



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

North Oklahoma City Chapter

January 2021

NEWSLETTER All contents copyright © 2021 All rights reserved. The Compassionate Friends

NORTH OKC CHAPTER:

P.O. Box 12249
OKC, OK 73157-2249
Telephone (405) 693-3955
New Phone Number

CHAPTER LEADER:

Sharon Ellington
(405)-721-6939
Email: bunji625@gmail.com

REGIONAL COORDINATOR:

Richard Szczepaniak
(580)-747-0686
E-mail: rbszczepaniak@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Interim News Letter Editor
Telephone: (405) 691-7144
Email: gary.clark@cox.net
Please send your newsletter items to:
TCF
P.O. BOX 12249
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73157-2249
Web: www.NOKCTCF.COM

Newsletter items can also be e-mailed to:
NOKCTCF@AOL.COM
The cut-off date for the next newsletter is the 15th of the prior month

TCF NATIONAL OFFICE:

New Address
48660 Pontiac Trail #930808
Wixom, MI 48393
Toll-Free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Upcoming Events

Regular meeting January 14th, 2021

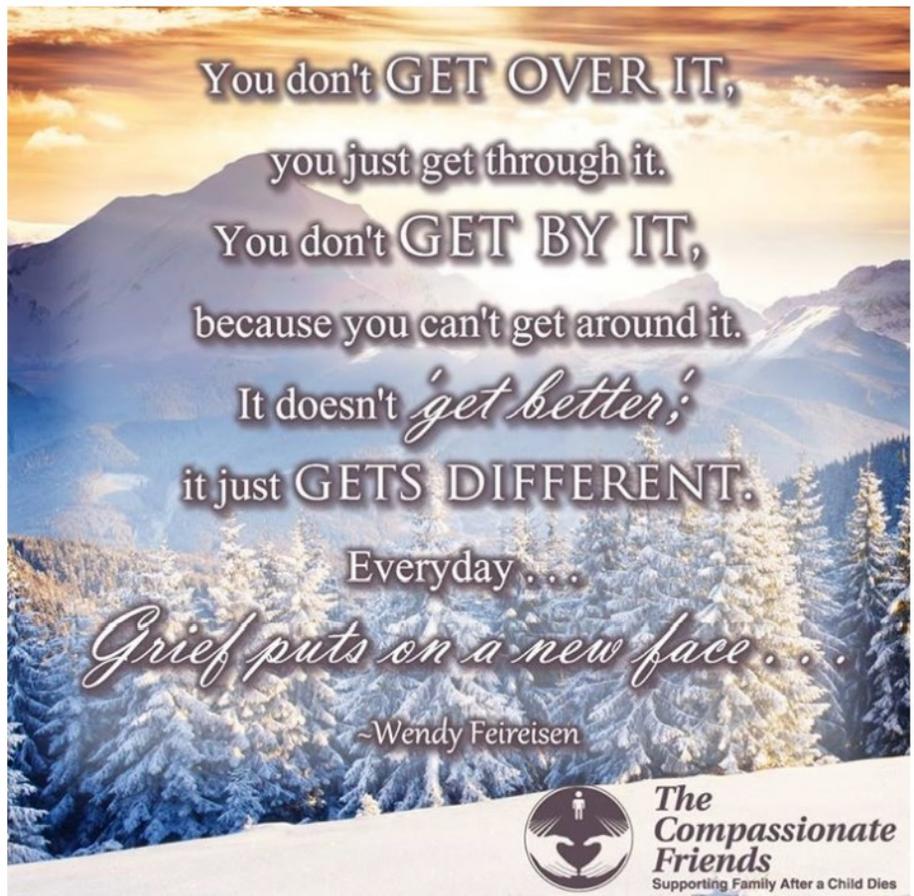
Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, our chapter has elected to NOT meet in person for the time being.

We are offering a chapter meeting via a video application called ZOOM. With zoom you can participate in the meeting on your phone, laptop, or desktop computer.

