

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month in the American Builders & Contractors (ABC) Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210. Park and enter at the rear of the building.

We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

## February 10 Meeting:

We all have things that are precious to us, that either belonged to or remind us of our beloved children. At this month's meeting, we invite you to bring any one thing that can be shared very briefly with the rest of the group. This memento can be something that your child treasured, or something that simply reminds you that your child lived and was loved, even if life was very short (a footprint, baby blanket, hospital bracelet, etc.)

Please join us February 10 as we share sweet remembrances of our dear children. Of course, we encourage grandparents and siblings to participate as well.

Small sharing groups will follow this program.



*When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart—and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.*

*Kalil Gibran  
The Prophet*

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We need not walk alone.

### Phone Friends

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can't reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

- Accidental Death** .....Mike and Paula Childers  
615-646-1333
- AIDS**.....Joyce Soward  
615-754-5210
- Illness**.....David and Peggy Gibson  
615-356-1351
- Infant**.....Jayne Head  
615-264-8184
- SIDS**.....Kris Thompson  
931-486-9088
- Suicide**.....Ron Henson  
615-789-3613
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley  
615-237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle  
615-712-3245

*We remember our children with love and gratitude. We miss their faces,  
their voices and their smiles. And we do not forget--*



*In the month of their births—*

<p><b>Brock Wyatt Blick</b> February 8 Son of Mark and Jeri Kay Blick Grandson of Jerry and Bonnie Buckner</p>	<p><b>Elizabeth Osborn Cheek</b> February 8 Daughter of Ross and Libby Cheek</p>	<p><b>Austin Chadwell Fitzhugh</b> February 28 Son of Chad and Gina Fitzhugh</p>	<p><b>Richard Edward Smotherman, III (Rick)</b> February 27 Son of Sandra Smotherman</p>
<p><b>Marcus Dean Lynn Brown</b> February 27 Son of Ricky Brown and Deanna Brown</p>	<p><b>Buck Allen Dawson</b> February 6 Son of Bob and Genevia Graham</p>	<p><b>Tony Scott</b> February 18 Son of Eldon and Margi Scott</p>	<p><b>Heather Ann Willis</b> February 26 Daughter of Tom and Margaret Loose</p>
	<p><b>Edward Elbersen</b> February 28 Son of Harry and Winnie Elbersen</p>	<p><b>William John Shelburne (Will)</b> February 12 Son of Terry and Laura Shelburne Brother of Claire Aven Shelburne</p>	

*And in the month of their deaths—*

<p><b>Glenn Thomas Allen, Jr. (Tommy)</b> February 7 Son of Ann McKee and Stepson of Wilson McKee</p>	<p><b>Bonita Brown (Nee Nee)</b> February 3 Daughter of Elaine Frey</p>	<p><b>Carvelle Conley, Jr.</b> February 16 Grandson of Carol Thomas</p>	<p><b>Edward Elbersen</b> February 28 Son of Harry and Winnie Elbersen</p>
<p><b>Bonnie Elizabeth Brandon</b> February 10 Daughter of Ricky and Lisa Wales</p>	<p><b>Charles Michael Brown (Charlie)</b> February 7 Son of Dan and June Brown Brother of Katherine Brown</p>	<p><b>“Princess” Kelsee Nicole Corbitt</b> February 7 Granddaughter of Cheryl Carney</p>	<p><b>Austin Chadwell Fitzhugh</b> February 13 Son of Chad and Gina Fitzhugh</p>
<p><b>Taylor Christian Brewer</b> February 11 Son of Justin and Tracy Brewer Grandson of Don and Sherry Eakes and Penny Waters</p>	<p><b>Marcus Dean Lynn Brown</b> February 27 Son of Ricky Brown and Deanna Brown</p>	<p><b>Geoffrey Edward deZevallos</b> February 17 Son of George and Anne deZevallos</p>	<p><b>Arianna Marie Michell</b> February 19 Daughter of Christopher Mitchell and Heather Evans Granddaughter of Frank and Brenda L. Nelson</p>
			<p><b>Greg Alan Swayze</b> February 10 Son of Michael Swayze and Carole Swayze</p>



*Yesterday is experience.  
Tomorrow is hope.  
Today is getting from one to the other  
as best we can.*

John M. Henry



## GIFTS OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

We are deeply grateful for the voluntary gifts of love that make it possible for The Compassionate Friends to offer comfort to those families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

*Keith and Meryl Craft  
In loving memory of  
their daughter,  
Stacy Leigh Kraft*

*Kevin and Molly Bishop  
In loving memory of  
their son,  
Daniel Bowen Bishop*

