



# 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

## March, 2019

### WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

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Happy St. Patrick's Day

### 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.

## March Monthly Meeting

**March 13th at 7:00pm:** The discussion theme will be "Tell us about your child." You might like to bring a photo to share. As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Doreen and Brian Sismour 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.



## March Birth Dates

1 - Aliyah Jean Ramsey	15 - Nathan A. Sorm
8 - Christopher George Stavlas	21 - Kathleen Michelle Blankenship
9 - Monique Nicole Jones	21 - Russell Todd Simon
11 - Larissa Ann Johnson	23 - Nathaniel Joseph VanNostran
11 - Marilyn Mickol	25 - Mary Beth Hendricks
13 - Brian Kenneth Kunsch	26 - Gregory Charles Brown
14 - Susan Kalnitzky	29 - Christopher James Pewitt
14 - Jonathan Matthew Lichtenberg	30 - Traci Lynn Rettig
15 - Nick Rothenbuhler	31 - Wendy Ann Toennies

## March Angelversary Dates

David Michael Benning (Age 42)	David Mitchell (Age 29)
Amanda Lynn Berhent (Age 16)	Aaron Mulvey (Age 31)
Christopher Todd Brogan (Age 33)	Stephen Charles Parish, Jr. (Age 23)
Marc Daniel Buterbaugh (Age 19)	Robert D. Runyon (Age 37)
Daniel Joseph Fernandez (Age 22)	Eric M. Shaw (Age 24)
Rob R. Gates, Jr. (Age 24)	Alexander Zachary Thomas (Age 24)
Mary Beth Hendricks (Age 48)	Andrea June Torres (Age 32)
Stephen Kanz (Age 21)	Jonathan Charles Vance (Age 1 month and 3 days)
Joseph Kather (Age 1)	Roderick ("Roddy") Joseph Stafford Whelan (Age 20)
David Matthew Knox (Age 36)	Shelley Wochele (Age 45)
James S. Mentzer, Jr. (Age 33)	Dominic Zunis (Age 18)
Marilyn Mickol (Age 1 day)	

## 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).

~ Len and Sandy Vargo ~ In loving memory of  
 Laura Vargo Rogerson (Age 34)  
 and Matthew Rogerson (Age 7)

~ Sharon and Douglas Wohl ~ In loving memory of  
 Michael James Wohl (Age 28)

## Thirty Years

Thirty years ago today  
 On a cold snowy winter day  
 You came into my life, my son  
 And changed my life in many ways

You taught me unconditional love  
 And what a mom should feel  
 You taught me compassion in many ways  
 The kind only the heart reveals

You taught me how to smile  
 When heartprints ruled my days  
 You taught me so much laughter  
 My love was endless in so many ways

I taught you, as you taught me  
 The years flew by too fast  
 And then God's Angels called you home  
 All I had left, was memories of the past.....

Today's your 30th birthday, Andy  
 And I sit here all alone  
 Wondering how you're spending yours  
 While I spend my at home

Thinking of the ones we had,  
 The double birthdays we once shared  
 I close my eyes and remember  
 It makes my eyes begin to tear  
 I remember when you were one

And I was twenty-seven  
 If I'd known then, in four years  
 God was calling you to heaven.....

I'd held you even more tightly,  
 I'd have kissed you even more  
 And probably went to school with you  
 Each day you went out the door

I'd have tucked you in more tightly  
 I'd have read more stories at night  
 And had I known what life held  
 I'd never let you out of my sight

But none of us knows what life holds  
 Or what our future will be  
 God gave us five great years  
 I treasure those precious memories

Happy Birthday Andy  
 I love you with all my heart  
 One day again we will share this day  
 But for now, I'll share you in my heart

I'll love you forever my son.....  
 on air, land, and sea  
 and through eternity

*Sharon J. Bryant*  
*In Memory of Andy Dunbar's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday*  
*Reprinted by permission of author*

***Life's unfairness is not irrevocable;  
 we can help balance the scales for others, if not always for ourselves.***

~ Hubert H. Humphrey

# Newsletter Dedications



Michael James Wohl (Age 28)

There they all were. Spiderman was climbing up the shelf. He-man guys and superheroes were waiting for action. But it is very still today. Teddy rests on the pillow of your bed with Pooh bear beside him. As I dust it all again, it seemed I could hear your little boy voice say to me: "Play with me Mommy. You can be She-ra." "No", I said. "I will be the mighty She-ma ma" and I chased you around the house and you giggled and ran as fast as you could.

