



# 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, 2019

### 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 13th 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.

**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               |
| 7 - Rhonda Zusack                | 24 - Gianna Renee Knapik           |
| 8 - Kerry Kipfstuhl              | 25 - Jack Gorden Gray, Jr.         |
| 9 - Renee Grace Ondrejch         | 26 - Zachary Gerard Lanum          |
| 9 - Jonathan Charles Vance       | 27 - Arik Bocian                   |
| 10 - Lisa Kearney                | 27 - Tobias Garrett Brugler        |
| 10 - Taylor Makela               | 28 - Marin C. Kos                  |
| 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)               | Anthony S. Martino (Age 21)        |
| Kathleen Michelle Blankenship (Age 25) | Jillian Deborah Martovitz (Age 28) |
| Tiffany Lyn Clawson (Age 12)           | Lisa Monty (Age 40)                |
| Nicole Julian Faust-Turner (Age 32)    | Kevin John Napolz (Age 28)         |
| Ian M. Hovancsek (Age 2)               | Terry M. Pappas (Age 31)           |
| Richard J. Kasper (Age 28)             | Billy Thomas (Age 58)              |
| 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)     |
| Nicholas William Luca (Age 3)          |                                    |

# Remembering Our Children



Our December or 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

Marge Clemens, remembering her beloved daughter Kimberly Kozar (Age 28)

Chris Kos, remembering his beloved son Marin C. Kos (Age 36)

## 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).

- ~ Lynne and John Bilecky ~ In loving memory of Steven J. Bilecky (Age 19)
- ~ Marie and Steven Hudgins ~ In loving memory of Andrew P. Hudgins (Age 32)
- ~ Karen and Jim Kipfstuhl ~ In loving memory of Kerry Kipfstuhl (Age 40)
- ~ Kathryn Kurtz ~ In loving memory of Michael Benjamin Kurtz (Age 17)
- ~ George and Bonnie Mickol ~ In loving memory of Scott Mickol (Age 16)
- ~ Cheryl and Ed Ondrejch ~ In loving memory of Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)
- ~ Sue Scardino ~ In loving memory of Charles "Sport" Haske (Age 22)
- ~ Fred and Mary Tschanz ~ In loving memory of Frederick M. Tschanz (Age 24)

*What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other? ~ George Eliot*

# *Newsletter Dedications*



**Kerry Kipfstuhl (Age 40)**

Thinking of you, Kerry, on your 44th birthday. We miss you and wish you were here with us. We love this picture of you because the Zoo was your favorite place. Keep watching over us. We love you.

*Love,  
Mom and Dad*



**Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)**

We love and miss you and your beautiful smile.

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

## A Valentine for Mom

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine.....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years....from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, handmade gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes give a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."

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



**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

# 50 Years

The 50th anniversary of The Compassionate Friends is January 28, 2019! Several of you have heard the story many times over of how our beloved organization began. However, for those who have not, it is very noteworthy; and for those who have, it most definitely bears repeating, especially such a momentous milestone in TCF's history.

In early 1968, Reverend Simon Stephens was the young assistant chaplain at the Coventry & Warwickshire Hospital in Coventry, England. On May 23, 1968, 11-year-old Kenneth, the son of Joe and Iris Lawley, died following severe head injuries when he was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. In the same hospital, Billy, the son of Bill and Joan Henderson, died a few days later from cancer. When the Lawley's heard of Billy's death, they sent flowers to the Henderson's. Joe Lawley stated, "We did not then know the significance of that act, but, looking back, it might be said that The Compassionate Friends started there."

The Henderson's were so touched by the Lawley's kind gesture, the two grieving couples met for a cup of tea. Through this, they found a place where they could speak openly about their sons and their lives, and their own shattered hopes for the future. They found, in each other, someone who truly did understand their devastating losses. Their shared experiences brought them a measure of comfort that they could not get from anyone or anywhere else. Upon watching how much their friendship and sharing helped them on their grief journeys, Reverend Stephens suggested that what they were doing together was far more beneficial than anything he could help them with. He wondered if this might also help other parents suffering the loss of a child.

