



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

North Oklahoma City Chapter

August 2019

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The cut-off date for the next
newsletter is the 15th of the prior
month

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JOIN OUR CHAPTER'S MONTHLY MEETING

THURSDAY: **August 8th, 2019**

Location: Mayflower Congregational Church 3901
N.W. 63rd Street

(Between NW Expressway and Portland)

Parking is in the back of the church We meet on the
second Thursday of every month.

Sign In: 7:00 p.m. **Program Starts: 7:30 p.m.** FOOD
AND FELLOWSHIP FOLLOW THE MEETING

Upcoming Events

August 8th, 2019 7:30pm

Mayflower Congregational Church 3901 N.W.
63rd Street , Oklahoma City

Regular meeting September 12th, 2019

Walk to Remember on Sept 14th, 2019
Bluff Creek Park, Oklahoma City
10:00 am

Regular meeting October 12th, 2019

We are still looking for volunteer(s) to help with
the Chapter Newsletter.

Please contact gary.clark@cox.net

"Ragged edges of sadness

are softened by memories."

~unknown

Sibling Corner... Dedicated to our Brothers and Sisters

A GENTLE BREEZE

A gentle breeze descended onto the world, changing the atmosphere . He would flow through the house, around the block, through out the neighborhood — through my heart . A gentle breeze, he changed many lives. On a hot day, he was a cool breeze, making the worst heat less intense. He was a gentle breeze; a constant breeze; a breeze that made the lives of those he knew a little bit better. This breeze was a kind one, not one of destruction. A breeze such as this, as good as this, should remain endless. But one cold night, a different wind came a long and over powered our gentle breeze. This wind was one of destruction, thriving on pain, torment and grief. The gentle breeze that had captured my heart and soul was fading away, until... stillness. Nothing moved . Time stood still. Heaviness was now taking the place of my gentle breeze. The new wind raged in me , forcing upon me every thing it thrived on . That cold night , my gentle breeze died, leaving me with a tormenting storm of emotions and feelings . A storm that welled up grief and a devastating sense of loss in my heart. My environment is so hostile, yet so very still. A gentle breeze, such as the one I had grown to love and rely on, comes only once. How I long to feel the gentle breeze again, teasing me with his spontaneity. How I long for the gentle breeze to be there for me on those hot, summer days that seem so heavy and endless. This breeze will always occupy a special place in my memory. The breeze I long for so much is a part of me. This gentle breeze is my brother, Shannon. —

Author Unknown — Bereavement Magazine

Uncharacteristic Behaviors



When Junior, the National Zoo's resident ape went on his escape travels a few months ago, the story was recorded in the local papers. This was probably because he came close to hopping over his barrier and into the laps of his human observers, many of them children. The press called this "uncharacteristic behavior" and, in a side note, added that his long time mate, Pency had recently died.

Now you and I would put all of this into proper perspective and agree, "Of course!" And then we would reflect upon our own "uncharacteristic behaviors" following the death of our beloved child or grandchild.

Many times these behaviors confound and confuse those close to us. How far will we go beyond our barriers? And will we return and be "ourselves" again? I was amazed at emotions I had never felt so strongly before. I thought that anger would become a permanent part of my reactions and I welcomed any kind of release from it. Confronting it and dealing with it was difficult. Sadness settled upon me like a soggy fleece and I thought that I might never shrug it off! And the apathy with which I met each day was very concerning, indeed! Junior's escapade brought all of my own "uncharacteristic behaviors" up from the not so distant past. Amusing?...a little; but more than that I wanted to shout with the children who watched him that late summer day, and encourage him to run and run, shaking off the grief and sadness of losing his beloved Pency.

~Lorie Hartsig TCF St. Mary's County, MD

How Many Children Do You Have?

