

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://www.tcfnashville.org)

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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 HCA building on Park Plaza just north of Centennial Park off of 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, North. Inside, you will see our sign and someone will greet you. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

## September 11 Meeting Program: Speaker Gene Skaggs

In his desire to grant his son's wish to keep him alive by living a life of honor, Gene shares information that will be extremely valuable to other grieving parents and to those who are affected by such loss. Gene Skaggs has a private counseling practice, is a certified PSYCH-K facilitator, has written four books about *A Course in Miracles*, and a fifth book as the result of the death of his youngest son Anderson in August of 2009 at the age of 22. Join us to hear Gene Skaggs. Our regular sharing groups will follow.



*Save the Date: Annual Picnic September 24!*

Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic at Fannie Mae Dees Park is a wonderful time to spend together with our families.

Details on Page 5

### 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.

<b>Accidental Death</b> .....	Mike and Paula Childers
	615-646-1333
<b>AIDS</b> .....	Joyce Soward
	615-754-5210
<b>Illness</b> .....	David and Peggy Gibson
	615-356-1351
<b>Infant</b> .....	Jayne Head
	615-264-8184
<b>SIDS</b> .....	Kris Thompson
	931-486-9088
<b>Suicide</b> .....	Ruth Edwards
	615-353-8547
<b>Small Child</b> .....	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
	615-237-9972
<b>Alcohol/Drug Overdose</b> .....	Ed Pyle
	615-712-3245
<b>Murder</b> .....	Joe Ladd
	615-727-3284

*Hope is the child  
of sorrow and patience.  
Sascha*

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.

## The Visit Home

There once was an old man who journeyed back to his hometown with the intent of reminiscing about the good times, as well as the sorrows he had experienced as a young father. High on the list of places he intended to visit was the elementary school his daughter had attended.

First he would walk around the huge playground where he so often had brought his daughter to play. He would stop at the slide, then the swings, and finally the monkey bars, remembering the joy on his daughter's face as she had moved happy and carefree from one adventure to another.

Then he would enter the school building. His first stop there would be the kindergarten room. He could still see in his mind that memorable day years before, his daughter's outstretched hand enclosed in his firm, yet tender grip. As they searched for her classroom, their loving touch finally ended as she walked through the open door to a new stage in her life.

The old man's next stop would be the tiny gymnasium where his daughter had performed in the holiday pageant. How beautiful she had appeared, dressed in soft white as she sang *Silent Night, Holy Night*.

Finally he would stop at his daughter's third grade classroom. The old man clearly remembered the day he and his wife had stood outside the closed classroom door, tears streaming down their cheeks. Finally, gathering their courage they entered the room to comfort and talk with their daughter's classmates who, as yet, failed to comprehend why they would never again see alive the little girl they all considered their best friend.

The anticipation grew strong as he neared the street where the school stood. Arriving at the spot, the old man wept at what he saw. The plain white concrete structure he expected was no longer there. A sleek modern building stood in its place. An asphalt parking lot now covered the old grassy playground.

Now understanding that he would never be able to fulfill his mission, the old man started thinking about the transient nature of life—how nothing ever remains the same. Communities change. Buildings are here today and gone tomorrow. Loved ones live—and die. Even nations rise and fall.

But then the old man had another thought: The love his daughter had passed on to him still remained within his heart so many years after she had died. He realized that it truly didn't matter if a day, a year, a decade, or a century were to pass. The candle of love would continue to burn brightly in his heart. Even an eternity from now the love he carried for his daughter would have transcended his own death and been returned to her a thousand fold.

The old man turned his car around to head back toward the highway. There was no need to stop elsewhere. Taking one last glance in the rear view mirror at the new school, he understood that memories live on not because of a building, or a classroom, or a playground. They remain alive inside each of us because love outlasts even the sands of time.

A smile crossed his lips.  
*His mission had been completed!*

Wayne Loder  
TCF Fort Wayne, IN

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## Does Guilt Live With You?

Though the death certificate reads “stillborn—cause unknown,” I have been sure that by some (if not many) irresponsible acts, I caused the death of my son. I'm not sure how, but some way I did it.

This guilt has not lessened over the years. On the contrary, it has grown from a seed of doubt to a full-blown conviction. Finally it came time to confess. I gathered all the “facts” of my crime and laid them out before my husband. Kerry listened intently, then proceeded to shoot holes in my “facts” with some real facts of his own.

