



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

July & August, 2019

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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

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.

July and August Monthly Meetings

July 10th at 7:00pm: The discussion topic will be "Vacation Memories", but 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.

August 14th at 7:00pm: The discussion topic will be "Mementoes". Please bring a favorite memento of your child to share with the group. As always you can raise any concerns you feel the group might be able to help with. Doreen and Brian Sismour will facilitate.

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.



July Birth Dates

1 - Bradley Ryan Riggins	24 - Joseph Troy Brown
6 - Tom Friebel	24 - Stephen Josef Daschner
9 - Kai E. Maatz	24 - Laura Vargo Rogerson
10 - Natalia Bercier-Graham	24 - Allison T. Steadley
10 - Sean Somoles	27 - Charles Junke
11 - Charles "Sport" Haske	27 - Alan F. Klohs
11 - David J. Silvestri	28 - Owen Martin Hoeptner
11 - Corey Michael Stevenson	28 - Eric M. Shaw
12 - John Albert Protiva	29 - Stephen Alexander (Gianfagna)
22 - Nathan Christopher Jurcago	31 - Luke Thomas Kurylak
22 - Michael A. Suglia, Jr.	

July Angelversary Dates

Michaelann Elizabeth Arnold (Age 21)	Susan Kalnitzky (Age 30)
Melanie Sue Ashwill (Age 27)	Denise Ann Kohl (Age 29)
Natalia Bercier-Graham (Age 1 day)	Michael Benjamin Kurtz (Age 17)
Antonio Deshon Briones (Age 21)	Laura Vargo Rogerson (Age 33)
Sarah Elizabeth Ciprian (Age 13)	Matthew Rogerson (Age 7)
Stephen Josef Daschner (Age 23)	Nathan A. Sorm (Age 19)
Brittany Nicole Finley (Age 27)	Donna Lynn Tischler (Age 38)
Jeffrey Lamont "Man-Man" Harris (Age 20)	Jeremy Daniel Yurcik (Age 29)
Timothy William Hautz (Age 3)	

Remembering Our Children

August Birth Dates

2 - Rick Marano	9 - John Michael Mendez
4 - Rob R. Gates, Jr.	10 - Kimberly Ann Parker
5 - Francis Scott Cwiklinski	11 - Dustin Kalstrom
5 - Jason Michael Repka	12 - Amanda Lynn Berhent
6 - Daniel Joseph Fernandez	12 - Kerrienne Loas
6 - Andrea June Torres	13 - Douglas Charles Roth
7 - Russell Ruprecht	22 - Lauren Venzel Kutchenriter
8 - David George Benning	23 - Dawn Nicole Fordu
8 - Robert William Duman, Jr.	30 - John Anderson Greer
8 - Nicole Julian Faust-Turner	31 - Dane Woods

August Angelversary Dates

Steven J. Bilecky (Age 19)	Allison Rose Kuczarski (Age)
Michael John Buchko (Age 30)	Christopher Kuzma (Age 14)
Angel "AJ" Cuevas, Jr. (Age 25)	John Michael Mendez (Age 23)
Rebecca Anne Dugas (Age 11)	LaMarr Deontay Moss (Age 30)
Thomas Patrick Harsany (Age 25)	Rhiannon Naab (Age 28)
Matthew Hickernell (Age 25)	Arrie Clifton Pritchard, Jr. (Age 30)
Anthony Lee Higgins (Age 28)	John Albert Protiva (Age 27)
Megan Leigh Homyak (Age 27)	Lauren Jane Rehker (Age 7)
Mark Adam Kapusta (Age 18)	Jason Michael Repka (Age 16)
Kerry Kipfstuhl (Age 40)	David J. Silvestri (Age 25)
Alan F. Klohs (Age 21)	Christopher George Stavlas (Age 30)
Kimberly Ann Kozar (Age 28)	Frederick M. Tschanz (Age 24)

Newsletter Dedications



*Nine years later
you are still beloved*

Michaelann Elizabeth Arnold (Age 21)



**It's been 5 years Stephen and we all miss
you very much. Rest in paradise until we
meet again.**

Love Mom, Dad and Eric

Stephen Josef Daschner (Age 23)

Newsletter Dedications



I still think of you a million times.
 I still cry a million tears.
 I still feel you at times.
 You were my son and our love will never die.

*Happy Angelversary
 Jeffrey aka (Mañ-man)
 (1 year in Heaven)*

Jeffrey Lamont "Man-Man" Harris
 (Age 20)

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).

