



The Compassionate Friends

*Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies*

Fellow Compassionate Friends,

Please plan to join in as we hold our monthly chapter meeting on May 13th. As we all do our part to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, the chapter steering committee has reviewed options for staying in touch. As a result, we will conduct the May 13th 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 weeks 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 pages 9 and 10 of the May newsletter for helpful information and tips on using Zoom. Then, watch for an email during the day on May 13th which will include the link you will click to join the meeting.

Your May newsletter appears on the following pages. Several additional pages are included. Those additional pages contain a few more stories and poems that hopefully will provide additional support during this period of physical distancing.

As a reminder, several phone numbers appear on the first page of each chapter newsletter for members who feel the need to talk. Additionally, many other support resources can be found through:

- The National TCF website (www.compassionatefriends.org)
- The National TCF Facebook page
- Our chapter website (www.tcf-cle.net)
- Our chapter Facebook page

***Remember ... We're all in this together!
Stay safe and stay healthy!***

*Doreen and Brian Sismour
Chapter Leaders*





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

May, 2020

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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.



May Monthly Meeting

May 13th at 7:00pm: We will meet “virtually” using the Zoom video conferencing app. Please see pages 9 and 10 for more information and some help preparing for this new way to meet. Meeting facilitators will be Joanne and Don Litvin, with Lori Rychlik assisting. *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.



May Birth Dates

6 - Ian M. Hovancsek	19 - Fannie Marie Thomas-Lewis
7 - Jay (John) Defever	19 - Mitchell Ryan Williams
7 - Robert D. Runyon	21 - Nicholas William Luca
8 - Stefanie Kmiotek	22 - David Mitchell
9 - Alexander Humel McCann	23 - Charles "Corky" Pecoraro
10 - Jeremy Daniel Yurcik	24 - Michael John Buchko
11 - Richard J. Kasper	28 - Justin Robert Swanger
13 - Christa Melody Hodges	30 - Wendy Sue Berry
13 - Cara Rose Prokop	30 - Brian Tyler Jenkins
14 - Johnny Robert Kazimer, Jr.	31 - Marc Daniel Buterbaugh
18 - Ryan Johnson	31 - Andrew Domonic Franklin
18 - Ivan Marko Penavic	

May Anniversary Dates

Tobias Garrett Brugler (Age 34)	Kadeem Von Hogan (Age 23)
Erin K. (Gaydos) Carlisle (Age 25)	James A. Jarosz (Age 24)
Anthony James Dawson (Age 22)	Stefanie Kmiotek (Age 18)
Robert William Duman, Jr. (Age 18)	Brian Joseph Kochmit (Age 26)
Abigail Nicole Fenstermaker (Age 6)	May-Lyn J. Martinez (Age 40)
Stephen Alexander (Gianfagna) (Age 18)	Tyler Andrew Moore (Age 20)
Carl Raymond Grants (Age 30)	Cara Rose Prokop (Age 34)
Scott Winfield Hawke (Age 31)	Traci Lynn Rettig (Age 17)
Heather Lynn Hist (Carr) (Age 1)	Allison T. Steadley (Age 20)
Isabella Marie Hlynosky (Stachewicz) (Age 1)	Michael A. Suglia, Jr. (Age 30)
Christa Melody Hodges (Age 26)	Hannah Elise Wernke (Age 8)

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).

~ Elaine and Lou Chorich ~ In loving memory of
Susan Elaine Chorich (Age 19)

A Mother's Memories

The kaleidoscope of my mind holds millions of memories of my son, Todd. The small flutter announcing himself. A tiny fist grabbing my fingers for the first time. A one year-old's blue blanket as he stroked its border with one hand and sucked his thumb with the other. Matchbox cars. A red tricycle. Building model cars. His first bicycle. A concussion. A saucer sled. His first "big boy" bed. Giggling until hiccups overtook him. His best Halloween costume. His white poodle, Fluffy. His lifetime best friend, Allen. Winning in track. Purple tennis shoes. Purple walls. Pink Floyd. The four-year paper route. Sunday mornings driving him on the paper route. His first car. His first GTO and the sound of the engine. The basketball hoop on the garage roof and the thump-thump of "shooting" into the night. The first prom. High School graduation with Grandpa in attendance. College days. Tears at Allen's sister's funeral. A 12-year restoration of a 1965 GTO. Car Shows. The new business after graduation. Marriage with Grandpa in attendance. First house. His children. Acceptance to A&M. Graduation with an MBA from A&M with Grandpa in attendance. New job in the corporation. Tears at Grandpa's funeral. Building a new home in Austin. The laughter he shared with his children. The joys he gave to me. The meaningful relationship with my adult child. The last day I saw him. The last conversation. There are books of details in each thought. A mother's memories glide effortlessly into the future. And that is as it should be.

