

# 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.

## May 10 Meeting

*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.*



## 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

*If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.  
If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting robin into his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.*

Emily Dickinson

## **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.

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*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.*



**The Compassionate Friends**  
**32nd Annual National Conference**  
*Mountains of Compassion*  
*Roses of Love*  
**August 7 – 9, 2009**  
**Doubletree Hotel Lloyd Center**  
**Portland, Oregon**  
*‘City of Roses’*



Registration forms may be found on the TCF Website  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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 from across the nation, 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. Anyone associated with the Nashville Chapter—bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling—is eligible to receive a predetermined refund to help with part of their conference expenses. To take advantage of this offer, please call Joe or Melanie Ladd at 615-361-7996.

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### Annual Balloon Release Scheduled for June 14

The afternoon of June 14, 2009 marks the date of our regular June meeting and the fifteenth annual balloon release in memory of our children. Family members and friends are invited to participate. Each person will be given a bio-degradable helium-filled balloon to which you may attach a handwritten message (paper will be provided.)

Following a few moments of remembrance, the balloons will be released. The balloons are quite beautiful as they drift heavenward together. Afterward, the group will gather for refreshments and fellowship, so it would be helpful if you would bring a snack or treat to share.

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*No person can sum up the life of another. Life is too precious to be passed over with mere words which ring empty. Rather it must remain as it is remembered by those who loved and watched and shared. Such memories are alive, unbound by events of birth and death. And as living memories, we possess the greatest gift one person can give another.*

*Charles Gaines*  
 TCF Sugar Land-SW Houston

## Finding the Future

When my son died, I lost my future on two levels. On a very practical level, I was consumed with grief that bombarded me with the thoughts of the past and made it a fight to survive the present. The one-day-at-a-time theory was a reality. There was no place for thought of the future.

On another level, my future was crushed. I worked and lived for my wife and me, but primarily I worked and planned for my son. He was my future. He figured in a big way in every plan I made, whether it was next week, next year or the next decade. Now, I ask myself, how can I plan ahead when the most important person in my life is gone forever?

Today when I remember my six years with Michael, they are without a doubt the best years of my life. That is a great memory until I realize that the rest of my life will probably fall short of those six years. It's really tough to plan a future that falls short of the past.

Is there a solution to this helpless, lost feeling? There is no universal solution that I've discovered. I have memories of the tremendous pride that Michael had in me. He showed that pride in many ways on many occasions. If I don't live the life I'm capable of living, if I allow my life to wither away, I'll be letting Michael and myself down. The strength to keep my commitment to Michael and myself comes and goes, but I will succeed eventually.

My ultimate commitment is to find the best way to help those around me to the best of my ability. I've not determined which path to follow, but the choices are unlimited. I can work with bereaved parents, children, or fellow Vietnam veterans. It means being aware of the needs of others and devoting the time and effort necessary to help them. The message is a strong one. I can't ignore it. My future can never be what I had previously hoped. It will be worthwhile. The search for the future goes on for the right path, but the goal is there. Search for your future. If you search hard enough, you'll find it.

Tom Murray  
TCF, Cincinnati, OH



## Butterfly Gardening



Turning your backyard into a haven for a host of colorful butterflies is easy. All you need is a sunny spot and a garden plan that includes both nectar plants for the adults and food plants for the young.

Before you plant your butterfly garden, do some research. Find out which butterflies are native to your area and what they like to eat. If possible, incorporate as many of these plants into your garden plan as you can.

Since butterflies get thirsty, you may want to sink a shallow pan or plate into your garden soil and fill it with water for them. When they are not feeding, butterflies often relax on a sun warmed stone. Be sure to set a few flat stones around your garden for resting butterflies. And finally, never use pesticides in your garden. If insect pests do make an appearance, handpick the marauders.

You'll attract the most butterflies to your garden if you plant their favorite flowers in drifts or clumps. Zinnias are a preferred food for many butterfly species, especially when the flowers are crowded together in large masses. Sometimes the least likely plants will lure the most butterflies. When the oregano is in bloom, it will be smothered with butterflies, including the snout butterfly.

Monarch butterflies will feast on almost any colorful bloom. Their young, however, eat only milkweed plants. During migration, monarch butterflies depend on fall blooming flowers such as New England asters, for nourishment during their long trek south. Aster is a perennial and blooms in early September.

Be sure to include at least one butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*.) These bushes grow to ten feet high and produce a summer-long banquet of pink, purple, blue or white blooms. Be sure to protect your butterfly bush in the winter in the north.

Always set out extra parsley plants to share with the butterflies. You can use a half-dozen parsley seedlings in the front of your garden plots.

Anne Baklarz  
TCF, Pittsburgh, PA

We survive the unthinkable. We survive for others. And then, very slowly, we survive for ourselves.

Because only through the good we do for others in her name  
will the beauty of spirit, mind and body that was our daughter live forever.