**The meeting ID is 884 5185 0603
the pass code is 753819**

You may log in as early as 7:15pm and the meeting will start at 7:30pm

~~~~~



**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

## *Sibling Corner... Dedicated to our Brothers and Sisters*

### WHAT IF?

Posted on December 28, 2018

We followed a silver Mustang to New York on Friday. My mother and I. Traveling from my home farther south. The boys buckled tightly in the back. It had black stripes on the hood and the windows were too dark to see inside.

Like his.

We joined minds, spoke without speaking, and imagined the unimaginable. That he was still here.

That it was his. His Mustang, zipping up and down the Belt Parkway in Canarsie, in Flatbush, in his Brooklyn. Visiting this and that, her and her, blasting his music, picking up the pieces, the bits, for the collection, for his soul. We imagined, jointly. It's like we both heard the whisper; a soft, silent whisper, "What if?" "What if?" it said.

What if October 22, 2009, never was? The cloudless sky on that sunny, sorrowful, unexpected day. The day my brother's soul ended its tangible journey beside us. The day that concluded us as we were and began us as we are.

"What if?" we whispered. He whispered.

What if ... he was here all along? What if it was as simple as catching up to him on his drive? What if we would find him watching a waterfall in Saratoga? Eating a Klondike bar in Elmont? Outside of a repair shop, getting a car service that took a little too long. Or what if we found him parked in my mother's driveway in Queens at home? At home ...

What if we had just been blinded by a bizarre streak of glaring sunlight? Cast from a low-flying plane? It was possible because we grew up by the airport. What if we had missed him standing there all along, and that man we watched leave us on 10/22 wasn't my brother at all? It was someone else's brother, someone else's son, someone else's ...

What if when the glare cleared he would appear? Smirking. Buffing a small fingerprint from his side view mirror and walking over to us with his heavy steps to make some joke about the latest current event. What if we had another chance to kiss his warm cheeks and cover him in our embrace? Make my mother smile again ... from the inside? What if he could tickle my sons and meet my dear Wesley, his namesake?

We raced alongside that silver Mustang. Watching and waiting, wondering and willing, wondering and willing ... life. We wondered, What if? We tried desperately to mask the quick sounds of our breaths as we chased this dream. We chastised our souls for wanting to bound toward him and dance in the unimaginable. To morph what wasn't into what is and make this impossible our possible. But it wasn't ...

The universe curses us with unexplained gifts.

That driver snuck off at an exit before we could see for ourselves before we could answer before we could reason ... but left us ... imagining, even for that moment, that second, in that small slither of unmovable, imaginable, glorious, beautiful space ... **What if?**

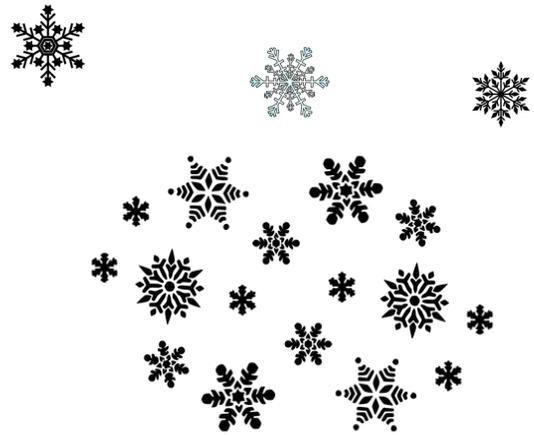
T. F. MCCRAY

T. F. McCray is a lawyer, freelance writer, and married mother of two. She is a native of New York and currently residing in Maryland. She lost her brother Thomas Wesley Higdon Jr. at the age of 38 on October 22, 2009, from congestive heart failure.

## SHARED THOUGHTS ON GRIEF AND THE NEW YEAR

Most of us have a new perspective about the New Year since our children or siblings have died. For some, it is a relief to close the door on the year of our tragedy, and we try to perceive the new year with small rays of hope. But, for others it was the last year we shared our life with our loved one, and we can't bear to see that segment of our life close. Each of us views new seasons differently, but for most of us, it is a difficult time. First of all, we must allow ourselves to grieve, both privately and with other family members. We can't expect other family members to grieve exactly as we do. Each needs space to solve their own needs, which may be different than ours. We find it helps to set time aside for our grief. Perhaps, that is why going to Compassionate Friends meetings is so healing for many, where we devote the evening to dealing with our feelings, and hoping for suggestions from others who have "made it through". It is important to take care of ourselves physically, for bad health can alter [https://publicdomainvectors.org/photos/molumen\\_snowflakes.png](https://publicdomainvectors.org/photos/molumen_snowflakes.png)

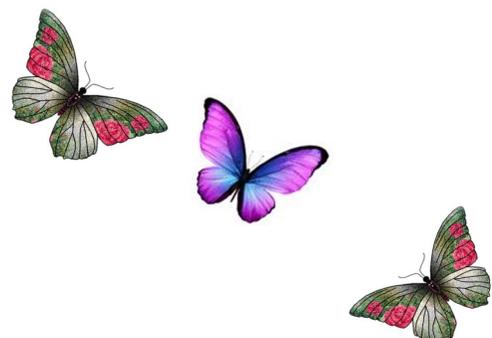