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

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

Where Did My Sunshine Go

“In My Daughter’s Eyes” is our song
Our song, for you and me
For it tells how much of a love we have
And is there for all to see

It speaks of how I see you
And how I hope that you see me
And a love that only we two shared
A love for all of eternity

We danced to this song together
At your wedding you and I
And as happy as I should have been
I couldn’t help but cry

I was sad that you were all grown up
And that you would move away
But I never thought I would have lost you
On a dark September day

My sunshine was taken in September
It seems so long ago
A day I will always remember
A day that hurt me so

We did so much together
You were my true best friend
You listened, loved and comforted me
Until the very end

I am so lost without you Jessie
People truly have no clue
Each day that I am without you
My heart is a deeper blue

Someday my heart will stop beating
And you will be standing beside me with a smile
And you will reach out your beautiful arms
And hold me for a while

Then, with your gentle hands
You will lead me to the light
Where Jesus will smile upon us
And we will never leave each other’s sight

*Laurie Card
In Memory of my beloved daughter Jessie*

On Cleaning Out His Stuff

It has been 18 years since my son Chris was killed in a car accident. I have been using his room as my computer room for the last six years but I have not cleaned out his drawers or closet-they were almost as he left them. After recognizing that I needed more space and the job finally "had" to be done, I decided to finally begin the process of throwing some of Chris' high school papers away. After all, it had been 18 years-surely I had progressed far enough along in my grief to finally begin to deal with "his stuff."

Surprisingly I found the task challenging and gut-wrenching. I still had a difficult time working my way through some of the items I found, as I poured over notebooks, papers and drawings. One of the papers was an evaluation from a career counselor. Just reading over her findings brought a wave of tears that was almost uncontrollable. She had captured our boy with accuracy and tenderness, sensing this was a young man of character and warmth. She talked about his smile when he acknowledged that he didn't like camping very much, so he could not see himself as a forest ranger. She saw a young man who had a quiet and gentle strength. With a lump in my throat, I shared it with my husband and both of us "choked up" with tears.

Letters from his girlfriend and his return letters back to her were comforting and lovely. His warmth, kindness and tenderness as a 17-year-old young man "in love" for the first time, came through as he wrote from his heart. Just seeing his handwriting again was such a cherished treasure. Lyrics from the many songs he wrote for "the band" were deep and inspiring. Some of his reports from school had encouraging comments from the teachers. I saved some of his childish drawings of Smurfs, "A Sweet Story" (a second-grade drawing of children running into the arms of Jesus) and his many stuffed animals-or "his kids" as he used to call them. He had named them, drew them all and then placed them in a scrapbook. What a precious gift to hold on to. I'll show it to my grandchildren some day.

Then I began the arduous task of organizing the cards, notes and words of comfort we received as the days, weeks and months after Chris' death passed by. Many shared how they remembered events he attended, and conversations they shared with our son, which we were not aware of. Some shared how they were praying for us. I saved rain and mud-soaked notes that were left on his grave-so many missed him in those early days of overwhelming grief, especially his classmates. What beautiful and wonderful human beings touched our lives so many years ago and gave us the strength in those early days of bereavement to go on. It continued to bring tears to my eyes and yet, the tears were those of gratitude for the many who had taken our grief and for a time, had cried with us and carried some of it for us. It warmed my heart to recall that so many cared and grieved with us. The prayers continued throughout the first year and beyond. We could not have made it without those human arms of love around us, listening ears, tear-soaked eyes and encouraging words.

Although I was drained after two days of tossing, remembering, crying and organizing, I was comforted for having done this job that I had dreaded for years. It brought me back in touch with my grief and I felt so much closer to Chris than I had felt in a long time. I felt as though I had had a visit with him. I was reminded of what a special young man he was and how I was privileged to have been his mom. One thing I know for sure, the love for Chris, the memories we shared with him and the compassion shown to our family will remain in our hearts far longer than "the stuff" and that is what is really important.

