

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • 615 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org
 Lamar and Joy Bradley, Chapter Leaders, 615 889-1387, email: lbradley1@mindspring.com
 Candan & Dan Gardner, Newsletter Editors, 615 855-2900, email: gardner3@tcfnashville.org
 Jayne Head, Outreach Coordinator, 615 859-2256, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net
 David Gibson, Regional Coordinator, 615 356-1351, email: davidg14@prodigy.net

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.

May 13 Meeting

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is a special day and it can be a difficult day for mothers.

TCF will honor all mothers with special readings and there will be a picture board to display your child's photo. (Please bring a photo 5"x7" or smaller)

Also, in what has become a tradition in the Nashville Chapter, miniature yellow carnations will be given to everyone who attends. The flowers are provided by David and Peggy Gibson in memory of their daughter, Paige.

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 Significance of Mother's Day

I don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my own child, a love greater than any I had known before. So as Mother's Day approaches, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood, I too, want to be remembered as a mother.

Ginny Smith
TCF, Charlottesville, VA

Far Beyond the Clouds

*Far beyond the clouds above
 A special garden grows with love.
 Special flowers of many blends
 Are the children of
 The Compassionate Friends*

Sam Rosenberg

Thought for the Day

It is pretty impossible to remember back to our babyhood days, when first learning to walk meant a lot of stumbling and falling. But things got easier and we moved faster when someone held our hand. Being a bereaved parent is something like that—a lot of stumbling. But I have found some "compassionate friends" to hold my hand and make things easier. I'm walking a lot better now, even though I still stumble and fall at times.

TCF, NW Central Jersey Chapter

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., Fridays at 11:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., and Saturdays at 10:30 A.M.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

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.

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. We'll be glad to include your child's name. You need notify us only one time.



The Compassionate Friends 30th Annual National Conference To be held in Oklahoma City July 20 through July 22



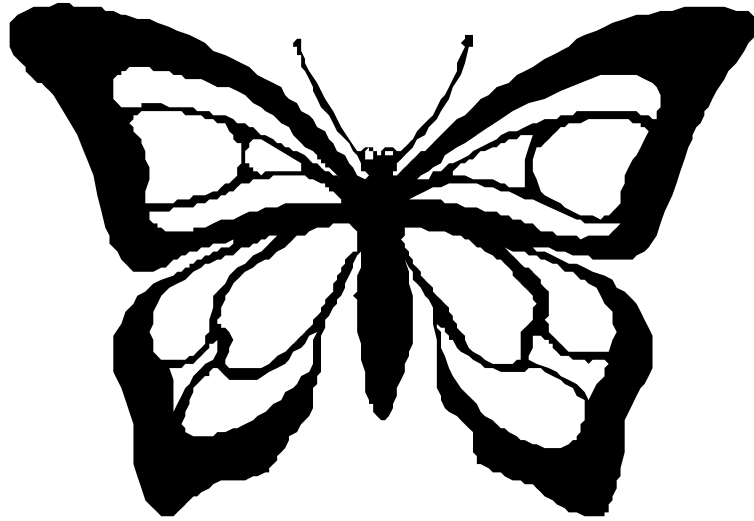
One of the best experiences a bereaved parent can have is to attend a TCF national conference. Here you will meet other bereaved parents and siblings, you will hear fine speakers, and you will have the opportunity to attend several helpful workshops and sharing sessions. A high percentage of the people who attend are within the first year of their child's death.

Go to the TCF Website at www.compassionatefriends.org to get registration forms and all the information you will need to attend this wonderful event.

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

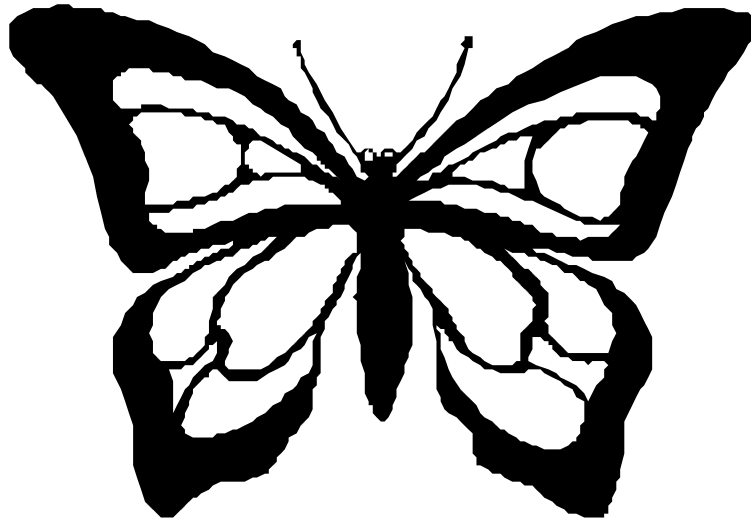
Let Us Remember Them

In the month of their births, the month of their deaths—and always, with love



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.