our mood and how we respond to the daily happenings in our life. We need to be considerate of other family members for they are also struggling to get their lives back together. Both kindness and antagonism will snowball, and return back to us. This does not mean taking abuse or ignoring our own needs. If a good hour, or day, comes our way, relish it. We deserve it. Sometimes this causes some guilt on our part. We must remember, the last thing our child would want is for us to feel any guilt for a moment of peace. The love for our children is usually matched in return with love for us. So, I'm sure they are glad when we can have relief from the terrible torment we are going through. We must try to see some good in the new year, and a reason to go on. When newly bereaved, it is difficult to even want to look for good things. Everything looks so trivial compared to our loss, for we are so depressed and hurting so bad. For those of us who are further along in our grief, well, remember how difficult it was to believe anything about "getting better," but it takes a lot of work to get there. Healing comes through sharing, crying, feeling guilty and angry, or any aspect of grief it takes for us to go forward. We do grow through our grief by becoming more loving, understanding, and compassionate to those around us. Most of us have refined our priorities and have no time for trivial complaints of others, for we now know there are greater things in life to be concerned with. We have learned the true meaning of desperation and know it comes from broken people, not broken appliances.



The new year comes  
When all the world is ready  
For changes, resolutions —  
Great beginnings.

For us, to whom  
That stroke of midnight means  
A missing child remembered,  
For us, the new year comes  
Like another darkness.

But let us not forget  
That this may be the year  
When love and hope and courage  
Find each other somewhere  
In the darkness  
To lift their voice and speak  
Let there be light.



# I AM SEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

*Posted on December 24, 2018*

On Sept 1, 2002, I stood in the room at the hospital looking into the face of my daughter Denise and seeing only pain.

I knew I was about to enter into the black hole. I felt the shooting sting through my heart as my daughter delivered the horrible news and seeing her I stepped immediately into "fix-it mode," the worst decision I ever made. But that was my role as a parent – to fix things. It almost always worked in the past. Put a bandaid on it, wipe away some tears or a tight hug. It has been working for forty plus years. So, that is where I stayed for at least the next two-plus years; if only I knew about "support mode" at that time.

It was very difficult to watch as my daughter seemed unable to smile or laugh. Denise always had a great sense of humor and a smile that always made you want to smile back. I listened to her, felt her pain and cried thousands of tears with and without her. I yelled at God and wanted to know how he could be so cruel to both my daughter and me. He was supposed to be a loving God. When I stopped yelling I cried out to him, I begged him to please give me the support I needed. Wow! What a revelation. Why didn't I think about supporting and not fixing sooner? How many times in the past had my friends and family been there to support me? When my parents and three of my brothers died the support I received was what helped me the most. As grandparents, it is easy for us to get stuck in fix-it mode.

We believe that we must have the answers and the magical powers to help those in our family heal. We not only carry our own grief but also the grief that our child bears as well as our grandchildren who are now bereaved siblings. We certainly are caught in the middle and have big shoes to fill. It took time but I finally came to the conclusion that trying to fix things simply doesn't work. I needed to be in "support mode" which meant supporting my children and grandchildren in their own unique grief journey while seeking support for myself. "Support mode" is where we can most effectively help our children and grandchildren by grieving with them and learning to heal together.

When we support our children and grandchildren in grief, it allows us to know when they are ready to start to go forward in the healing process. Just like in our own grief, we don't try to push or rush anybody. Support mode considers the process of grief and allows the time and space for each of us to take baby steps. Support mode gives our grieving children and grandchildren a safe place to feel every hurt, embrace every tear and yet welcome the warmth of laughter and smiles once again when the time feels right. Slowly the smiles did return and the laughter too for all of us.

As a family, we learned together that grief doesn't have a time limit. As a grandparent it is a gift in that we know our children – we can read their face and hear it in their