Therefore, in January of 1969, six people came together, including Simon Stephens, where they talked about developing an organization that would help bereaved parents. And thus began "The Society of The Compassionate Friends", eventually shortened to The Compassionate Friends! From a handful of people meeting around a kitchen table to what the organization is today –a lifesaver for those whose precious daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren died much too soon. A place where bereaved families can find understanding listeners and sharers, friendships with others walking on a similar journey of grief as they learn to cope together, and, in time, find hope for renewed meaning in life again.

In 1972, Arnold and Paula Shamres lost their 10-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, in a tragic car-train accident. Two years later, they learned of the British Society of The Compassionate Friends from Time magazine article. Recognizing the tremendous value such an organization would have in the U.S., they contacted Simon Stephens. Gratefully, he came from Great Britain to Florida, and following that, TCF came to the USA!

To join in the celebration of the 50th anniversary, watch for interviews conducted with longtime members of The Compassionate Friends on the TCF/USA Facebook page as well as our website beginning on January 28th. How grateful we are to our founders, Simon Stephens, the Lawley's, and the Henderson's, who began this amazing organization 50 year ago, and to the Shamres' for bringing TCF to the United States!

*Cathy Seehuetter  
Director of Online Services, TCF (National)  
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# Our Chapter News

## International Candlelight Celebration December 9, 2018

The holiday season brings special memories for families who have lost loved ones. On December 9th, 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, 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  
Joanne Litvin and  
Clayton Samels*



## Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

A small book you may find worth reading is For One More Day, by Mitch Albom. Although it does not deal specifically with the loss of a child, still, it tells the story of someone who gets just one more day with a lost loved one. What we would all give for something like that! What would that day be like for you? I was struck by the quote “Children nest in the dreams of their parents.” What dreams did you have for your child? Did they have dreams for their own future?

I am passing along a recommendation for a book I haven't read yet, A Broken Heart Still Beats, by Anne McCracken. It is a collection of poems, essays, and fiction by famous literary figures who were also bereaved parents, and it was compiled by two professionals who are also bereaved mothers. I found a copy on Ebay, and it's already on its way to my mailbox. I'll give it a read and then pass it on to our library, which is something I can't do with ebooks I bought for my Kindle or downloaded from the Cuyahoga County Library.

I hope you are keeping warm during the winter deep freeze. Sit by the fireplace and read. And pass along any recommendations for books you think we might enjoy.

## You Did Not Die

You live in the beautiful wind that blows.  
 You live in the sound of birds that crow.  
 You live in the sun that shines so bright.  
 You live in the peaceful dark at night.  
 You live in a star I see in the sky.  
 You live in ocean waves that come in with the tide.  
 You live in the smell of flowers and grass.  
 You live in the summer that goes so fast.  
 You live in my heart that hurts so much.

You did not die, we only lost touch.

*Shari Swirsky*  
*TCF Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## 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)

## This Day

This dreaded day  
 Before highly anticipated,  
 I wake up cataloging the others  
 Wearing your first cake,  
 Cookie cakes and steak dinners,  
 Dalmatian cakes, skating, pancake breakfasts.  
 Carloads of boys going to the park  
 The last...family, and best friends, celebrating a milestone.  
 "18"  
 The world holds promise, the golden age of independence,  
 future, and choice. We are so proud.  
 A year later, we are in another world, one without you.  
 Now, what do we do? We grieve the  
 lost hope and possibilities.  
 We ask why?  
 We make bouquets of festive flowers, and take  
 green balloons to where you lay.  
 Your precious sister and I sit on the ground  
 arranging flowers and talking.  
 Your friends join us. You are remembered. You are loved.  
 We scream silently, wanting you back, and wondering how,  
 and even why we are standing here, why you are gone.  
 The world keeps turning, and we keep  
 looking back, wishing.  
 Daily, we miss you our darling boy.  
 Happy Birthday my baby.

*Charisse Smith  
TCF Tyler, TX*

## 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