



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

September, 2019

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WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

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 11th 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. Don and Joanne Litvin will facilitate.

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

September Anniversary Dates

Baby Boy Buchko (Age 1 day)	Alyssa Louise Miller (Age 2)
Brenda Cole (Age 31)	Eric Justin Obloy (Age 26)
Matthew John Desmarteau (Still Born)	Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)
Zachary Thomas Gott (Age 12)	Nick Rothenbuhler (Age 20)
Adam Timothy Grodzik (Age 17)	Nathan Edward Rychlik (Age 28)
Christian Creed Hein (Age 3)	Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)
Marin C. Kos (Age 36)	Frank Michael Suhar (Age 38)
Jessica Marie Kossin (Age 21)	Dorothy Thomas (Age 59)
Reid Alan McClellan (Age 1)	Dane Woods (Age 15)

Remembering Our Children



Our August 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.

First Meeting

Trinity McCarty, remembering her beloved daughter Maisie McCarty (Age 1 day)

Paulette Prokop, remembering her beloved daughter Cara Rose Prokop (Age 34)

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)

~ Joan Mass ~ In loving memory of Russell Ruprecht (Age 46)

~ Loretta Mulvey ~ In loving memory of Aaron Mulvey (Age 31) and Ryan Mulvey (Age 33)

~ Doreen and Brian Sismour ~ In loving memory of Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

~ Jerry and Angela Suhar ~ In loving memory of Frank Michael Suhar (Age 38)

~ Theresa Vance ~ In memory of Andy Herbcha (Age 59)

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

Newsletter Dedications



Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

4/14/97 - 9/10/11

**ALWAYS LOVED,
ALWAYS MISSED,
FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS,**

Love - Mom , Dad & Andrew



Frank Michael Suhar (Age 38)

**On your 4th anniversary Frankie
I hope you're dancing in the sky!
Love and miss you so much.**

Mom, Dad and Family

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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Autumn

In the fall
 When amber leaves are shed,
 Softly—silently
 Like tears that wait to flow,
 I watch and grieve.
 My heart beats sadly in the fall;
 'Tis then I miss you most of all.

*Lily de Lauder
 TCF, Van Nuys, CA*

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

Sorry if this month's column rambles a bit. Sometimes that happens.

On our chapter Facebook group, I posted an updated Grief Book list by Ron Gallacher, from the TCF Facebook group Reading Your Way through Grief. There are over five hundred books on his list, and it's broken down into categories. Some books are in our chapter library. Some are in your local library, some are available online through various sources. It is not a list of recommended books, just a list of what is out there, so check the reviews, etc before you pick one to read.



I should be reading Once More We Saw Stars, by Jayson Greene for the Reading Your Way Through Grief Facebook group. I tried to borrow it through Libby, but it would be on hold for 15 weeks, so I paid \$1.99 for a pdf version that I received. I'll let you know what I think of the book when I read it. I got sidetracked reading Ann Hood's The Book That Matters Most instead. It's about a book club with that theme for a certain year. Of course, it's fiction, but still . . . And each member of the book club explains why a particular book is so important to them, so you get to hear about a number of important books, not just one. And then, of course, you get to think about what book matters the most to you. I would be hard pressed to name one single book, that's for sure. And a book can mean different things at different times in your life. That's because, in the end, you are the meaning maker. For instance, I read The Life of Pi, not as a grief book, but just as an interesting book, but then I first thought about the tiger in the book as the animal part of man's nature. But, I guess I could interpret that tiger now as my own grief, and the story would then be about how to survive with that all devouring animal in my life and come to some accommodation. It's complicated. I used to think the book that mattered most was Catch-22, by Joseph Heller, a book about the absurdity of life. I would reread it at least once a year, maybe for a span of ten years or so. Ok, so I'm off the subject of The Book That Matters Most. First book mentioned in the novel was From Clare to Here, which I have never read. But it was mentioned that there was a song by that name by Nancy Griffith, which, of course, I just had to listen to. I love Nancy Griffith, and the song is well done. Yeah, I know, another side issue. Well, it's been thirteen years since that grief tiger climbed on board my boat. Early on, I don't think I would have felt comfortable exploring all the little side streams, like that Nancy Griffith song, with the animal on board. But the tiger and I have gotten to know each other rather well over the years.

*A friend is one who knows you as you are . . .
Understands where you've been . . .
Accepts who you've become
And still gently invites you to grow. ~ author unknown*

A Survivor's Alphabet: Empathy

"Where were you when I needed you?" Ever find yourself saying words like that? Ever look for comfort at a point of greatest need and wonder why it doesn't come or help? Family and friends try their best to let us know they care. It never seems enough for just what we need at the critical moment.

What's going on? Family and friends, in expressing their sincere words of comfort and love, are relieving their own anxiety. In their attempts they often bypass our more critical need. It's like two trains passing each other in the night. They meet but quickly go their separate ways.

What we have received is sympathy which, by itself, gives temporary comfort and relief but has little long lasting effect. It may or may not touch the point of hurting with enough impact to relieve. What is better is a sensitivity to hurt where it is and a response to that hurt that mirrors the crisis itself. What is needed is not sympathy but empathy.

Empathy is made up of the following:

Listening. What do you hear when you hear? Isn't it amazing how often we hear but we do not listen. You and I hear the concert while the violinist listens for pitch and tone. We tell a mechanic the engine runs "rough" while he listens and notes that something is wrong with the valves. Developing the skill of listening enables us to be more sensitive to actual need where it occurs. A cry for help may be more, or less, than what we think we hear. Someone is hurting and needs relief, now. Being with that person we listen and are given clues of what to say and do that will bring the greatest relief. It's not for us to set the agenda; the other person in their hurt and pain does.

Understanding. By careful listening it's amazing what we can learn that we only surmised before. We learn that our agenda can be put "on hold" while the hurting person is considered as top priority. We learn that words do not always have the weight we give to them; a touch will do far more. Maybe just being there without thinking that we have to do something helps. Whatever it is, we are there for the other person and they know it; they are given just what they need at that given moment.

Value. This tacit understanding gives strength for building trust. A bond is created whose value will be noted long after the crisis is over. Friendships are developed that are long lasting. New understanding between family members creates a climate of love. Personal self esteem is given a boost which has a value of its own. We understand others and they understand us and a network is established of support and caring.

Empathy is "**LUV**" actively supporting and sustaining to develop strength for times of crisis. It goes beyond in creating long lasting relationships that give personal vitality to each of us.

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Jesse Baker is a retired minister of The United Methodist Church. He and his wife Fay live in Port Orange, FL. They became bereaved parents when their daughter Vera was murdered in November, 1984.

Reprinted from the Heart of Florida Chapter newsletter, May 1999.

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:

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)

People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. ~ Maya Angelou

And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of “self help” were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April’s meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother’s Day and my son’s birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I sat at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child’s story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son’s death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be “cured”. As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

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My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.

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

You Did Not Die

You live in the beautiful wind that blows.
You live in the sound of birds that crow.

You live in the sun that shines so bright.
You live in the peaceful dark at night.

You live in a star I see in the sky.
You live in ocean waves that come in with the tide.

You live in the smell of flowers and grass.
You live in the summer that goes so fast.

You live in my heart that hurts so much.

You did not die, we only lost touch.

*Shari Swirsky
TCF Toronto, Ontario, Canada*