



# 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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Chapter Website: [www.tcf-cle.net](http://www.tcf-cle.net)



Chapter Closed Facebook Group

## December, 2019 and January, 2020

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### WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

### 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 11th 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 8th 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 and Lori Rychlik will be the meeting facilitators.

**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
- 5 - Shelley Fletcher
- 6 - Lisa Simpson
- 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 - Justin Robert van Brakle
- 23 - Steven J. Bilecky
- 25 - Victoria Ann (Corrigan) Horn
- 28 - Robby Brandt
- 30 - Eric Justin Obloy
- 31 - Denise Ann Kohl
- 31 - Stephen John Parker

### January

- 4 - Melanie Sue Ashwill
- 9 - Isabella Marie Hlynosky (Stachewicz)
- 11 - Jackie vanDaalwyk
- 12 - Maisie McCarty
- 15 - Ryan Mulvey
- 16 - Robert C. Cutler
- 17 - Hannah Elise Wernke
- 20 - Adam Joseph Semenas
- 24 - Terry M. Pappas
- 26 - Steven Michael Luff
- 27 - Kimberly Ann Kozar
- 28 - Jessica Marie Kossin
- 31 - Christopher Todd Brogan
- 31 - Monica Lynn Weber

# Remembering Our Children

## Anniversaries

### December

Claire Jane Cocklin (Age 4)  
 Peter Anthony DiRienzo (Age 30)  
 Megan Lynn Frazier (Age 18)  
 Charles "Sport" Haske (Age 22)  
 Nathan Christopher Jurcago (Age 17)  
 Johnny Robert Kazimer, Jr. (Age 24)  
 Kai E. Maatz (Age 26)  
 Alexander Humel McCann (Age 17)  
 Katherine Lynn Nemes (Age 20)  
 Dina Marie Parisi (Age 32)  
 Kimberly Ann Parker (Age 34)  
 Rebecca Helen Truelsch (Age 18)  
 Dominic Vincent Vitullo (Age 1 day)  
 Mark Anthony Weber (Age 19)  
 Dustin M. Zarobell (Age 35)

### January

Monica Judith Ann Adams/Bittner (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)  
 Shelley Fletcher (Age 34)  
 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)  
 Dustin Kalstrom (Age 26)  
 Matthew Kolesar (Age 21)  
 Rick Marano (Age 33)  
 Maisie McCarty (Age 1 day)  
 Gregory Charles Christopher Musichuk (Age 24)  
 Andrew Joseph Picone (Age 16 months)  
 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)  
 Justin Robert van Brakle (Age 20)  
 Michael James Wohl (Age 28)

# Newsletter Dedications



**Michael Benjamin Kurtz (Age 17)**

**My son, my big brother, my friend ... in 17 short years you lived, laughed, played, grew, comforted, protected and loved. You unconditionally loved us. An unfinished life. Forever loved - Forever missed.**

*Love,  
Mom, Adie and Mark*



**Steven Michael Luff (Age 19)**

**Steve,**

**Time goes fast — Time goes slow. But time doesn't change our love for you. We are so blessed to have you as our son and brother and will love you now and forever.**

*Mom, Dad,  
Scott and Lisa*



## First Meeting

Our November meeting was the first for these bereaved parent and grandparents. It is very difficult to attend a first meeting and we applaud them for having the courage to come. We hope we were of help, and that they will return and work through their grief journeys with us.

Carol Studer, remembering her beloved daughter Cynthia Elizabeth Betancourt (Age 47)

Joan and Russ Uhlir, remembering their beloved granddaughter Lucille Alexandria Uhlir (Age 1 day)

## 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).

~ Kathryn Kurtz ~ In loving memory of Michael Benjamin Kurtz (Age 17)

~ Judy and Bill Luff ~ In loving memory of Steven Michael Luff (Age 19)

~ Rosary and Nunzio Martino ~ In loving memory of Anthony S. Martino (Age 21)

## 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:

Cheryl Ondrejch, 14365 Old Pleasant Valley Road, Middleburg Heights, OH 44130

# TCF National News



## **THE 23RD TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING**

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 pm 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 23rd 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. TCF's WCL 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.

The Compassionate Friends and allied organizations are joined by local bereavement groups, churches, funeral homes, hospitals, hospices, children's gardens, schools, cemeteries, and community centers. Services have ranged in size from just a few people to nearly a thousand.

Every year you are invited to post a message in the Remembrance Book which will be available, during the event, at TCF's national website. The Remembrance Book will be open to post a message Sunday, December 1st, through Monday, December 9th. Photos can be posted on our Worldwide Candle Lighting Facebook page.



