

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: tcf@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.

November 12 Meeting Rick Shelton—Speaker

It is our pleasure to welcome Dr. Richard C. Shelton as our guest speaker this month. Dr. Shelton, who teaches in the Department of Psychiatry at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, is active in the research on depression. He has served on teams sent to counsel those who have been affected in areas where tragedy has occurred, including the fast-food murders in Clarksville. He will be discussing whether seeking professional help outside the TCF group would be appropriate. We invite you to join us.



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

Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 10—HCA Auditorium

IMPORTANT: TO ALL MEMBERS

Everyone who wishes to have a picture of their child shown on the big screen will need to carefully follow the instructions on the form on page 7. This must be completed and received at the address on the form by Saturday, November 25. **DO NOT send forms and photos to the TCF P. O. box.** Slides that we have from previous years may be used, or you may send a new slide or an original photo of your child (preferably 5"x7" or larger, but smaller can be used too.) Copies cannot be used.

Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself. Your photo will be returned to you at the service.

Also, please plan to bring a stand-up photo (preferably no larger than 5"x7") to the service to be displayed on the stage at the front of the auditorium.

Following the service, we will gather in the cafeteria for refreshments. It would be most appreciated if you would bring a snack to share.

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010
 TCF Website: www.compassionatefriends.org National Office email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

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.

Help for Bereaved Children

The Grief Center at Alive Hospice now provides individual counseling for grieving children and teens, as well as their family members. Also, a periodic children's support group is being offered. For further information, you may call Lauren Thurman, CMSW, Children's Grief Counselor, at 615 963-4829.

Alive Hospice Support Group For Bereaved Parents

John Baker has suspended private counseling for the Grief Center at Alive Hospice; however bereaved parents meet as a group the 1st Thursday of each month. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

For general grief (loss of parents, adult siblings, etc.) Call 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

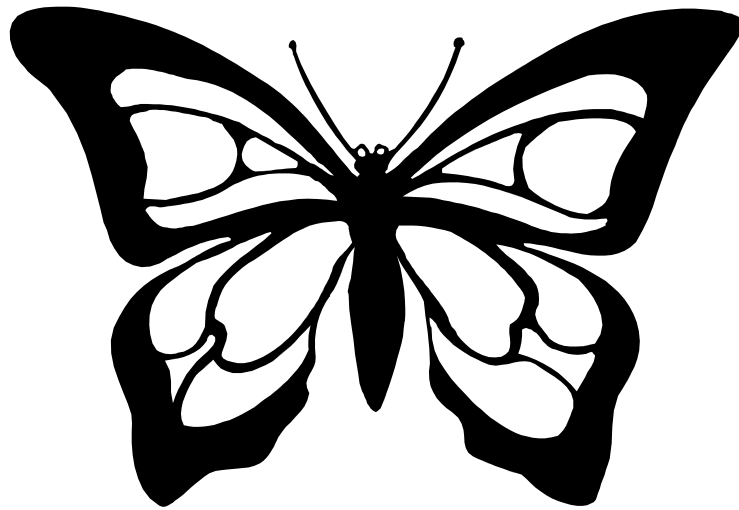
At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the “Let Us Remember Them” list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you have not been able to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing 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.

TCF Website

Go to the TCF Website at www.compassionatefriends.org to find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter web sites, including Nashville, and numerous other resources. Check it out.

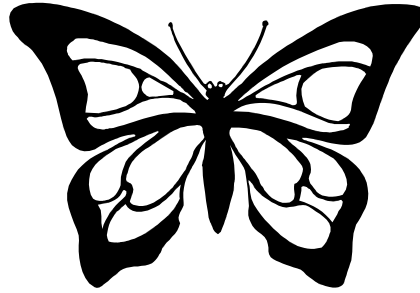
Let Us Remember Them

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.



Thankful Heart

Did you know that it is possible to be thankful even though your son or daughter has died! There are many blessings in everyday things that we all take for granted and just assume should be ours. We can become thankful for these things and make it become part of our life—our new life we are given in our children's death. In this a healing can take place.

I'm not saying it's easy. Sometimes, in fact, it is very hard. But, maybe it is time to take a look at things differently and be thankful for them. A thank you may not always come from the heart, but rather from the head. It may not always be spontaneous, but sometimes require a deliberate effort. Sometimes I can end up changing my whole attitude by forcing myself to think up something, however small, to be thankful for. I can start out feeling down and depressed and bring myself up into a much more pleasant frame of mind.

