

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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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.

September 10 Scrapbooking and Picture Projects

Have you ever wanted to organize various pictures, small mementos, certificates etc. that belonged to your child or were reminders of them? Jayne Head and Dan Gardner will be presenting some examples of what can be done with those items to make them last and also to create a new or creative memory.

Family Picnic Set for September 23

Mark your calendar. For a wonderful afternoon of friendship, fun, and good food, a time for remembering our children and for bringing our families together. Please join us for our annual chapter picnic. We will gather on Saturday, September 23 at 3:00 P.M. in Area 6 at Edwin Warner Park. Drinks and paper goods will be provided. We ask each family to bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

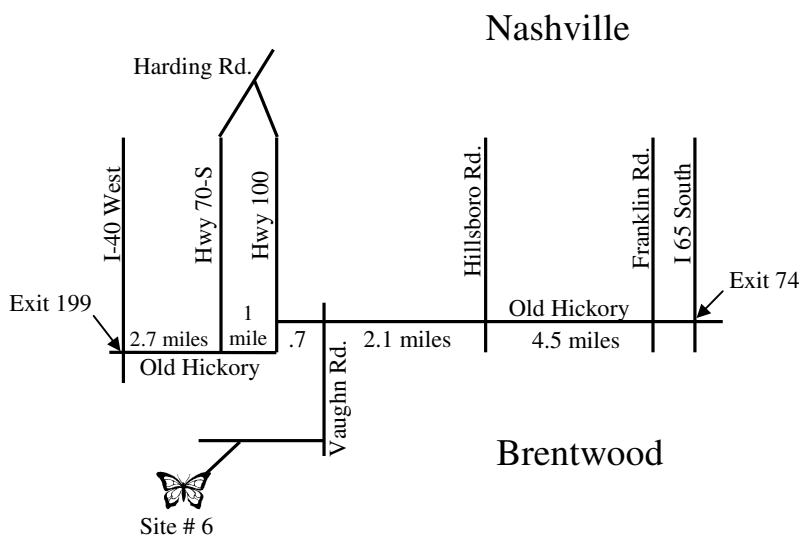
- A-G:** Prepared main dish
- H-M:** Dessert
- N-Z:** Salad or side dish

Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket, balls and bats or other games. Restroom facilities and play equipment are nearby. There will be a brief candle lighting observance in memory of our children.

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



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

Every other Thursday, an ongoing support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

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.

Change of Address?

Due to the large number of newsletters we deliver each month, it is essential to keep our database up-to-date. We must rely on you, the recipient, to let us know if you have moved. We ask that you help us by remembering to let us know when you have a change of address so the newsletter will reach you each month. Thank you.

The “Let Us Remember Them” Listings

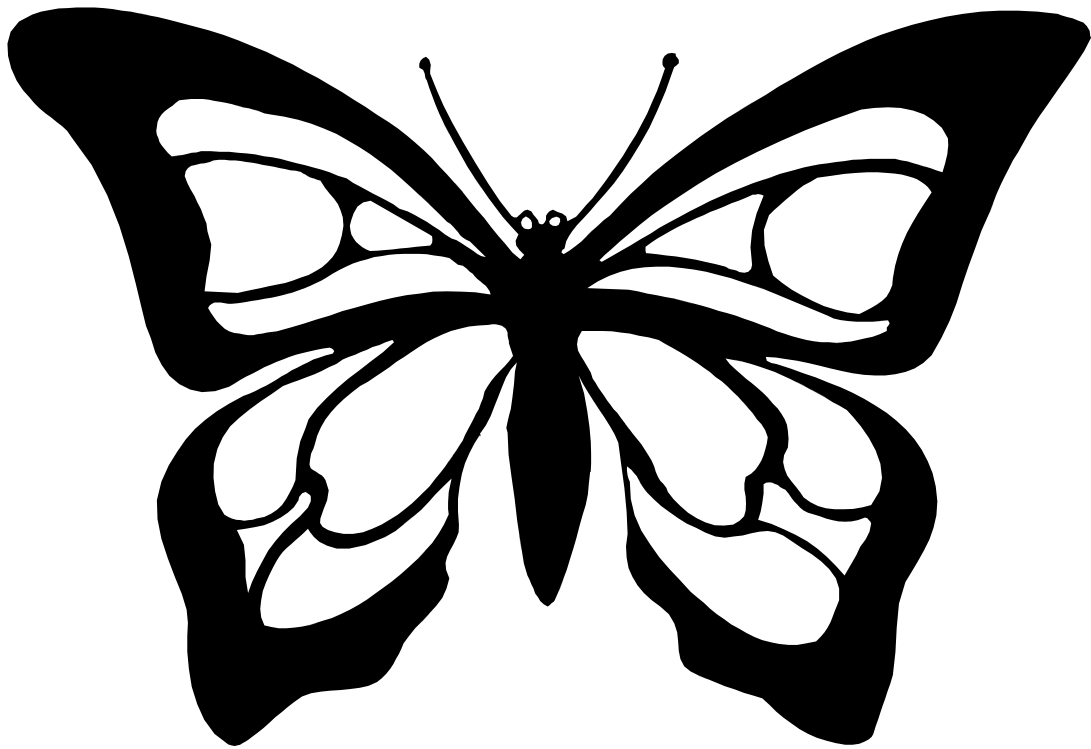
At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the “Let Us Remember Them” list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you have not been able to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing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

