



# The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

North Oklahoma City  
Chapter  
September 2021

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Newsletter items can also be e-  
mailed to:  
[NOKCTCF@AOL.COM](mailto: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



## Upcoming Events

\*\*\* *Good news* \*\*\*

**Our Regular meeting September 9th, 2021 will be a Hybrid meeting! We will be allowed to meet at Mayflower Congregational Church again, but we will also be meeting virtually for those who want to join virtually.**

**\*\* *Masks and social distancing will be required of everyone per church policy!* \*\***

***You may bring a drink or snack, but we will not be allowed to furnish refreshments at this time.***

**While we would love to see you there we understand if you prefer to join us through ZOOM.com, using 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**

**Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.**

**Henri Nouwen, You are the Beloved: Daily Meditations for Spiritual Living, Hachette UK, 2017.**

**\*\* We are planning *our Walk to Remember* for October 23rd, Details to follow. \*\***

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

### **DEAR MOM & DAD – A NOTE FROM YOUR SURVIVING CHILD**

Dear Mom & Dad, There may be moments when you wonder about me. How I am doing since our precious family member was stolen from us. A few things I wish you would know:

- \* I am hurting so much, but afraid to share with you just how much, lest I add to the tremendous pain I see you are suffering
- \* I don't know what to say to you sometimes. I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing. I'm afraid of saying the right thing
- \* I know you knew my sibling from the day they were born, but I knew them my entire life. We were so close in years and they were older than me and so there is not a day of my life that they did not exist. You have years of memories before they were here. My life without them started the day they died
- \* I feel unloved sometimes as I watch you fuss over them instead of me who is still here. I understand why and don't begrudge you – but some days it stings
- \* I feel guilty for not protecting them and don't understand the lion that roars inside of me from all this hurt
- \* I've become fiercely protective of my other siblings and you. Don't mistake that façade of strength to mean I'm okay
- \* I don't understand this grief and that makes me question how I could possibly know how to help you and our family with their grief. But somehow feel responsible to do so
- \* I worry as I watch you fade and diminish from your grief ☹️ I wish you could kiss this and make it all better, like you did when I was little and scraped myself. I know you can't but I still look up to you and the little child in me still wants it with all my heart.
- \* I don't blame you for their death ☹️ I know I may be hard to handle: angry, sullen, distant. Please know that is just the hurt coming from my deep pain that I sometimes direct at you because I can't get to the one that is responsible
- \* Under all the ugliness, I still love you very much.

Written by Julie Brown. Reprinted from [compassionatefriends.org/blog](http://compassionatefriends.org/blog). Julie lost her sister Amy to homicide in 2016 and has spent the past years trying to care for her surviving son and her parents while navigating the stressful path of the justice system. She has learned from having a high profile case associated with the loss of her sister, that finding any small point of gratitude is a powerful way to survive and endure the complexity of grief that comes from sudden and violent loss. She and her husband Jeff reside in Pennsylvania where they are actively involved in their church and helping other families deal with loss to homicide.

## REFLECTIONS FROM A CHAPTER LEADER

It's been over 22 years since my son David died in an automobile accident at age 35. It's been more than 19 years since I became chapter leader and facilitator at our TCF chapter. Over these many years at our meetings, I have witnessed bereaved parents who could barely come through the door, barely breathe, whose emotions were at the surface and who needed to be with other parents who had lost children.

These same parents who could not imagine life without pain or having fun or even laughing, somehow can make it to a different place where there is joy and where the good memories dominate the bad ones. This transition takes between three to six years, but the new normal usually comes about in years four and five. That's when they quit coming to TCF meetings because the pain of the meetings is greater than the good they get out of them. I call it graduation. Just when these parents are great contributors and valuable in our meetings, they quit coming. From a Chapter Leader and Facilitator point of view, I really miss these "graduates", but I am glad that their new normal allows them to not need TCF. But TCF still needs them. Before our meetings start, there are smiles and sometimes laughter among some of the "veterans". This can be a shock to the newly bereaved. I point out to them that we are also bereaved parents, and that the smiles and laughter that seems out of place show that there is hope for a better future.

I emphasize to our group that it is important to manage your expectations. I tell the newly bereaved that the grief journey is not measured in days, weeks or months. It is measured in years. The airlines tell you if the oxygen masks drop, put yours on first so you will be able to help others. In the same way, take care of yourself first. Do whatever it takes to deal with your loss. Only then will you be able to deal with the rest of your life.

