



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

November, 2021

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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.

November Monthly Meeting

November 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 “Preparing for the holidays”. 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.



November Birth Dates

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3 - James Christopher Hartman | 18 - Antonio Deshon Briones |
| 5 - Dina Marie Parisi | 19 - Tiffany Lyn Clawson |
| 8 - Thomas Patrick Harsany | 19 - Bruce Albert Schmidt |
| 11 - Michael James Wohl | 19 - Amy (Cudney) Sobolewski |
| 12 - Anthony James Dawson | 20 - Dorothy Thomas |
| 12 - Scott Winfield Hawke | 20 - Jason Tompkins |
| 14 - Todd David Buchko | 29 - Michaelann Elizabeth Arnold |
| 15 - Brian David Moll | 30 - Kadeem Von Hogan |

November Angelversary Dates

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Arik Bocian (Age 5) | Andrew C. King (Age 21) |
| Todd David Buchko (Age 1 day) | Lauren Venzel Kutchenriter (Age 27) |
| Benjamin David (Age 31 days) | Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13) |
| David Thomas Erich (Age 29) | Kerrienne Loas (Age 20) |
| Tom Friebe (Age 17) | Steven Michael Luff (Age 19) |
| Christopher James Giermann (Age 31) | Tracy Ann Schuenemann (Age 27) |
| James Christopher Hartman (Age 31) | Justin Robert Swanger (Age 22) |
| Brian Tyler Jenkins (Age 12) | Ashley Nicole Szewczyk (Age 39) |
| Sean R. Kaminski (Age 26) | |

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).

~ Karen Protiva ~ In loving memory of
John Albert Protiva (Age 27)

~ Rita and Dave Schuenemann ~ In loving memory of
Tracy Ann Schuenemann (Age 27)

~ Jennifer and John Wallace ~ In loving memory of
Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

Thoughts About Progress

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to “recovery,” when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really?

Let’s keep in mind most of us have had no previous experienced “recovering” from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference – it’s all new to us. Actually the “roller coaster” of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left – just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute.

After a couple of months we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM – back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let’s be realistic! There is something wrong – terribly wrong: we have each lost a child.

Let’s be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, “laughing on the outside – crying on the inside.” We want to be acceptable to society. “You are doing so well,” we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean, “getting over it,” it means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let’s not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person’s general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy. Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that, and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us, and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

*Mary Ehmman
TCF Valley Forge, PA*

Newsletter Dedications



John Albert Protiva (Age 27)

**To the world you might be one person,
but to one person ... you might be the
world.**

Love, Mom

Thanksgiving Marks Beginning Of Holiday Madness and Sadness

In our society we have turned the holidays into a never ending round of parties, shopping, cooking, preparations for guests or travel and stress, lots and lots of stress. It begins in October with the not so subtle reminders from our friendly retail stores. Most of us dread this time of year because as members of Compassionate Friends, we have one more item on our list and it invariably is at the top.....my child is gone.....how can I handle the holidays?

This will be my third Thanksgiving without my son. We had 35 wonderful Thanksgiving celebrations together, and now it's just me. My only child is gone, my grandchildren now live solely in their mother's world. I am not a part of that world.

But I am learning to cope with this reality. I am learning that I can hold on to the traditions that don't cause me sadness and let go of those that do. As bereaved parents we fall into a unique category. As humans we accept that the loss of parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and acquaintances is inevitable. But never, never, were we taught or conditioned to the idea that our children would or could precede us in death. The very notion of this shook us to our core.

Now we have lost our child to death. Nobody prepared us for this mind numbing loss. The rules have been broken. We have no coping skills. Our friends usually can't help. Our families try, but until one endures a loss of this magnitude, the ability to fully comprehend the never ending rounds of sadness is simply not there.

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We do have a support system.....we can choose to participate or simply be there, in the moment, at our Compassionate Friends meetings. Here we find our most meaningful and helpful connection with other parents.....parents who are walking the road we now walk. These bereaved parents are here to help us on this unfamiliar road. They cannot answer every question because the answers don't exist to most questions. When will this pain end? When will life go back to "normal"? There are different types of pain and new kinds of normal. We gather each month to help each other, to lean on each other, to find hope in each other's ability to function. From this meeting of kindred souls we do derive some solace, some peace and some hope.