Zachary had Intro-Growth Retardation (his growth had started slowing early in the pregnancy—something was wrong, they just didn't know what.) He was not perfect. My list of irresponsibilities was exaggerated and trivial.

So why do I torture myself this way? After quite a bit of soul searching, I think I've found my answer. I want to believe I had control. That somehow, some way, Zachary could have lived.

“Could have” or “almost” seem to be just on the other side of death's door, adding weight to my fantasies, indeed the very reality of them.

I realize “could have beens” and “if onlys” plague all bereaved parents—some terribly more than other. Guilt adds greatly to our grief. So I ask you, gently, to look beyond the obvious and ask yourself “why can I not get by this?”

I know for some, it is just too soon, and for others of us, it is just too big. But hopefully, for a lot of us it may just be a matter of further exploration—at least to a beginning of an end.

Laura House  
TCF, St. Louis, MO

## TCF Picnic Set for September 24

**M**ark your calendar. For a wonderful afternoon of friendship and fun, a time for remembering our children and for bringing our families together, please join us for our annual chapter picnic. We will gather on Saturday, September 24 at 3:00 p.m. in Fannie Mae Dees Park, Shelter 1. The park is located at 2400 Blakemore Avenue in Nashville. A map can be viewed on our website at [www.tcfnashville.org](http://www.tcfnashville.org). Barbeque, drinks and paper goods will be provided by the chapter. We ask each family to bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

**A-G:** Cole slaw, baked beans, salad or other side dish

**H-M:** Main dish, other than barbeque

**N-Z:** Dessert or chips

Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket, balls and bats, or other games. Restroom facilities and play equipment are nearby. This event is for families and friends; you do not have to be a bereaved parent to attend. All ages are invited. The picnic tables are under a large shelter in case of a shower. However, if heavy rain is occurring or if you have any question as to whether the picnic will take place, please text or call our Chapter Leaders, Joe and Melanie Ladd, at 615-727-3284 or 615-513-5913.

There will be a brief candle lighting ceremony in memory of our children at the close of the event. Plan to spend this afternoon with your TCF family and get to know each other better!

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### Remembering

*Why do I always long for what  
is not within my reach?*

*Why do I try to circumvent  
the lessons life would teach?*

*Why do I seek perfection in  
myself and those around me?*

*Why do I long to have the  
“ideal, perfect love” surround me?*

*You’d think by now I could accept  
our human frailties,  
yet, on the fringes of my mind  
preposterous thoughts still tease.*

*I want to have the rainbows, but*

*I do not want the storms;*

*I want to have the roses,  
but I do not want the thorns.*

*I want a world of smiles and laughter  
where people do not cry;*

*I want a world of love and joy  
where children do not die.*

*I want no grief to mar my life,  
no heartbreak, no remorse;  
it hurts too much to cope with them...  
to let them run their course.*

*I want a world of gentleness,  
of spiritual delight,  
where all is peace and fairness  
and where justice conquers might.*

*I must let go of views that are  
naïve and idealistic;  
my heart must be contented with  
a life that’s realistic.*

*Accepting, never yearning for  
a world that cannot be,  
may my spirit soar to heights unknown  
in splendor, gratefully.*

Peggy Kociscin  
TCF, Mesa County

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### Loneliness and How to Overcome It

**W**hy are there times when a bereaved parent feels lonely even though surrounded by loving people the bereaved parent loves? Loneliness is the outgrowth of separation from one who has given meaning to life. Yes, other relationships offer meaning, but it is normal for the searing pain from the loss of one’s child to supersede the pleasure from other experiences. Part of yourself has been invested in another person. When that person has died, in a sense, you are lonely for a part of yourself that has been destroyed. At times you look around you and think that no one else is experiencing the pain you are feeling; no one else’s world has been shattered. This self-centeredness is a natural part of the grief process. Do not deny it, but *do not hold on to it as a way of life*. Give yourself permission to accept help from others and then to reach out and help others. Although your child is not here to give continuity to your life, by having lived and having given purpose to your life, your child can be the bridge to your continuity with life as a thinking, loving and active person.