*Carole Dyck
TCF Verdugo Hills, CA
In Memory of my son, Chris Dyck*

The Room

I began to think about my son's room and how parents often struggle with what to do with a child's room and belongings after a child dies. This decision may be more compounded if your child still lived at home, but living at home or not, most of us confront the decisions of how to handle our child's possessions. There are different thoughts on how to handle the physical items left behind; do we give them away, store them in a box, share them with friends or family or just leave them be. Whatever the choice...the answer lays in what brings you peace.

It has been 857 days since my son's death. While we've not kept his room exactly as it was, mostly it is unchanged. My sister made a quilt from some of his clothes and that now adorns his bed, we added a bed side table and removed a cabinet. A painting of his beloved river given to us by the mother of his friend hangs on the wall. But, his clothes are in the chest of drawers, his things still about the room, the proverbial "junk" drawer still sits un-pilfered by our hands. I know there is a chocolate Santa Clause in there and photos from a middle school field trip, a crazy pen from his grandma, notes from his girlfriend and an old phone. I'm not ready for any of that, not at 857 days.

I decided it was ok to leave it be, to allow his room to be there as before. Why should I change it, I see no need. Some days it's a comfort to go in there, some days I avoid like the plague with the fear of unrelenting tears. Some days I pull open the shade and let the light shine through, some days I leave it dark and cool. Simple acts bring startling memories of him and in my grieving the way they hit me changes from day to day. Today, the blinds are open and I can smile at his handsome face. Tomorrow, well, tomorrow will be what tomorrow will be.

The Room

I walk by your room many times a day; it's the place of all my lost dreams. The bed still sits as it was that fateful day. The dresser with a photo of you and her, the one you loved. Cologne bottles sitting there, three dollars placed under a rock, guitar picks, capo, one yellow 20 gauge shot gun shell and a sea shell. The guitars are on the wall, hanging as before...only longing to be held and strummed by you.

The shelf is there with all your things...ticket stubs from your last concert, your bible, photos of you racing your motorcycle, the books we read when you were small, Blueberries for Sal and Dr. Seuss. The harmonica, pocket-knives, the collectable die cast cars, a howling wolf atop a box that I set there not long before your accident and of which you heartily approved and a carved and brightly painted little wooden fish.

The things of a boy's life are sitting here; a boy growing into a man, yet not quite there. You were still attached to mom and dad yet yearning to be free. All was taken on that fateful day, all your freedom, all your dreams, it just went away.

I wonder sometimes what to do with this room I pass by every day. This place of your existence for so long, the place you held your deepest secrets and shared with friends your thoughts and dreams. The place where you and I would sit and talk, mother to son...if only for the allotted minute or two. The scratches on the floor, the once newly painted walls that boast the little fish you caught with grandpa when you were seven and the trophies you won when racing.

I wonder some days what to do with this room; this room that holds my memories of when you were here. I've no cause to move it or change it; there are no more children here. This room I'll keep for you, as a vessel of your being here and for all my hopes and dreams.

*Marian W. Lambeth
TCF Tallahassee, FL
In Memory of my son, Wyatt Lambeth*

The Gifts You've Given Me

I left the need to know Why behind years ago.
Instead,
I practice finding peace with the inner turmoil,
accepting the unacceptable,
living my truth.
You have given me the gift of uncertainty
and thus, taught me to live in the Now.

The fingers of your loss have quietly shaped me,
molding away the sharp edges,
my judgment of others,
my innocence.
You have given me the gift of Humility.

You were a child,
my child.
Now you parent.
Invisibly, quietly, from behind the veil,
you show me the meaning
of Life.
You have given me the gift of Awareness.

I am not the same.
In losing you,
I found my strength, my sorrow,
my compassion, my
Self.
You have given me the gift of Suffering.

These tears carry knowledge
that through suffering came
Understanding,
and through understanding came
Forgiveness,
and through forgiveness came
Love.

You fluttered in my womb like a butterfly,
and now you flutter in my soul,
eternally a part of me.
Eternally giving.

*Sara Therese
TCF Tucson, AZ
In Memory of Shawn*

TCF National News

An Important Update From The Compassionate Friends About Our 2020 National Conference

Dear Compassionate Friends,

A few weeks ago, we wrote to you to share how The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is responding to the Coronavirus pandemic and the challenges it has presented for our national conference this summer in Atlanta, GA. Since that time, we have been watching national developments and considering the many issues surrounding our ability to hold the conference in July.