I have watched the newly bereaved, raw in their sadness when they first attend a meeting. As the months move forward, I begin to see a change in these parents. Each changes in a different way, for each experiences their loss and their grief process in a different way. Some changes aren't apparent for months, even a year or two. Learning that we are not alone in the grievous burden of our loss is comforting. Learning that others have developed ways to cope with the holidays, the birthdays, the death anniversaries and other special occasions gives us the hope that we, too, will one day feel comfortable in our new "normal."

I have chosen to accept this group of gentle, kind and compassionate friends as an integral part of my life. The first holidays were horrible. I learned that I had to do what I felt was right. I learned to let go of the expectations of others and live in the moment. Even if I plan to do something and change my mind, I feel no guilt. I learned that those who truly love me understand. I have found that I am truly becoming myself....my new self. It is a slow process. There are setbacks.

Holidays are extremely difficult for every parent who has lost a child.....it matters not how long ago our child died. The pain is fresh, new and raw at this time of year. This is the season for leaning on our compassionate friends, for asking questions, expressing fears, anxieties, doubts, depression and anger and for finding the comfort, hope and understanding that each of us so desperately seeks.

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

***Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow.
Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.
One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow,
or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,
and want more than all the world for your return. ~ Mary Jean Irion***

TCF National News



SIGN UP FOR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS E-NEWSLETTER

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

TCF NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON FACEBOOK

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the Facebook icon from TCF's national website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org. Or, you can find it by going to: www.facebook.com/TCFUSA.

We want this to be both an informative and supportive place for those of us who are mourning the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. All are welcome to leave messages and talk about their child and their grief. As in our meetings, we especially appreciate shared insights about anything that has brought you comfort, hope, or some measure of peace.

In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page has posts about upcoming events such as conferences, the Walk to Remember, and the Worldwide Candle Lighting. Please visit often and contribute to the conversation.

TCF is also now on Twitter. Search for TCFofUSA. These social media initiatives are important to TCF because they will help increase public awareness about our organization and better enable us to fulfill our mission to help bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.

For more information, please call TCF's National Office at 877-969-0010 or e-mail sara@compassionatefriends.org.

Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

I hope this finds you all well.

Ah, Halloween, one of my favorite times of the year. I bought bags of candy to pass out, but nobody came to the door, so I've started in on the candy myself. I've got enough to last until New Year's Day. Maybe.



Maybe because of the time of the year, I read a bunch of Stephen King stuff. First, I read The Stand (the extended edition). It took me four weeks to read it all. It was the first time I had to renew a library book in I don't know how long. I will say this; it's probably not the book to read in a global pandemic, or maybe it is. Anyway, I also read two shorter works, The Running Man and The Long Walk, which King wrote under the name Ricard Bachmann. All I can say is none of those books was light fluffy stuff, but then who expects light fluffy stuff from Stephen King, right? I did enjoy the fact that King mentioned Akron a couple of times in The Stand, but I'm not quite sure what he thinks Akron is like.

As for grief reading, I read a novel called Shuggie Bain, by Douglas Stuart. It's the story of a boy growing up in the 1980's in Glasgow, Scotland, as the son of an alcoholic mother. The book was the September pick in the TCF closed Facebook group Reading Your Way Through Grief. It was chosen because it deals with alcohol and drug addiction. OK, it's fiction, but it is told realistically enough. And it could be a rough read for a number of reasons. First, a lot of the language is rough, coarse speech, but, hey, who hasn't heard or read that stuff, right? Then it might be rough because there is a lot of language that is pure Scots, so you might have to use Google a bit, or just figure it out from the context. Finally, it's rough because it shows the toll that alcoholism takes on a person and those around. The book, however, is not without its humor. For instance, Agnes, the alcoholic mother of Shuggie, has a friend who comes visiting her a lot. The friend keeps saying, "I cannae stay long." She stays, of course, until the beer runs out, at which point, she gets up to leave, saying, "I told ye I cannae stay long." The main point of the book seems to be that, although Shuggie wants to do anything and everything to help his mother, in the end, all he can do is love her.

So there you have it for another month.

Stay safe. Stay well. Read something.

November Monthly Meeting

November 10th at 7:00pm

Please plan to join in as we hold our monthly chapter meeting on November 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. More information on page 9.

THE MEETING WILL NOT BE HELD AT BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH.

*Don't cry because it's over,
Smile because it happened. ~ Dr. Seuss*

Dear Friends:

I get migraine headaches.

