



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

March, 2021

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Happy St. Patrick's Day

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.

March Monthly Meeting

March 10th at 7:00pm: We will meet “virtually” using the Zoom video conferencing app. Please see page 9 for more information and some help preparing for this new way to meet. The discussion topic will be “How men and women grieve differently.” 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. *Join the meeting from your home via Zoom!*

NOTE: THE MEETING WILL NOT BE HELD AT BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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 |
| 2 - May-Lyn J. Martinez | 21 - Kathleen Michelle Blankenship |
| 8 - Christopher George Stavlas | 21 - Russell Todd Simon |
| 9 - Monique Nicole Jones | 23 - Nathaniel Joseph VanNostran |
| 11 - Marilyn Mickol | 26 - Gregory Charles Brown |
| 13 - Brian Kenneth Kunsch | 29 - Christopher James Pewitt |
| 14 - Susan Kalnitzky | 30 - Frank A. Ragone |
| 15 - Nick Rothenbuhler | 30 - Traci Lynn Rettig |

March Angelversary Dates

- | | |
|---|--|
| 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) | Charles "Corky" Pecoraro (Age 48) |
| Benjamin Alan Cuthbert Corliss (Age 29) | 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) |
| Stephen Kanz (Age 21) | Andrea June Torres (Age 32) |
| Joseph Kather (Age 1) | Jonathan Charles Vance (Age 1 month and 3 days) |
| David Matthew Knox (Age 36) | Shane Michael Ward (Age 22) |
| Marilyn Mickol (Age 1 day) | Roderick ("Roddy") Joseph Stafford Whelan (Age 20) |
| David Mitchell (Age 29) | Dominic Zunis (Age 18) |

The Visit Home

There once was an old man who journeyed back to his hometown with the intent of reminiscing about the good times, as well as the sorrows he had experienced as a young father.

High on the list of places he intended to visit was the elementary school his daughter had attended.

First he would walk around the huge playground where he so often had brought his daughter to play. He would stop at the slide, then the swings, and finally the monkey bars, remembering the joy on his daughter's face as she had moved happy and carefree from one adventure to another.

Then he would enter the school building. His first stop there would be the kindergarten room. He could still see in his mind that memorable day almost 75 years before, his daughter's outstretched hand enclosed in his firm, yet tender, grip. As they searched for her classroom, their loving touch finally ended as she walked through the open door to a new stage in her life.

The old man's next stop would be the tiny gymnasium where his daughter had performed in the holiday pageant. How beautiful she had appeared, dressed in soft white as she sang *Silent Night, Holy Night*.

Finally he would stop at his daughter's third grade classroom. The old man clearly remembered the day he and his wife had stood outside the closed classroom door, tears streaming down their cheeks. Finally, gathering their courage they entered the room to comfort and talk with their daughter's classmates who, as yet, failed to comprehend why they would never again see alive the little girl they all considered their best friend.

The anticipation grew strong as he neared the street where the school stood. Arriving at the spot, the old man wept at what he saw. The plain white concrete structure he expected was no longer there—a sleek modern building in its place. An asphalt parking lot now covered the old grassy playground.

Now understanding that he would never be able to fulfill his mission, the old man started thinking about the transient nature of life—how nothing ever remains the same.

Communities change. Buildings are here today and gone tomorrow. Loved ones live—and die. Even nations rise and fall.

But then the old man had another thought: The love his daughter had passed onto him still remained within his heart—67 years after she had died.

He realized that it truly didn't matter if a day, a year, a decade, or a century were to pass. The candle of love would continue to burn bright in his heart.

And he thought how even an eternity from now the love he still carried for his daughter would have transcended his own death and been returned to her a thousand fold.

The old man turned his car around to head back toward the highway. There was no need to stop elsewhere. Taking one last glance in the rear view mirror at the new school, he understood that memories live on not because of a building, or a classroom, or a playground. They remain alive inside each of us because love outlasts even the sands of time.

A smile crossed his lips.

His mission had been completed!

Wayne Loder
Public Awareness Coordinator
The Compassionate Friends/USA

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*,
the national magazine of
The Compassionate Friends.

I'm Still Counting

My son's favorite character on Sesame Street was 'The Count'. Todd would laugh and count and laugh some more whenever the count would appear on PBS. "Come on, Mom," he would say, "count with me." So, I would join him and we would count together.

When my child died, I started counting hours. One hour since he died, two hours, then 24 hours, 36 hours, 96 hours. I started counting weeks, then months and finally years. I was totally focused on the moment that my son left this earth.

Now I count the years and months, weeks and days. While this may not sound like progress, it truly is a step back into life. Three years, seven months, one week and one day. I stopped adding the hours. Moreover, when people ask me about it, I generally say about 3 1/2 years. I try to keep it simple for outsiders who can't begin to understand.