We want to share with you that we have made the very difficult decision to cancel the national conference currently scheduled in Atlanta, GA, for July 24 to July 26, 2020. This decision has not been made lightly, and we recognize how important the annual conference is to so many of our members in providing community, connection, support, education, and care. Our Board of Directors, staff, Conference Co-chairs, and committee volunteers are as disappointed as many of you may be that we cannot proceed safely and responsibly with our plans for meeting in Atlanta this July.

We know that these are challenging and trying times we are all sharing right now. Some are fighting illness or experiencing the death of a loved one due to COVID-19, while others may have job, financial, or other losses. Many of us are experiencing the sudden loss of control and abrupt change of what we knew, triggering the deep pain of loss we are already experiencing from the death of our child, sibling, or grandchild. We also know that having the support of our TCF community is more important than ever as we experience our individual and collective grief.

Because of this, we are actively and diligently exploring options for alternative ways that we can continue to care for our community and meet some of the needs that come through a national conference. Many details are involved with this, and we will work through them one-by-one to find alternatives including possible later dates for an in-person conference, and ways to connect virtually through this extraordinary time. We truly are in new territory since this is the first time a conference has needed to be canceled due to significant events outside of our control.

We have already seen many volunteers throughout TCF step forward with new ways of serving our members' needs during this time, and these examples show the heart of The Compassionate Friends. Please know we share this spirit and are committed to continued care for our community and leading the way with innovative ways to engage during this time.

As your new CEO, the Board of Directors and I were particularly excited for this first opportunity to meet in person when we were together in Atlanta this summer. While I'm disappointed this won't be able to happen in July, I remain very hopeful and optimistic that we'll all share meaningful time together before long.

We'll be working with the hotel to cancel existing July reservations. Those of you who already made your reservations should receive a notification of these cancellations soon. Additionally, those of you who are workshop presenters or keynote speakers will receive a separate correspondence in the coming days regarding this.

Please reach out with any questions you may have, and we'll continue to be in touch with you as we become clearer on additional options.

Stay safe, healthy, and well.

Shari O'Loughlin

Connor's Mom & Patti's Sister
Chief Executive Officer
The Compassionate Friends
tcfconferences@compassionatefriends.org

Debbie Dullabaun

Dale's Mom
President, Board of Directors
The Compassionate Friends
tcfconferences@compassionatefriends.org

Our Chapter News

May Monthly Meeting

May 13th at 7:00pm

Please plan to join in as we hold our monthly chapter meeting on May 13th. As we all do our part to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, the chapter steering committee has reviewed options for staying in touch. As a result, we will conduct the May 13th meeting using Zoom ... an easy-to-use video conferencing tool. **THE MEETING WILL NOT BE HELD AT BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH.**

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Please see page 10 for helpful information and tips on using Zoom. Then, watch for an email during the day on May 13th which will include the link you will click to join the meeting.

Hope you can join us on May 13th.

Candlelight Remembrance Service (*save the date*)

The service consists of lighting candles in memory of our children, with appropriate readings and music, a balloon release and refreshments. The chapter Steering Committee is reviewing plans for this annual event, scheduled for June 28th. Several options are being considered, including a possible “virtual” service using Zoom. *Please watch for more information in the June newsletter.*



Our Chapter News

Zoom! Join us online May 13th 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. The link will be sent in an email during the day on May 13th. 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.

Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels



Another stay-at-home month has come and gone. Also, not sure when the next physical chapter meeting will take place, or how that would work. But at least the weather is getting a little warmer, so I have had the chance several times to sit out on the balcony and enjoy some fresh air. And I'm learning to use Zoom to have video chats and meetings with family and friends, so that's a plus.

I've also had the time to read a lot more, too, some fiction, some nonfiction, and some grief related. I hope you have been able to get in some worthwhile reading, too. I should mention that the book I talked about last month, Grief Diaries Surviving Loss Due to Overdose by Lynda Cheldelin Fell, is available in Kindle or paperback format on Amazon. Yeah, I know, I got mine from Kobo. I have to say, the first part of the book, the stories of the losses as told one after another, was a rough read for me, but worth it.