- ~ Joanne Arnold ~ In loving memory of Michaelann Elizabeth Arnold (Age 21)
- ~ Darthena Culpepper ~ In loving memory of Jeffrey Lamont "Man-Man" Harris (Age 20)
- ~ Sharon Daschner ~ In loving memory of Stephen Josef Daschner (Age 23)
- ~ Don and Joanne Litvin ~ In loving memory of Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)
- ~ Chris and Michelle Mercurio ~ In loving memory of Christopher Brandon Mercurio (Age 1)
- ~ Len and Sandy Vargo ~ In loving memory of Laura Vargo Rogerson (Age 34) and Matthew Rogerson (Age 7)

*Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
 Love leaves a memory no one can steal. ~ found on a headstone in Ireland*

TCF National News

41ST TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 27 - JULY 29



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National Conference on July 27-29, 2018. “Gateway to Hope and Healing” is the theme of this year’s event, which promises more of this last’s great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. We’ll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our **TCF/USA Facebook Page** and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

REGISTER NOW

Adult Registration: \$115 Child Registration (9-17) \$55

Full-time College Student Registration \$55 Active Military Registration \$55

To help plan your time in St. Louis, view the general [conference schedule](#). We also have a list of the [Workshops](#) available.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

TCF’s discounted rate with the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel is \$140 per night plus tax. Reservations can now be made **online** or by calling the Marriott Reservation line at 800-397-1287. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. If your group needs to reserve a larger block of rooms, please contact the National Office to make arrangements for your reservations.

Transportation to/from the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel to/from the St. Louis Lambert International Airport (approximately 15 miles)

GO BEST Express 877-785-4682: \$21.00 one way

Bus service: \$7.00 one way

Estimated taxi fare: \$40.00 one way

Subway service: \$3.50 one way

Our Chapter News

Candlelight Remembrance Service



Our chapter's annual Candlelight Remembrance and balloon release was held, Sunday, June 23rd at Bethany Lutheran Church.

After a wonderful service of readings, music and our slideshow, early afternoon rain moved away in time for our balloon release. We watched the balloons soar into the sky, carrying messages to our children.

It takes a lot to put together an event such as this and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved. *Special thanks to the Mercurio family for once again providing the balloons and helium, and to Don Litvin for the wonderful slide show of our children's pictures.* Thanks also to the members of the steering committee (Lori Brown, Joanne and Don Litvin, Judy and Bill Luff, Bonnie Mickol, Cheryl Ondrejch, Lori Rychlik, Clayton Samels, Doreen and Brian Sismour) for all their work to put this program together.



*Photos Courtesy of
Lori Rychlik and
Clayton Samels*

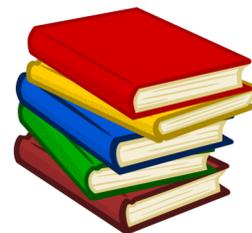
Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

The chapter library has been updated as much as I could do in May and back in service. You'll notice the list has updated section keys to help you find a particular book as well as display cards to let you quickly find the section of the display you are looking for instead of just trying to figure out how the heck I had set things up. I hope it makes your searches a little easier. When I put the books away after the June meeting, I spilled the hardbound stack. Guess I need to make two hardbound stacks, H1 and H2. Oh, well, it will give me something to do before the start of the July meeting.

Summer is a great time to catch up on your reading. Well, for that matter, so is fall, winter, and spring, but summer is a good time to catch up on your reading at the beach. Yeah, I'm still trying to catch up on a stack of books. So many pages, so little time.

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine is the 2017 debut novel of Gail Honeyman and the winner of the 2017 Costa Debut Novel Award. The novel focuses on 29 year old Eleanor Oliphant, a social misfit who becomes enamoured of a singer she sees performing named Johnnie Lomond who she believes she is destined to be with. It deals with themes of isolation and loneliness.



I did not read this as a grief book; however, Eleanor is haunted by the death of her younger sister in a fire, and Eleanor blames herself for not being able to save her sibling. So while most of the novel appears to have little to do with grief, grief is certainly a very important part, and, apparently, when Eleanor decides to deal with those unresolved issues of grief and guilt through therapy, she begins to make some progress in her life. I appreciated the fact that there was no fairytale happy ever after ending. Just hope.

Oh, and I should be reading Once More We Saw Stars, by Jayson Greene for the Reading Your Way Through Grief Facebook group. I tried to borrow it through Libby, but it would be on hold for 15 weeks, so I paid \$1.99 for a pdf version that I should receive shortly. I'll let you know what I think of the book when I get and read it.

For My Compassionate Friends

How is it that I know you?
How'd you get into my life?
Sometimes when I look at you,
It cuts me like a knife.

I do not want to know you,
I don't want to cross that line.
Let's both go back into the past,
When everything was fine.

You've held me and you've hugged me,
And dried a tear or two,
Yet, you're practically a stranger,
Why do you do the things you do?

Of course, I know the reason,
We are in this Club we're in,
And why we hold on to each other
Like we are long-lost kin.

For us to know each other,
We had to lose a kid,
I wish I'd never met you,
But, I'm so thankful that I did.