The early time frame of grief comes with generally well intentioned comments from friends, relatives, co-workers and strangers: "Are you feeling better," "Have you recovered", "Are you over it", "He's in a better place", "It's just God's will", "At least you have other children", "I know how you feel; I lost my dog last month", and "I want the old person back." Sometimes we ignore the questions and comments. Sometimes we try to explain our feelings. Sometimes we just explode, inwardly or outwardly. We face these questions, we face our grief, we face all our relationships, and we face ourselves. Grief work is hard. We say our grief is so intense because the love of our child is so intense.

There are no short cuts on working through our grief. One of the benefits (if I can use that word) of coming to TCF meetings is "empathy." Most of our grief is focused inward. At a TCF meeting, we listen to other parents tell their story, and our grief is turned outward as we feel their pain. This empathy is physically and emotionally beneficial. It changes us from being totally inward focused to being open to fellow travelers and to their stories and issues. Everyone listens and is attentive at a TCF meeting, even if we've heard the story many times.

There is an abundance of tools to help us in our grief journey: TCF meetings, therapy and counseling, journaling, scrap-booking, TCF chat rooms, TCF Facebook, articles, books, medication, and meditation. As we work through our grief, we are often presented with "redemptive possibilities." These are things we can do now that we probably would never have thought of if our child were still alive.

These include setting up a foundation, starting a scholarship, working with a group or activity your child was involved in, volunteering at a place to honor your child, special projects, special events, providing material goods where they are needed, and many other opportunities once our eyes are open. Don't expect to find redemptive possibilities when your grief is fresh. It takes time for our eyes to be open to them.

So it is possible, given enough time and enough work, to find joy in your life, to laugh again, to be open to new things, and to not having your first thought of the day and the last thought at night to be of the loss of your child. I have seen it over and over again. To the newly bereaved (and I mean for at least the first two years), the previous paragraph reads like fiction. But it is true. Nothing can compensate for your loss, but the "new you" will be able to navigate through life. We never get over the loss of our child, and there is no such thing as closure.

We just get through the loss and emerge as the "new you". Keep watching for the redemptive possibilities.

To all the "veterans" of this process, remember those who were there for you when your grief was new. Please consider coming back for a visit or two. Your experience and wisdom are very beneficial to our entire group.

So, the message of these reflections is hope. Hope for a new you, as you feel your way along this grief journey. As you travel down that long, unfamiliar grief road from which there is no return, be gentle with yourself and work hard, and remember there is hope.

Written by David Hendricks, Chapter Leader for TCF Houston Northwest  
Reprinted from The Chapter Leadership Newsletter from The Compassionate Friends



**As a past Chapter Leader, Regional Coordinator, TCF National Board Member, and current Steering committee member, I would encourage those "veterans" who found us and found help, and who are farther on their journey, to not only come back, but to help the chapter either with the meetings, or behind the screens so that the next grieving Parent, Grandparent, or Sibling can also find help and hope.**

**Travis's dad, Gary, North OKC Chapter**

# A MOTHER'S HOPE

By Betty Lineberger, BP/USA of Marion County FL

When our son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not. I hoped it was a dream. It was not. Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook, I did not shop for food, I did not eat. I hoped he would come back. He did not. I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not. I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives. I hoped for acceptance. I found none. I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none. I hoped for sleep. I had none. I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew our life would never be the same again. I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not. I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not. I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not. I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not. I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give. I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead. I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying. At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, —How long will I feel like this?— He did not.

I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at my second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter in law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have. When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again. But there is joy. When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. But I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often. So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium.