Let's pretend we're at a cocktail party. It's five o'clock somewhere, right? We're meeting for the first time and getting to know each other. We've learned that we're both parents, so one of the very first questions you'll probably ask me is, "How many kids do you have?" Thus begins my TEDx talk, "Why We Should Share Our Stories." But it has also been the story of my life for the past two decades since our fourth child, Noah, died when he was 15 months old. In the beginning, this question struck me silent with grief and it became even more gut wrenching when people would coo it over and over again as my belly grew with the promise of our next bundle of joy. Nine months later, it would bring me to my knees, the answer completely inconceivable when Jonah was stillborn. So when the opportunity to present a TEDx talk arose, this seemed like a good place to begin. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design and their tagline— ideas worth spreading — speaks for itself; their goal to cultivate and share ideas. I wanted people to understand why that seemingly innocent question strikes fear in the hearts of bereaved parents. And I liked the idea of stepping onstage in my red cowboy boots carrying a glass of chilled chardonnay. I figured my "prop" might come in handy and it definitely improved the rehearsals! How many kids do I have? As I continued, "And I'll give you this quick answer—five." The conversation will move on, most likely with me telling you all about my five children and you telling me all about yours. We'll smile and sip our wine and you'll never know that your simple question has just kicked me in the belly. Or that I feel like I've just lied to you. I do believe

lying is a sin, but, as I justify my public confession, because, I rarely give the correct answer to that question. Usually, I sidestep it. I don't want to watch your face crumple or hear you say, "I'm so sorry," like so many, many others before you. I like to have fun and I want to keep things lighthearted. But every time I do that I feel guilty. Because I do believe we should share our stories. Maybe not while standing in the grocery store checkout line or with a glass of wine in our hand. But somewhere, sometime, someday... Given that I've had 13 pregnancies remaindering 5 living children, it's really more of a little white lie. I've become quite adept at softening the blow when delivering my math equation in a diversity of settings and this was the idea I wanted to share. I also wanted to impart that every year, 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage and 26K babies are stillborn yet we rarely talk about them. Stillbirth and miscarriage are largely taboo subjects, not mentioned at cocktail parties over glasses of wine, and I've had to bite my tongue more times than I care to count. It's time to shatter the silence. They say there's no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you and for me this was that story. As an author, I share best by writing but I certainly never dreamed that life would place this particular tale in my hands. Eventually, I gave birth to my book, *Breathe*, both to tell the story of my sons and to help other people. This is the first reason I give in my TEDx talk as to why we should share our stories—to help each other. When Noah died, I searched, desperately, for other bereaved parents. In those days before social media, I called them. I wrote letters to them. I accosted them in per-

son. And I'm sure some of them thought I was crazy. Because I was. I was crazy with grief. And I was crazy with pain. And when you're in pain, all you can think of is getting out of pain. So I searched for survivors because I needed to know that the pain I was in wouldn't last forever. I needed them to tell me that I was going to survive the unbearable agony I was in. Another reason we should share our stories is to keep our loved ones alive. My family marks our gravestones with this saying: To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is not to die. As long as we walk this earth, our loved ones will never truly be dead because we are holding them in our hearts. Before I wrote my book, the only thing people really knew about Noah and Jonah was that they'd died. That was the most definitive characteristic of their short, little lives. But because I shared their stories, readers now know that they also lived and they've become manifest. That is the power of sharing our stories! *Breathe* was published a few years ago, and after reading it, my thirteenth child Bella's dance teacher asked me to write my story as a dance. And this is the final reason I cite for why we should share our stories— because you can never foresee how your story will impact others. Or where that path will lead as you move forward. And it might just be someplace that's so amazing you can't even imagine it! There's a passage in my book where I write that it's my terrible misfortune to be able to compare losing Noah, a toddler who was learning to walk and

(Continued on next page)

How Many Children Do You Have?