Kay Lokoff  
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

## *Mother's Day Memories*

*Sometimes, now,  
In the early days of spring, when the chirping birds'  
morning melodies echo beyond the trees,  
When the bright daffodils burst forth with their  
announcement of new life,  
When the morning chill of winter has finally  
faded away,  
My body remembers,  
And then, my heart remembers.*

*I start to remember a spring long ago that held  
great hopes and wonder—  
the happiest spring of my life.  
A Mother's Day more joyful than any other,  
A Mother's Day of mothers' days—  
As I gazed into the eyes of my newborn daughter,  
and the innocence of life was still with me  
And I remember what happiness was.  
I remember Lauren.*

*And then, I can remember another happy  
Mother's Day.  
And, I remember a little more of Lauren—  
on her first birthday.  
I remember her happy smile and her huge dark eyes  
And how she loved to discover the life around her,  
And what a gift it was to be her mother.  
And I remember what happiness was.  
I remember Lauren.*

*And then, I remember a different Mother's Day.  
It was Lauren's second birthday,  
A Mother's Day of hope,  
But mixed with too much fear.  
Would it be my last?*

*After her eight-month battle with cancer,  
We were fighting for more life for her  
In the midst of spring's new life around us.  
But, we still had her and that was our gift.  
I remember Lauren.*

*And then I remember all the Mother's Days since.  
The height of my joy on that first Mother's Day  
was brought to the lowest point of sadness  
with my grief  
Over her death on my first Mother's Day  
without her.  
I had no other children.  
Was I still a mother?  
And, I remember sadness.  
And, I remember Lauren.*

*I survived those other Mother's Days.  
I learned that it was okay to do what was  
necessary to ease my pain on a date  
so closely linked with her birthday.  
It was okay to stay home from church to avoid  
seeing all the happy mothers and their children.  
It was okay to make my own plans, and to  
avoid family gatherings if I felt too much pressure.  
But it was not okay to forget Lauren.*

*This spring brings my ninth Mother's Day since  
Lauren's birth.  
And the pain of those early Mother's Days has eased.  
And, now it will soon again be her birthday.  
And, I'm beginning to remember a little bit  
of what happiness is.  
And, that is a gift, because  
I can still remember Lauren.*

*Shirley O'Donnell  
TCF, Nashville, TN*

## **It's Okay**

**It's Okay to Grieve:** The death of a child is a reluctant and dramatic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. **Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.**

**It's Okay to Cry:** Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life. **It's okay to cry.**

**It's Okay to Heal:** We do not need to "prove" we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty," for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. **It's okay to heal.**

**It's Okay to Laugh:** Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. **It's okay to laugh.**

Marianne Waite  
TCF, El Paso, TX

## MY DONNIE

To honor my son, Donald Lee Fleet, on the 8th anniversary of his passing

*My son's love is as warm as the sun that shines down on me,  
And when he smiled, it warmed my heart like a warm April breeze.*

*Then a thunderstorm of life took him from me,  
And I became sadder than I ever thought I could be.*

*But, just as the sun comes up each day,  
My son's memory comes to me in the same way.*

*And just as the sun rises,  
So will he, because we share a hope for eternity.*

*Ruby M. Dotson  
TCF, Nashville, TN*

## Of Parent and Child

**B**etween Alexander and me was an unspoken arrangement. My job was to teach the lessons of the world, his was to grow and learn. In the two and a half years that we were together, we utilized this system to the fullest.

From my accumulated wisdom and experience, Alexander was taught all that a growing child needed to know. Together we studied the mysteries of the universe—the softness of kitten fur and how rain makes mud.

He learned the social graces, table manners, and bathroom etiquette. He was taught care and consideration for himself, his sibling, and other human beings. Under my gentle tutelage, Alexander learned of love and life.

As his mother, I took the responsibility for protecting him from all hurt and harm. It was my job to go before, to pave the way for the child that follows. But somewhere in the stillness of a February night, Alexander and I reversed roles. He died quietly in his sleep, making his journey to the other side alone, without me.

I was left as the child—he as the parent. I am the child who must struggle, stumble, and falter, unsure of my way. Alex is the parent, possessing spiritual completeness for which I am still searching. He has jumped ahead and now he turns to hold out his tiny hand to me. “Come, Mother, do not be afraid. The path ahead has been paved by me and I will not let you fall.” Through Alexander’s gentle tutelage, I have learned of love and life...and death.

*Joanetta Hendel  
TCF, Naples, FL*

## A Mother's Tear

*A single tear trickles down my cheek.  
It tells a tale I cannot speak  
Of days gone by that have been stilled.  
It tells of dreams left unfulfilled.  
It's wetness holds "what might have been."*

*Not going to the Senior Prom.  
No more "I love you, Mom."  
No cap and gown on graduation day.  
No wedding bells in the month of May.*

*No more family birthday celebration,  
No voting for the leader of our nation.  
Gone, the dream of horse and farm,  
Never mine, to hold her babes in arm.*

*You've followed the path of my lonely tear,  
It speaks of one that I hold most dear.  
Now, you'll hear this mother cry, "Why God,"  
Why did my daughter die?*

*Karen Bell  
Bereavement Magazine*