



# 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

## February, 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

**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.

faith to be a source of strength, while 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.

## February Monthly Meeting

**February 14th at 7:00pm:** The discussion theme will be general, with no specific topic. As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Judy and Bill Luff will facilitate.

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING SCHEDULE  
TO 2nd WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH**

**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.



## February Birth Dates

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2 - Matthew Rogerson             | 19 - Richard Charles Devrient, Jr. |
| 3 - Christopher Anthony Bonsell  | 20 - LaMarr Deontay Moss           |
| 7 - Christopher Brandon Mercurio | 21 - Matthew Kolesar               |
| 8 - Kerry Kipfstuhl              | 24 - Gianna Renee Knapik           |
| 9 - Renee Grace Ondrejch         | 25 - Jack Gorden Gray, Jr.         |
| 9 - Jonathan Charles Vance       | 26 - Zachary Gerard Lanum          |
| 10 - Lisa Kearney                | 27 - Arik Bocian                   |
| 10 - Taylor Makela               | 27 - Tobias Garrett Brugler        |
| 15 - Matthew Pajak               | 28 - James Louis Morabito          |
| 18 - Erin K. (Gaydos) Carlisle   | 29 - James S. Mentzer, Jr.         |
| 19 - Claire Jane Cocklin         |                                    |

## February Angelversary Dates

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Wendy Sue Berry (Age 28)               | Nicholas William Luca (Age 3)      |
| Kathleen Michelle Blankenship (Age 25) | Anthony S. Martino (Age 21)        |
| Tiffany Lyn Clawson (Age 12)           | Jillian Deborah Martovitz (Age 28) |
| Ian M. Hovancsek (Age 2)               | Kevin John Napolz (Age 28)         |
| Richard J. Kasper (Age 28)             | Terry M. Pappas (Age 31)           |
| Gianna Renee Knapik (Age 12 hours)     | Gabrielle Nicole Walczak (Age 20)  |
| Baby Boy Krajnyak (Died in Utero)      | Sarah Alice Walzer (Age 21)        |
| Brian Kenneth Kunsch (Age 17)          | Monica Lynn Weber (Age 2 days)     |

# Remembering Our Children



Our January meeting was the first for these bereaved parents. 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.

## First Meeting

Karen Colvin, remembering her beloved daughter Melanie Sue Ashwill (Age 27)

Steve Kaminski, remembering his beloved son Sean R. Kaminski (Age 26)

Becky and Ken Kossin, remembering their beloved daughter Jessica Marie Kossin (Age 21)

## 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).

~ Val and Ron Brugler ~ In loving memory of Tobias Garrett Brugler (Age 34)

~ Karen and Jim Kipfstuhl ~ In loving memory of Kerry Kipfstuhl (Age 40)

~ Cheryl and Ed Ondrejch ~ In loving memory of Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)

~ Emily Sismour ~ In loving memory of my cousin Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

*There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept,  
things we don't want to know but have to learn,  
and people we can't live without but have to let go. ~ author unknown*

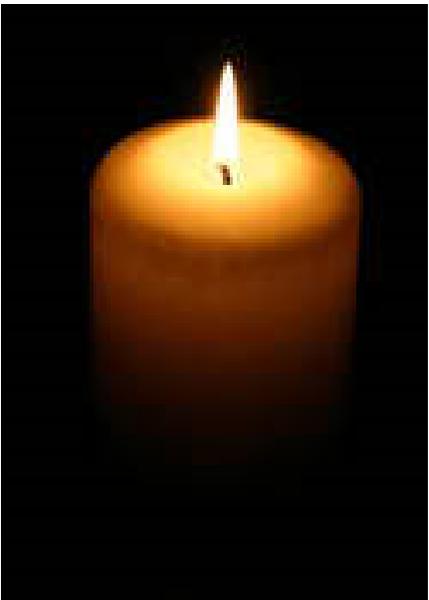
# *Newsletter Dedications*



**We miss you so much. We will be in Florida over your birthday with Jessie and Gus. There's a restaurant that has ramen noodle dishes. We will eat some in your honor.**

*Love always, Mom and Dad*

**Tobias Garrett Brugler (Age 34)**



**We love and miss you and your beautiful smile.**

*Love,  
Mom, Dad, Gabby, Andy and Eddie*

**Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)**

# Newsletter Dedications



Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

**Merry Christmas Mr.Alex!**

**I miss you so much!**

**From your Secret Santa & favorite cousin -**

*luv u , Emily!*

## Trust

I'm going to trust in the Lord to see me through  
 Not just this trial, but the next one too  
 With His help I'll walk through this dark cloud  
 Because this promise to me was vowed  
 He'll hold firmly to my hand  
 Until on my own I can stand

*Angela Riggins,  
 Bradley's Mother  
 TCF Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland, Ohio*

## Valentine's in Heaven

Are there Valentines in Heaven?  
 Are there Red Hearts everywhere?  
 Do they line the golden streets,  
 Or is that very rare?

