



The Compassionate Friends

Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

We Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends

P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522 1-877-969-0010

National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Website: www.tcf-cle.net



Chapter Closed Facebook Group

December, 2017 and January, 2018

WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while

MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

December and January Monthly Meetings

December 14th at 7:00pm: There is no specific discussion subject for this meeting. You can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Joanne and Don Litvin will be the meeting facilitators.

January 11th at 7:00pm: The discussion subject will be "Coping, Moping, Hoping; How did you do with the holidays?", but you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Clayton Samels will be the meeting facilitator.

MEETING LOCATION: *Bethany Lutheran Church, 6041 Ridge Road, Parma 44129*

Remembering Our Children

Please take a moment to remember these children and those who love them on their birth dates and anniversaries. Although they were only here for a short time, the impact they made on their loved ones remains forever.



Birth Dates

December

- 2 - Tracy Ann Schuenemann
- 3 - David William Woods
- 4 - Michael Edward Moran
- 7 - Christian Creed Hein
- 9 - Frederick M. Tschanz
- 9 - Dominic Vincent Vitullo
- 10 - David Thomas Erich
- 10 - Roderick ("Roddy") Joseph Stafford Whelan
- 16 - Kimberly Ann Keenan
- 20 - Jacques Christiaan Bosman
- 21 - Anthony S. Martino
- 21 - Randy Stock
- 22 - Carl David Mancini
- 22 - Justin Robert van Brakle
- 23 - Steven J. Bilecky
- 23 - Christopher Michael Vinson
- 25 - Victoria Ann (Corrigan) Horn
- 25 - Douglas A. Specht
- 28 - Robby Brandt
- 30 - Eric Justin Obloy
- 31 - Denise Ann Kohl
- 31 - Stephen John Parker

January

- 5 - Joan Marie Dolinsky
- 9 - Isabella Marie Hlynosky (Stachewicz)
- 11 - Jackie vanDaalwyk
- 15 - Ryan Mulvey
- 16 - Robert C. Cutler
- 16 - Eli James Draper
- 17 - Hannah Elise Wernke
- 20 - Joey Keeler
- 24 - Terry M. Pappas
- 26 - Steven Michael Luff
- 29 - Kaitlyn Mary Schauer
- 31 - Christopher Todd Brogan
- 31 - Monica Lynn Weber

Remembering Our Children

Anniversaries

December

Claire Jane Cocklin (Age 4)
 Andrea Cortes (Age 26)
 Peter Anthony DiRienzo (Age 30)
 Christina Elswick (Age 49)
 Megan Lynn Frazier (Age 18)
 Charles "Sport" Haske (Age 22)
 Nathan Christopher Jurcago (Age 17)
 Johnny Robert Kazimer, Jr. (Age 24)
 Jonathan Matthew Lichtenberg (Age 20)
 Kai E. Maatz (Age 26)
 Alexander Humel McCann (Age 17)
 Katherine Lynn Nemes (Age 20)
 Matthew Pajak (Age 6)
 Dina Marie Parisi (Age 32)
 Kimberly Ann Parker (Age 34)
 Susan Kay (Pangrac) Sizler (Age 26)
 Rebecca Helen Truelsch (Age 18)
 Dominic Vincent Vitullo (Age 1 day)
 Mark Anthony Weber (Age 19)

January

Monica Judith Ann Adams/Bittner (Age 33)
 Nathan Bell (Age 33)
 Gregory Charles Brown (Age 15)
 Joseph Troy Brown (Age 17)
 Sean Daniel Byers (Age 21)
 Robert C. Cutler (Age 34)
 Richard Charles Devrient, Jr. (Age 22)
 Dawn Nicole Fordu (Age 15)
 Andrew Domonic Franklin (Age 30)
 Michael B. George (Age 20)
 Victoria Ann (Corrigan) Horn (Age 42)
 Ryan Johnson (Age 26)
 Matthew Josef-Arthur (Age 23)
 Charles Junke (Age 49)
 Matthew Kolesar (Age 21)
 Mary Kay (Moore) Lehman (Age 36)
 Matthew Glenn Lehman (Not Yet Born)
 Rick Marano (Age 33)
 Gregory Charles Christopher Musichuk (Age 24)
 Aliyah Jean Ramsey (Age 7)
 Bradley Ryan Riggins (Age 25)
 Russell Todd Simon (Age 18)
 Amy (Cudney) Sobolewski (Age 30)
 Sean Somoles (Age 40)
 Fannie Marie Thomas-Lewis (Age 22)
 Wendy Ann Toennies (Age 51)
 Justin Robert van Brakle (Age 20)
 Michael James Wohl (Age 28)