voice, we know every facial expression and what their eyes are saying. Our grieving children cannot hide their pain from us. Support mode makes it alright for us to not hide our pain from them either. So I want to close by saying that the first step toward moving from "fix-it mode" to "support mode" is to find a friend or family member who understands your loss and will support you in your grief. We cannot help others until we have found support for ourselves. We need someone who will just listen. The next most important thing is to take care of ourselves. Exercise, eating well and taking care of our health gives us the added strength and energy we will need to help our family in grief.

So what is my advice to other grandparents trying to fix things? Rip the band-aid off and realize this is a forever journey for us, our children and our grandchildren. Together, our family has come a long way on our grief journey. Denise started attending a TCF support group twelve years ago and served as a Chapter Leader for seven years. Today, we are working together to help plan and organize the TCF National Conference in 2016 in Phoenix, Arizona. To all my fellow grieving grandparents, always remember, You Need Not Walk Alone.

*Therese Starkey*

Therese Starkey is a member of The Compassionate Friends and a regular contributor.

# OUR CHILDREN *Loved...*

## *Missed... Remembered...*



*As long as we live, our children too shall live, for they are part of us in our memories.*

*We lovingly remember the following children on Their Anniversary.*

### **January Birthdays**

|    |                                   |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1  | SCOTT SLATER (STEINERD)           |
| 3  | ANDREW ROGERS                     |
| 3  | GLENN HOWARD DAVIS JR             |
| 5  | COLBY FAULK                       |
| 7  | ROBERT L HOPPER JR                |
| 8  | ADAM LANGFORD                     |
| 8  | DAVID COX                         |
| 9  | NICHOLAS R. WILLIAMS (BASCO)      |
| 9  | SYDNEY LEMONS (WILSON)            |
| 10 | ANNABELLA MARQUEZ                 |
| 10 | CAMERON CAREY                     |
| 10 | JAMIE RENAE COX                   |
| 10 | NOLAN CHARLES FALCON (RICHARDSON) |
| 10 | WILLIAM CHARLES BROWN II (VOTH)   |
| 11 | MICHAEL JOHNSON (KNIGHT)          |
| 11 | MOLLY KATHRYN EMERSON REED        |
| 13 | CAMI PERRYMAN                     |
| 14 | BRANDON NALAGAR                   |
| 15 | COLE BRIAN GILLIAM                |
| 16 | KENT CASTLEBERRY                  |
| 17 | KEITH MAPLE                       |
| 17 | ROBERT ANTHONY BURKE (WALKER)     |
| 20 | ANGIE WILSON                      |
| 20 | JILL VAUGHT                       |
| 20 | MATTEW DAVID HAMILTON             |
| 20 | WILLIAM JOSEPH DAVIS (FISH)       |
| 21 | DAKOTAH DAWN PERRY                |
| 21 | JENNIFER SIPES (PERRYMAN)         |
| 21 | MEGAN ASHELY HENSON               |
| 22 | JENNIFER BORING                   |
| 24 | JILL PERRYMAN                     |
| 26 | LANE MCCORD                       |
| 27 | JEFF McLAUCLIN (CARPENTER)        |
| 27 | ZCAURICE ZEUS MOORE (BURRELL)     |
| 28 | CORY RYAN BUSBY (WHITE)           |
| 29 | STEFFANI CATHLYN TATE (THRIFT)    |

### **January Angelverseries**

|    |                                  |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1  | NICHOLAS IAN "NICK" DAHL         |
| 1  | RYDER JOHNSON (HOGUE)            |
| 1  | SCOTT RUSSELL REAMS              |
| 3  | EMILY WEBSTER (GAMBLE)           |
| 4  | JT TURNER (WARNOCK)              |
| 5  | BRIAN ALAN EATON (MOORE)         |
| 5  | STEVE CUSTER                     |
| 5  | WILLIAM "TREY" LITTLEJOHN III    |
| 6  | DAVID TERRY                      |
| 6  | DOROTHEA A. "THEA" DELANEY       |
| 6  | KRISTEN A. "KRIS" DELANEY        |
| 6  | WILLIAM 'BILLY' KHOURIE II       |
| 8  | JULIA KATHRYN GILBERT            |
| 9  | DAJUANA COLLINS                  |
| 10 | BETHANEY ODOM (THOMAS)           |
| 10 | DANA LYNN SPAULDING (DEATHERAGE) |
| 12 | COLBY FAULK                      |
| 14 | MARIO JOSEPH FLORES              |
| 15 | RUTH IRENE FOLEY (MCPHERSON)     |
| 16 | ADAM LANGFORD                    |
| 16 | BILLY JOE CUNNINGHAM             |
| 18 | CAMERON WILLIT                   |
| 18 | STAN EVANS                       |
| 19 | CHAD STOREY                      |
| 20 | RYAN FIACCONE                    |
| 21 | MIKE HARRINGTON (ERWIN)          |
| 22 | MICHAEL SKEEN                    |
| 23 | KALEE EATON                      |
| 23 | TREY BENEAR (BARNES)             |
| 25 | LANAYE JOHNSTON                  |
| 28 | COURTNEY BUNKER                  |
| 29 | DUSTIN WILLIAMS (HARBOUR)        |
| 29 | RALPH MALCHER                    |
| 31 | POMETA DAVISON                   |



## Love Gifts...A thoughtful way to remember our precious children.

A *Love Gift* is given to The Compassionate Friends in honor of someone who has died...or a memorial to a relative or friend...or simply from those who wish to help.

