

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: 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 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.

October 12 Meeting—

FACING THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are coming. How do you deal with this special time of the year when you're hurting so badly? Your child has died, and all the traditions of the past seem impossible to navigate. Some members of our chapter who have managed to memorialize their missing child or children during the holidays, as well as to make these days special for their other family members, will share with us solutions they have found to be helpful. We hope you will be with us.



**2008 Worldwide Candle Lighting
In Memory of All Children**

Sunday, December 14

TCF invites you to join in this special day of remembrance by lighting a candle at 7:00 P.M. wherever you are.

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

“Those of us who have worked through our grief—and found there is a future—are the ones who must meet others in the valley of darkness and bring them to the rim of light.”

*Rev. Simon Stephens
TCF Founder*

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.

OUR HEIRLOOM QUILT

Quilts tell stories. The stories quilts tell are often of family, at least they were in the days when quilts were hand stitched. I remember my aunts in the 1940s sitting around a large quilting frame that rested on the backs of straight chairs. The quilt top had been pieced together from the cloth of discarded clothes torn into strips. With utmost patience they sewed with tiny stitches the outline of the pattern they chose--patterns like "Double Wedding Ring" or "Lovers Knot." Occasionally a neighbor would come to join in, sewing and talking for an hour or two.

Some of the old hand-sewn quilts became family heirlooms handed down from generation to generation. We have two of these that Peggy's Grandmother Jones made in the early 1900s. We also have an heirloom quilt of a more recent vintage.

We were amused when our oldest daughter, Paige, told us that she and one of her college classmates had joined a quilting class made up mostly of middle-age women. Paige developed a real talent for quilt making. She enjoyed sitting with a large quilting hoop in her lap carefully stitching away. The design she chose for her first quilt was "Log Cabin" and we were amazed that she did such a good job. She was very proud of that quilt. It now hangs as a backdrop on the wall over her sister's bed.

For her second quilt she chose a "Double Four Patch" pattern with earth tones of brown and tan squares. She pieced together the quilt top her last semester of college and she began quilting on it during the summer following graduation while living at home and working in a department store. That fall she left for graduate school in Memphis but didn't take her quilt with her. In early November, home for a weekend visit, she suffered a brain hemorrhage and underwent emergency surgery that removed the right frontal lobe of her brain and most, but not all, of a malignant brain tumor. During the few months of life she had left, she tried again to stitch her quilt but where the previous stitches had been small and all in straight lines, they were now large and in lines that wandered off at an angle. Paige was never able to finish that quilt. Today it is folded over a quilt rack in our bedroom, those last irregular stitches displayed on top. It is our beautiful heirloom quilt and we treasure the story it tells us.

David Gibson
TCF Nashville, TN

Your Child—Gift or Possession?

I had a choice to either view Laura Lou from the vantage point of entitlement, and that is to say, “She was mine. I had a right to her. She was my child, and therefore her death is tantamount to theft,” or to look on her from the vantage point of grace and gift ... that I’d ever had her for a single moment was more than I could claim was my “right.” I had a choice between which perspective I would put around her ten years as a part of my history, and I chose to regard her life as gift. I chose to regard her as someone that I had never deserved, as someone whose very presence in my existence was utterly beyond anything I could have created. That did not take the sadness out of it. It did not in any way diminish the grief, but it did keep me from being angry and resentful at God ... or at doctors who didn’t know how to save her, and I would say to you that you, too, have the same choice—you can either regard the people you have loved as your rightful possession and therefore their death as a kind of stealing of what rightfully belongs to you; or ... you can stop asking, “Why did she die?” and step back and ask a prior question, “Why did she live?” ... When you ask that question, you’re getting back to that mystery of grace that any of us exists for a single day, and the kind of gratitude that you feel in the presence of something that you know is a gift is something very different from what you feel when something that is rightfully yours has been stolen.

Dr. John Claypool—
 Author of *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler*
 From the Keynote Address—
 Twelfth Annual TCF National Conference

Sometimes love is for a moment.

Sometimes love is for a lifetime.

Sometimes a moment is a lifetime.

