



The Compassionate Friends

Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

We Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends

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National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Website: www.tcf-cle.net

Chapter Closed Facebook Group

February, 2020

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WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

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.

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 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 12th at 7:00pm: The discussion theme will be how do you answer the question "How many children do you have?" As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Meeting facilitators will be Doreen and Brian Sismour and Lori Brown.

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 | 20 - LaMarr Deontay Moss |
| 3 - Christopher Anthony Bonsell | 21 - Cynthia Elizabeth Betancourt |
| 7 - Christopher Brandon Mercurio | 21 - Christopher William Harris |
| 7 - Rhonda Zusack | 21 - Matthew Kolesar |
| 8 - Kerry Kipfstuhl | 24 - Gianna Renee Knapik |
| 9 - Renee Grace Ondrejech | 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 |
| 18 - Erin K. (Gaydos) Carlisle | 28 - Marin C. Kos |
| 19 - Claire Jane Cocklin | 28 - James Louis Morabito |
| 19 - Richard Charles Devrient, Jr. | |

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) | Billy Thomas (Age 58) |
| Baby Boy Krajnyak (Died in Utero) | Nicole Julian Faust-Turner (Age 32) |
| Brian Kenneth Kunsch (Age 17) | Monica Lynn Weber (Age 2 days) |

Remembering Our Children

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 M. Brown ~ In loving memory of
Gregory Charles Brown (Age 15)

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

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

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight. ~ from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

Newsletter Dedications



Miss you more everyday.

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

Renee Grace Ondrejech (Age 18)

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.

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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 though the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "someday" would probably not arrive in my life-time. 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!

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 through 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*

TCF National News

TCF NATIONAL MAGAZINE WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE AVAILABLE FREE ONLINE

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

We Need Not Walk Alone provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year. Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, compassionatefriends.org. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.



SIGN UP FOR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS E-NEWSLETTER

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

*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*

Our Chapter News

International Candlelight Celebration December 8, 2019

The holiday season brings special memories for families who have lost loved ones. On December 8th, 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, Cheryl and Ed Ondrejoch, Alex and Lori Rychlik, 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*

Candlelight Remembrance Service (save the date)

Our annual Candlelight Remembrance Service will be held at Bethany Lutheran Church on Sunday, June 28th. The service consists of lighting candles in memory of our children, with appropriate readings and music, a balloon release and refreshments. Please plan to attend this very special event in remembrance of our children. *More information will appear in the May and June newsletters.*



Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

As I write this article, the media is full of the reports of the death of Kobe Bryant and eight other people in a helicopter accident. Of course, that resonates with me because Robert died in a small plane crash, so I am familiar with and sensitive to news items about aviation accidents, victim identifications, media frenzy, NTSB investigations, etc. So I almost forgot that just a couple weeks ago, I was reading about another celebrity's death, Neil Peart, drummer and lyricist with the band Rush. Neil was also the author of seven non-fiction books. One of them, [Ghost Rider: Travels on the Road of Healing](#), has relevance to our group. (As an aside, it is a free audio book if you sign up on Audible dot com.)

From the description on Amazon:

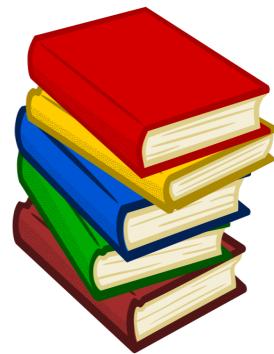
"Within a ten-month period, Neil Peart lost both his 19-year-old daughter, Selena, and his wife, Jackie. Faced with overwhelming sadness and isolated from the world in his home on the lake, Peart was left without direction. This memoir tells of the sense of personal devastation that led him on a 55,000-mile journey by motorcycle across much of North America, down through Mexico to Belize, and back again.

Peart's journey of self-exile and exploration chronicle his personal odyssey and include stories of reuniting with friends and family, grieving, and reminiscing. He recorded with dazzling artistry, the enormous range of his travel adventures, from the mountains to the seas, from the deserts to the Arctic ice, and the memorable people who contributed to his healing."

I recall reading some remarks from an Amish shopkeeper, remembering Neil. Unfortunately, the link on Facebook no longer works, so I can't revisit the article. Anyway, the guy recalls how Neil would drive through and stop in Amish country. Neil liked it that he was not recognized and was just another guy on a motorcycle.

Personally, I have found that Amish country is a great place to visit to get away from it all. As Robert was heading off to college, we spent a pleasant weekend at one bed and breakfast for some relaxing family time. The place was run by a Mennonite couple. Robert's bed was up in a loft, and he got a big kick out of lying on the bed, listening to the cows break wind through the open window. What a hoot!

After Robert's death, we used another lovely bed and breakfast down in Amish country just to hide out over his birthday weekend. I often recommend Amish country to newly bereaved as a quiet place to go. Not many of us can just get on a motorcycle and take off for 55,000 miles, but we are all on some sort of healing journey or other.



In this universe nothing is ever wholly lost. That which is excellent remains forever a part of this universe. Human hearts are dust. But the love which moves the human heart, abides to bless the last generation.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

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:

tbl3665@sbcglobal.net



Donor: _____
(Your Name)

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

In Memory of: _____
(Child's Name)

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:

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

*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