

# 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.*

## Ask-It Basket Scheduled for Meeting

### March 9

**B**ereaved parents are often plagued with questions regarding their grief. This meeting will provide an especially good opportunity for those of us who are farther along in our grief to give the benefit of our experience to those who are just beginning their sad journey. If there is something bothering you, bring your questions for the basket. We invite our old-timers to come and lend a hand.



## 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

**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.**

## **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.

### **TCF Video on Channel 19**

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 P.M.

## Return of the Butterfly

Everyone in The Compassionate Friends knows the meaning of the butterfly, but for most other people, it is just a butterfly.

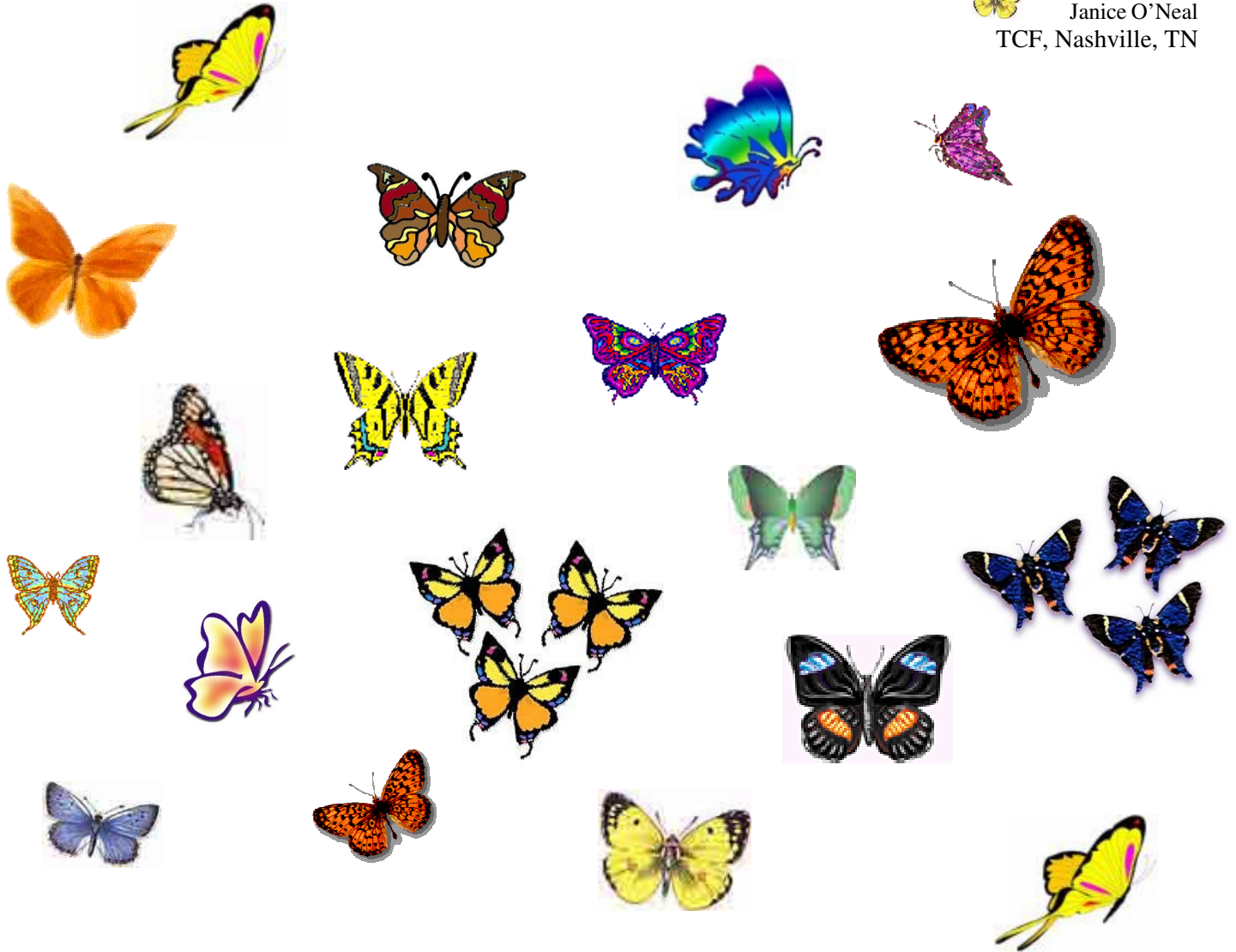
My husband’s aunt gave me a butterfly pin for Christmas last year, not knowing what it would mean to me. Then, one day, I lost my pin and could not find it anywhere. Finally I gave up and thought it was gone forever.