As my tears now fall and my heart breaks once more, I pause and wait to hear the sound of your G. I. Joe slippers sliding across the floor and feel you fall into my arms. You will always be my little boy.

*With all my love,  
Mommy*

## Hidden Emotion

Hidden deep inside my breast is a longing that has been suppressed. The feeling is always there---longing---longing to see you, to hug you, to know who you are at this time in your existence. It stays hidden for a period of time and then---when I least expect it--- rises to the surface and must be tended to.

At times I feel as if I cannot breathe, as if I will suffocate trying to suppress the pain. At other times a tear comes from nowhere and trickles down my cheek. Occasionally, something inside of me explodes causing me to weep uncontrollably.

I can only guess what causes these unbidden emotions. Is it the song that's playing on the radio? Can it be the changing of the seasons? Do the budding trees beginning new life cause me to let down my guard? The longing never goes away.

I feel like a tight rope walker never knowing if I will make a misstep, causing me to fall into the stream of emotional pain that forces me to cry out, as I long to see you again.

With the passing of years, I have learned that if I can hang on for just a little longer, these emotions---strong as they are---will pass and I can live again with the longing hidden deep inside my breast.

*Shirley Muller  
TCF Lafayette, IN*

## **Grief: A Lifelong Process**

When my son was killed I was certain that I would die. My life went on autopilot, my heart was broken, my will to live was gone and I could see no meaning in the world.

Six months later I was still in a bad place. I could not vary from a routine, I became angry very easily, I rarely laughed and I didn't communicate with many people.

On the first anniversary of my son's death I was a zombie. I dreaded the day. I remembered the last conversation; I went over his death in my mind a thousand times. I started asking myself what if I had done this or that...would my child still be alive? I felt a misplaced guilt that was sadistically hammered home by the wrongful death lawsuit of my former daughter in law and her accompanying attitude that can only be described as purely malevolent. My husband, who was driving the vehicle when my son was killed, spent hours in self-recrimination, hours with attorneys doing depositions, hours quietly sobbing and my response was that we had to buck up. We had no choice. I hardened on the exterior, but inside I was broken into pieces.

I continued to go to Compassionate Friends meetings, became active in our chapter and read books on grief, death, dying and coping strategies. I leaned heavily on my Compassionate Friends as I endured the pain of losing my son and any possibility of a normal relationship with his children. I know the excruciating pain of intentional cruelty and the radiant warmth of compassion.

18 months after my son was killed, I decided that I had to quantify my progress. I began to soften, to give positive reinforcement to those around me. I reached out to others. I stopped thinking of the negatives within myself and began searching for the positives. I began taking down my emotional wall and allowed some people inside.

It has been 3 years and 3 months since Todd was killed and, in hindsight, I can see the progress I have made. Initially each step was difficult. Now I move forward much like an amputee, progress is steady, but it is slow. I will never be the same again. A part of me has been confiscated by death. This is my reality.

I can laugh now, I can enjoy other people, I can see the beauty in each child I meet, each sunrise and each day. But I can also see and acknowledge the ugly side of this world. There is much cruelty in our world. There is much sadness. Some days I focus on the beauty and joy and some days I look at the cruelty and ugliness.

But the choice is mine to make. If I have a day that is good, it is because I have willed it to be so. If I have a bad day, I have also chosen this.

For I have discovered that grief is a lifelong journey. Our children are with us forever. I close my eyes and see my son. I dream of him at night; our conversations are very interesting, very reassuring. He is with me. And because I always told him that the world is what you make of it, then I must also tell myself the same thing. My world is what I make of it.