Because TCF is a non-profit organization, *Love Gifts* are an important means of financial support, which enable us to continue to reach out and support bereaved families. **We are so very grateful for the *Love Gifts* listed below. Thank you for caring**



***When someone you love becomes a memory ,the memory becomes a treasure.***

my Dear Billy Joe,

Christmas was the last holiday we had together those many years ago. It still seems like yesterday and forever at the same time. I heard other people say the same thing. When I look at your picture, you often seem so real. I miss you all the time but am glad you are up there now with so many of our family.

I love you and miss you. It is so hard to believe that Jan 16th you will have been gone from my side for 31 years. I can't imagine you would be like all grown up as a 41 year old! I love you always. Elizabeth Cunningham

Love, Momma (Elizabeth Cunningham)

Barbara Goodman in memory of Barbie Sue Goodman.

## *Remembering*

*Remembering is such a special thing.  
At first you feel and remember only the grief,  
the loss like a throbbing dome of pain  
over every thought, every recollection.*

*Remembering is such a special thing.  
After a while, you try to remember only the nice feelings, the good times.  
You fight yourself if memory tries to bring to mind anything unpleasant.  
It feels wrong to think of something not perfect.  
You remember big events, great successes.  
She was the most wonderful child in the world.*

*Remembering is such a special thing.  
It takes time before you manage to recall without  
discomfort that you were sometimes angry at her,  
or disappointed or bored with her. It takes even longer to realize that  
glowing recollections make no difference to the way you love her.*

*And then, at last, your memory allows you to have  
the whole person with you - all your thoughts about  
her are comfortable and comforting.  
Your dreams about her begin to include scenes from everyday life.  
That is when memory lets her be with you again, completely and truly.  
It may sometimes hurt a little, bring small reminders of your early grief,  
but most of all, it feels warm and tender and real.*

*Remembering is such a special thing.*

Taken from "Knowing Why Changes Nothing" by Eva Lager with Sascha Wagner

Sometimes when grief overwhelms us it is comforting to know that someone who cares is just a phone call away. A Loving Listener is someone who is willing to talk on the phone with another bereaved Parent, Sibling or Grandparent. A Loving Listener's phone number will be published in the newsletter as another resource to our bereavement community. Names will be listed along with special circumstances, such as auto accident, illness, suicide or homicide.

**If you are willing to be a Loving Listener please let me know and I will add you to the newsletter. Contact Gary Clark at [gary.clark@cox.net](mailto:gary.clark@cox.net).**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Loving Listeners**

**Gary Clark: Skiing Accident 405-691-7144**

**Melinda Heidling: Infant Death 405-885-2739**

**Sharon Ellington: Drunk Driver 405-721-6939**

**Robi Long: Unknown 405-408-2102**

**Kelly Sibley: infant death, special needs child 405-962-8968**

**Janet Turley: Suicide, adult child 405-413-9797**



**\*\*\* PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING \*\*\***

We all want to help when we can. It is a BIG part of our healing process. Being helpful, productive people is key. Our chapter very much needs to strengthen our steering committee. The Steering committee meets once every other month, and perhaps once or twice a year for special projects, such as the Walk to Remember and the December Candle Lighting.

***WE NEED YOUR IDEAS, YOUR CREATIVITY, YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS.***

***WE NEED YOUR INDIVIDUAL TALENTS.***

Our chapter has been operating with just a few volunteers for sometime now and we have not been able to do the Outreach to the community and Public Awareness that was once our strength. We know there are so many hurting families in our community who have not heard of us.

We can all probably help a little, which will help our chapter a lot. If you can help please contact Sharon Ellington at 405-721-6939 , or Gary Clark at 405-691-7144, or come to our next meeting and talk to us. We will be very happy to have your help.



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. ©2007

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73157-2249

P.O. BOX 12249

NORTH OKLAHOMA CITY CHAPTER

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

**January**  
**2021**

NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK  
PERMIT NO. 752

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing  
The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "Men Only Sharing Session," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.