

Your Chapter Needs Your Help

Our chapter bank account balance is critically low. The chapter relies on love gifts as the only source of funding to cover operating expenses (rental for our monthly meeting space, expenses associated with our June and December candlelight remembrance services, newsletter printing and mailing costs, chapter, financial support for our TCF National organization).

Please help by making a love gift in memory of your child. Your tax deductible gift will help us continue to provide comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild.

Love gifts should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends and mailed to our treasurer:

George Mickol
2914 Dellwood Drive
Parma, OH 44134

(Your September newsletter follows this page)



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

September, 2018

WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

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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.

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

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.

Happy Labor Day



September Monthly Meeting

September 12th at 7:00pm: The discussion theme will be "How do you handle your child's possessions?". As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Joanne and Don Litvin will facilitate.

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING SCHEDULE
TO 2nd WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH**

MEETING LOCATION: Bethany Lutheran Church, 6041 Ridge Road, Parma 44129

Remembering Our Children

Please take a moment to remember these children and those who love them on their birth dates and anniversaries. Although they were only here for a short time, the impact they made on their loved ones remains forever.



September Birth Dates

2 - Megan Lynn Frazier	23 - Baby Boy Buchko
5 - Susan Elaine Chorich	23 - Brian Joseph Kochmit
6 - Aaron Mulvey	23 - Shane Michael Wiech
7 - Robert C. Higgins	25 - Abigail Nicole Fenstermaker
7 - Nathan Edward Rychlik	25 - Timothy William Hautz
8 - Frank Michael Suhar	26 - David Matthew Knox
9 - Douglas Stover	27 - Andrea Cortes
10 - Thomas D. Hayn	27 - Alyssa Louise Miller
12 - Donald A. Litvin, Jr.	29 - Nicole D. Anzalone
13 - Matthew John Desmarreau	29 - Christopher James Brennan
16 - Todd Allan Rael	30 - James A. Jarosz
17 - Anthony Lee Higgins	

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).

- ~ Don and Joanne Litvin ~ In loving memory of Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)
- ~ Joan Mass ~ In loving memory of Russell Ruprecht (Age 46)
- ~ George and Bonnie Mickol ~ In loving memory of Scott Mickol (Age 16)
- ~ Doreen and Brian Sismour ~ In loving memory of Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)
- ~ Fred and Mary Tschanz ~ In loving memory of Frederick M. Tschanz (Age 24)

Remembering Our Children

September Angelversary Dates

Baby Boy Buchko (Age 1 day)	Phillip Masterson (Age 25)
Brenda Cole (Age 31)	Reid Alan McClellan (Age 1)
Matthew John Desmarteau (Still Born)	Alyssa Louise Miller (Age 2)
Zachary Thomas Gott (Age 12)	Bob Murphy (Age 46)
Adam Timothy Grodzik (Age 17)	Eric Justin Obloy (Age 26)
Jason Thomas Haberman (Age 31)	Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)
Christian Creed Hein (Age 3)	Nick Rothenbuhler (Age 20)
Larissa Ann Johnson (Age 35)	Nathan Edward Rychlik (Age 28)
Ella Grace Kepchum (Age 2)	Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)
Jessica Marie Kossin (Age 21)	Frank Michael Suhar (Age 38)
Amy Angel Marilyn Lee (Age 40)	Dane Woods (Age 15)

... in the Autumn

Some people love to see the changes
in the colors of the leaves,
When the sky is clear and dark blue
as the sea.

They love to smell the oak leaves burning
But it is then my heart is yearning
To be with ones I know
I cannot see.

There's something in the autumn
That makes my heart so heavy,
I miss them all but know they're where
they should all be.

If I can make it through the winter,
And see the spring unfold before me,
Then I'll know once more they're
there, and wait for me.

When the morning sun comes later,
and the afternoons die early,
And my spirits drop like leaves
around my feet.

I'm so aware that I am mortal
and I can almost see the portal
that I will pass through and be
evermore complete.

*Jim O'Neil
TCF, Montgomery, AL*

Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable to the imagination of the unbereaved.

~ Iris Mudoch

Newsletter Dedications



Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)

Love and miss you today and everyday,

Mom and Dad



Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

4/14/97-9/10/11

Hard to believe it has been 7 years since you passed and you would be 21 now. We still miss the sound of your voice, the stories you told, especially the sound of your laughter and your precious smile.