Just as people grieve differently, there are no set rules. What to be thankful for can vary from person to person. I generally start with little things and work my way up.

A new life has formed within me as a result of my daughter's dying, and I vow to make it a positive change—one of growth and advantage in respect to her life and as a tribute to her. I'm thankful for her, for what she's meant to me and for what her dying has meant to me. Yes, I miss her and think of her every day and sometimes wonder what it would be like to have her here. I imagine all the joy that I'm missing because she isn't here. I feel the pain of her absence. It would be better and I'd rather have her here, of course. Sometimes I think it's unfair and miss her more and more each day. There is a hurt that will never go away completely until I see her again. But, at the same time, I can be thankful for things I do have. If I can only think of just one little thing each day and think about that—as the days go by—my list will grow and so will I.

Barb Netzke
TCF, New Ulm, MN

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.

At Daybreak

*I listen for him through the rain,
And in the dusk of starless hours
I know that he will come again;
Loth was he ever to forsake me:
He comes in the glimmerings of flowers
And stir of music to awake me.*

*Spirit of purity, he stands
As once he lived in charm and grace;
I may not hold him with my hands,
Nor bid him stay to heal my sorrow;
Only his fair, unshadowed face
Abides with me until tomorrow.*

*Siegfried Sassoon
From Collected Poems*

Come Walk With Me

*Come walk with me a while
Along this bitter path
Where travelers, not by choice
Walk uphill all the way.
The weary road is paved
With broken hopes and dreams
And phantoms gather tolls
And steal their memories.*

*Who are these travelers, who
Sadly journey on this road?
They're moms and dads who've lost a
Child and must survive, it's said.
This street begins in Hell, you see
And ends somewhere in time.*

*Come walk with me, my friends
Along this bitter path,
For I have been this way before—
Alone I thought I was,
Until some strangers shared my pain
Named COURAGE, HOPE and LOVE.*

*KLD
TCF, Arlington Heights, IL*

Please Ask

*Someone asked me about you today.
It's been so long since anyone has done that.
It felt so good to talk about you,
To share my memories of you,
To simply say your name out loud.
She asked me if I minded talking about
What happened to you...
Or would it be too painful to speak of it.
I told her I think of it every day
And speaking about it helps me to release
The tormented thoughts whirling around in my head.
She said she never realized the pain
Would last this long...
She apologized for not asking sooner.
I told her, "Thanks for asking."
I don't know if it was curiosity
Or concern that made her ask,
But told her, "Please do it again sometime...
Soon."*

*Barbara Taylor Hudson
Kansas City Chapter,
Parents of Murdered Children*

For Stuart

*They say there is a reason
They say that time will heal
But neither time nor reason
Will change the way I feel.*

*For no one knows the heartache
That lies behind our smiles
No one knows how many times
We have broken down and cried.*

*We want to tell you something
So there won't be any doubt
You're so wonderful to think of
But hard to be without.*

*Tracy Weaver
TCF, UK Web site*

Recipe for Recovery

As many of us go about preparing our Thanksgiving dinners, don't we wish we had a "Recipe for Recovery?" "Just add a cup of boiling water, stir well and drink," and our grieving would be over. Our society seems to crave "instant answers," but bereavement is a long, slow process and there are no easy solutions. Yet, I couldn't help imagining what I would put in my own "Recipe for Recovery."

- ◆ Start with one cup of the Milk of Human Kindness—all those dear friends who did not turn away from me when they heard of Steve's suicide, but helped in many practical, caring ways to make the first months easier.
- ◆ Add several Good Eggs—helping professionals like my minister, the counselor who suggested TCF and the young funeral director couple who organized the TCF chapter I attended in northern New York.
- ◆ Throw in a few heaping tablespoons of Reading Materials—Books and Pamphlets from TCF library that started my thoughts going in a positive direction.
- ◆ Add The Salt of The Earth—wonderful new friends I met through TCF and other support groups. Maybe we should call them The Cream of The Crop, because eventually they rise to the top!
- ◆ Sprinkle liberally with Tears—because it's okay to cry—and generously with Laughter—because we can learn to smile again. Bake in a warm oven of Tender Loving Care. Be sure to make enough to share with others—and freeze some for later.

That's my recipe—what's yours?