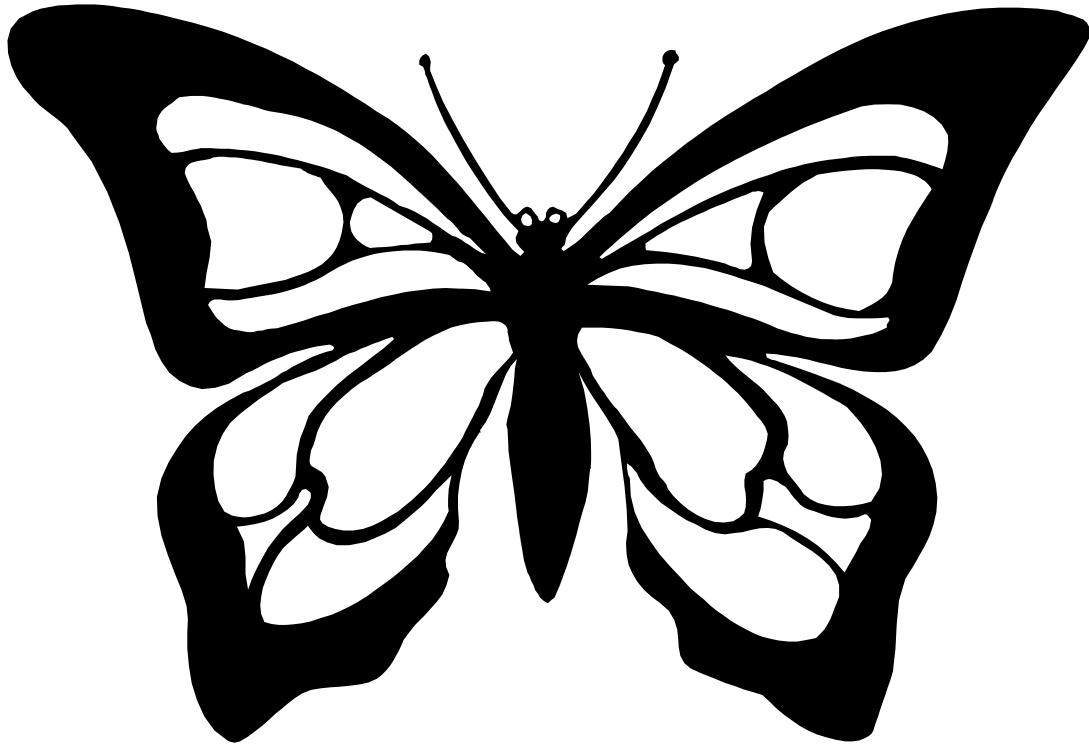
Let Us Remember Them

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.



On Memory

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me, and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am not entirely lost.

Frederick Buechner - theologian

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.