One day, while doing laundry, I found my pin. I was so happy; however, within a few weeks I had misplaced it again. I did not think I would ever find it this time, but once again, I was doing laundry and there it was.

My butterfly seemed to disappear repeatedly for a short time, then would come back to me. I began to think about how our children seem to come to our minds more at some times of the year and then fade away for awhile only to return to us at the most unusual times—just as my butterfly keeps returning to me.



Janice O’Neal  
TCF, Nashville, TN



Bryan Houstrup and Joe Philpott at Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donate the printing, collating and stapling of this newsletter each month as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of their son, Marcus Dean Brown. We are very grateful for these people and their generosity to all of us.



## 2009 Annual National TCF Conference

August 7 – 9 in Portland, Oregon

Candy Lightner, the dynamic founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) has agreed to be a keynote speaker at the 2009 TCF National Conference in Portland, Oregon August 7-9. Besides Candy Lightner, the conference will feature keynoters Reg and Maggie Green and Michele Longo Eder. Reg and Maggie are the parents of Nicholas Green, the seven-year-old American boy who was shot and killed by highway bandits in Italy in 1994. Their decision to donate his organs to seven Italians became a major news story around the world, spawning thousands of organ donations in Italy (a country where organ donations were virtually unheard of before Nicholas' death) and around the world. This remarkable story was made into a CBS movie of the week called *The Nicholas Effect*. Michele Longo Eder is author of *Salt in our Blood—The Memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*. Michele, an accomplished lawyer, started journaling what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Never did she dream that her journaling would include the account of a personal tragedy that struck just before Christmas 2001.

Many workshops for parents and siblings are being planned. We'd like to have a large contingency from the Nashville chapter. Conference registration is not yet available. However, room reservations for those attending TCF's national conference are being accepted by the Doubletree Hotel Portland where the conference will be held. TCF has negotiated for a large block of rooms at a special price for those attending the conference. Rate is \$129 per room per night in several different configurations. As always, we suggest that you make reservations early to avoid disappointment. You may make your reservations through the TCF National Website, or you may call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-503-281-6111 and receive the negotiated price, but you must identify yourself as attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The rooms are available at this special rate for those staying the nights of August 5-August 9. Last day for reservations, if rooms are still available, will be July 4.

**As in the past, the chapter has allocated a sum of money to help members of the Nashville chapter with conference expenses. This will be in the form of a reimbursement following the conference. For further information or to receive this help, call Joe or Melanie Ladd at 615-361-7996.**

### Your Chapter Library

TCF Nashville has a wonderful collection of books, booklets, and tapes. Be sure to browse the library tables during the break at our monthly meeting. You may find a title that will be a blessing to you on your grief journey. Also, you may have some books in your personal collection that have helped you, but no longer serve your needs. If so, consider making a book donation to our chapter library in memory of your child. A memorial bookplate with your child's name will be placed inside the cover.

### Turning Point

*Dawn does not so much break as it happens  
Dark slides into light so slowly my eyes  
Adjust without thought, as faint pink ribbons  
Turn to streamers of orange in eastern skies.  
So goes my grief with no strident fanfare.  
Sadness and grieving have been all I know.  
Then, for a brief moment, it is not there.  
Imperceptibly then the moments grow,*

*Until I laugh without guilt. Life's more worthwhile,  
I don't feel as compelled to visit the grave.  
I can remember some good times and I smile.  
There was nothing dramatic and I have  
Had no revelation, no special thing.  
I just felt a bit better sometime last spring.*

Richard A. Dew  
Rachel's Cry

## *Spring Will Return*



*Cold winds blow across frozen ponds.  
 Snow lies deep upon the fields.  
 But the change has begun.  
 Daylight hours increase slowly.  
 With each passing day  
 later sunsets are more apparent.  
 Winter is ending.  
 For bereaved parents,  
 The change is painfully slow,  
 The progress not always apparent,  
 But the promise is the same.  
 Winter will end.  
 Spring will return.*



Betty Stevens  
 TCF, Baltimore, MD

## *After the First Year*

*After the first year  
 The pain changes from a crushing weight to a wickedly sharp  
 cutting edge.  
 Time speeds up from a grinding plodding  
 To a more normal routine  
 And sometimes you can forget (for a moment)  
 That your whole life was destroyed  
 Just last year.*

*After the first year  
 You start to remember the good times,  
 And you can tell a funny story about your child  
 And save the crying for later.  
 But sometimes it seems like  
 You're the only one left who mourns.  
 "What's the matter with you, anyway?"  
 "It's been a whole year."*

*After the first year  
 Your child seems a little closer  
 And yet still so far away.  
 Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten*