You will live on in our hearts forever.

Love you and miss you so.....

Mom, Dad and Andrew

Quiet Courage

I have seen much courage in my life. Many types of bravery have inspired me. I am astonished by the courage of the elderly widow who buries her husband, quietly sells most of her personal belongings, furnishings and home and moves into a tiny apartment so that she can survive until death takes her, too.

I am distressed by the youthful courage demonstrated every day by soldiers who were high school kids heading for homecoming last year but who now serve in dangerous, hostile places fighting an enemy who is invisible in the crowd. The law enforcement memorial in Washington, D.C., speaks of the many brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to keep anarchy at bay. The EMS and fire fighting people who hold strong to tradition and put themselves in harm's way each day to save others amaze me with their dedication and devotion to duty.

The single mother who works two jobs, raises her children, cares for them in times of illness, keeps a home, cooks, cleans and still finds time to bake cookies for the PTA fundraiser is a heroine who is doomed to remain faceless and unknown. Yet the courage to start each new day in the hope of making a better life for her children drives her forward.

There are all types of courage in this life. All are impressive, all are worthy of praise and all set standards for us to emulate.

But the deepest, most compelling courage I have seen in my life is that of the parent who has lost a child to death. Each has experienced total helplessness and real physical pain in their loss. Raw in their grief, they join our Compassionate Friends group. I am struck by how weakened in spirit these parents are, how tenuous their hold on sanity must surely be. Yet these parents quietly enter our meeting room and face the unknown with tears in their eyes and tremendous weight in their hearts. Their world is upside down, their children have died and the pain and loss seem insurmountable. They have been snatched out of their former reality and slammed into the depths of hell by a cosmic force more intense than a tsunami. These moms and dads who have lost their beautiful child listen quietly as others talk of children who have lived for years in their parents' hearts. Each parent tells a story, each voice breaks, each heart breaks as a lost child's name echoes in the quiet room. The courage to acknowledge and face this new reality and look for hope in the midst of this infinite despair is a pure wonderment.

What pain is in this room? What deep, agonizing loss is systemic within this group? What will I say? How can I relate when I cannot even remember what day it is? How can I go on for one more day? These are the agonizing feelings of the newly bereaved parent. The Compassionate Friends meeting is the place they have chosen to begin their journey into what they perceive as a hideous, horrible, dark and unknown future. Yet their courage to face this, the greatest loss any human could possibly endure, is extraordinary. The power of the mind to begin to see reason, to begin to seek hope, to climb this mountain of trauma and travail cannot be overstated. This power is pure courage, raw courage, desperate courage, but courage in its purest form.

Each meeting brings the dread of facing the reality of their child's death. Yet the parents who have lost so much return to talk, to listen, to understand, to move into the light of hope. Gradually an understanding develops. Slowly each parent learns we must continue to live and honor our child. They light candles, visit cemeteries, fund scholarships, write poetry, raise funds to help others.....all in memory of their precious children. They reach out to other parents who are newly bereaved, listening, talking and listening again with their hearts. Occasionally they smile. Then one day they laugh. The journey is long, the grief work is difficult, the pain is forever, yet they keep on moving forward into the light.

There are no medals, no press releases, no television appearances, no accolades, no parades. The deepest, soul-permeating, life changing and amazing courage is found here. As I look at my Compassionate Friends I am awe-struck by the rare and quiet courage that fills this room.

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

TCF National News

Notes on the 41st TCF Conference in St. Louis, July 27 – 29, 2018 – by Clayton Samels and Sharon Daschner

On the afternoon before the TCF National Conference in St. Louis opened, I walked up to the National Blues Museum, returning that evening for a jam session. Listening to people sing and play the blues. I thought who better than bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings to say something like, “I’ve got a right to sing the blues!” It could be sad; it could be angry; it could be all sorts of things. And certainly, the bereaved, like everyone else, have the right to be who we are and feel what we feel.