# Our Chapter News



## Worldwide Candle Lighting Celebration

*Our annual celebration will be held December 8th 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 bring a picture to the November meeting or email one to Don Litvin at [lit@roadrunner.com](mailto:lit@roadrunner.com) *no later than Thursday, November 28th.*

**VERY IMPORTANT: You MUST RSVP to Pauline Dey (440-526-2087 or [rpdey1@cox.net](mailto:rpdey1@cox.net)) by Monday, December 2nd. 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 four 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.

*It has been said that time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain.  
In time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the  
pain lessens, but it's never gone. ~ Rose Kennedy*

# Our Chapter News

## Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

The book I am reading this month is called Clapton and is the autobiography of Eric Clapton. I got it for several reasons. First, and relevant to TCF, Clapton lost his son, Conor, and so there is his perspective on a father's grief. Next, one of the ways he channeled his grief was through writing a beautiful song. Next is that the book is available in Kindle format, so I am reading it on my Kindle app on my phone, which was nice to be able to do on my flight down to Dallas to visit a couple of my kids for Thanksgiving. As an aside, I like the fact that I can mirror the screen on my phone to my 55 inch smart tv, which gives me, in effect, a 55 inch smartphone, which is sometimes a very handy thing to be able to do. Finally, I got the book at a great price, \$1.99, from a BookBub alert, thanks to a tip from Ron Gallacher, from the Reading Your Way Through Grief TCF closed Facebook group. Of course, now I am getting email alerts from BookBub all the time, but that's just the price I pay for getting the price I paid.



Anyway, I am working my way through the book but still have a way to go to get through it. I did manage to stop where I was in the narrative and just skip to and read the chapter called "Conor." Eric was in his second treatment for alcoholism, and the birth of his son and his subsequent relationship with him was a real positive focus. After Conor's death (and, believe me, reading about the helicopter death of Stevie Ray Vaughn - Eric was in another helicopter - and then Conor's death by walking out of a 53rd story apartment window - all of that in one chapter, was enough to activate my personal grief triggers) Eric goes through a period of emotional numbness. But after awhile, he channels his grief by writing a series of songs, none of which he expected to go public with. And he continues his 12 Step recovery program. One woman in the program tells him that he just removed her last excuse for taking a drink. She says that if he could remain sober after all that, then that was an example. In addition, Eric also begins to focus on having a more positive relationship with his daughter.

So, yeah, the one chapter is definitely worth the read, even if you don't want to read the whole autobiography of a giant figure in the music world. But it's icing on the cake to read this thing on a smartphone while playing some of his music on the phone, too. I bet there are a number of TCF chapters that will be including "Tears in Heaven" in their December candle lighting ceremony. But right now, I am focusing on finishing the column to get ready for Thanksgiving tomorrow. I'm thankful for what is, was, and will be, even if it's just for the little while.

## For the New Year

Where there is pain,  
 Let there be softening  
 Where there is bitterness,  
 Let there be acceptance  
 Where there is silence,  
 Let there be communication  
 Where there is loneliness,  
 Let there be friendships  
 Where there is despair,  
 Let there be hope.

*Ruth Eiseman  
 TCF Louisville, KY*



# Frost

On a cold winter's day,  
 Frost etches a beautiful artistry  
 On every thing it touches, every blade of grass  
 It glitters and sparkles, and for moments  
 Before the sun comes out and the master piece evaporates before our eyes, we stand memorized cherishing the  
 wondrous sight.  
 Like frost, our children were only here for a brief moment  
 But, while they were here  
 Whether it was moments in the womb  
 Days, months or many years  
 They etched their beautiful artistry of love  
 On our hearts and lives and all of those  
 They touched.  
 Unlike frost, what they etched is forever,  
 It is something that we can cherish and hold onto always.  
 We stand here tonight lighting a candle to remember children we will never forget.  
 Their light, their spirits, their artistry lives on and like the flame of the candle gives warmth on a cold winter's night  
 And light in the darkness  
 The love our children gave us still remains.  
 It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow.  
 It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness  
 That we feel,  
 And it gives us hope!

*Julie Short  
 2007 Southeastern TCF  
 Candle Lighting Ceremony  
 In Memory of Kyra*

## 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](mailto:jbl3665@sbcglobal.net)




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### 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)

## And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of “self help” were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April’s meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother’s Day and my son’s birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I set at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child’s story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son’s death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be “cured”. As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainly to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

*(continued on page 11)*

*(continued from page 10)*

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.

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

## **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*