



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, 2017

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 14th at 7:00pm: The discussion theme will be "How do you handle your down days?" As always you can raise any concerns or issues you feel the group might be able to help with. Clayton Samels and Bill Luff 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	23 - Brian Joseph Kochmit
5 - Susan Elaine Chorich	23 - Shane Michael Wiech
6 - Aaron Mulvey	25 - Abigail Nicole Fenstermaker
7 - Robert C. Higgins	25 - Timothy William Hautz
8 - Frank Michael Suhar	26 - David Matthew Knox
10 - Thomas D. Hayn	27 - Andrea Cortes
12 - Donald A. Litvin, Jr.	27 - Alyssa Louise Miller
13 - Matthew John Desmarteau	29 - Nicole D. Anzalone
16 - Todd Allan Rael	29 - Christopher James Brennan
17 - Anthony Lee Higgins	30 - James A. Jarosz
23 - Baby Boy Buchko	

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)	Brian D. Oldenburgh (Age 18)
Jason Thomas Haberman (Age 31)	Renee Grace Ondrejch (Age 18)
Larissa Ann Johnson (Age 35)	Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)
Ella Grace Kepchum (Age 2)	Frank Michael Suhar (Age 38)
Amy Angel Marilyn Lee (Age 40)	Dane Woods (Age 15)

Remembering Our Children



The August meeting was the first for these bereaved parents. 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

Audrey and Ron Dawson, remembering their beloved son Anthony James Dawson (Age 22)

Beverly Hogan, remembering her beloved son Kadeem Von Hogan (Age 23)

Annie Jakyma, remembering her beloved son Luke Thomas Kurylak (Age 23)

Mary Kmiotek, remembering her beloved daughter Stephanie Kmiotek (Age 18)

Marji Lightbody and Edward Williams, remembering their beloved son Mitchell Ryan Williams (Age 18)

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)

~ Joyce and Todd Gates ~ In loving memory of Rob R. Gates, Jr. (Age 24)

~ Don and Joanne Litvin ~ In loving memory of Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)

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

~ David Oldenburgh ~ In loving memory of Brian D. Oldenburgh (Age 18)

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

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.

~ from *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis

Newsletter Dedications



Donald A. Litvin, Jr. (Age 13)

Forever young
Love, Mom and Dad



Alex B. Sismour (Age 14)

**Our last picture of you taken 9/8/11.
Hard to believe that it has been 6 years
since we last hugged you. It feels like forever,
although the day you left us, we remember
as if it were yesterday.
We hope you are chasing your dreams
up there and that you can see how much you're loved.**

*Love you and missing you always,
Mom, Dad and Andrew
RIP 9/10/11*

Autumn Memories

My son and I always enjoyed the autumn season. Yes, when we lived in the cold zone, we knew that winter's winds and snows were on the way. But, yet, we took time to enjoy the beautiful array of colors that nature gave us as a final salute to the growing season.

Todd and I raked leaves in the autumn. I had purchased a home in a town on the Mississippi River bluffs; the home had been built in the 1860s and I am sure some of the trees were well over 50 years old. The leaves would fall and we would rake. We made a game of it. Sometimes his best friend, Allen, would come over and help. The boys would jump into the piles and laugh with delight. We'd create a big pile and rake it to the concrete so that it could be burned. I can still see Todd laughing and dancing around that fire. His pure childhood joy was contagious.

Todd and I loved to look at the changing leaves along the bluffs of the river. We would drive on weekends and find the best view. Then we'd park and marvel at nature's wonder. The big bluffs, the turning leaves, the eagles soaring above us. Ducks flying south....even the occasional group of geese overhead...honking, honking as they journeyed to a warmer climate.

The light is different in the autumn...it's diffused somehow. It's different than the light in any other season. Autumn sun was our favorite light. It seemed less harsh, more forgiving, gentler in a strange sort of way. That was another time and another place.

Now in the autumn I remember all the special times I shared with my child. Looking at leaves, collecting leaves, raking leaves.....we did this together, just the two of us. "Mom, when are we going to go look at leaves?" Todd would ask. That was my cue to load up some soft drinks and sandwiches and head out on the first sunny Saturday. We'd repeat this ritual until the leaves had all fallen and it was time to rake.

When we moved to the Houston area, Todd was 12, and we talked about the seasons. He told me about his great memories of leaves and drives and time together. He said he would miss autumn with me. That made me feel good. These were memories that we shared, of a time when it was just Todd and me for those special moments. Looking back, I am so glad that I spent the time to make memories. I thought I was making memories for my child, but in fact, I was making memories for us both. And now those memories are my memories.....good memories....memories that I will cherish always.