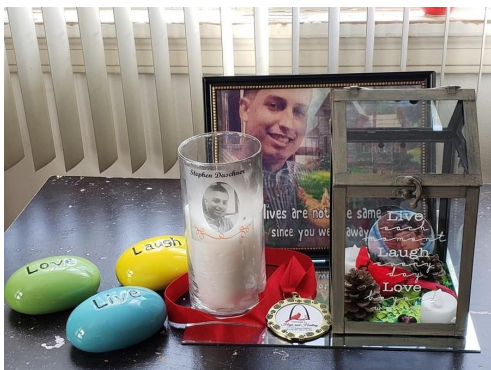
But the Arch was the perfect symbol for the conference, and the tagline, Gateway to Hope and Healing, was appropriate for the thousand TCF folks who attended. The conference was something for us to go through and be transformed when we come out the other side. There is nothing like spending an entire weekend with a thousand people who get it, sharing our unspeakable losses. With over a hundred workshops to choose from, we learned about grief and ways to heal, and we shared in sharing sessions to learn about each other, to laugh and to cry. My favorite workshop was one I walked into by mistake!

On Saturday evening at the dinner and candle lighting, I sat with Sharon Daschner from our chapter as well as a couple of friends I had made from the Nashville chapter at their regional conference last October. And there were new friends to make at the table. Oh, and Sharon won the beautiful centerpiece, a lighted birdhouse on a mirror with a cardinal and two candles inside the little house. And she won a raffle basket, too. And we both got medals for completing the walk. And there were the conference mementos, too.

And then, on Sunday morning, we all walked to remember, stopping along the way with a view of the Arch. For me, the Walk is always the best part of a conference weekend, a true embodiment of We Need Not Walk Alone. This year’s walk was only a mile, and it was pleasantly cloudy out. I walked along with a guy and talked about how symbols and signs mean different things to different people, such as the peace sign on some lady’s purse. And of course, that Arch, and following people’s footsteps to it and through it. You don’t ever get over it. But you do go through and beyond.

And as for walking, kudos to the planning committee for this one! Everything was within walking distance of the Marriott, including lots of very good restaurants. On Saturday, I ate at a great Asian restaurant down the street, and a stranger from Illinois came over to sit and talk about the conference. She said, “Ha, the motto should be ‘We Need Not Eat alone.’” And after the conference closed, I walked down the Arch. No, I didn’t go to the top, but I did touch the Arch, walk around it and walk through it. Then I ate lunch at the Flamingo Bowl, a bowling alley with a big flamingo logo (and folks in Parma know all about pink flamingos).

And then it was back to the Marriott to pack for the flight home. Somehow, I was able to fit all the books I got at the conference into my very small suitcase for the return. Since I’ve been home, I’ve read Grief for Dads, a short but intense book that Ron Gallacher gave us in one of his sharing sessions. And Sharon and I are already thinking about next year’s conference in Philadelphia. We hope you are, too!



Our Chapter News

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

Hi fellow readers, I'm Clayton, your friendly chapter librarian – since last January, anyway. I'm the guy that lugs that big tub of books out for display before each meeting. I've posted a full-page description of how our library works as well as the contents of the library on our closed Facebook group page. If you've been to recent meetings, you might have picked up a paper copy, too. I know I just posted an update to include six books I brought back from the July St. Louis TCF national conference.

Also on the Facebook group site is a great list of recommended books by Ron Gallacher, who shared at the conference. If you don't see what you want to read in our library, use an app like Libby to borrow online from the county library or just order from Amazon or your favorite bookstore.

This Month's Book Recommendations – (I hope to do this each month. Help me out, readers!)

Lori Turchetta Rychlik says, "I'd have to say that Still Right Here, by Suzane Giesemann, is the best book I've read yet. It is written by a medium about four couples who've lost children. They all ways see signs from them and feel their spirits are still with them. This is a real comfort to me."

My pick this month is Grieving Dads – to the Brink and Back, by Kelly Farley with David Dicola, an unvarnished look at male grief as told by one grieving dad and supported by statements of many men interviewed for the book.

What is your personal recommended read? Let me know so we can share with the chapter. And consider donating the book to our library after you've read it.

What Is A Love Gift ?

A love gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but it can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. All local TCF chapters are totally dependent on funds from our families. We DO NOT receive funds from our National Office. Everything we need to operate our local chapter is paid directly from our local resources and our local family contributions. All monetary love gifts are tax deductible.