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talk and was loved by so many, with losing Jonah, a baby inside my belly and mostly only known by me. And I share how people have actually asked me, "Which was harder, losing Noah or losing Jonah?" To which I replied: "Which would you miss more, your right arm or your left?" That passage stuck in Miss Pam's mind where it grew into a dance in which half the dancers can only move their arms and the other half their legs. This limitation is removed only during a brief pas de deux danced by Bella and my niece, Ava, who represent Noah and Jonah. Miss Pam and these girls have transformed the story of my sons and of my life into art by dancing some of the answers I don't always share at cocktail parties. But, as most bereaved parents know, we've already done the hardest thing—burying our children. After that, the answers to every question and the challenges life places in our paths should all be easy. When your baby dies, you wonder so many, many things including how you can possibly get through that next painful breath, never mind the rest of your life. Your life without your son, and then without your next son, stretches infinitely on beyond you. You ask all the terrible questions for which there will never be any earthly answers. The why's and the why not's, the why me's and the what if's. And somehow, you resign yourself to living without understanding. But to sit in a darkened theater and watch Noah and Jonah's baby sister dancing their story on stage almost two decades after their deaths? Well, you think, this? Maybe this.

Kelly Kittel is the author of *Breathe, a Memoir of Motherhood, Grief and Family Conflict*, and has been published in many magazines and anthologies, including *Three Minus One: Stories of Parents' Loss and Love*. She speaks about grief and loss and presents annually at TCF conferences. Her TEDx talk can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1oA3w7JcTg> and her website is www.kellykittel.com

***At times our own light goes out
and is rekindled by a spark
from another person.***

***Each of us has cause to think with
deep gratitude of those who have
lighted the flame within us.***

~Albert Schweitzer

Do You Know?

Do you know what I've learned,
that the deepest, truest healing
offered by The Compassionate Friends
comes not in the first few years,
but later?

Do you know
that just when you think
there is no more to gain
by coming to meetings,
something you will say or do
will help another,
and another. . .
and exponentially,
through your opened heart,
there can flow riches,
gifts beyond imagining?

Do you know
that TCF's truest alchemy
lies not in what we can get
but what we can give?

That by turning grief's dark energy
and inner absorption outwards
towards the hope of helping others
we can regain a sense of purpose,
honor our beloved children,
and take them with us as we do?

All this. . .
if only you stay on - or come back -
to help those more newly bereaved,
sharing your own unique path through grief
and learning, along with others,
what you did not know you know.

~Genesse Bourdeau Gentry "We Need Not
Walk Alone", Winter 2007-08

OUR CHILDREN *Loved...*

Missed... Remembered...

Birth Days

1 BENJAMIN NIMMO
1 BRYAN NICHOLSON (BAKER)
2 RON PATTERSON
2 TYRONE CLAY (TJ) (HILL)
3 TODD HAGAN WICKETT
4 TAYLOR DON HEINTZELMAN
7 BRYAN PIETSCH
7 JOSH HARLIN (CLOPTON)
7 NOEL DEAN HARRIS
8 DAVID BENJAMIN YANCEY
10 BAUSTEN RILEY JECH
10 BRANDOLYN DICKEY HENDERSON
10 STEVE CUSTER
12 DORIAN DAVISON
13 RUTH IRENE FOLEY (MCPHERSON)
13 STEVEN B LUEHRING
13 TYLER JAMES SPANGLER
14 HANNAH DENISE McCARTY
14 JEFFEREY Van HOOSER JR
15 A J PEARCE (GONZALES)
15 WESTON LEE REESE
16 ANGELA DIANNE "ANGY" BARNARD
16 BLAINE LONG
16 JENNA LOREE RUSSELL (BECKER)
17 KYLE JOSEPH WACKERLY
17 WAYNE COLLINS
18 TANNER HILL
18 TREVOR MAX HEIDLING
19 SHYAM DEV PATWARDHAN
20 JANET DIANE PIPPIN
20 RALPH MALCHER
21 ALEXANDRIA WAGGAMAN
21 BRAD KETTNER (MOORE)
21 JARRETT HAYDEN LANG
23 JENNIFER LEE TAYLOR
23 ROWDY GRAY
24 CONNOR REID (PERRY)
24 JOSHUA GRIGGS
24 MARY FANNING TAYLOR (SIB) (ELLINGTON)
24 SYDNEY MURRAY
25 RICHARD ALLEN CANADY (EUBANKS)
26 BRANDON POWELL
26 CORD ALEXANDER MOBLY (PAULSON)