Newsletter Dedications



**Aaron Mulvey (Age 31)
and Ryan Mulvey (Age 33)**

Though not long enough, I am grateful to have had you. “Gratitude” is one of the nicest feelings a heart can have. It’s a feeling that comes along for a very special reason, and it’s a lovely thought that never goes away once it enters your heart. It joins together with special memories.

*With all my love,
Mom*



Bradley Ryan Riggins (Age 25)

Dear Brad,

**I wish you back more than a million times a day
Even though I know there could never be a way
I miss that smile that only you could make
And with that smile my heart you did take
What would life be like if you were still here
The memories of you I still hold so near and dear
Your presence is missed beyond human measure
Only a short time with you was our sweet pleasure
We struggle with the loss of you each day
And putting back the pieces of our life in a new way
You were gone from us and this world way too soon
But one day we will meet beyond the stars and moon**

*We love and miss you Brad. Until we meet again.
Love Mom, Dad, Cory, Garrett, & Zachary*

Newsletter Dedications



Rebecca Helen Truelsch (Age 18)

*We love and miss you
Mom, Dad and sisters*



Footprints on My Heart

I will never forget you my dear daughter. You loved to put your feet into the warm sand. Walking along you left your footprints there. But more importantly you left footprints on my heart. You were my best friend. We shared the good and bad. All the memories of you I hold dear. I still listen and yearn to hear your voice singing along with me to the music playing on the radio. Through all the hopeful times and the difficult times you were there for me as much as I was there for you. Safe in my heart you will be where you've left your footprints on my heart.

*Connie Truelsch, Rebecca's Mom
TCF Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland, OH*

TCF National News



THE 21ST TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

The 21st Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held this year on Sunday, December 10, 2017. This is a very special and moving event, when bereaved families join together from around the world in memory of all children gone too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 21st annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

What Is A Love Gift ?

A love gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but it can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. All local TCF chapters are totally dependent on funds from our families. We DO NOT receive funds from our National Office. Everything we need to operate our local chapter is paid directly from our local resources and our local family contributions. All monetary love gifts are tax deductible.

Thank you to all who contribute and support our chapter. Some people contribute in memory of other's children ... this is a wonderful way for others to say, "I am remembering your child." Other "Gifts of Love" are evident by all the compassionate and giving volunteers we have within our organization.

Love gifts should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends and mailed to our treasurer:

George Mickol, 2914 Dellwood Drive, Parma, OH 44134

Our Chapter News



Worldwide Candle Lighting Celebration

Our annual celebration will be held December 10th at the Old Town Hall, 18825 Royalton Road, Strongsville. We will have a potluck dinner beginning promptly at 6:30pm with the welcome and music/readings. At 7pm, we will each light a candle in memory of all children before sharing dinner together.

Our chapter will provide ham, rolls & butter and beverages. Each family please arrive between 6:00-6:20pm and provide a side dish, salad or dessert (including serving spoon) to serve 10-12 people. After dinner, we will extinguish our candles and have a final reading/music.

There will be a table to display your child's picture which should be no larger than 8x10. Again this year a slideshow of our children will be shown during the meal. If your child's picture *has not* been included in a previous slideshow, please email one to Don Litvin at lit@roadrunner.com *no later than Friday, December 1st.*

VERY IMPORTANT: You MUST RSVP to Pauline Dey (440-526-2087 or rpdey1@cox.net) by Monday, December 4th. The City of Strongsville enforces a very strict maximum occupancy of 65 for this facility. We will be unable to accommodate more than 65 persons. (The last two years our attendance was 63-65.)



