



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

Phone Contacts:

Pauline Dey

Phone: 440-526-2087

Judy Luff

Phone: 440-234-7098

Chapter Co-Leaders:

Lori Brown

Phone: 440-376-5019

brownl1025@gmail.com

Lori Rychlik

Phone: 440-503-5601

loritr55@yahoo.com

Chapter Treasurer

Cheryl Ondrejch

Phone: 440-799-1980

echondo@aol.com

Chapter Newsletter Editor:

Bill Luff

Phone: 440-234-7098

jbl3665@sbcglobal.net

Regional Chapter Coordinator:

Karen Pinsky

Phone: 513-207-8714

karenpinsky@gmail.com

June, 2021

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.



June Monthly Meeting - In-Person

June 9th at 7:00pm: The discussion theme will be "Father's Day." As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Brian Sismour will facilitate.

MEETING LOCATION: Bethany Lutheran Church, 6041 Ridge Road, Parma
(see page 10 for more information)

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.



June Birth Dates

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 - Michael Benjamin Kurtz | 14 - Andrew P. Hudgins |
| 2 - Reid Alan McClellan | 16 - John Lazor |
| 2 - Stephen Charles Parish, Jr. | 18 - Katherine Lynn Nemes |
| 2 - Robert Clayton Samels | 19 - Joseph Kather |
| 8 - Arrie Clifton Pritchard, Jr. | 25 - Alexander Zachary Thomas |
| 10 - Sean Daniel Byers | 29 - Rebecca Helen Truelsch |
| 12 - Monica Judith Ann Adams/Bittner | 30 - Angel "AJ" Cuevas, Jr. |
| 12 - Tyler Andrew Moore | 30 - Andrew C. King |

June Angelversary Dates

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| David George Benning (Age 46) | Brian David Moll (Age 21) |
| Cynthia Elizabeth Betancourt (Age 47) | Courtney Julianne Nichols (Age 13) |
| Christopher Anthony Bonsell (Age 36) | Stephen John Parker (Age 22) |
| Susan Elaine Chorich (Age 19) | Scott Lee Pearson (Age 30) |
| Francis Scott Cwiklinski (Age 34) | Ryan Kenneth Perkins (Age 45) |
| Robert C. Higgins (Age 54) | Randy Stock (Age 25) |
| Thomas (Tommy) Joseph Kess, Jr. (Age 25) | Mitchell Ryan Williams (Age 18) |
| Luke Thomas Kurylak (Age 23) | David William Woods (Age 26) |
| Scott Mickol (Age 16) | |

Remembering Our Children



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*

On Pain and Healing...

In pain management used for patients with chronic pain, it is taught not to tighten around the pain but to relax and allow the pain to be present. The idea is that when pain is resisted, it intensifies. When we breath deeply and acknowledge the presence of pain, it has room to move and can dissipate more readily. Pain is there to tell us something, to warn us of possible danger.

This is as true for emotional, spiritual and mental pain as it is for physical pain. When pain speaks, we need to listen. All it takes is paying attention to our pain so that when it comes we remember to breathe and get soft. We don't want to fight with our pain. We want to learn from it.

Time does not heal. But healing does take time. Give yourself the gift of time. To become whole means that as we open to the pain, we open to the loss. We break open and, as a consequence, we get bigger and include more of life. We include what would have been "lost" to us if our hearts and minds had closed against the pain, we include what would have been lost if we had not taken the time to heal. As singer/songwriter Carly Simon tells us: "There's more room in a broken heart."

From the chapter, "Time Does Not Heal All Wounds," of the book, "Good Grief," by Deborah Morris Coryell



First Meeting

Our May 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.

Celeste and Mike Hicks, remembering their beloved daughter Micala Christie Hicks-Siler (Age 41)

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)

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.

~ from *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis

Men Do Cry

I heard quite often “men don’t cry”
 Though no one ever told me why
 So when I fell and skinned a knee
 No one came to comfort me.

And when some bully boy at school
 Would pull a prank so mean or cruel
 I’d quickly learn to turn and quip
 “It doesn’t hurt” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years
 I learned to stifle any tears.
 Though “Be a big boy” it began
 Quite soon I learned to “Be a man.”

And I could play that stoic role
 While storm and tempest wracked my soul.
 No pain nor setback could there be
 Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby
 And helplessly watched my son die
 And quickly found to my surprise
 That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame
 I cannot play that “big boy” game.
 And openly without remorse
 I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can’t abide
 A man you’ve seen who’s often cried
 Reach out to him with all your heart
 As one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see
 Their loss of immortality.
 And tears will come in endless streams
 When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

*Ken Falk
 TCF NW Connecticut Chapter*

Wish You Were Here

You’d be nineteen if you were here
 But why you’re gone still isn’t clear.
 Your things are still all in your room
 As if you’d be returning soon.
 Spongebob waits there by the door.
 Your shoes are still there on the floor.