Thank you to all who contribute and support our chapter. Some people contribute in memory of other's children ... this is a wonderful way for others to say, "I am remembering your child." Other "Gifts of Love" are evident by all the compassionate and giving volunteers we have within our organization.

Love gifts should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends and mailed to our treasurer:

George Mickol, 2914 Dellwood Drive, Parma, OH 44134

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

Angels Among Us

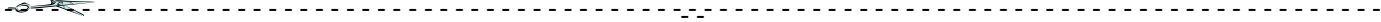
Our Angels are among us
 We see them everyday
 In all the forms that God created...
 They are with us along life's way.
 We see them in the sunrise,
 That brightens and warms our soul.
 We feel them in the summer breeze
 That chases away our cold.
 They are there among the flowers...
 Their sweet scent a memory of love.
 They soar with the eagles,
 As they fly so high above.
 The night will find them in the stars,
 Lighting our path below.
 And even in our dreams,
 Their presence we'll still know.
 As the snow melts with the sun,
 And spring flowers peek through their beds,
 They come on the wings of butterflies,
 And flutter about our heads.
 They are telling us they are with us,
 And will be forever more...
 Until it's time for us to meet again,
 As we pass through heaven's door.

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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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's in a Word?

I do not think that ‘handling’ grief is an accurate concept. I see grief as a force of nature, much like an avalanche or an earthquake or a tornado. That’s hardly the sort of thing human beings ‘handle’ — such a force of nature handles us — and we can at best react to it, do damage control, maybe. There may even be limited ways in which to prepare for the impact of such a force of nature. We can construct buildings that are more earthquake proof, or we can blast overhanging snow masses. We can at least try to escape major injury by finding a safe place in a tornado. But we can hardly call that ‘handling’ the event, can we?

In a similar way, we may be able to do things about surviving tragedy, enduring great emotional disasters, outlasting enormous grief. The first step about preparing for grief is to be honest about it — fact is that grief comes everyone’s way at one time or another and we only THINK that we are helping ourselves if we deny the possibility of grief in our life. Being aware of that possibility might fortify us to a small extent against the absolute devastation which grief can create. Perhaps we can think about help, i.e. to discover in advance a safe place where to survive the tornado of grief. Perhaps we can develop an attitude of acceptance, to lessen the impact of grief’s emotional avalanche. But these are by no means guaranteed safeguards.

If we keep in mind that grief is handling us, instead of expecting to ‘handle’ grief, our chances for positive survival are much better. True, ‘handling’ grief is only a word — yet it can inadvertently convey the wrong idea at the worst possible time. Grief handles us. Grief is the master here, and a difficult master at that.

The first thing we need to learn is to stop fighting — grief only tightens its grip if we try to do battle against our feelings. Once we have learned (grudgingly) to accept and even respect grief, the workload eases a bit. By and by the master lets us do our work without that heavy hand constantly on our heart. We can start to arrange our life schedule, and our reactions, on our own, much like straightening our devastated house after a flood. That is the time, when we find that grief has taken away, or ruined, much of what we had and loved. And that is also the time when we must examine our attitude about grief, again. Do we look to new ways for living? Do we recover some treasures from the devastation? Do we have some things left to go on with? Do we find the strength to feel thankful for having had treasure at least for a while?

To paraphrase Victor Frankel, we are only in charge of one thing: the attitude we bring to the tragedy. And this attitude is not something we just naturally develop over a few days or weeks. Neither can this attitude be fully realized in theory — our attitude about grief emerges in total only during our presence in the reality of grief. Most of us need a few semesters of intensive study and practice in that reality, to give us at least the ability to cope. We could speak about coping with grief, like working with an unreasonable monarch.

What we are really ‘handling’ then, is not our grief, is not the flood, the avalanche, the tornado — what we are handling is ourselves. And the more we do the necessary work, the more we look honestly on the force of nature which is grief — the more we will be able to heal and to go on. And just as the results of a natural disaster can take a long time to disappear, so the results of grief will not become manageable overnight. We must sift through many rooms, many memories, many feelings, until we can say: “This is what is left, I have salvaged some treasure, I have restored rich memories. I have recovered many feelings. But I will always remember this event in my life, it will always be part of me — I have been changed. Grief has handled me.

*Sascha Wagner
TCF Aurora, CO*