*Barbara Davies  
Through Nationwide  
workplace giving program  
In loving memory of her stepsons,  
Roy James Davies and  
Taylor Davies  
Sons of Roy Davies  
Danny and Sherri Garcia  
In loving memory of  
their son, Austin Garcia*

*Shirley Rich Brinegar  
In loving memory of  
her son,  
Bert Rich  
  
Herb and Susan Gould  
In loving memory of  
their son,  
Stephen Christopher Gould*

*A donation has been received from the Kroger Plus Community Rewards Program: To create an account to benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click on "Community Rewards"; then follow the instructions on that page. After that, all you need to do is shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to TCF. It's an easy way to support your chapter.*

*Each month, Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family assemble, label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of her son, Marcus Dean Brown. We appreciate so much these people and their generosity to all of us.*

### **A Message from Our New Chapter Leaders—**

*Thank you for the opportunity to serve as leaders in the Nashville Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. We serve in memory of Heidi and Princess Kelsee and know that they proudly encourage us from afar.*

*It is truly our privilege to "pay it forward." The guidance, care and love shown to us in the early days of our grief saved us. We are grateful to the people who greeted us and helped us grieve when we first walked through those doors.*

*Thank you to the Steering Committee and the previous leadership for their strong commitment to this organization. We look forward to their guidance and wisdom as we plan for 2019 and 2020. We know it takes many hands to run a successful chapter.*

*We need not walk alone.*

*Kris Foust and Cheryl Carney*

## Writing the Heartache

The first year after the death of a child is like having the worst noise possible running through your head each day and night. There is no way to turn the horrendous sounds off because there is no off button. I wrote through that noise. I wrote from the heavy bag of emotions bereaved parents and siblings must carry—anger, guilt, sorrow, and confusion, all the “what ifs” and “how comes” and “whys.”

I wrote of longing for a blond-haired boy with blue eyes whose laughter brightened hospital rooms. A quiet spot under weeping willows at a local park is where I carried my pen, journal, and pain. As I wrote over the course of many months, I was, although I didn’t realize it at the time, providing therapy for myself. Grammar didn’t matter; penmanship went out the window. These aren’t a concern when you are writing to survive.

Some days when the weather did not permit a trip to the park and my body and mind harbored excruciating pain, I shut myself in a room, away from my other children and husband. I’d grab my journal and let the experiences of the day and my feelings freely emerge onto each white page. Grammar didn’t matter; penmanship went out the window. These aren’t a concern when you are writing to survive.

Writing the heartache, complete and honest, is a way of healing. Our cry is, “Help me with this pain!” We find ourselves lamenting as King David did in Psalm 13:2, “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” David wrote many of his psalms starting with anger and agony and, gradually, ending with hope.

Writing can do that for us. We enter into our devastation, get a good grip on what our struggles are, and something about seeing them on paper causes us to realize the pain is not only within us anymore. It is shared, even if only on a sheet of notebook paper. It is documented, and the more we write, the better we are able to understand and deal with our intense sorrow.

Some people think only the creative types write, when in reality, writing through the pain is available to anyone who has suffered the loss of someone close. “I don’t have the time,” many say. “What will I write?” others wonder. The blank page scares some because they think they have to fill it with something profound.

But just writing a memory of your child or a few lines about how you felt after he died is a notable start. If we think of writing as a private endeavor and an effective tool, not a paper to be graded by a high school English teacher, we will conquer

many of the doubts about our ability. In time, we will see that writing helps us become better in tune with our feelings and thoughts. It clarifies our lives and gives us understanding.

Other reasons to take the time to write are:

- To experience personal growth.
- To leave a legacy or a keepsake so that there will be recordings of what and who our child was.
- To demonstrate a way of cherishing our child.
- To feel a connection to our child as we remember the things we shared here on earth.

We also are honoring our grief, our pain, and what has happened to us. We are validating its existence. As studies have shown, writing is healthy for our minds and bodies.

Professor James Pennebaker claims that writing actually helps the physical body when the writer is able to open up, by sharing deep feelings on paper over a period of time. In his study, half of a group of students at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, wrote their heartfelt thoughts and feelings about a stressful event from their lives; the other half wrote about superficial topics. Each group wrote for 20 minutes a day, for four consecutive days. Before and immediately after writing, blood pressure and heart rates were tested and a galvanic skin response was done. Six weeks later, the students had their blood tested again.

The group that had written about trivial topics showed no sign of changes. But the group that had poured their pain onto paper, claimed writing had actually calmed them. Their skin was drier after writing and both heart rate and blood pressure had decreased. Their blood work even showed an increase in lymphocytes, the white blood cells that work to keep the immune system healthy.