Every month I dread the 19th. Another month is added to the time between my son's last breath and now. It's almost as if time might separate us, erase him from the memory of those who knew and loved him.

Despite my obsession with counting, I am moving forward in many ways. I think of my child each day, I honor his life each day, and I feel a real apprehension about his daughters each day. Their lives are horribly different from what they might have been if Todd had lived. Their values will be so jaded compared with his values; their experiences of personal growth are miniscule compared to what Todd would have given them. I know I cannot change this. So along with this private obsession, there is a deep lingering sadness for my son's children and for opportunities lost.

In the meantime, I count years, months and days. I keep my unconditional love for my child in my heart and in my life. And I continue to reach out and become the person I am meant to be. And I'm still counting with Todd.

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

Grief Is Like A River

My grief is like a river – I have to let it flow,
But I myself determine just where the banks will go.

Some days the current takes me In waves of guilt and pain,
But there are always quiet pools where I can rest again.

I crash on rocks of anger – my faith seems faint indeed.
But there are other swimmers who know that what I need

Are loving hands to hold me when the waters are too swift,
And someone kind to listen when I just seem to drift.

Grief's river is like a process of relinquishing the past.
By swimming in Hope's channel, I'll reach the shore at last.

Cynthia G. Kelley

TCF National News

THE TCF VISION STATEMENT

Everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

THE TCF MISSION

The mission of The Compassionate Friends: 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 TCF STORY

The Compassionate Friends was founded 50 years ago when a chaplain at the Warwickshire Hospital in England brought together two sets of grieving parents and realized that the support they gave each other was better than anything he, as a chaplain, could ever say or provide. Meeting around a kitchen table, the Lawleys and the Hendersons were joined by a bereaved mother and the chaplain, Simon Stephens, and The Society of the Compassionate Friends was born. The Compassionate Friends jumped across the ocean and was established in the United States and incorporated in 1978 in Illinois.

Each chapter, along with the supporting National Office, is committed to helping every bereaved parent, sibling, or grandparent who may walk through our doors or contact us.

Today TCF has over 600 chapters serving all 50 states plus Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and Guam, that offer friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members during the natural grieving process after a child has died. Around the world more than 30 countries have a Compassionate Friends presence, encircling the globe with support so desperately needed when the worst has happened.

Our Chapter News

March Monthly Meeting

March 10th at 7:00pm

Please plan to join in as we hold our monthly chapter meeting on March 10th. As we all do our part to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, we will conduct the meeting using Zoom ... an easy-to-use video conferencing tool. **THE MEETING WILL NOT BE HELD AT BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH.**

Many of us have used Zoom for group communications during these months of sheltering-in-place. Meeting via Zoom will allow us to see and listen to one another, just as if we were gathered together in our meeting room at Bethany.

Please see page 9 for helpful information and tips on using Zoom. Then, watch for an email February 10th which will include the link you will click to join the meeting.

Hope you can join us on March 10th.

Bereaved Parents

Different ages
Different stages
Different issues

Same pain
Daily strain
Occasional tissues

Our children have died
Often is all we know
A fact we fear to hide

Despite our ever-present woe
We live with pride
Though broken-hearted
To love, remember, and grow

*Victor Montemurro
TCF Medford, NY*

Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

I hope this finds you all well.

Our Christmas tree is still up with its lights turned on 24/7. We plan to keep it up past the end of February, maybe even until St. Patrick's Day. Why not?

As for my reading lately, I have gone through about fourteen books during February, which means about a book every two days, I guess. They consisted of various crime, mystery, adventure, or sci-fi thrillers, nothing particularly grief related, just stuff to pass the time indoors.. However, in the middle of Sycamore Row, by John Grisham, I did come upon a short bit in the middle of the book, so in that sense, it was central to the plot. It concerned a drunk driver crash that killed some children, and the parents later forgave the drunk driver.



In my last column, I mentioned using the Libby app to get ebooks from your local library, which in my case is the Cuyahoga County Public Library. This month, I'd like to add that you can use Libby to borrow ebooks from more than just the local library. You can register library cards from other systems, too. But first, you need to get those other cards. In my case, I signed up for cards from the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the Medina County Public Library. I could not sign up in the app, but a visit to the regular library web sites let me apply. The Summit County library card number arrived about two minutes later in my email, so I quickly added that to my Libby app and am ready to borrow from that system. The Medina County website thanked me for my application and said they would be in touch later, but I got that in short order.. I think I can apply online for library cards for lots of Ohio library systems, but so far, I have only applied for the two I mentioned. And I have borrowed a couple of books already from the Medina library that were not available in either of the other two systems I have cards for.

Some of the library systems are again open for actual walk-in visits, but I'm not going out in this weather just for a "real" book. Online or in person, you might want to search for books on the big list of grief books I mentioned last month, or just get a book that catches your fancy.