Your friends are all young women now.
 They’re working jobs or college bound.
 Sometimes we see them and they say
 We miss her so, wish she had stayed.

Your boyfriend’s in the Army too
 And by the way, he still loves you.
 You thought his love was not so true
 And that some other girl he’d choose.
 But near two years have passed on by
 Still to your grave he goes to cry.

Your niece and nephews miss you too,
 And talk of the things you used to do.
 Your Mother’s going to be alright
 And doesn’t cry so much at night.
 She puts the flowers on your grave,
 And scrapbook pictures tries to save.

And me, I’m still the same old Dad,
 The same old routine like I had.
 I work real hard to make a way
 To pay some bills and pass the day.

I’m not as funny as before
 My world’s not happy anymore.
 I don’t let on the pain I feel
 But deep inside the hurt is real.

Time passes by year after year,
 Life goes on with seldom a tear.
 One wish I have, a wish so clear
 My wish most of all, I wish you were here.

~Dad

By Steve Tutt
 TCF, Tyler, TX

The Grief Of My Man

There are no words to ease his pain.
He has that look in his eyes again.
He travels on down that lonely road.
It sure has been a heavy load.

The pain does not ease. The tears do not flow.
He keeps it inside. That is all that he knows.
He stands all alone, so proud and so strong.
Inside he is broken. This trip has been long.

His knees never bend. His back never breaks.
But deep down inside, oh how his heart aches.
He counts all the days. He dreads all the nights.
Try as he may, he can never make it right.

He keeps on going, from one day to the next,
Finding the good, and leaving the rest.
He tries not to question God's life plan.
But, still I can feel the grief of my man.

*For My Loving Husband, Andy
I Love You Forever
Melissa*

*Written for her husband, Andrew
in memory of their son, Kieran Andrew,
2/15/96-2/17/9*

Love's Lasting Touch

Don't weep for me when I'm gone,
Because I'll always be there.
My spirit will exist in all the earth,
In the water, trees, and air.
You'll hear me say, "I love you",
In the whisper of a breeze.
You'll know that I'm beside you,
With the rustling of the leaves.
You'll feel my arms caress you,
In the warmth of each sunrise.
The moon will be my goodnight kiss,
The stars my watchful eyes.
Your life will be my legacy,
Your memories my epitaph.
These ties will bind us together,
Till we meet on heaven's path.
I'll not ever desert you,
We'll never be far apart.
I'll live within you always,
Nestled deep inside your heart.

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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In Loving Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny*

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husband's this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

*Doug Hughes
TCF Cincinnati, OH
In Memory of my son, Alex*

TCF National News



The Compassionate Friends 44th National Conference will be presented virtually this July 16, 2021 - July 18, 2021! We invite you to join us for an informative and supportive weekend from your own home. Attend the sessions you would like and have many of the others available by recording for 90 days after the conference.

Conference offerings include:

- Over 100 workshop choices
 - Keynote presentations
 - Healing Haven
 - Crafty Corner
- Virtual Silent Auction and Raffle
 - Sharing Circles
- Musical performances and sessions
 - Candle Lighting Program
 - And more!

Our Keynote Speakers:

Scarlett Lewis founded the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement, which helps people build a culture of love, resilience, forgiveness, and connection in our communities. Scarlett is the mother of Jesse Lewis, who was killed in his classroom during the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. She has been interviewed by BBC, Fox News, CBS, and the Today Show, and has been featured in Fortune, Strive, and the Huffington Post. Scarlett will share how to thoughtfully respond with love in any situation by using the Choose Love Formula.

(Continued on following page)

TCF National News

(Continued from preceding page)

Dennis Apple is a pastor, author, and long-time workshop presenter at TCF national conferences. His 18-year-old son, Denny, died suddenly in his sleep from complications of mononucleosis. The pastor of a mega church, Dennis felt he was exempt from the tragedies that others experienced. Sixteen years later, after a crisis of faith and deep despair, he wrote about his struggle in a book, "Life After the Death of My Son." Dennis co-leads the TCF of Johnson County chapter in Leawood, Kansas.

Peggi Johnson is an avid writer and frequent contributor to *We Need Not Walk Alone*, TCF's magazine. Her son, Jordan, died by suicide at the age of 19, in 2009. After Jordan's death, she learned about and received support from TCF. She then served as editor for six chapters in the Washington, DC and Northern Virginia area, as well as a chapter leader in Piedmont, VA. Since 2013, Peggi has presented workshops for TCF national conferences.