I wish that I could send you one,  
 Right through Heaven's Gate,  
 To say how much we miss you,  
 On this special date.

I'd like to send a Candy Heart,  
 That is printed, "I Luv U,"  
 And maybe you would whisper back,  
 "I know, I Luv U too."

*Marilyn Rollins  
 TCF Lake-Porter, IN  
 For All Our Children*

## The Valentines of Yesterday

In my lifetime I have received many Valentines. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, school friends, boyfriends, good friends, acquaintances and my husband have showered me over the years with lovely Valentines which I have so appreciated. The tradition of declaring friendship and love on Valentine's Day is a very fond memory.

However, the sweetest Valentines I have ever received are from my son. From the first days in nursery school when my son made a hand plaque and a drawing on construction paper to the final Valentine in 2002, I have cherished these gifts of love from my only child. I have kept every Valentine my son ever made for me or bought for me. I have every Valentine gift he ever gave me. These are the treasures that remind me how special a parent's love truly is. There is no love to compare with the unconditional love we give our children. I think my son knew that nobody in the world would love him as much as his mother did. Yet, he also knew that he would love his children in just this same way. This unconditional parent's love that we give our children is the most precious love in life. It is always our hope that they, too, will find the joy of this love with their children.

When our child dies, we cling to our unconditional love as we feel the anguish of a final separation on this earthly plane and a tsunami of betrayal as the devastation of this incomprehensible loss sweeps over us. The pain is real. It is physical, emotional, psychological and forever embedded on our psyche. Yet, without that unconditional love, there would be no pain. Who among us would trade the most infinitely rewarding love and the subsequent pain of loss for a life of lukewarm relationships?

And so, as Valentine's Day once again comes into my life, I will look back at this love, at the good times, the wonderful handmade childhood Valentine cards and gifts and the carefully selected cards of adulthood that my son gave to me. His words, his love, his appreciation for all that we had shared as mother and child will be reflected in these treasures. There will be tears, certainly, but these are tempered with the many wonderful, sweet memories of my son and his life. It is these sweet memories which sustain me, give me hope, and bring me gratitude for all that was given to me. My son is forever in my heart. He is with me every day and every night, and especially, he is with me on Valentine's Day.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin*

*TCF Katy, TX*

*In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

## 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

## International Candlelight Celebration December 10, 2017



The holiday season brings special memories for families who have lost loved ones. On December 10th, Compassionate Friends held its International Candlelight Dinner to remember and celebrate those we hold so dear in our hearts. This anticipated, annual event was warmly shared by our TCF families and friends.



We wish to thank those who worked so hard and gave generously of their time to coordinate our Candlelight Dinner: Joanne and Don Litvin, Judy and Bill Luff, Bonnie and George Mickol, Angela and Lloyd Riggins, Clayton Samels, Doreen and Brian Simour. Special thanks to Don Litvin for the heart touching slideshow. We hope this celebration of our children's lives was a comfort to all.



*Photos courtesy of  
Clayton Samels*



## **IMPORTANT CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENT: CHANGE IN MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE**

Our monthly chapter meetings will now be held the **2nd WEDNESDAY** of each month. **This is a permanent change** made necessary by a schedule change for the Bethany Lutheran Church mid-week worship service.

## Precious Valentine Memories

The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by the uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters.

I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years.

February is a middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the Great North, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets, and it's warmer in the closet (although not by much!) So, armed with a dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in...not really about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

But, that first box sent me spinning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift bought for my sister last year and then so carefully had hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip something "important"). I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive.

I found a half a chocolate-covered cherry and part of a deck of cards. It was quite a treasure box, filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me.

I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "someday" would probably not arrive in my lifetime. The too short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows.

When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down, now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet and did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained, piece of construction paper, I felt a connection with other valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT....it had become lost in the pain of

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of the scrapbooks. I found my own laughter and that of my friend, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts. Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet...as if when I opened the door, the give of this Valentine would still be waiting!

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Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting - waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have.

The snow had drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace is faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and though the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones die, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and the memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE - and what a sweet treat that will be!

*Darcle Sims*

*Lovingly lifted from Sunflower Chapter, Wichita, KS Feb Newsletter*

## 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)



**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)