



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

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May, 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.

May Monthly Meeting - **In-Person**

May 12th at 7:00pm: The discussion theme will be "Mother's Day." 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
(see page 9 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.



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) | Stefanie Kmiotek (Age 18) |
| Erin K. (Gaydos) Carlisle (Age 25) | Brian Joseph Kochmit (Age 26) |
| Heather Lynn Hist (Carr) (Age 1) | May-Lyn J. Martinez (Age 40) |
| Anthony James Dawson (Age 22) | Tyler Andrew Moore (Age 20) |
| Robert William Duman, Jr. (Age 18) | Richard Pratt, Jr. (Age 28) |
| Abigail Nicole Fenstermaker (Age 6) | Cara Rose Prokop (Age 34) |
| Stephen Alexander (Gianfagna) (Age 18) | Traci Lynn Rettig (Age 17) |
| Carl Raymond Grants (Age 30) | Isabella Marie Hlynosky (Stachewicz) (Age 1) |
| Scott Winfield Hawke (Age 31) | Allison T. Steadley (Age 20) |
| Christa Melody Hodges (Age 26) | Michael A. Suglia, Jr. (Age 30) |
| Kadeem Von Hogan (Age 23) | Hannah Elise Wernke (Age 8) |
| James A. Jarosz (Age 24) | |

Remembering Our Children



We miss you every day

Love always, Mom and Dad

Tobias Garrett Brugler (Age 34)



Dear Alex,

When we visited your grave the other day and considered another Spring without you, we missed you as much as we did that first Spring. Every day in every way. On your birthday it will be 5,618 days since your revered last spoken words to your family, "I love you, man."

We are comforted believing that you are perfect in God's loving embrace. We will always love you and treasure the 17½ years we had with you in this life.

Mom, Dad, Nick

Alexander Humel McCann (Age 17)

***You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes;
You heal because of what you do with the time.~***

Carol Crandall



First Meeting

Our April meeting was the first for these bereaved mothers. 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.

Rachel Santos, remembering her
Beloved daughter Raven Santos (Age 2 months)

Christina Tagliarini, remembering her
Beloved son Thomas Tagliarini (Age 22)

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).

~ Val and Ron Brugler ~ In loving memory of
Tobias Garrett Brugler (Age 34)

~ Kathryn Kurtz ~ In loving memory of
Michael Benjamin Kurtz (Age 17)

~ Mike and Joyce McCann/Humel ~ In loving memory of
Alexander Humel McCann (Age 17)

A Mother's Touch

My husband Jeff grew up in a family of hugging, kissing, foot-rubbing, back scratchers.

Affectionate folks! In my family, on the other hand, we only scratched mosquito bites, and certainly not each other's. Although we loved one another fiercely, we weren't very demonstrative. A wink, a squeeze, a peck on the cheek, a poke in the ribs — that was mushy stuff for us. Touching another person was not something that came easily to me; that is, until my first child was born.

When the nurse placed that chubby cherub in my arms, the floodgates of my heart opened, and a torrent of overwhelming love poured out. I couldn't keep my hands off the little dumpling! I reamed first-hand what it means to "smother with kisses." Caressing my precious baby came as naturally as breathing.

Other children came along, and I was reborn a certified, card-carrying cuddler. I learned how many of a mother's day-to-day interactions with her children require her touch. Touching became a way of life for me as I fed, bathed, dressed, tamed cowlicks, and kissed ouchies.

It's funny, but one of the things I missed most after my son Blake died was tying his shoes. When he was alive, that chore was the bane of my existence. Blake's shoes were perpetually untied or hopelessly tangled in knots that would have defied Houdini himself. I rejoiced when the shoe designers came up with Velcro closures, seeing an end to my nemesis. But would Blake wear those simple, convenient shoes? No way! Big boys wore shoes with laces, and most of all, he wanted to be like the big boys. So I armed my teeth, and kept tying and bending every fork in the house de-knotting. After Blake died, how my fingers ached to tie those little shoes one more time!