Mother's Day and Father's Day

Mother's Day and Father's Day, two very difficult days to get through when you are a bereaved parent. For some of us, our only child has died; for the rest of us our remaining children seem to remind us of the one we no longer have.

Our only son, Jason, died a few weeks before Mother's Day last year. I remember dreading that holiday and wondering how I would survive all the reminders that I no longer had a child, was no longer a mother. I dreaded finding any cards in my mailbox, but I dreaded not finding any even more. That would be proof that I was no longer a mother.

When I picked up the mail, there was, indeed, a card from my mother-in-law. My first reaction was anger and hurt: "How could she be so cruel? How could she remind me of my loss this way?" when I finally calmed down and was able to read the card, I found a wonderful, warm message of love and concern. Mom realized how difficult that day would be and wanted to help in her own special way. She pointed out that once I had become a mother, it could never be taken away. Motherhood was in the heart and it was there to stay.

I still feel a little sad and nostalgic on Mother's Day, but I know that what has happened can never be undone. Jason lived and made me a mother as surely as he died. I am still a mother and will be in my heart forever.

Connie Eddy
TCF, Concord, NH

A Mother's Love

*A mother's love is unique and special;
Nothing else can quite compare.
When you think she's given all she's got
You find she still has love to spare.*

*When the object of her love is taken
For whatever the reason be
An important part of her goes with him,
A part no one else can see.*

*You may understand her grief and sorrow,
You may feel a great loss too,
But what that child meant to her is different
From what that person meant to you.*

*She spent nine months with this life within her,
Growing and maturing day by day,
Truly depending on her for existence
In a very real and vital way.*

*A bond is shared between mother and son
The first moment of his birth;
Unspoken, unrehearsed, though it be,
No words can measure it's worth.*

*So though your cherished child has departed
From what we know life to be
That bond will keep the love you share alive
For now through all eternity.*

*Robin Hunt
TCF, Portland, OR*

Forever Together

*A day will never pass
When we don't think fond thoughts of you
We lost a son, we lost a friend
Without you we're lost too*

*You had the greatest laughter
And who could forget that smile
We feel so very honored
That God chose you as our child*

*A phone call never ended
Without an "I love you"
So when you're looking down on us
Remember we still do!*

Mom and Dad

*Freddy Weller
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Thoughts on the Month of May

*The spring flowers on your grave
Express the time of year.
It used to be a busy time...
Lots of happy days and cheer.*

*I still have all the Mother's Day cards
Made of construction paper and glue
Verses written on a slant
That said, "Mom, I love you."*

*I'll make no birthday cake this May
Nor see the graduation of your class.
The parades, ice cream social and such
Are all a part of the past.*

*And though these weeks bring sadness
When I remember them I have to smile.
May was really very special
And I'm glad we had it for awhile.*

*Norma Herzog
TCF, Cincinnati, OH*

Just Another Holiday

*How do I approach this special holiday?
My precious child from me is gone away.
The day I could say "Yes, I am a mother,"
Now just a painful day like any other.*

*A day awaited with much anticipation.
Now seems to me a painful confrontation.
I must accept that I am different,
From those for whom the day they did invent.*

*My child can't give to me a homemade card,
I find the thought of that is very hard.
And what when all the mothers are asked to stand?
To you, my little one, I'll reach my hand.*

*May thoughts of you carry and uphold me;
So that this day won't leave me sad and empty.
On Mother's Day, I may not be able to respond.
But of you, my child, my thoughts are always fond.*

*Sally Sell
TCF, Greater Ozarks*

When a Sibling Dies

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because grieving parents no longer have the emotional energy to care for them. They may feel unloved as they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-destruct: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead siblings and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

- Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to the cemetery visits.
- Share with the siblings all factual information as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.
- When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the siblings' fear of being left out.
- Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
- Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
- Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
- Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.

Janice Lord
TCF, Anne Arundel City, MD

Survivors of Suicide

Time heals all wounds is not necessarily true for survivors of suicide. Time is necessary for healing, but time is not enough. Shared feelings enrich and lead to growth and healing.

