise.*

*I remember holding her tightly during her last amazing hour,  
The memory of that time has such an incredible power.*

*These hands that held her with parental love that was selfless,  
Would become weak and useless and felt utterly helpless.  
These hands that held her and carried her and miss her so  
badly,  
Are the longing, searching, caring hands of her Daddy.*

*I'll keep them working and toiling making new plans,  
Waiting to reach out and hold her again with these father's  
hands.*

*Holding firmly onto the memories of Pride.*

Dan Gardner  
TCF, Nashville, TN

## *A Father on Father's Day*

Fatherhood is a wonderful and privileged word. I am a father, a bereaved father, who lost a son. Although it will be eight years in August of this year, I still miss him every day. Maybe I should miss him a little more on Father's Day, because someone, somewhere once decreed that Father's Day be a special day to honor your father. So, according to that mandate one might suppose that I should because I may have subconsciously (or forcibly?) calibrated the threshold of that pain, of that missing, so it is constantly within me every day of the year, but at a lower level than in the beginning, and not as devastating. In life, and with minor fluctuations, it is there. Yes, I wish my son were here on Father's Day, but so do I wish he were here every day.

However, I will celebrate Father's Day this year, because, thank God, I have a remaining son whom I cherish. For you bereaved fathers who have lost your only child, more than one of your children, or all of your children, there are no words that can adequately express my sorrow for the depths of your grief and anguish. There is no way that I can truly feel the pain that you feel, but as someone wisely and compassionately said to me in my despair, "I wish I could take your pain away from you."

Perhaps some of us might agree that Father's Day is a cruel day for bereaved fathers, just as Mother's Day is a cruel day for bereaved mothers. If that be so, I hope we can elicit some sweet memories of our beloved children from kinder days to treasure, to help alleviate the pain, and to enable us to pass the day with some degree of serenity.

May I repeat that which was said to me, which was of consolation to me when I desperately needed it: "I WISH I COULD TAKE YOUR PAIN AWAY FROM YOU."

And bereaved fathers, may you find peace, as much as is possible, on Father's Day and on every day of the year. I hope next Father's Day will be better.

Dave Ziv  
TCF, BucksMont Chapter, Warrington PA

## *Butterfly Wings, Bricks, and Lead*

When I saw her load of grief, it looked to me to be merely a light load of butterfly wings compared to my full load of heavy bricks. Then I saw another man and he seemed to be carrying a small load of lead. But as I watched her step on the scales bearing her load of butterfly wings, the scales read, “One Ton.” When he stepped on the scales with his load of lead, the scales also read, “One Ton.” I knew a grief-load of bricks would weigh more, but those scales read for me, “One Ton.” Our loads of butterfly wings, lead, and bricks weighed exactly the same to the one who was carrying that particular load of grief.

Bereaved parents often feel resentment when a non-bereaved person speaks toward or to our child’s death. *How can that person* know or even dream of how I feel or what I am going through? These feelings may be justified, but when we begin to feel resentment toward another bereaved parent—“That child’s death is easy compared to my child’s death”—“I have suffered more than she/he ever did”—we should remember that each of our grief-loads weighs two thousand pounds to the one under it. Compared to Rose Kennedy, who had one child in an institution, and lost one daughter and three sons in violent deaths, my grief-load begins to look as if it were made of gossamer soap bubbles; but when I again step on that scale, it still reads, “One Ton.” Our grief-loads may appear to weigh less because we who are under them have grown stronger through time and grief-process maturation. The load actually weighs no less; it is we who have grown stronger and can carry it more easily. Sometimes, we can even completely ignore the weight that is still there. Always be careful in judging another’s grief-load—remember that lead, those butterfly wings, and those bricks all weigh the same to the one under that load of grief.

Tom Crouthamel  
TCF, Sarasota, FL