Directions to Old Town Hall: The building is located on the south side of Royalton Road (Rt. 82) just east of Pearl Road. It is directly across from the Town Square, in the center of Strongsville.. Parking is on both the east and west sides of the building. Please use the east building entrance. Our Candle Lighting Celebration and potluck dinner will be held on the first floor. The building is fully accessible ... there are no stairs.

*Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow.
Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.
One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow,
or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,
and want more than all the world for your return.*

~ Mary Jean Irion

Love Gifts

Love gifts are donations that are made to our chapter to support the continuation of the chapter as well as the newsletter. We would like to thank these people who donated to our Chapter in memory of their loved one(s).

~ Loretta Mulvey ~ In loving memory of
Aaron Mulvey (Age 31) and Ryan Mulvey (Age 33)

~ Lloyd and Angela Riggins ~ In loving memory of
Bradley Ryan Riggins (Age 25)

~ Connie and Dave Truelsch ~ In loving memory of
Rebecca Helen Truelsch (Age 18)

Remembering Christmas

Remembering Christmas the way it used to be
When all the children went to bed early and we trimmed the tree
To make it look special when they came down with a twinkle in their eye
Yes those were the happiest days of all the years that have gone by.

Remembering Christmas when the children would open each gift
Even though you were so tired watching them would give you a lift
For each special gift they would open they would give you a kiss
We knew when they grew up these are the things we would miss.

Remembering Christmas when all the children were small
All the happiest moments we shared together we still do recall
Christmas was so much fun when all the children were here
Each child is so different in their own way but they all are so dear.

As the years have gone by Christmas is not the same anymore
The children all get married it's not like it was before
Some have children of their own and tell them what they used to do
Now they give to their children what once was given to you.

One Christmas came and we had lost a lot of love
When our Susan was taken from us and went to Heaven above
Christmas will never be the same now that Susan is gone
We try to have the best Christmas we can, she would want us to go on.

Remembering Christmas is still what we both try to do
Keeping Susan's spirit alive has helped us to get thru
We try to be happy but it will never be the same
So we light a candle at Christmas as we both say her name.

*Jack and Dee Heil
TCF Northeast Philadelphia, PA
In Memory of Susan*

Giving Myself Permission

It has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season.

After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays. Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before. But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me.

Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply, too painful for me. Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter? Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son's name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made.

That's Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX*

Newsletter Dedications

A newsletter dedication is a wonderful way to remember your child, and to help defray the costs to produce the newsletter. The cost is \$30 (tax deductible). If you would like to include a dedication, please fill out the form below and either bring it to a monthly meeting or mail it with your check (made payable to The Compassionate Friends) to Bill Luff, 133 Fourth Avenue, Berea, OH 44017. If you have a picture to include or a small tribute, please e-mail it to Bill Luff at:

jbl3665@sbcglobal.net



To submit a Newsletter Dedication in loving memory of your child

Please complete this form and send with your donation (\$30). Make check payable to The Compassionate Friends.



Donor: _____
(Your Name)

Donor Address: _____
(Street) (City, State, Zip) (Phone #)

In Memory of: _____
(Child's Name)

I would like dedication to appear in newsletter for month of: _____
(1st Choice) (2nd Choice)

When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

*Nita Aasen
In memory of my sons, Erik and David Aasen
St. Peter, Minnesota*

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SNOW

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again—even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

*Denise Falzon
TCF Lake Area, MI*

Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
 Burning in the night?
 Lights of love we send you
 Rays of purest white

Children we remember
 Though missing from our sight
 In honor and remembrance
 We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
 Spinning out in space
 Can you see the candles burning
 From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
 Who taught us perfect love
 This night the world lights candles
 That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
 Of those who know great sorrow,
 But as we remember our yesterdays
 Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
 And every year in deep December
 On Earth we will light candles
 As.....we remember

*Jacqueline Brown
 TCF Peace Valley, PA*

One Little Candle

I lit a candle tonight, in honor of you.
 Remembering your life, and all the times we'd been through.
 Such a small little light the candle made until
 I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.
 All of the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain.
 What a garden they grew, watered with human rain.
 I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in hopeless despair.
 But then your memory sustains me, in heartaches repair.
 I can wait for the tomorrow, when my sorrows ease.
 Until then, I'll light this candle and let my memories run free.

*Sheila Simmons
 TCF Atlanta, GA*