This month, I'd like to talk about a book called Life from the Ashes: Finding Signs of Hope after Loss, by Shari O'Loughlin, who is, by the way, the new Executive Director of the national TCF organization. My friend Ronald Gallacher out in the state of Washington thought I'd like to read the book because Shari lost her son in a small plane crash back in 2012, and I lost my son in a small plane crash back in 2006. Also, it was a timely read for me in April because Robert died in April. The first part of the book, detailing the actual events of the plane crash and immediate aftermath certainly stirred some vivid memories for me. I recalled particularly how frustrating it was for us to get any official notification for hours and hours (and hours). The rest of Shari's book talks about finding signs, feathers, actually from her son. So if you are into signs like feathers, coins, butterflies, cardinals, etc., then this book would be a good read for you. I also picked this book up in Kindle edition from Amazon.

I probably would have tried to pick up an autographed copy at the national convention, but, sadly, that has been canceled. Oh, well, maybe at the next one.

Stay well and have a good read.

The Learning of Love

Love lives - continually gives ~ LOVE NEVER FAILS

Love never leaves & never deceives.

Love always remembers, Love sometimes grieves

Love establishes, Love includes, Love understands, Love honors, Love forgives, Love waits...

There are secret things with Love - mysteries, moments, memories

The secret things belong to One higher, sovereign, & wiser

But the things that inspire LOVE & the things that are revealed about LOVE;

Belong to us - to our sons & daughters, to our siblings & grandparents, family & friends

~THE THINGS REVEALED ABOUT LOVE BELONG TO US~

That we may observe, honor, & remember

ALWAYS & FOREVER

Pamela Hagens

Happy Birthday in Heaven

Today we remember the day we were blessed with your birth.
How wonderful to have your life to share upon this earth.
Too few birthdays you spent with us, now another in heaven.
We wonder what our lives would be if you were still here in them.
But sadly it is not our fate to spend our days with you.
So we will cherish our memories to help see us through.
Our memories of your smile, compassionate, generous ways,
The joy you brought to all you saw each and every day.
Oh Son how we wish so bad we could be together,
But always know we love you today, tomorrow and forever.
Happy Birthday precious angel, may your spirit soar above,
Mom, Dad, Sister, family and friends sending all our love.

*Cindy McClain
TCF of the Wabash Valley, IN
In Memory of my son Dylan*

Their Song of Love

Remembering on this Mother's Day
the melody your child etched
in your heart.
The sweet song of love
that only your child could place there.
As this special day brings
their song to you,
may the warmth of their eternal love
fill your heart once again,
For their song is never ending.

*Patty Erdman
TCF Longview, WA*

Ritual

A gaze thru blurry window
When did it start to rain?
Then realize it's just the eyes
They're crying once again

Emptiness is mighty
Deep within begins the ache
Intense, this pain that surely
Will cause a heart to break

Shoulders gently tremble
A moaning soft and low
Arms tightly wrapped about oneself
Body rocking to and fro

A ritual of comfort
A numbing of the mind
A cleansing of the tortured soul
A knowing eye made blind

Thus begins the healing process
Of this I know so well
Without you, I fall victim to
This mindless cast of spell

*Donna Gerrior
TCF Pasco County, FL
In Memory of Rob*

Strange Words Welcome New Members

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: “We are so sorry you have to be here.”

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to “size up” the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn’t neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child’s name, tell your child’s story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the “after death” world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

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

Tomorrow Will Be Better

When my son died, I felt like there would be no tomorrow. I didn’t want a tomorrow. I wanted yesterday with its promise of joy and perfection. I wanted my son to be alive. But he was gone.

Now, when life gets me down, I remember the joys of yesterday, think of all that I was given, take measure of all that still needs to be done, and I promise myself that tomorrow will be better because I will work very hard to make it better.

My grandmother often told me, “If you think you can, you’re right. If you think you can’t, you’re right. What do you think?” As a child I thought this was strange. As an adult, I know it to be true.

Tomorrow will be better. Tomorrow I will, once again, tell my mind to stop the negative thoughts. And my mind will do exactly that, as I command my ship of grief.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX
Forever remembering my son, Todd Mennen*

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)

As long as I can I will look at this world for both of us. As long as I can I will laugh with the birds, I will sing with the flowers, I will pray to the stars, for both of us. ~
Sascha Wagner