



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, 2020

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WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS?

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

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our

MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

Happy Labor Day



September Monthly Meeting

September 9th 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 “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. Meeting facilitators will be Joanne and Don Litvin. *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.



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
10 - Thomas D. Hayn	26 - David Matthew Knox
10 - Shane Michael Ward	27 - Alyssa Louise Miller
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



First Meeting

Our August meeting was the first for this bereaved mother. It is very difficult to attend a first meeting and we applaud her for having the courage to come. We hope we were of help, and that she will return and work through her grief journey with us.

Ellen Giermann, remembering her beloved son Christopher James Giermann

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)

~ Cheryl and Ed Ondrejch ~ In loving memory of Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)

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

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

*There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept,
things we don't want to know but have to learn,
and people we can't live without but have to let go. ~ author unknown*

Newsletter Dedications



Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)

Always in our thoughts

Love, Mom and Dad



Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)

Miss you more everyday

*Love,
Mom, Dad, Gabby, Andy and Eddie*

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



Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

4/14/97 - 9/10/11

**We miss you more each and every day.
Most of all, we miss the memories we will
never get to have.**

*Forever in Our Hearts,
Mom, Dad and Andrew*

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



Worldwide Candle Lighting Celebration December 13, 2020 *(save the date)*

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

Our chapter is reviewing options for observing this annual event. More information will appear in the October and November newsletters.

Library Notes – by Clayton Samels

I hope this finds you all well. I can't believe that the end of summer is near. I did manage to get to a beach, but kept to social distancing, so I sat about a quarter mile from the water, a good twenty-five yards from anyone else. It was more like being in the middle of the desert than being at the beach, but at least it was out in the fresh air, until, that is, it became just too hot to bear it anymore, so I went back and sat in the car in the air-conditioning to eat a peanut butter sandwich. Still, I guess, it was a pleasant enough experience, especially by 2020 standards.

I read Daring Greatly, by Brené Brown earlier this summer. While not dealing specifically with the topic of grief, the book offered this quote about compassion by Pema Chödrön: Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It is a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared 'humanity.' So I decided to look up something by Pema Chödrön and ended up borrowing her book When Things Fall Apart from the library. While not specifically a book about grief, I figured it would be close enough, right? The book is basically a transcription of talks and lectures on Tibetan Buddhism that she has given over the years, which were then transcribed. I guess for me, reading the book is closure of sorts.

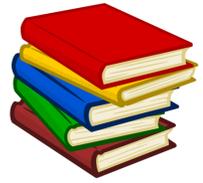


We visited a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Bloomington, Indiana when Robert was attending graduate school at IU in that city. The monastery gave tours, but was unfortunately closed that day, so we just walked around the grounds. I recall walking around an outdoor altar, called a chorten, I think, but later I discovered I had walked around it in the wrong direction. You are supposed to go clockwise (or anticlockwise, I forget), and I went around it anticlockwise (or clockwise, I forget), which caused the universe to get all out of whack. So when Robert died a couple years later, I blamed this incident and my ignorance as having contributed somehow to the convergence of circumstances that came together to cause his death. Yeah, grief and unnecessary guilt sometimes work that way, huh? Well, reading Pema's book has supplied me with lessons about treating myself with compassion and forgiveness, so if I screwed up the universe by walking the wrong way, I'm sorry, but I do forgive myself. I try to remember that now while I am shopping and am going the wrong way up (or down) those one way aisles that are clearly marked on the floor, but, of course, I am looking at the shelves for stuff, not at the floor to find out which way I am supposed to be going. I have enough trouble just remembering to wear my mask inside, but, as I said, I do treat myself to a good measure of compassion about such things. I should write a book and call it The Zen of Grocery Shopping in the Year of the Plague.

(continued on following page)



Library Notes – by Clayton Samels (continued from preceding page)



I also managed to get through The Pioneers by David McCullough, an account of the early settlement of Ohio, more specifically, Marietta, Ohio. Of the early hardships the settlers encountered was an epidemic in 1822-23 that, as the book explains, left no family untouched. So while not specifically a book about grief, there is that. Also, if you want a book with some local history to it, this is a good choice.