Zander Sprague is an author, speaker, and licensed counselor. In 1996, his sister was murdered, and, ten years later, his sister-in-law died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 35. Zander is the author of "Making Lemonade: Choosing a Positive Pathway After Losing Your Sibling." His latest book, "Why Don't They Cry? Understanding Your Living Child's Grief" is going to press later this year. Zander is a certified From Heartbreak to Happiness® grief coach.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about each of them.

TCF's national conference focuses on support for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents, while also offering overall grief support and resources. Whether you are personally grieving a loss or want to learn how to better support others who are bereaved, join us for connection, community, education, and support.

For more information and to register, [click here](#).



Our Chapter News

In-Person June 9th Chapter Meeting

Please note that our June 9th chapter meeting will be held in-person at Bethany Lutheran Church. We will meet in the cafeteria just outside our regular meeting room.

The cafeteria provides adequate space to permit proper social distancing. As part of the permission to use that space, the church requires that when our meeting ends we clean all the tables and chairs we have used. Bethany will provide cleaning supplies. The meeting facilitators will appreciate cleaning help from those who attend.

Candlelight Remembrance Service

The chapter Steering Committee has decided our annual Candlelight Remembrance Service should not be held in June, as it had been for many years until 2020. We will continue to discuss options, including possibly scheduling it for later in the summer or fall. ***Please watch for more information in future newsletters.***



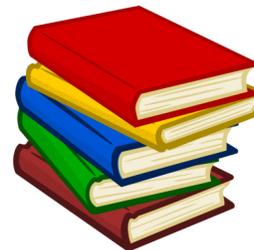
Danny

Danny, our only child, passed away at the age of twelve. His death was unexpected, and the pain almost unbearable. Our pastor told us that yellow is the color of life. What then could be more fitting than yellow roses? To ensure these symbols of life for years to come, I bought a rose bush for my wife. After all, she was still Danny's mom and needed more than ever to be reminded of that. I planted the bush on Mother's Day. On the day before Father's Day, the roses bloomed - three of them, to be exact. They were arranged in size order, just as our family had been in life. When I bought the bush, there was no way to know that there were to be only three roses. I have no doubt this was a sign from Danny. He wanted us to know that he still lives, and that there are still three roses.

*John W. Carlsen
In memory of Danny
Reprinted from Bereavement Magazine,
5125 N. Union Blvd., Ste. 4
Colorado Springs, Colorado 89018*

Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels



I hope this finds you all well.

As I write this column, it's gloomy and rainy, the perfect way to start the Memorial Day weekend. Guess I won't be going outdoors for a picnic. I suppose I could just sit in the chair and read something.

As for my reading lately, I've been immersed in the usual batch of cheap sci-fi and thrillers, but a recent book by Nicholas Sparks, called The Return, caught my eye, so I borrowed it from the library. I'll say one thing about Sparks – he sure can crank out books! I think this is book number 22 in 24 years since The Notebook came out. Not that I've read all of them, just a few, but I did meet the guy and got his autograph. Well, I'll get to that later. Back to this most recent book. It is a romance book, well, duh. But grief does figure into the plot, so that's basically why I am mentioning it in this column. You don't really have to go out there and just read "grief books." Grief is a part of life, and so you will find it in all sorts of books that aren't specifically grief books. The book is about some guy who inherits his grandfather's house after the old guy passes away. The guy's life then intersects with the lives of two females, one about his age and one quite a bit younger. Well, I don't want to spoil the book for anyone, so I'll just say I enjoyed reading it very much

The other Nicholas Sparks book that I will mention is one that I read quite some time ago, back when I was teaching a Basic Writing class down in Akron. (And I've been retired for over a decade!) During one particular semester, we used the book Six Weeks with My Brother, by Sparks, as reading material. I still have the book, a paperback with his autograph. After speaking to all of our students, he met with us teachers and autographed our copies of the book. The teachers were mostly female, so he was writing "Love, Nicholas Sparks." When I finally got up to him, I told him he could just write "Best Wishes" on my copy. He chuckled a bit and wrote what I requested. Anyway, the book is non-fiction and the result of a Notre Dame alumni world cruise that he took with his older brother. He kept a journal of the trip, which later became the basis for the book. The story line is basically a recounting of the places they visited on the trip, shuffled in with memories of their childhood. The grief part is about the death of their sister and how it affects them still after all the years. Now, I always advise people to keep a journal. No, they won't all end up as published books, but they do provide a person with a good way not only to put your mind on paper, but a way to look back later on to remember how things were and to see how you have changed over time.

So there you have it for this month, something old and something new, some fiction and some non-fiction, something borrowed from the local library electronically and something on actual paper and ink.

Stay safe. Stay well. Read something.

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

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



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)

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, nor touched, but are felt in the heart.
~ Helen Keller