27 JACK HOLLOWAY
28 KINSLEY ANN PEEK (GIST)
29 MEGAN YORK
31 AMANDA FAITH LIGHTY
31 GUY GRIFFIN

Angelverseries

1 JEFFREY CURTIS LOHMANN
1 RUSTY LOFTIS
2 DUNCAN HARLAN
3 CAELAN MATTHEW WALLACE
3 GREGORY LYNN EATON (MOORE)
3 JIMMY DALE BARNARD
3 THAD "OX" WALKER
3 TODD HAGAN WICKETT
4 CHASE ASHLEY
6 JOSHUA LANGO
7 ANDREW STEINERT
7 NICHOLAS R. WILLIAMS (BASCO)
9 ANDREW JOSEPH LAWS
9 MATTHEW LANDRY
10 AMY LYNN AKINS
10 CHANCE TOLES
13 BRANDON PERRYMAN
13 TORI LYNN LUKE (BIRK)
14 EMILY STROUGH
17 CRAIG E. MILLER (BENEDICT)
20 JEFF McLAUHLIN (CARPENTER)
21 CARL WAYNE ROSS
21 MEGAN ASHELY HENSON
23 DANIELLE LORRAINE ROCHETTE (HUFF)
26 TYRONE CLAY (TJ) (HILL)
27 WAYNE COLLINS
28 AUSTIN WAYNE GOVIA (VANDENBURG)
30 AMANDA LYNN HARNED
30 ZACKARY ROBERT FINCH (DAY)
31 EMILY CLAIRE TRIMBLE (FALCON)
31 JACK HOLLOWAY
31 KAIDEN



Love Gifts...A thoughtful way to remember our pre-

cius 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**



Ronnie & Linda Redinger "Thank you for remembering . May God continue to bless your work.

Missy & Perry Reid in Memory of Connor Reid, 8/24/90 - 6/2/2015

Moma Shirlene Courr, in Memory of Matt Courr 8/20/1977 - 11/2/2013

Kim & Greg Jehlik in Memory of Jeff Jehlik. 9/2/1979—12/12/2015

In memory of Hannah Denise McCarty on her birthday 8-14-86 from Jack & Pamela McCarty"

There is no vacation from your absence. Every morning I wake. I am a bereaved parent. Every noon I feel the hole in my heart. Every evening my arms are empty. My life is busy now, but not quite full. My heart is mended, but not quite healed. For the rest of my life every moment will be lived without you! THERE IS NO VACATION FROM YOUR ABSENCE.

Vacations are great for relaxing and taking a break from the routine of life. But as bereaved parents, vacations can be one of the most difficult times of the year. We are supposed to be having fun, relaxing and revitalizing ourselves. But how can we do this when our child has died?

Our first few vacations were disasters. I felt torn between the desire to enjoy life again and the need to keep Matthew and my grief alive. There was no way to rush through the process. The pain had to be faced even more directly without the diversions of daily routine.

A few things helped me to bear vacations. Some of these were necessary only for the first few years, some are still a part of any vacation. I set aside a time each day to remember Matthew, and to try to deal with my grief. Sitting on a rock in Panama City, Florida, overlooking an ocean sunset. I felt God in a way that I had not felt since Matthew's death. Setting a time each day to remember him seemed to include him in the trip.

Every new place I go, I bring something home in Matthew's memory. A shell sits on the shelf in the office. Matthew never went to the beach, but this is Matthew's shell.

Accept your feelings. You may not feel happy. That will come later. For now accept your grief. Accept the fact that vacations mean something different than before your child's death. Accept the fact that you need rest. Be kind to yourself. Do only the things you feel you can do.

Eventually you WILL smile again!

Eventually you WILL have fun again!

~by Kathy Boyette TCF, Mississippi Gulf

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.

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



*** 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

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NORTH OKLAHOMA CITY CHAPTER

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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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 and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.