For most bereaved mothers I know, not being able to touch, to hold, to embrace our child is the most painful reality we have to face. The emptiness of our arms, the indescribable longing to have those arms filled again with our precious child, are almost more than we can bear.

At first, when our grief is fresh, it may be hard, for us to touch anyone. We may close ourselves off emotionally, willing to touch or be touched, or to run the risk of being hurt so badly again. But mothers are touchers. With time, when the pain isn't so intense, we may want to reach out once more.

None of us ever outgrows the need to be touched, no matter how old we are. And what can be so comforting as a mother's touch! Today, if you can, touch someone. Do it in the memory of your beloved child.

*Patricia Dyson
In memory of Blake
TCF, Beaumont, TX*

Second Sunday of May

Many happy memories
Linger in our hearts this day
As we each remember our child
Who has left this earthly plane.
The day is bittersweet for us,
The mothers who have lost so much,
For to remove all pain could well
Erase the precious life we touched.
Tears will trace the memories of
Other, happier Mother's Days,
As we dwell in a quiet reverie
This Second Sunday of May

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

April Showers Bring May Flowers

April is a month known for rain, which is a necessary component to bring out the flowers in May. It is a step that cannot be skipped or done away with. Although at times bleak and dreary, this rainy season is a time of rejuvenation for the ground and prepares the soil to be able to nourish the plant life that will soon come.

The death of a loved one creates a personal "rainy season" that lasts much longer than a single month. The days become figuratively dark and gloomy with menacing clouds hanging overhead. This too is a necessary component for personal healing. So many people I see grow (understandably) tired of their "rainy season"; full of sudden outbursts of tears and thunderous pangs of pain. These emotional storms can not only come quickly, but may linger unmercilessly as well.

In April, with storms coming at the drop of a hat, I know that if I want to manage the amount I get wet, I need to stay prepared. I will keep an umbrella in my office, in the car, at home and with me wherever I go. Likewise those who are weathering "emotional storms" can also prepare themselves. Suggested supplies to keep on hand are many and may vary from person to person. First and foremost, keep tissues on you at all times. Grief is often unexpectedly triggered in the most inconvenient of places. For many, eating is completely thrown off balance. Keep a snack near you as well for times when you suddenly realize you have not eaten all day and feel like you may pass out. Also, it is nice to have something cold to drink to replenish yourself after having a "good" cry. In addition, keep a small notebook and pen handy and write down anything important that you need to remember. People who are grieving are supposed to have no memory when it comes to appointments or grocery lists. These things take a back seat (if that) to mentally reconstructing one's own life after a death.

As you continue to weather your own storms, remember that the tears you shed are not wasted. They are necessary and healing, preparing you for your coming springtime when the flowers bloom once again.

*Stephanie E
El Paso, TX / Chapter Newsletter
(Reprinted from Tears To Hope Newsletter of the Amelia Center)*

A Mother's Lament

If I had known
The pain I'd bear
The sadness and the great despair
Would I have chosen the path I did
To have this child
Who so briefly lived?

Yes, I am certain
That I would
For all the laughter
All the good.

He taught us all
So much you see
Through his kindness,
Love and generosity.

Though he's gone
From us physically
He lives on in our hearts
Eternally.

Sandy Roush
TCF Lakes Area, MI
In Memory of Whit

He Is Gone

You can shed tears that he is gone
Or you can smile because he has lived

You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love that you shared

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday

You can remember him and only that he is gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

*written 1981
David Harkins 1959 -
Silloth, Cumbria, UK*

In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.

In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few hours as into an oasis where
draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.

In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story may be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.
Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,
for the long and winding road that is ahead.

And those we love are pleased we are together.
They smile down on us, and bless this day,
glad for every tiny step we're taking
and send their light to guide us on our way.

Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters -
in every dance we dance, and every song we
sing.