Who Cares

*When we need someone to care
The Lord is always near
Friends come as death creeps in
As it leaves, they disappear.*

*The weeks and months that follow
Too often faced alone
Become unbearable moments
When we just cry and moan.*

*The mention of your loved one's name
Brings on glances uncertain
What must you do, what must you say
To let them know you're hurting?*

*Your loved one lives within you
If but in your memory,
You can't pretend they never were
Dear friends, can you not see?*

*Speak about my loved one
Though a tear it might bring
To know that you remember her
Will cause my heart to sing.*

*Ginny Cracraft
TCF, Charleston, WV*

Olivia's Candle

My husband and I lost our baby, Olivia, during pregnancy, and having no funeral or other traditional means of finding a place for our feelings of loss and love for this cherished person, a person many believed never lived at all, we settled on burning a candle for 24 hours every time the death date passes. Beside the candle is this poem:

*To our beloved Olivia,
Whose life-light burned so briefly.
You are forever a part of us
As we remember and relive
The joy with which we discovered you and
The sadness with which we
Accepted your departure.
The light and love you lit
In us burns on.*

*Patti Williams
TCF, Northeast Georgia Chapter*

A Butterfly's Wings

*How delicate and beautiful to see,
Those wings that carry them so easily.
With a simple twitch they are in the air
To fly so gracefully from here to there.*

*Wings so dainty and colorfully made,
Reds, blues, yellows that never fade.
Their shapes and sizes are so varied,
The small bodies so easily carried.*

*Whether in a strong breeze or calm air,
They fly successfully everywhere.
The beauty in each will always remain,
In those wings be they fancy or very plain.*

*Those wings that seem so very frail
Enable those small creatures to really sail.
The flowers they visit are made more bright
Whenever the butterfly decides to light.*

*Watching them flit among the flowers
Makes time stand still, sometimes for hours.
Their beauty is both in color and grace.
It is a joy to have them all over the place.*

*If only they were able to speak to us,
They might ask "What's all the fuss?"
Like your children, we were normal beings,
But now they fly with angel's wings.*

*Dan Gardner
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Reflections of an Anniversary

*Frozen in a hundred photographs, my son,
No more do you crash through the door
And throw your adventures at my feet
Or solve the non-workings of a music box.
Your rolling giggle echoes in your sister's voice;
Your dimple somehow lodges on your brother's face
And younger brother lives with your scientific thirst.*

*We said good-bye years ago
But you never left.
Memories, a thousand moonbeams of joy,
Not frozen, but active
A spirit filling in the corners and hollows of my life
A love expanding my capacity for living
Until in eternity—we meld again.*

*Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, NJ*

“Yeah, But What If You’re A Jerk?”

In one of my favorite bits that Bill Cosby does, a cocaine addict is explaining why he thinks cocaine is so great. Basically, he proudly tells Bill that cocaine will enhance your personality—make you “more of who you are.” And Bill replies, “Yeah, but what if you’re a jerk?” it always cracks me up.

I see bereavement as a similar “personality enhancer.” We’re often told at the time of our child’s death, “This experience will make you a better person;” “This will make you a more compassionate person;” “This will strengthen your marriage and bring your family closer together.”

Many of us even believe these myths ourselves. Well, I’m here to say, “It ain’t necessarily so.”

Whatever good and bad traits we have, whatever coping skills, whatever shape our marriage or other relationships are in, we bring with us into grief. And grief intensifies *everything*. If your surviving child’s behavior has always driven you crazy, you’re not going to suddenly be *more* patient with her—you’re going to be less so. If you’ve never gotten along with your sister, understanding “the importance of family” won’t make you like her any better. And if you didn’t communicate with your spouse *before* your child died, you won’t miraculously become better at it *after*.

The same holds true for whether or not grief will make you a better person. There are a lot of bereaved parents who are not compassionate and understanding. We meet them occasionally at TCF, but they usually don’t stick around long.

They can be heard to complain, “That group didn’t help me a bit!” as if help and healing are things that can be bestowed *upon* someone, with no effort on their part.

Healing requires becoming a helper by listening to others, and if this has never been in a person’s nature, grief won’t magically change their personality.

The only thing grief will do (all by itself) is make you “more of who you are.”

So what about all these wonderful things losing your child is supposed to do for you?

Save your marriage? Make you a saint? Sounds ridiculous doesn’t it?

Grief *will* enhance your better qualities, but it will also enhance your worst. It has no magical powers—anything you want to change, you will have to work at.

It’s very compelling to think that something positive will result from all the pain of losing a child. And therein lies the difference between the great “personality enhancers,” grief and cocaine. Unlike cocaine, grief can give us some *motivation* to change.

We all have a desire to memorialize our children in some meaningful way.

We can’t change their death, but we can change ourselves in their memory. It says to them, “Your life changed mine in a positive way—because you lived, I’m a better person.”