Then, I read the three novels by Mary Renault about Alexander the Great. Ok, those books were some heavy reading, especially the third book of the series, called Funeral Games. That's the one after Alexander's death, where everybody poisons everybody else to try to become the great king of the empire. I think it's fitting reading during an election year.

I do have a more grief related book ready to read, Dear Edward: A Novel by Ann Napolitano, which I purchased at a great price in a Kindle edition from Amazon, so I hope to be able to report on that in the next column.

And, finally, did get out and see the two deer in the fenced in area in front of our building. I found that there are actually three, not two, so that was a pleasant surprise. But I didn't get to feed the ducks and geese in the pond in the park nearby close to the big Parma sign. Stay safe; stay well.

Wounded Heart

"Your broken heart requires at least as much care as a broken bone. With proper care you can be confident that you will heal. The same powerful forces that mend a broken bone will heal your emotional pain, but a wounded heart needs time and proper care to heal."

~Harold Bloomfield, MD~

If someone fell and broke a leg, people would rush to their aid. They wouldn't stop to even think about it. Yet, when it's our hearts that are broken, few rush to our aid and even fewer understand. At first, we receive the cards and phone calls wishing us well and telling us "if there's anything I can do"...but they soon taper off to a trickle. Then we begin to hear that we must 'get on with our life,' 'we can't let it get us down,' and we're told just how soon we should be 'back to normal'... we're given a deadline of sorts. When we don't follow the acceptable standards for healing, we are thought to 'need help'...the professional kind... and we're told that we are 'in denial'. These same people, who seem to have all of the answers, not only have never experienced the loss of a child but also tend to not want to get too involved...too close to our pain. They would rather stand off to the side until we're back to our old selves...whatever that is! They're uncomfortable when we speak of why our hearts are broken and they don't mention it for fear of reminding us of how our hearts broke in the first place... as if we could ever forget. When they ask us, "How are you"...it's more a greeting than a question. They don't want to hear how we ache inside, how lonely and empty we feel, how desolate we feel. Why...because they can't fix it. They can't make us whole again. And unlike a broken bone that's healed, we will never be as good as new. We will forever be missing a part of what made us the person that we once were. When our child died, so did a part of our heart and where that piece was, now there is nothing...only a gaping hole that nothing and no one can ever fill. Unlike a broken bone, we will not mend in a few weeks...in fact, we will never fully mend. We learn to live without that piece of our hearts...to live with our loss, to survive...one day at a time!

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Loving Memory of My Angels...Michelle, Jerry & Danny
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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*

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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Rosebush Full of Blooms

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms: it receives the same amounts of food and water from the earth, of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside It has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its petals and fragrance and color for the world to see.

But for some reason, once in a while, a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault, nor the fault of the rose. So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, the best efforts of the gardener, the best possibilities for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its growth for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss, not for the loss of a promising rosebud, whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment, in the midst of our grieving, we can remember the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that was shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

*Ernestine Clark
TCF, Oklahoma City, OK*

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)

We quickly find there are no words to describe the experience of losing a child. For those who have not lost a child, no explanation will do. For those who have, no explanation is necessary. ~ Mary Lingle

Share the Pain

Guest Writer - Bill Chadwick

I was watching the news tonight when they announced that the 27 year old son of Bill Cosby had been murdered today. I felt that now familiar sickening in my gut again...as one more young person beat us adults to the grave. Such a senseless waste...and such pain.

They read a statement from Mr. and Mrs. Cosby which said in part "..., this is a tragedy that is very difficult to share with anyone." The death of a loved one is such a personal thing...a direct wound to the heart. His statement is so full of truth. In fact, it may be impossible to share the loss completely with anyone...but I think we have to try.

When my 21-year-old son Michael was killed three years ago by a drunk driver, the pain was so intense...so incredibly powerful...that I just didn't think I would survive. It is a miracle that I ever did. I remember feeling so alone...so completely alone. People were hovering around me day and night...yet I felt so far away from them. My pain was a very personal pain...one I knew they could never comprehend. I was right I think...they didn't or couldn't understand. It was that realization which caused me to seek out someone...anyone...who did understand. Was it a coincidence that I had recently signed on to the Internet?