*How he walks, her voice, the shape of his head  
 Or the solid warmth of her fingers curving around yours.  
 Those memories ambush you at many unlikely moments and  
 tear you apart.*

*After the first year  
 Your heart begins to thaw.  
 You remember that you once loved your surviving children  
 And you love them again.  
 You remember that life used to hold joy,  
 And you rediscover some small enjoyment in living.  
 You learn to piece your life back together  
 In a different pattern.  
 After the first year.*

*You pick up your burdens and go on.  
 Amazingly, you've survived a blow  
 More painful than anything you ever imagined.  
 Even though you wished you could have died too,  
 It slowly dawns on you that you must still live,  
 Because after the first year,  
 Comes the second year.*

Liz Ford  
 TCF, Madison, WI

Grief is a great teacher when it sends us back to serve and bless the living. We learn how to counsel and comfort those who, like ourselves, are bowed with sorrow. We learn when to keep silent in their presence, and when a word will assure them of our love and concern.

From *Gates of Prayer*  
*Reform Judaism Prayer Book*

## Evolution

In the beginning, I walked around wringing my hands constantly like Lady MacBeth. Now I still wring them but only on her anniversary during the hours leading up to her death and upon hearing tragic news.

In the beginning, the video tape in my heart played the events of the days before and after her death again and again. I was powerless to stop it. Now I can frequently turn it off, by consciously thinking of other things.

In the beginning I felt that my skin was too tight for my body. Compulsively, I had to move in order to make it fit. I walked for long periods in order to feel comfortable. Now I walk just for exercise.

In the beginning, on Tuesdays leading up to 12:25 p.m., I tensely counted the minutes. Now Tuesday is usually just an ordinary day.

In the beginning, time was counted in days and weeks. Now it's numbered in years.

In the beginning, everything that belonged or related to her was sacred. When the earrings she had given me fell out, I was frantic. Now if they were lost, I would be very sad but I could cope. I have also reached the point where I am able to donate many of the things she owned.

In the beginning, it was hard to think or talk about anything but her death. Now I have reinvested in life, have other topics of conversation, and actually find much of life enjoyable.

In the beginning I cried when I passed her favorite foods in the supermarket. Now there is a pang but the tears no longer flow.

In the beginning, after the first TCF memorial service, the words to "Wind Beneath My Wings" and "Somewhere Out There" echoed painfully in my head for months. Now when I hear those songs there is sadness, but it is softer and ends quickly.

In the beginning, I was sure that I was crazy. Now although I still question my sanity at times, I usually accept the fact that my thoughts and feelings are normal for bereaved parents, even if the rest of the world does not agree.

In the beginning there were many things I wouldn't do. Now I do some of them but still avoid others. Perhaps in my continued evolution, I will decide that those things are possible too.

*If you are at the beginning, take heart. Someday when the time is right and you have worked through much of your grief, you too will look back to the beginning and realize that life, even without your child, is bearable. There is evolution.*

Stephanie Hesse  
TCF Rockland County, NY  
North Palm Beach County, FL



### Love's Lasting Touch

*Don't weep for me when I'm gone  
Because my love will always be there  
My spirit will exist in all the earth,  
In the water, trees, and air.  
You'll hear me say, "I love you,"  
In the whisper of a breeze.  
You'll know that I'm beside you,  
With the rustling of the leaves.  
You'll feel my arms caress you,  
In the warmth of each sunrise.  
The moon and stars will be my goodnight  
kiss,  
The stars my watchful eyes.  
Your life will be my legacy,  
Your memories my epitaph.  
These ties will bind us together,  
Till we meet on heaven's path.  
I'll not ever desert you,  
We'll never be far apart.  
I'll live within you always,  
Nestled deep inside your heart.*

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
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### The Waves of Grief

*I watched the waves break on the shore  
I heard them crash and pound and roar,  
Some broke a long way out at sea  
And some washed right up over me.  
And as I watched them ebb and flow  
They seemed quite like the grief I know.  
They never stopped, yet there were those  
Which carried me with them as they rose.  
Other waves were very calm  
And I could stand and not fall down.  
While I watched, the tide went out  
And "Grief" retreated without a doubt.  
I knew that it would come again  
And I would feel that awful pain,  
But maybe not so often now  
Will I be overwhelmed somehow.  
Since David died the grief has changed  
Not dimmed, but rather rearranged.  
The waves of grief I'll always have  
But this I know—I have survived.*

Barb Patterson  
TCF, Coquitlam, Canada





*Tears may soothe the wound they cannot heal.*

Thomas Paine

*There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than 10,000 tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.*

Washington Irving