Writing through the heartache of losing a child is some of the best therapy I have found on this journey. I didn’t know how helpful it was, I just knew I needed to organize my thoughts and get them on paper. Now, four years since my 4-year-old son Daniel’s death, I see that when all the evidence is presented, there is no reason not to write. It causes dim skies to light up when not only the pain, but also the love and cherished memories, are recorded.

Alice J. Wisler  
In Memory of my son, Daniel  
Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of  
The Compassionate Friends  
Copyright 2001

*Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world.  
So long as you can sweeten another’s pain, life is not in vain.*

Helen Keller

## A Valentine for Mom

As we grow older, we find that the simple reflections of our children are often the best memories we have. One such memory most mothers have is a valentine.....maybe many valentines. These special valentines were made by our children just for us. They were made when mom was the most important person in their world.

Some of us have kept each little memento of our child's years....from the first little hand plaque to the handmade gifts and cards to the special gifts that our children purchased with their own money. Each one is a part of our child, a part of us and a part of our shared history.

My first valentine from my child was a handmade red construction paper heart glued to heart shaped white lace paper... On it he had written "Happy Valentine's Day to my MOM. I love you. Todd." Shyly he asked if I liked it. I told him I loved it, and that his valentine was the most beautiful valentine a mother could receive. It is a treasure I have always kept. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

In my office I have a gift that Todd bought me five years ago. All grown up now with an MBA, bright future, important corporate job, family of four children, a beautiful new home, and major responsibilities, precious little time was available for finding the perfect gift for his mom. His life was busy; his free time was limited, but a something special caught his eye and he thought about me. He decided to buy it. A few weeks later, he gave me a brightly wrapped package containing a beautiful plate picturing a Sioux Indian princess. "She's beautiful, just beautiful", I told him. "Do you really like it?" he asked. The detail, the essence of her heritage and her

outlook were captured perfectly. I told him, "I love it, Todd I'll keep her in the office so I can see her every day. I think she is beautiful." And she is in my office today, another treasure I will always keep. "I just wanted to be sure," he whispered.

Much has happened since my three year old son gave me that handmade valentine and my adult son gave me that special gift. The years have raced by; my son has been dead for over two years. And so this month I will open another special gift that my son bought me when he was still in college: my cedar chest. I'd always wanted a cedar chest for the special keepsakes marking our lives. That cedar chest contains pictures, cards, handmade gifts and other things that only a mother could hold in her hands while watching the movies play in her head. There are many movies in that cedar chest, but only I can see them. That is the beauty of memories.

Each of us has our memories of our child. Whether our child was 5 days old or 55 years old, we have special memories that are as much a part of us as our faces. Valentine's Day was always a special day for our family. We exchanged valentines and sometimes gave a special gift.

This Valentine's Day I will send my son a special handwritten valentine, carried on the wind to the cosmos. The message will be simple. "Happy Valentine's Day to my SON, Todd. I love you. Your Mom."



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

## A Valentine's Day Wish

How I wish I could bring our children back to us for Valentine's Day—24 hours we could spend telling our children of our love.

But, alas, we are doomed to spend another Valentine's Day without our beloved children. Others who have not lost a child, tend to take for granted these special days. A card that says "I love you, Mom and Dad" should be carefully folded and saved in a special place. All too many parents consider these cards to be renewable commodities. There's no need to save this one—"we'll always get another one next year."

For many of us, next year came and there was no card. Tears of sadness replaced tears of joy on this special day. But for many of us the memories remain of those Valentine's Days gone by. Because our child's love remains with us, our child will never truly be gone.

This year on Valentine's Day, let us shed tears of joy that we were given even a short time with our child—for this, no matter how short, can never be taken from us.

Wayne Loder  
TCF Lakes Area, MI



## Our Child's Birthday

Many bereaved parents begin to have trouble as the time of their child's birthday grows near. Even those whose child has died a number of years ago. The ache that is in their heart is always there and the yearning for their child is never more strong than around the time of their child's birth. The greatest gift you could give to a parent who has lost a child is to listen intently as they reminisce and share memories of their child. Call a special friend who has lost a child on that child's birthday and encourage them to talk about him or her. Or better yet, invite your friend to coffee or lunch so you can look into their eyes and they can feel your compassion and empathy. Many parents relish the opportunity to share pictures of their child with others. If your friend likes doing this, ask that they bring photos, a scrapbook or mementos of their child. It will help to spark fond memories of a happier time. Make your list ahead of time. Ask your friend questions in order to draw them out such as; do you remember how you felt when you were anticipating the birth of your child? How did you feel when they were born? How did you come to pick your child's name? What was your child like as a baby? How old was your child when they took their first step? What was their first word? Do you remember your child's first day at school? What was their favorite color? What was their personality like? Did your child take after someone in your family? Did