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from Catching the Light –
Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child
Written for TCF Meeting or Conference First Timers*

TCF National News



Save the Date! TCF's 44th National Conference will be presented virtually July 16-18, 2021. Although we would love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through our virtual event. More details about TCF's three-day conference are coming soon, including number of sessions, registration prices, and earlybird prices and dates.

COMMENTS FROM THE 2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

"The Conference meant so much to me. It was beautifully presented. I will always be grateful that I was able to attend." – 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

"I am very grateful for all your hard work putting together such an amazing 3 day event. I am newly bereaved and this conference was that ray of sunshine that I needed. The Compassionate Friends conference has given me tools that I didn't even know I needed to help me ease some of this pain in my heart." – 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

Our Chapter News

In-Person May 12th Chapter Meeting

Please note that our May 12th 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. ***ALL THOSE ATTENDING MUST WEAR PROPER FACE MASKS.*** 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.

Chapter Leadership Change Announcement

To our fellow Compassionate Friends of Southwest Suburbs/Cleveland Chapter:

Doreen and I are very happy to announce that after 7 years of chapter leadership, we are “passing the baton“ to two wonderful teammates of ours, Lori Brown & Lori Rychlik! We have really enjoyed our time as chapter leaders but it is time for a change and these two are perfect! We thank you all for helping us during those years and we are not going away. We still plan to be just as active in our chapter and will help and assist wherever we can. Thank you so much Lori B. and Lori R. – the Lori Team !!

Brian and Doreen Sismour

THANK YOU, BRIAN AND DOREEN !!!!!

THANK YOU BOTH FOR YOUR COMPASSION, DEDICATION AND LEADERSHIP THESE PAST 7 YEARS!!! It has been a joy to witness your service to so many parents who have connected with our chapter, seeking help in their grief journeys.

You stepped forward 7 years ago to guide the chapter and its mission of service to grieving parents. We look forward to your continued involvement with the chapter.

Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels



I hope this finds you all well.

As I write this column, the temperature outside is 81 degrees, so I am going to have to devote a little time today to getting outdoors. But it hasn't been that long since the four inches of snow on April 21. Yeah, this is Ohio.

As for my reading lately, I have finished a book by Julia Stuart called The Tower, the Zoo, and the Tortoise, which is supposed to be grief handled with a lighter touch than Hamnet, and, one thing's for sure. British humor differs from the American humor that I am used to. I knew right away when the male protagonist, Balthazar Jones, who works at the Tower of London, was in the bathroom, battling "the loneliness of constipation." Yeah, the book is funny, but in a definitely British way. And if you are into all sorts of touristy British history, real or contrived, this is also a book for you. But the book does deal with the grief, that of Balthazar and his wife Phoebe over the death of their son, Milo in a serious way. They each grieve in a different way and seem driven apart, when they really needed each other. And then it is also the tale of a tortoise without a tail. There is that.

I got my second vaccination, and some of us did meet for a face to face chapter meeting, something that had not happened since February, 2020. There were eleven of us, all masked up and properly socially distanced, not really "back to normal" but certainly, perhaps, a new normal, a phrase we are all familiar with.

One couple, Joyce and Michael, donated a book to our library in memory of their son, Alex. The book is titled Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss, by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen, illustrated by Taylor Bills. "Soup making is an art, and you are the artist. Improvising as you go, your only goal is that the blended creation will both satisfy your hunger and soothe what hurts you. What's true about soup making is also true about grieving." The book gives information and advice in a simple, but not simplistic, way and seems suitable for people in the early stages of grief. The book is not overly burdened with text, which can be a blessing for early grieverers who might be otherwise overwhelmed. And the illustrations are beautiful. Yeah, the book is a definite keeper.

I did not get out at the meeting the big tub of books that is our chapter library. Just lifting it up after over a year was a bit of an exertion, but if we keep meeting face to face, I'll put the newly donated book in with the rest. In the meantime, get out and about and enjoy some fresh air.

Stay safe. Stay well. Read something.

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.***



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