From within the circle, we talk about the past. I hear cries for fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and friendships we thought would last.

And we ache for the arms of a loved one, of a time too short lived and of questions left more piercing than a knife. Oh, the questions come hauntingly, pressing your mind, when a loved one takes their own life.

In the circle I dare reach out my hands. In the circle, help me see there's a plan for me.

And my story becomes yours as we struggle through the pain. In the circle, we remember their names. We have daydreams of the future, about how we thought it might be, with regrets of conversations that might have been the key.

We are angry and confused as we struggle for our breath. Our hearts cry out in anger in what has been labeled a senseless death.

We have good days and bad days, and without a trace, in the circle, tears and smiles meet as we gather strength together. Sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters and friendships felt deep in our souls, memories and moments left clinging to us, and questions of how to let go.

Donna Braddy (SOS)

Mother's Day: A Father's View

In our house as in other bereaved parent households, Mother's Day comes with mixed emotions. Setting aside a day to honor motherhood is only right; mothers do tend to be taken for granted. I remember as a child the joy of getting my mother a special gift, even if the gift was nothing more than a crayon drawing. As an adult, buying gifts and doing something special for my mother and the mother of my children brings back those happy memories. All that changed after Erin died.

Looking through all the cards at the gift shop only reminds me of the irony. Cute, humorous and sentimental cards await the bereaved father shopping for his bereaved wife. I can't find the card that will comfort my wife on this day, or worse, I'm afraid I'll buy a card that will bring back only painful memories of the child she lost.

I realize this day can, even years later, take my wife back to grieving she thought she was "through with." I can never do enough on Mother's Day; maybe I try to do too much. I know cards, gifts, flowers and messy breakfasts can't make up for the loss of our child. Still I do these things because she deserves them.

The unfairness of our daughter's death will always be there. I know I can't change that. But I can remind her she is a great mother, a loving mom and most importantly, she is still the mother of the child we lost.

If she's happy on Mother's Day, I will try to do my best to keep her there. If she's depressed, I'll try to cheer her up as best I can, even though I feel I'm not very good at it. This, then, is the wish I have for all other bereaved mothers today: Please be as happy (and proud) as every other mother today; no one can dispute the fact you brought your child into the world. Although that child is no longer with you, the love you had for her or him remains and can never be taken away from you. If you should be depressed, may there be family and friends to remind you of this and to comfort you.

To Chris and to you,
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY.

Al Bots
TCF, Cleveland, OH

A Special Note to Siblings and Fathers

An emotional and sentimental day is on Mother's Day. It can be a very lonely day for moms, even if there are other children in the family, because that one child is not here to wish her "Happy Mother's Day."

Siblings, if mom is not responding as you would like her to on that day, give her a big hug and tell her you love her. Be gentle with her. She loves you. She is your mother too, but she is also a mother who is lonely for the absent child.

Dads, hold your wife close and tenderly on that day. She may do a lot of daydreaming and crying and her mind may wander back to when....

If the child who died was an "only child," dad, be extra kind and loving, maybe take her to lunch or dinner, because even though that child won't be here with her, she is still a mother and a mother forever she will be.

I am a mother of two beautiful children who are with me and I am a mother of two children who have died.

Verna Smith
TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

Thoughts on Mother's Day

I saw my friend standing, staring at a picture of my son and daughter, and I joined her. Instinctively we put our arms around each other as we stood there together.

"Loving him was worth the pain of losing him, wasn't it," she said. It wasn't a question. It was a statement of fact and we both knew the answer was "yes, yes, a thousand times yes."

My friend is childless, but not by choice. I know how hard Mother's Day is for me, but I can only imagine how difficult and empty it must be for her. For me there are the memories of the months I nurtured that child beneath my heart. Will I ever forget the time he actually kicked the purse off that bump I called my lap? And the time he hiccupped? Even if he had died at birth, I would still have memories to treasure.

Then, there were those wonderful toddler days when he told the world all our family secrets and amused a whole airplane full of people when he said in his loudest three-year-old voice, "Tell the maid I want a coke!"

School brought a mixed bag of memories. Some good, some bad, but all a part of a boy growing up. How we loved him as a teenager. "I'm half kid and half adult," he said, "and the kid comes out on Saturday night." We lost him during those years, but sometimes I've consoled myself with the thought that 16 would be a magical age forever.

Yes, dear friend, loving him was worth all the pain of losing him and more. Much, much more.

Judy Osgood
TCF, Central Oregon