It sure doesn't look like we will have face to face chapter meetings for some time yet, so the big tub of books remains stored away, leaving you without that option.

I did register online for my covid vaccination at Drug Mart. I got a text the other day saying I am still in the system, and they'll let me know when I can actually get the shot. I think that's going to be awhile, too. Meanwhile, the country has passed the one half million deaths mark, and people are struggling with compassion fatigue, both for the time this has gone on and the size of the death toll. But I understand if you are a baseball fan, they plan to let 30,000 fans into the stadium.

Stay safe. Stay well. Read something.

Zoom! Join us online for a video chapter meeting using Zoom!

Should you use a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone? They each have their benefits and their drawbacks, so pick which one you are comfortable with. In any case, you need to download the Zoom app for your device or use Zoom from within your web browser. It's probably a good idea to do a test at first with a friend or two before you actually join a meeting. Or, you can be like me, jump right into a meeting and learn the hard way.

You will receive a link to click on to join the meeting. Just click on the link and you will be put in a "waiting room" until the meeting host admits you to the actual meeting. This is a security measure to keep unwanted people from crashing the meeting. Also, the host can remove a participant from a meeting if that ever becomes necessary. You have the ability to name yourself or rename so that the other members will see that displayed. The meeting host can rename any of the participants.

You should know how to mute/unmute yourself, just in case. You should also switch off or on your video. You can leave the meeting at any time if you wish. If the meeting exceeds the allotted time limit (40 minutes) it may end automatically. To prevent that, we will probably take a break after 35 minutes and then in 5 minutes or so, the host may start up the meeting again. In that case, you can return by clicking that meeting link again.

Let's get specific: How to Zoom

1 Download Zoom for your device and install if you don't already have it and then run it. Here are some links for videos showing how to install Zoom on different devices.

Android - <https://youtu.be/1tdT35ZNGKk>

iPhone or iPad - https://youtu.be/j__a-PKrMqI

Windows - <https://youtu.be/Xp6tJOo9mmc>

Need more instructions? Search on YouTube for "zoom dottech" for some good ones.

2 Sign up for a Zoom account. Not needed to join a meeting, but you might want to sign up anyway. Their basic account is free. You can then host your own meeting with your family or friends., a good way to test it all out and keep in touch with people. Check to make sure your audio and video work, and learn how to mute/unmute your audio and turn off/on your video.

3 Click on our meeting link at meeting time to open the app and be placed in the waiting room. The meeting host will admit you to the meeting. It's that simple! (Maybe!) Try it out. If you need help, post on our chapter TCF group page and I, or someone, will try to get you going.

*Clayton Samels
TCF Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland Chapter*

Please See Me Through My Tears

You asked, "How are you doing?" As I told you, tears came to my eyes...and you looked away and quickly began to talk again, All the attention you had given me drained away.

"How am I doing?" ... I can do better when people listen, though I may shed a tear or two. This pain is indescribable. If you've never known it you cannot fully understand. Yet I need you. When you look away, when I'm ignored, I am again alone with it. Your attention means more than you can ever know.

Really, tears are not a bad sign, you know! They're nature's way of helping me heal ... they relieve some of the stress of sadness.

I know you fear that asking how I'm doing brings me sadness ... but you're wrong. The memory of my loved one's death will always be with me, only a thought away. My tears make my pain more visible to you, but you did not give me the pain ... it was already there.

When I cry, could it be that you feel helpless, not knowing what to do? You are not helpless, and you don't need to do a thing but be there. When I feel your permission to allow my tears to flow, you've helped me. You need not speak. Your silence as I cry is all I need. Be patient ... do not fear.

Listening with your heart to "how I am doing" relieves the pain, for when the tears can freely come and go, I feel lighter, Talking to you releases what I've been wanting to say aloud, clearing space for a touch of joy in my life.

I'll cry for a minute or two ... and then I'll wipe my eyes, and sometime you'll even find I'm laughing later. When I hold back the tears, my throat grows tight, my chest aches, my stomach knots ... because I'm trying to protect you from my tears.

Then we both hurt ... me, because my pain is held inside, a shield against our closeness ... and you, because suddenly we're distant.

So please, take my hand and see me through my tears ... then we can be close again.

Kelly Osmont

STANDING

People say
"Oh you are doing so well,
you are so strong,
you are an inspiration!"
We do not feel strong.

We feel shaken to the core,
Saddened beyond belief,
Pain beyond comprehension,
Forever changed.

What do they see that we cannot see?

"That a horrible storm,
unexpectedly ripped through
our lives and we are
still standing"

They are amazed
We are paralyzed

Still Standing

*Julie Short
TCF Southeastern Illinois Chapter
In Memory of Kyra*

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)

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

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