Ruth Eiseman  
TCF, Louisville, KY

## The Good Fight

Before our son's death turned our lives upside down, I cannot recall spending any time in cemeteries. One or two elderly relatives, who had lived out their span, are in cemeteries now, and their loss is felt at holiday gatherings. When I was a child, our Sunday school class once took a tour of the pre-Revolutionary cemetery behind the historic old church I attended. I remember being shocked at the number of tiny markers for the very young who, our teacher said, were so susceptible to diseases in those colonial days. We were simply told that people had large families then because they knew illness would take some of the children. We were never exposed to the notion that this was a tragedy to these real people of so long ago.

Many years later, when my grandmother was in her eighties, she told me that the child born before her died at the age of three. At the age of thirteen, Grandmother was stunned to find her mother caressing this child's clothing and weeping in the attic of their home in the rolling hills of Kentucky. I was a parent then and I thought, "Well, of course Grandmother's mother was sad, but she had other children." I didn't know, did I? Who among us did?

Now when I go to my son's marker, I examine the other headstones carefully. Did everyone in the family live to an acceptable age? When I find one that clearly indicates the death of a child, I study the parents' markers closely. How long did they have to live without their child? Sometimes the number of years takes my breath away. I am to learn from this. Others "made it." So can I. Without Compassionate Friends I wouldn't have had a clue as to HOW they made it, and I probably would have given up on the effort.

I read the inscriptions on these older markers to see if they provide any clues as to what helped those before me carry on. I found one that summed it up. It read:

"LIVING, YOU MADE IT GOODLIER TO LIVE;  
DEAD, YOU MADE IT EASIER TO DIE."

So—we are to endure. We do know what it was to live, but now we have the added dimensions of courage, love and steadfastness. And, though we no longer hope for our own death as a release from the pain, we, unlike most "other people," will not fear it when we have finished "fighting the good fight."

Pat Kuzela  
TCF, Atlanta



## Summer's End

*Always at summer's end  
there comes that moment  
when memory brings to me  
gifts from the past.*

*I see your faces then,  
glistening in the sun.  
I hear your laughter then,  
shared by the wind.*

*And in that glint of time  
I feel you near again,  
as you were, long ago,  
at summer's end.*

Sascha

## Strength and Courage

It takes strength to be firm  
It takes courage to be gentle  
    It takes strength to stand guard  
    It takes courage to let down your guard  
It takes strength to conquer  
It takes courage to surrender  
    It takes strength to be certain  
    It takes courage to have doubt  
It takes strength to feel a friend's pain  
It takes courage to feel your own pain  
    It takes strength to hide feelings  
    It takes courage to show them  
It takes strength to endure abuse  
It takes courage to stop it  
    It takes strength to stand alone  
    It takes courage to lean on another  
It takes strength to love  
It takes courage to be loved  
    It takes strength to survive  
    It takes courage to live.

John G. Young  
Mississaiya, Ont. Canada

*Courage is not the absence  
of fear and pain,  
but the affirmation of life  
despite fear and pain.*

Rabbi Earl Grollman

## **CHAPTER INFORMATION**

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

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 2 in The Children Remembered, 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.

### **Picture Name Tags**

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge. A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

### **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 demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.



## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may call the Crisis Center at 615 244-7444.

### **Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. SHARING meets the second and fourth Thursday evenings of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave). Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times.

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

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

### **Alive Alone**

Alive Alone is an organization to benefit parents whose only child or all children have died.

Visit their website at [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org).

### **TCF Web site —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.

As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's,  
we begin to find a different kind of love than we expected to experience.

Rosalie Baker  
TCF, Rochester, NY



## Sharing

When the most fearful solitude  
seems yours alone,  
when you are certain  
that there are no friends,  
that no one feels as cast away as you—  
when night and day and earth  
move on without you  
and leave you, motionless, in icy pain—

when you feel mute with grief and isolation,  
when you seem cut  
from every living thing,  
then listen to the truth  
your silence touches:

Behind oblique facades  
of noise and cheering  
a thousand other lives  
are drowning, drowning,  
in other sorrows and in other pain—  
afraid to cry for help,  
afraid to break...

They need to hear your sorrow  
and your darkness.  
Give them your truest self,  
discover theirs.  
Reveal your tears—  
then share and speak your heart.

Sascha