Pamela S. Adams
 TCF, Winnipeg, Canada

Acceptance

*Since sorrow came to live with me
 I hear folks speak of how ‘twill be
 When healing’s done its work in me
 And brings a new maturity.*

*My heart cries out, “I’ll take the old!
 Bring back my child for me to hold.
 I’ll gladly give up all the gold
 Of the new worth of which you’ve told!”*

*I surely have no choice in this.
 I ache to touch the child I miss
 And on her cheek to place my kiss,
 Returning to my former bliss!*

*Since back in time I cannot go,
 May I of wisdom come to know
 And may new values in me grow
 So that compassion I may show!*

Robert F. Gloor
 TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

Fall

*Leaves so bright and golden in the sun,
Glistening in early morning with dew.
Another season has begun,
Another fall to see, without you.*

*Pumpkins so ripe and beautifully bright,
In the still of a frosty night.
An array of colors for us to enjoy
Their beauty only dulled by the thought
Of our emptiness without our little boy.*

*The wind and the cold and the awesome dark
skies,
Somehow disappear in the memory
of your beautiful brown eyes.*

*We see the beauty of fall colors so clear,
Oh how I wish you were here!*

*The harvest moon shining,
Through the barren trees,
As we prepare for the first hint of snow,
Reminds us of a child who only meant to please.
And all those memories, only you will know.
Life goes on, as the seasons do.*

*But there's one thing that stays the same,
And that is—OUR LOVE FOR YOU!*

Jean Staicar
TCF, Central Iowa

Letting Go of the Pain

A few weeks or a few months after your child has died, you will probably find yourself in a situation where you find yourself laughing or having a good time—then you...think to yourself “How can I dare laugh or have any fun now that my child has died and I hurt so bad?” We’ve all had this feeling in the early stages of our grief. I urge you newly bereaved, PLEASE do not feel guilty about enjoying the happiness that comes with life. When you find yourself laughing and enjoying something in life, it doesn’t mean that you have forgotten your child it just means that you are “letting go” of some of the pain. In all of our lives there will be tears and in all of our lives there should be laughter.

When people used to say to me “You must put it behind you and let go of your child and start living again.” I wondered what they meant by “it.” I would get very angry. How dare those people think I could ever “let go” of my child, or even want to but after a while I realized that I don’t have to “let go” of my child in order to live again. I just have to “let go” of the pain that his death caused. His life will always be a part of me and so will his death; I’ll never forget him, but I don’t have to keep the grief and pain with me always. So if you see me cry, I’m “letting go” of some pain. And when you see me laughing or having a good time, I’m living life again.

Verne Smith
TCF, Fort Worth, TX

What a Strange Time is Autumn

*What a strange time is Autumn.
More than a season,
Autumn can be like a mood,
Softness and Warmth and Abundance
Drift from the sky like a smile
And you remember the seasons
Before the children died.
They do seem far away sometimes
Those seasons, now.*

*But not the children—they are always here
In this strange time, this Autumn,
When the Softness
And the Warmth
And the Abundance
Of unseen Children
Drift from the sky like a Smile.*

Sascha Wagner
TCF, Des Moines, IA

Your Pup and I

*Your old pup sleeps before the fire.
Muzzle resting on outstretched paws,
He twitches with a little yelp,
Reaching to a dream gone bad that he can't help.*

*A sound from outside jerks his head alert,
Ears listening intently,
Radar in search of your special step.
Not hearing the sound he wants, he looks hurt.*

*His head goes down with a sigh.
He looks to me with mournful eyes.
I declare I think that dog sometimes cries...
He, like I, never dreamed you'd be first to die.*

*He misses you as badly as I.
Even old pups want to know why –
And they grieve, like us, for one last goodbye,
And tonight I joined him as he cried.*

Fay Harden
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

*When the sun sits down on the mountains and the clouds turn purple and pink
And golden rays send fingers out to touch me,
I stop breathing and inhale with my heart
Because I know that along those glittering strands of light
Lies my connection to you.*

Sandy Goodman
TCF, Wind River WY

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 14, 2008

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, December 6, 2008. 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 computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. 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 an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

_____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

_____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved 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 _____

Good Therapy

*We shared a few hours, my friend and I
At the close of a busy day;
Left lives filled with daily cares,
And went away to play.*

*A few small jobs were there to do,
With errands to be run,
So choosing the work we wanted,
We turned it into fun.*

*We talked as we drove,
We talked as we shopped,
Words overflowing...
They couldn't be stopped.*

*We spoke of our happiness
We told of our joys,
We talked of the birth of
Two special baby boys.*

*We shared our sorrows,
Our pain, our fears,
For we have been friends,
Oh...years and years.*

*Some burdens are heavy,
Some burdens are light,
We shared them quietly, as
Day slipped into night.*

*What have I done with my life? you cry.
What have I done with this day?
The answer was ready, swift and sure —
You've been a friend, I say.*

*Our joys are double, our sorrow is half,
When we are able to share;
For when there is someone to listen,
We know there is someone to care.*

Laura Batty
TCF, Mercer OH