I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change. My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

# 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.*

### **September Birthdays**

2 HANNAH MOCK (MILLER)  
2 JEFF JEHLIK  
2 MASON PIERSOL  
3 AUSTIN TAYLOR BAILEY  
6 DAJUANA COLLINS (CAMPBELL)  
6 PHILIP HAGAN WICKETT  
7 LAURA ELIZABETH GALLEGLY  
(MATHEWS)  
9 PAUL EARNEST COLBERT BROWN  
11 KYLE DEWAYNE BELT (VAN WINKLE)  
12 ARLO PERRY GLIDEWELL  
14 BROOK NICOLE HENSLEY  
14 CALEB POSS  
14 MACKENZIE RAPPE  
14 NANCY M. JENNINGS (HORNE)  
16 LORWIN MANTOOTH  
18 ZACHARIAH ROBERT LEWIS  
20 AMANDA FULTZ  
21 MADISON RACHEL  
22 DYLLAN ROSS SANDERS  
22 RYAN S DALLAM  
25 SOPHIA CLAIRE CRAIN  
26 KIPP GRIFFIN

### **September Angelverseries**

1 JACKSON CLAY HENSLEY  
2 CADENCE MARIE GORDON  
(BAUTISTA)  
3 WILLIAM PALMER  
4 JULIE GRANT  
6 AMY HELMS (WITMER)  
6 KARMEN JILL DAVIS  
7 DEAN SHORT  
10 KEITH DAVIS  
12 JENNA LOREE RUSSELL (BECKER)  
12 KAREN ELAINE SHEFFIELD  
13 LANE MCCORD  
13 SETH RYAN HUNTER  
14 DAVID K DEATHERAGE JR  
14 DONNA BURRELL  
14 ZCAURICE ZEUS MOORE (BURRELL)  
17 TIM MCLAUHLIN (CARPENTER)  
18 HUNTER "COLE" MAN JACKSON  
19 DUSTIN LYLES  
20 ZACHARY RYAN MULANAX  
21 LEE BRUNER  
21 MARY FANNING TAYLOR (SIB)  
22 RYAN MILLS  
23 KADYNCE HOLLARS  
26 BRAD KETTNER (MOORE)  
26 TRACEY HUMPHREY  
29 JARED EWY (NELSON)  
29 JONATHAN HOWEL (WILLIAMS)  
29 JOSH HARLIN (CLOPTON)  
29 KENNETH "BRIAN" BROADWAY  
30 ROBERT KENNETH KOTT

Sometimes you have to take it on blind faith that your heart is healing. It may not feel like the pain is going away. You might still cry just as hard as ever. But strength, confidence, and wisdom grow invisibly and you must trust that it is there.

~ Stephanie St. Claire





## 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 Not for 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.***

Donna Carpenter "A Love Gift in Memoriam"

Don & Lea Ann Harlan TCF, My wife and I received your card marking the fifth anniversary of our son's death. We were so moved by the sentiments that were expressed. We are touched that he is remembered.

What a noble organization. You exist to fulfill a simple, basic, humane mission: ease the suffering and heartbreak of my fellow man. No one is turned away but the price of admission is unspeakable. You truly are good people doing good works.

-Don and Lea Ann Harlan

Gary Steinert a love Gift "In Memoriam"

Elizabeth Cunningham: I hope you know how much you guys are appreciated since you reach out to a lot of parents that have lost their child. I am one of them. When we live in a rural area where there are no meetings you are still able to reach out to all , passed all of the miles and share our love for our children.

To my Beloved son, Billy Joe Cunningham, The Lord is my rock and my savior, I praise God that he holds you in his care and brings out that beautiful smile of yours on your face! I love You and miss you everyday!

Love, Moma (Elizabeth Cunningham)

#### **The Comfort My Heart Holds**

My heart is so very grateful  
For the pictures in my mind.  
The precious thoughts and memories  
My grandson left behind.  
The pain that grips my heart  
Is quieted by the joy  
Of things he said and did  
While just a growing boy.  
I long to have him here once more  
And watch him as he grows.  
Yet, the joyful life he has now  
Is the comfort my heart holds.  
Not one single day goes by  
Without a thought of him.  
In time and with God's loving grace  
This pain will grow more dim.

In memory of Chad Cavazos by his grandmother, Patsy Murray, TCF Tyler, Texas

### **The Moment That you Left ME**

The moment that you left me  
My heart split in two  
One side filled with memories  
The other side died with you

I often lay awake at night  
When the world is fast asleep  
and take a walk down memory lane  
With tears upon my cheek

Remembering you is easy  
I do it everyday  
But missing you is a heartache  
That never goes away

I hold you tightly within my heart  
And there you will remain  
As my life goes on without you  
But will never be the same.

Doug Craven

### **GRANDPARENTS REMEMBRANCE:**

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey TCF Rutland, VT



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/Organ donation 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

2021

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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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.