your child have a beloved pet? Did your child enjoy a special hobby or activity? Do you have any stories to recant about a memorable family vacation or gathering? What was their favorite holiday? Did your child have a favorite book, song or movie? Do you remember any heartwarming or funny stories about your child? What was your child's personality like? The list could go on and on. Just stop and think about it for a moment. You can also make your own list and give it to a trusted family member or confidant to ask you when it's time for your child's birthday. The point is to draw the parent out. Try to get your friend to remember the beautiful sweet story that was their child's life and not to focus only on their passing. Once they get started they will recall wonderful things that were once forgotten. A child's death is only a small moment of time in their short lives. Remembering a child's life in this way can be a very cathartic and healing experience for a parent whose child has died. As bereaved parents, we know all too well that most of the people in our lives do not want us to speak of our child. I can't think of a better gift to give to another parent who is like we are than to talk about, honor and celebrate the life of their child.

Janet G. Reyes  
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

### February

*Let this cool and  
gentle  
month of the heart  
remind you  
not only of lost  
treasure,  
but also of riches  
(past and present)  
in your life.*

Sascha Wagner

### Valentine's Day

*Did you know?  
When we truly listen  
to each other,  
we are saying  
~~I love you~~*

Sascha Wagner

### Griefscape

*Shadows play with the light here  
And no matter the age gone  
Our arms ache  
Wishing to cradle our child.*

*This land we now inhabit is  
Vast empty plain  
Barrenness of the poles  
Harshness of deserts.*

*Grief rules  
Taking all color with it  
Leaving us bruised and battered  
Lost hopes and dreams  
Dark skies.*

Melissa Anne Schroeter  
TCF Rockland County, NY



## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

### **Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, we pay to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay again to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

### **The “Children Remembered” Listings**

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the We Remember Them list on pages 2 and 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net, We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

### **We Need Your Help**

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child's name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. Our outreach chairperson will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.

### **The Birthday Table**

In the month of your child's birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child's favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you'd like to bring. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth and for us to become better acquainted.



## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents**

For general information about Grief Support Services and groups at Alive Hospice, please call the main number: [615 963-4732](tel:6159634732) or email [GriefSupportIntake@alivehospice.org](mailto:GriefSupportIntake@alivehospice.org). Katherine Reynolds is a grief counselor for children and their families.

### **Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization for parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. They meet at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the Administrative Board Room on the first floor at Tri-Star Centennial Women's and Children's Hospital, 2221 Murphy Avenue in Nashville. The meetings are “open” and free. You can drop by as often as you like. The website is [sharingmiddletn.org](http://sharingmiddletn.org). Their informative brochure is found under “Contact Us.”

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call 615 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at [TSPN.org](http://TSPN.org), and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

### **TCF Website —A Treasure for You**

When you log onto the TCF Web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) you will find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter Web sites and numerous other resources. Check it out.

# *The Compassionate Friends*

P.O. Box 50833

Nashville, TN 37205



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**February 2019**

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## *Wish You Were Here*

*You'd be nineteen if you were here  
But why you're gone still isn't clear.  
Your things are still all in your room  
As if you'd be returning soon.  
Spongebob waits there by the door.  
Your shoes are still there on the floor.*

*Your friends are all young women now.  
They're working jobs or college bound.  
Sometimes we see them and they say  
We miss her so, wish she had stayed.*

*Your boyfriend's in the Army too  
And by the way, he still loves you.  
You thought his love was not so true  
And that some other girl he'd choose.  
But near two years have passed on by  
Still to your grave he goes to cry.*



*Your niece and nephews miss you too,  
And talk of the things you used to do.  
Your Mother's going to be alright  
And doesn't cry so much at night.  
She puts the flowers on your grave,  
And scrapbook pictures tries to save.*

*And me, I'm still the same old Dad,  
The same old routine like I had.  
I work real hard to make a way  
To pay some bills and pass the day.*

*I'm not as funny as before  
My world's not happy anymore.  
I don't let on the pain I feel  
But deep inside the hurt is real.*

*Time passes by year after year,  
Life goes on with seldom a tear.  
One wish I have, a wish so clear  
My wish most of all, I wish you were here.*

Steve Tutt  
TCF Tyler, TX