Yes, I still grieve. I still miss my child. To hear his voice would be a gift worth more than my life. But I have my memories...memories of raising a beautiful son who became an exceptional man. Our time together was the most meaningful experience of my life. I knew it then, I know it now. There is a void in my life that will never be filled.

My world was never perfect. It certainly will never be perfect. Each day I ask myself what kind of day I want this to be. Sometimes I want it to be a bad day. My sadness overwhelms me and I choose to exorcise it with a bad day. I have the right to have a bad day: my only child is dead. But these days I usually want it to be a good day.....the kind of day my son would have enjoyed.

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

# TCF National News

## 42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 19 - JULY 21, 2019

42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



**RINGS OUT IN  
PHILADELPHIA**

**JULY 19-21, 2019**

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019 at the Philadelphia 201 Hotel. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. 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.

Choose to attend from nearly one hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.

- Take advantage of "Healing Haven" to receive free personal services such as a massage.
- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the "Crafty Corner".
- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the "Reflection Room".

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Pre-registration Rates

Adult – \$125.00

Senior (65+) – \$115.00

Active Military – \$75.00

Full-time College Students

(with ID) – \$60.00

Child – \$60.00

**[REGISTER NOW](#)**

### HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Philadelphia 201 Hotel

201 N. 17th St.

Philadelphia, PA 19103

**[MAKE A RESERVATION](#)**

Or call 215.448.2963 ext. 6415 to reserve a room and use group code TH1326. Room rate is \$145 for guest room with Queen/King or 2

# Our Chapter News

## Candlelight Remembrance Service *(save the date)*

Our annual Candlelight Remembrance Service will be held at Bethany Lutheran Church on Sunday, June 23rd. 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 April and May newsletters.*



## THANK YOU for Volunteering

We enthusiastically welcome Lori Brown, Marge Clemens, Cheryl Ondrejch and Lori Rychlik as new members of our chapter Steering Committee. Lori Brown attended her first chapter meeting in February 2009, Marge in December 2018, Cheryl in November 2014 and Lori Rychlik in June 2018.

**THANK YOU** for volunteering to help organize and manage the chapter. The Steering Committee members are:

Lori Brown  
 Marge Clemens  
 Joanne and Don Litvin  
 Judy and Bill Luff  
 George and Bonnie Mickol  
 Cheryl Ondrejch  
 Lori Rychlik  
 Clayton Samels  
 Doreen and Brian Sismour

## Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

*(please see page 9)*



## 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

## 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)



## Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

I received the copy of *A Broken Heart Still Beats*, by Anne McCracken, a collection of poems, essays, and fiction by famous literary figures who were also bereaved parents, and compiled by two professionals who are also bereaved mothers. I found a copy on Ebay and am giving it a read, but it's not one of those books with a story line, something you start and read through to the end. Rather, it's something you might dip into for a piece of prose or a poem, and then savor it for awhile before delving into the book again.



The book is divided into twelve chapters, and here are a couple of things I selected more or less at random – one by Stephen King (because I'm a fan of some of his fiction), and another by Rita Dove (because she grew up in Akron, a few blocks away from where I grew up).

From Chapter 9: We Feel Like Aliens in the World

The most important things lie too close to wherever your secret heart is buried, like landmarks to a treasure your enemies would love to steal away. And you may make revelations that cost you dearly only to have people look at you in a funny way, not understanding what you've said at all, or why you thought it was so important that you almost cried while you were saying it. That's the worst, I think. When the secret stays locked within not for want of a teller but for a want of an understanding ear. -- Stephen King, from *The Body*

From Chapter 12: The Legacy of Loss

Lamentations – by Rita Dove

Throw open the shutters  
to your darkened residences:  
can you hear the pipes playing,  
their hunger shaking the olive branches?  
To hear them sighing and not answer  
is to deny this world, descend rung  
by rung into no loss and no desire.  
Listen: empty yet full, silken  
air and brute tongue,  
they are saying:  
To refuse to be born is one thing --  
but once you are here,  
you'd do well to stop crying  
and suck the good milk in.

I hope you didn't blow away in the recent wind storm! Sit by the fireplace and read. And pass along any recommendations for books you think we might enjoy.

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