Here it is autumn again. Soon Todd will be gone five years. The memories are flooding back: the first day of each school each year, the changes as he grew to become a man. High school, college, graduate school....all began in the autumn. Autumn marks the beginning of many good memories for me. I listen as the school bus stops in front of our house to pick up today's children. Once in a while I go to the door and watch them load up, chatting with each other as they take their seats. I think of my 12 year old son, getting on that bus in front of our home for the first time: the first day of school in Houston. And for a moment, just a fleeting moment, I think I can see him sitting at a window seat, waving at me. Waving goodbye.

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

TCF National News

No One is Alone – Notes from the National TCF Conference in Orlando, July 2017

By Clayton Samels

The Orlando conference marks the eighth national (one international) TCF Conference that I have attended since the death of my son Robert in 2006. Every conference is unique, with its own set of memories: atmosphere, speakers, workshops, special events, so it's difficult to choose one as the best. But the Orlando conference, held in the Hilton Bonnet Creek, July 28-30, 2017, was one that was especially moving for me on many levels.

The keynote speech by Pastor Jarvis Wash was very dynamic and inspiring

I heard The Butterfly Song by TCF's own Madam Butterfly, BJ Jensen. I got a chuckle out of her rap song to the melody of Ode to Joy, and I got a great picture of her spreading her wings out in the hall.

I saw the American premiere of the movie *A Love that Never Dies*, by Jimmy Edmonds and Jane Harris. Eighty hours of video condensed into ninety minutes of very powerful presentations of real grief in real people. The movie tells it like it is.

I attended several workshops and especially liked the one called Write Your Heart Out by Neal Raisman and brought his honest and forthright book *Standing on One Foot home*, where I read it with much interest. We share an academic background, and it's been about twelve years since each of us lost our sons. The book tells it like it is, too. I loaned it to a new chapter member and asked that he put it in our chapter library when he finishes it.

The moment that brought me to tears was the performance by Jeralyn Glass of *No One is Alone*, from her CD *Forever Love*. The song is, of course, from the Musical *Into the Woods*. I recall when we saw a local production of that musical when Robert was in high school. He was already bitten by the music bug by then. Later, he ended up at IU Bloomington working on his PhD (so, by then, he was off and

well on his way into the woods of adult life), with an ultimate goal of singing at the Met, so hearing Jeralyn, someone with a twenty year career in opera, at the conference certainly struck a chord with me. And then, when Robert and his four friends crashed in that small plane back in 2006, they did so into a small woods near the airport they were heading toward, and so they died together, not alone. We all know that songs can affect us on many levels at once. You can always go on YouTube to listen to all sorts of versions of the song, but you can also get Jeralyn's CD and listen to her version, which has those nice crystal bowls. Watch her on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9-8ZU04brA>

Finally, of course, the motto of TCF is *You Need Not Walk Alone*, which certainly dovetails nicely with *No One is Alone*. Which is always good to remember as you walk into your own woods of grief.



Our Chapter News

Invitation to a Very Special Event



The Lake County TCF Chapter has invited members of our chapter to a very special event at 2:00pm on Sunday, September 17th.

The Lake County chapter has created a Children's Memorial Butterfly Garden in Willowick, which is very meaningful to chapter members and also to the community. The Lake County chapter has extended an invitation to our chapter to join them at their annual Children's Memorial Butterfly Garden Dedication celebration at 2:00pm on September 17th. The celebration will include the dedication of new butterflies added to the garden during the past year, a live butterfly release and entertainment, with desserts and coffee afterwards.

The Children's Memorial Butterfly Garden is located at Manry Park, 30100 Arnold Drive, Willowick.

This is a wonderful way to support our sister TCF chapter, and to learn about the butterfly garden. Perhaps our chapter could explore creating a similar children's memorial in our area!

Here is a link to the Facebook page for the Children's Memorial Butterfly Garden:

[Lake County Butterfly Garden](#)

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

When You Wish Upon A Star

Every time I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." Those wishes, unfortunately, can never come true. Another wish I hear is "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew all of the "crazy" grief reactions that I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent," but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent."
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are a terrible times for us. I wish you would tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us re-examine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches, and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self," you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me - - maybe you'll still like me.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us, or we can sit and wait, I believe our children would want us to help the world understand.

*Elaine Grier
TCF Atlanta, GA*

Where Are You Now?

where are you now
 but in my heart
 your voice clear in my mind
 I know we're never far apart
 mind to mind
 heart to heart
 and, maybe, if I'm fortunate,
 soul to soul
 we connect
 you, watching over me
 me, so unaware
 but, oh, to actually see you
 how you've grown and changed
 still, oh, to embrace you
 feeling your strength and youth
 breathing in your life
 now held only within
 mind's eye
 heart of hearts
 and lonely soul

Victor Montemurro
TCF Brookhaven in Medford, NY

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)