Cynthia Kelley
TCF, Cincinnati, OH

Memories of Thanksgivings Past

As Thanksgiving approaches, my husband, my daughter and I were recently recalling our first Thanksgiving without Jack. We simply ran away that first year. Since Jack's birthday always fell near Thanksgiving, even though we celebrated his day on his day, everybody always knew that Thanksgiving dinner was really his birthday dinner. He truly loved that meal. I found I couldn't cook it that year, nor the next—and I also found nobody wanted me to. So, we ran away—as far away from tradition as we could. They laugh at me in the groups when I tell them we had dinner that first year at the Benihana of Tokyo restaurant! As my family talked about it, we all agreed we would do it again given the choice. It was right for us.

What is right for you this Thanksgiving? Really think about the choices you have available to you—and do what will help you through this special family time with the least pain. There is no rule that says you have to do it as you always have, you know. I can assure you Benihana of Tokyo will be able to accommodate you should they be your choice. Just isn't a busy day for them for some reason!

I can also assure you that eventually you'll be able to approach the holidays without this overwhelming fear and dread. It was the third year before we were ready to return to some of our old traditions. We now fill that empty chair with some person or persons who need to have a place to be that day—and we feel good about that. It doesn't completely fill his chair, but it helps, and we do give thanks for those we have left.

I am now able to prepare our traditional turkey, dressing, wild rice, green beans, sweet potato soufflé, and ambrosia—and have done so for the past four years. I knew I was better when I was able to do that. Don't you have to measure progress in strange ways when you're recovering from the loss of your child? I can tell you it is nice to have progress to measure. Don't despair. You'll get there, too.

Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA

Feelings on Losing Our Children's Pets

When my son David died last year at 19, he left us a kitten, about 6 months old. The kitten, whose name is Buster, had been a birthday gift to David 3 months before from his girlfriend. We had not been pleased about this. We already had a cat, age 19, and thought it would be too traumatic for her to have a kitten around. So for three months we had been strongly suggesting that the kitten go live with Beth until David was out on his own. But somehow it never happened.

Then David died. Now I can't imagine life without Buster. He is grown now, fat and sassy, still giving our old cat, now 20, fits. But my very last memory of David, as he went out the door that night, is of his picking up that kitten and giving him a kiss on his back. When I pet Buster now, or talk to him, or when he snuggles up to me on the couch, it is a sweet feeling of connection to my lost son. Losing him some day will be another degree of losing David...

Anne Teddlie
TCF, Decatur, GA

So often, one attempts to face the whole future at once. But we will not live that period all at once, only day by day. Don't try to face twenty years. Face today. When that has been achieved, face tomorrow. You will find more and more ways in which you can cope. The Chinese have a saying that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. There is no way you can take the fifteenth, or the two hundred seventh step, before you have taken the first.

Michael A. Simpson
The Facts of Death



CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 10, 2006



Regardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, November 25, 2006. Do not send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Instructions: A new computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. Either a slide, or an original 5"x7" photo (no copies, please) may be used. (If a 5"x7" is not available, any size will do; however, the 5"x7" or larger is easier to process.) The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year. **Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

- _____ I will attend and am enclosing a slide or original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)
 _____ I will attend and am enclosing a photo or different slide of my child to be used in place of the slide you have from last year's service.
 _____ I will attend and would like for you to use the slide you have from last year.
 _____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name: _____ Phone: _____

Sharing

We recently had an experience with our eight year old daughter, Julie, which we share in the hope that it will encourage other parents. Julie was four when her seven year old brother died unexpectedly. The subsequent years have been a challenge, and we have often agonized over whether we have made the right decisions in helping Julie cope with her loss. She and her brother were very close and each year has brought new dimensions both to her grief and to her healing.

Julie came home from school with the news that a classmate's father had died. The child had returned to school, but was struggling with her pain, crying frequently and expressing anger to those around her. Julie sat down and wrote her a letter which we share with Julie's permission.

"I hope you do not get mad. I am sorry your father past [sic] away. I know how you feel. One of my favorite brothers died. I was very sad. It take a long time to get over it. It took me three years to get over it. I will not bring the subject up if you do not want me to. You can ask your mom or me if you have any questions. Your friend, Julie Peterson"

Several days later, Julie came home with the question, "What can you do when someone just cries and cries?" I told her there wasn't much one could do, but to give a hug and just be there. "That's what I did," said Julie. "I hugged her and held her head on my lap and patted her back. I told her it was ok to cry, and just to let it all out."

Our little one paid a terrible price for her wisdom. But as she expressed her compassion and love to her friend, we knew she was going to be all right. And we gained a much needed affirmation of our ability to parent. Maybe we will be all right too.

John and Jane Anne Peterson
TCF, Godfred, IL