Every migraine-sufferer knows these are not the “take two” kind of headaches. They are more like the “lie-down-in-a-dark-room-and-hope-you-die” kind.

People who have never experienced migraines often cannot understand this excruciating ordeal. If their own headaches are just the nuisance variety, they may even be impatient and unforgiving. As in most things, understanding is generally defined by personal experience. These people don't mean to be cruel, they just can't empathize with anything they haven't gone through themselves.

Grief is like that too. Just as there are different kinds of physical pain, there are different degrees of grieving. People who have experienced only mild grief may be intolerant of grief that is disabling. (I won't try to give examples of “mild grief” here or I'll get in big trouble with somebody!) Believing that they handled their own problem, they tend to think that others should do the same, just as easily.

In my years of connection to the world of the grieving, I've seen a lot of people (myself included) who have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to “win over” the uninitiated.

We beg their pardons, we excuse ourselves for being a bother to them, we strain our minds and hearts trying to find ways to help them understand us, we try to follow their advice; and when it all fails, we build on our foundations of guilt, because we believe it must have been all our fault for being bereaved in the first place!

This might make sense to somebody, but when I thought it through, it seemed to me that the shoe was on the wrong foot. I'm not mad at “them” anymore. I realize now that it's awfully difficult to describe a sunset to someone who was born blind.

On the other hand, I need to keep in mind that I have no right to expect those who do not share my suffering to automatically know my needs.

Now, when I encounter people who “brush off” grief and who are critical of those who can't, I ask them to share with me their deepest sorrow. If the only death they've suffered through is that of their car battery, I simply tell them I don't expect them to understand. If they haven't experienced grief on a deeper level, there's no way they can imagine it, so they needn't even try.

I do, however, expect-even demand-that they believe me when I tell them what it's like. I not only require that they take my word for how it is, I've liberated myself from being apologetic if I can't take their advice. Never again will I permit myself to become a pitiable victim who is counseled, guided and instructed by the uninformed.

We who grieve intensely don't need pity, we need understanding. If we can't get that, we can at least refuse to bend our backs to the whips of pragmatism. We can grieve with dignity and self respect.

In the end, “they” will like us better, and we will like us better too.

Andrea Gambill
*Reprinted from **Bereavement** Magazine, Mar/Apr 1990*
5125 N. Union Blvd., Ste. 4
Colorado Springs CO 89018

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*

First Thanksgiving

The thought of being thankful
fills my heart with dread.
They'll all be feigning gladness,
not a word about her said.

These heavy shrouds of blackness
enveloping my soul,
pervasive, throat-catching,
writhe in me, and coil.

I must, I must acknowledge,
just express her name,
so all sitting at the table,
know I'm thankful that she came.

Though she's gone from us forever
and we mourn to see her face,
not one minute of her living,
would her death ever replace.

So I stop the cheerful gathering,
though my voice quivers, quakes,
make a toast to all her living.
That small tribute's all it takes.

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from Stars in the Deepest – After the Death of a Child*

The Sign

As a little boy Jody loved to pick Black-eyed Susans. He'd pick those wild flowers and bring them to me with such love and pride in presentation. The last bunch he picked for me was on my birthday before his death, August 4, 1976.

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son's death, in the center of Jody's grave, was a single perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.

I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. "Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I'm okay and at peace."

Whether it was a sign from Jody or from God, perhaps a bird dropped a Black-eyed Susan seed on the fresh grave, it brought me relief. I felt that my son wasn't so far away, and that his spirit would always be with me.

If nothing more, it helped me to begin to think of Jody there at the gravesite. He was dead, and I began to accept that. I started to realize that I would never again see his form as I had known it. But his spirit would be close and would guide me. I would not forget him and what we shared. He would always be special. What we gave to one another, what we had meant to each other, would not die or diminish with the passage of years, and it has not.

Each year since Jody's death, a single Black-eyed Susan has grown on his grave. It is a comfort and a joy. It is a remarkable phenomenon that now makes me smile rather than cry. Joey was a kid who never forgot my birthday, and never outgrew giving his mom flowers. I choose to believe he still hasn't. There are many mysteries in life and death that can't be explained, and I think shouldn't be, just accepted.

*Susan White-Bowden
In memory of Jody
"From a Healing Heart"*

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)

*A real friend is one who walks in
When the rest of the world walks out.*

~ Widely attributed to Walter Winchell