Marilyn Rollins
TCF Lake/Porter Counties, IN

In Nancy's Garden

I know a place where Beauty lives
If you happen upon it, what peace it gives
I traveled there down a river of tears
On the back of a dragon called "Rage and Fear"

Its walls are made from iron-will parts
But its gate is fashioned from a tender heart
And there at that gate a voice in my ear
Bid me to enter, "I'm so glad you are here"

The rich scent of roses filled the air
A riot of color was everywhere
"Come and lie down on the soft, green grass
In a moment all your confusion will pass"

Then I heard her laugh, a small choir of bells
Light silver notes that rose and fell
I could almost see each one as it danced
And I followed along like one in a trance

As I lay down on the grass as she'd asked
I sensed a shift in the air as near me she passed
Felt the silk of her hair as it brushed cross my cheek
And the warmth of her breath as she started to speak

"I was a spirit in human attire
And now I've come home and laid rest desire
It's unfulfilled yearnings that steal away peace
But here in this place, I've found release"

"In your time you will join me, not early or late
At just the right moment the eternal awaits"
The sky there was dazzling, brilliant and white
Tho no sun seemed to cast its light

Then just for an instant in that magical place
I caught a glimpse of her sweet, lovely face
And she said, "From your grief, let your soul take pardon
For I am so happy here inside my garden"

Then she kissed me farewell, as I closed my eyes
And when I awoke, to my surprise
On the pillow on which I had been crying
A single red rose was now lying.

*Janna Jewel
TCF Nashville, TN
In Memory of Nancy Conway,
Daughter of Mike and Mary Conway*

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 Ondrejch, 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*

A Grief Journey in Review

As I write this I am listening to Johnny Horton singing “Whispering Pines.” This is a melancholy song, yet a sweet one. It reminded me of the day that my son died and the journey I have taken since then.

Todd was in a car accident in mid-December....almost on the winter solstice. He died on December 19. This is significant to me. I was raised in the cold, snowy part of the country. My son was returning from that area when the accident that took his life occurred. I remember recounting the events second by second when my son died. I remember how Todd disliked the shortened daylight of winter. How ironic that his death came on what was nearly the shortest day of the year.

We have just passed summer solstice. Todd has been gone for over 4 ½ years. I still miss him, and I think about him each day. I am a different person since my son died. My life has changed dramatically. The cast of characters in my life has changed somewhat. Solitude has become an important part of living for me. I no longer weep endlessly and fall asleep from exhaustion. I no longer walk the floor at night. The periods of manic rearranging of my house have slowed to something approaching normal for me.

Somewhere on this horrible journey of grief my subconscious mind accepted the fact that I will never see Todd again. I have accepted his death. I am rarely jolted by the sudden thought that Todd is not on this plane. My beautiful child, the baby who grew to be such a special man, is gone. This is part of who I am now. I now keep Todd in my heart. I talk about him with strangers as if he were still alive. With those who know me, I speak of the loss of my only child with quiet acceptance, and I share the many joys of my child’s life.

Life has begun to improve. I am even thinking of a vacation next year. I am making more plans than I have in over four years. I have accepted what I cannot change. This is a milestone for me, because I have always been able to change the variables, to make things right, to bring back normalcy. But I won’t be able to change the fact that my son has died.

Along the way I have had moments of epiphany....only brief ones, but epiphanies of various sorts. Most of the change has been gradual. Talking with other parents, reading, writing, listening to music, to radio programs, to speakers, going to seminars, watching movies....all of these efforts have helped me. But it was up to me to take those first steps. It was my choice to remove the crepe and add a colorful wreath to the front door. It was my choice to reach out for help and accept what those who shared my grief journey offered.

Much has changed in my life since that first year of grief. Much will change in the future. I have learned that change is the essence of life. I have learned from wonderful people; I have learned from negative people as well. Each person who transcends my life has taught me something about grief, about living, about moving forward into the light.

I don’t know where I will be in five years or ten years. I dream about my son. We often have great conversations in those dreams. Sometimes he is a small child, sometimes a grown man. When I awaken I feel as close to Todd as I will be on this earthly plane.

Shortly after the summer solstice this year, a strange thing happened. My grandson and his girlfriend came home early which was odd because they planned to be out late. I was reading and listening to a news show. “Don’t freak out, Nanny”, my grandson said. “We were in an accident.” I just looked at him.

Then I asked if he was hurt. “No, but the guy who was driving jumped out of the truck and ran away. He was doing 80 mph in the rain. He hit a curb, fishtailed, braked and spun around twice. Then the truck smashed into a utility pole. Annalee hit her head on the door panel. I bounced around in the back seat....I didn’t have a seat belt on.” The EMTs had checked them out. I did the same. Then I sat down. I smiled at him. “What?” he said.

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“What, what. What have you learned tonight?” I responded. “I’m never riding with him again.

I’m never riding with anyone who is drinking. I’m never riding with anyone who drives like a spaz or drinks,” he said, summarizing the situation.

That was good. I smiled. Just shortly after summer solstice my grandson escaped death. The truck was a total loss. The driver was nowhere to be found. But Todd’s son was alive, unhurt. His girlfriend was fine. I later confirmed with a deputy on the scene that it was a real miracle anyone walked away. Yet they did. They walked away from that mass of twisted steel and smashed plastic.

I like to think that my son is still on this earthly plane in some form. Watching.....watching over his children. That’s what he did in life.

And so my journey continues. I no longer “freak out” about the unchangeable. My child would be glad to know this. “You’re acting like Dad,” my grandson said. “He was always cool.”

“I guess I’m cool now. But there was a time.....”

I’ve changed. My perspective is the unique one of a mother who has lost her only child. And the journey continues until I, too, meet the angel of death.

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)