Linda Moffatt
TCF, St. Louis, MO

Missing You

*There are no words written
In any poem or song,
That say how much we miss you
Now that you have gone.
The memories of your smile
May help to ease the pain
That will stay with us forever,
Until we all meet again.*

Jackie Short
TCF, UK

*Who do I thank for her?
The stars?
The universe?
Our creator?
She herself?
None of these things
Seem enough of a gift,
As having her in my life.*

Terri McCloud

Grandparent's Day

In our involvement in the grief over the death of our child, we fail to realize that grandparents also grieve. Although not in the same way we do, they do grieve. Their grief is two-sided, one for the child who is dear to them and the other for their own child who is suffering. Just as the parent does, the grandparent loses his future. One of the joys of grandparenthood is the knowledge that through grandchildren they achieve immortality. It is expected that their name will be carried on through them. At the death of their grandchild, that branch of their family tree is cut off. What should have been will not be. In cases of an only child, there will be no future generation. Just as for the parent, the family of the grandparent will never be complete again. They, too, feel the empty place at family gatherings. We bereaved parents must consider the needs of grandparents and at the same time be open and honest with them about our needs. We must let them know how they can help us, but at the same time, we must be aware that they, too, need help. Mutual sharing of feelings between bereaved parents and grandparents will be helpful to both in the recovery process. The sharing not only of painful feelings but also happy memories of the child with grandparents can be helpful for both and it can also create a deeper relationship in the family.

Margaret Gerner
TCF, St. Louis, MO

If I Had Only Known

If I had only known that you would be gone.
What would I have said; what would I have done?

Would I have spent hours watching your sleeping face?

How many thousands more kisses would I have given? How many more times would I have squeezed you tight? So many memories that have yet to be, stolen away.

So many lives left untouched because of your absence. What would our first fight be about? What kind of student would you be; what kind of brother, son, husband, father would you be? How many lives will your absence affect? Like a stone that was never thrown into the water. Did you really know we love you?

Did you know you were going to go? Could I have made your life any better? What would I change, what could I have done differently?

Would I have stayed awake all the time so as not to waste one precious moment of time with you, looking at you, listening to you, memorizing the sound of your voice, the shape of your face, the weight of you in my arms, the warmth of you?

The shape your blankets were in when you climbed out of them, the sound of your feet and how warm they were when they were just out of your shoes. Every memory every moment of your life, would I somehow have cataloged it better in my own mind? Would they seem more vivid, would I have paid more attention? Would they have been more than memories? Would they somehow have become moments etched physically in my mind like some kind of film that I could replay at will?

How many more times would I have touched you just to remember the smoothness of your skin or the smell of your breath or hair? The way your small hand felt in mine.

The quirky ways you did or said certain things that were just so unique to you. Would I have tried to imagine the ache in my chest that your absence would bring?

Would it have been enough if I had only known; would things be any different if...I had only known?

Dawn Lyons
TCF, Bakersfield, CA

September Memories

Many of our new members have lost children of school age. Even for those whose children died before they could go back to school or after they finished with school, September often brings painful memories. Seeing children with brand new clothes and the latest craze in lunch boxes and book bags. Lined up for the bus brings back memories for all of us. For some, we see children our child's age, progressing to the next grade when he or she will never have that experience. For some, we remember putting our child on that bus, the last minute rush to replace outgrown clothes and buy school supplies. For some, the pain is from the dreams we had of seeing our child go to school, dreams that our child never lived long enough to bring to fruition.

Some of us have younger children who are now "passing" in age our dead child, who should have been the older brother or sister. In my case, I have one daughter left and I remember shopping for back-to-school clothes for two. I can't help but wonder what size Colleen would be wearing now. She'd be twelve. Colleen rode in one of those little buses because she was handicapped. My mom used to hold her at the front door of her house, swaying back and forth saying, "Tick, tock, here comes the bus." I often think of that when I notice one of those little buses. Even after five years, I still look for #77, her bus.

I guess what I'm trying to say is two things. First, we're all in this together. We all have the same pains, just different variations. Second, we all have to expect that moments of nostalgia and longing will be with us ALWAYS.

The pain does dull, somewhat, with the years, but tears will always spring to your eyes at certain moments. The special days will always tug at our heartstrings in a way that non-bereaved parents will never fully understand.

At least we have each other; people who know what we're feeling and who understand our pain. I'm glad we can be here for each other.

Kathy Hahn
TCF, Lower Bucks, PA