I found a place on the Internet called "alt.support.grief." It's one of the Usenet Newsgroups. When I arrived, there were only a few "posts" there, but enough that I could sense the mood of the group. I was totally new to the Net...and had never posted to a Newsgroup before. It took a lot of courage...but I mustered enough to type: "My name is Bill...and my 21 year old son Michael was killed in a car crash on October 23, 1993. My life has been forever changed."

I have been typing that same message now for over three years...and it is still true today. Michael's life...and his death...forever changed me. But...that day...when I shared my pain for the first time on ASG...my life changed even more. I felt some relief almost immediately...even before people had responded. As the responses to my message (back then, only a couple!) began to get posted...my heart warmed. I had no way of knowing then just how important these precious people would be to me. In the end...they literally saved my life.

Something powerful happens when we write about our grief and share it. Even before it is shared...just the writing of it seems to help. I think it helps to move us out of our denial. Somehow, seeing my own words in print helped me to center on the reality of Michael's death. But if writing it is helpful...sharing it is miraculous!! As I always say on ASG..."A miracle happens when we share our pain here. I don't know why it works...but it does!"

I remember hearing some years ago about an experiment conducted at an eastern university. It seems they lined up 50 barefooted students and had them come one at a time and place one bare foot into a bucket of ice. They timed each student to see how long he could keep his foot in the bucket before the pain overwhelmed him. After each student was clocked, they lined them up again...this time with a partner to stand next to them...holding their hand. On average, each student was able to keep their foot in the bucket twice as long as when they were alone!

The obvious conclusion that the scientist drew from this experiment was that somehow the students could endure more pain when they were not alone. I think perhaps the scientist may have missed the most important factor in the formula. You see...the student holding the participant's hand...had his foot in the bucket only minutes before. He knew what it felt like!!

Talking to a therapist...writing in a journal...sharing with a relative...all of these are positive ways to express our feelings of grief. But...there is something very special...very powerful...about sharing with someone who has been down the path you are walking. Find them at a Hospice grief group...at "The Compassionate Friends"...or right here on the Internet...just find them. And once you have found them...don't let them go until you have told them EVERYTHING! It will be a big favor you are doing for yourself...and an even greater favor you will be doing for them!

Love & Peace, Bill

This article originally appeared on the Website of TLC Group < <http://fohnix.metronet.com/~tlc/> >, which specializes in publications for transition, loss and change. *TLC Group grants anyone the right to use this information without compensation so long as the copy is not used for profit or as training materials in a profit making activity such as workshops, lectures, and seminars, and so long as this paragraph is retained in its entirety.*

A Flicker In The Distance

In this time of grief,
When the darkness is so great,
And your heart is aching so,
You feel that it may break.

Remember that in this darkness
There is a candle's light
A flicker in the distance
Small but intensely bright.

That tiny little glow
That seems so far away
Will grow brighter and brighter
With each passing day.

Time does not heal, as they say,
But it tends to numb
The ache we feel inside our heart
When that darkness comes.

In time your heart will feel lighter
And the memories won't bring such pain
The tears won't flow as often
And you will find laughter again.

So keep you eye on that distant glow
To see how far you came...
Because at the end of the darkness
That flicker becomes a flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
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I Am Wearing A Pair of Shoes

I am wearing a pair of shoes. They are ugly shoes, uncomfortable shoes. I hate my shoes. Each day I wear them, and each day I wish I had another pair. Some days my shoes hurt so bad that I do not think I can take another step. Yet, I continue to wear them. I get funny looks wearing these shoes, they are looks of sympathy. I can tell in others eyes that they are glad they are my shoes and not theirs. They never talk about my shoes. To learn how awful my shoes are might make them uncomfortable. To truly understand these shoes you must walk in them. But, once you put them on, you can never take them off. I now realize that I am not the only one who wears these shoes. There are many pairs in this world. Some women are like me and ache daily as they try and walk in them. Some have learned how to walk in them so they don't hurt quite as much. Some have worn the shoes so long that days will go by before they think about how much they hurt. No woman deserves to wear these shoes. Yet, because of these shoes I am a stronger woman. These shoes have given me the strength to face anything. They have made me who I am. I will forever walk in the shoes of a woman who has lost a child.

~Author Unknown