



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 8, Issue 12

Tyler, Texas

December 2007

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, December 18, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

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Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat Settle
Chapter Co-LeaderMargie Newman
Newsletter/Web SiteMary Lingle
Steering Committee: Tina Loper,
Pat Settle, Sam Smith, Sherri Tutt
Margie Newman, Mary Ann Girard,
Carol Johnson, Carol Thompson,
Patricia Miller, Charisse Smith,
David & Teresa Terrell, Mary Lingle

Jim & Karen Roach, Regional
Coordinators, (817) 244-0116

TCF National Organization
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with refreshments followed by announcement of birthdays and anniversaries and reading of the Credo. We will then have open discussion.
8:00 p.m.
Meeting will close by recognizing our childrens' names. Feel free to visit after the meeting or check out books from our library.

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Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony

Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial will be December 9, 2007 at Calvary Baptist Church, 6704 Old Jacksonville Hwy., Tyler. The service begins at 6:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome. **Childcare will be provided.** Candles are lit in memory of our children at 7 p.m. For 24 hours straight, candles stay lit in every time zone around the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORGOTTEN children. (See announcements on page 3 for more information.)



...that their light may always shine.

Light a candle for all children who have died.
2nd Sunday in December, 6:30 p.m.

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery ~ Sugar Land/SW Houston TCF, Houston, TX

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.



We need not walk alone.

“From this tangle of emotions, one truth emerged: As long as I choose to embrace the miracles around me, my heart will dance. Whether in the slow dance of grief or skipping to the beat as I cuddle and coo with grandbabies yet to come, hope and joy will emerge in the rhythms of the dance.” —*JoAnne Rademacher*

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting last month.

We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not-for-profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the third Tuesday of the month). The meeting is open to everyone and free of charge. You are free to talk, cry or to sit in silence; we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families (100% of funds are used for this outreach). Donations, along with the name of the person being honored, may be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”

Take Your Time

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called “time table.” You are told you should be feeling one way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be “over it.” “Get on with your life.” “Count your blessings.”

All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (a) you don't WANT to “get over it,” (b) you are “getting on” with your life in the best way you know how, and (c) your “blessings” have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss! Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting “normally.” There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months; you may not feel anything except numbness for awhile. That's OK!

The best advice is...take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don't clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally. Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can.

Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child's name to anyone who will listen...take time...your time...to heal.

Sandra Young ~ TCF, Knoxville, TN

Survivors of Suicide

Parents and siblings of a young person who has completed suicide face an almost overwhelming burden of emotions. It is one of the cruelest tragedies that can happen to a family. To pull oneself out of the emotional wreckage is a mighty struggle. Each parent can be utterly devastated and unable to be supportive to their mate or to surviving children. Other family members are shocked and unable to cope with the event. They do not know how to console or help us. Our friends wonder, “How could such a thing happen?” They too, do not know how to help us. We struggle with the “Whys?”...the unanswered questions and painful memories.

We, who count ourselves as survivors—we've made it a year, two years, some of us are in the third year—would like to share a few thoughts. First, you are not alone. We understand whatever you may be feeling for we have been there! Suicide can intensify the feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, depression—all a part of the grief process. The course of recovery is up and down. Give yourself plenty of time. You need a great deal of support, at least through the first year. The suicide of one's child raises painful questions and doubts and fears. We can find ourselves in a spiritual crisis. We question our beliefs and may feel cut off from God. Through sharing with others and listening to others who have walked the same path, you may gain some understanding of your reactions and learn some ways to cope.

But most of all, we, who are in the process of rebuilding our lives, have not forgotten the dark hours of those early days and weeks when we thought we could not live again. We cannot offer you any shortcut through the pain. There isn't any. But you can help yourself along the way to healing. We can offer you support, encouragement, and the hand of friendship.

JoAnn Dodson, ~ TCF, Louisville, KY



We need not walk alone.

“As we walk through this grief of losing our children, we owe no explanations. Our love for our dead children lingers, and in that love is a goodness and purity that allows us to gently be ourselves.” —Annette Mennen Baldwin

Love Gifts



Joyce Stewart in memory of Stephanie Settle

Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle in memory of Stephanie

Carol Thompson in memory of Sarah

Claudette Brown in memory of Terry Brown

Tina Loper in memory of Christopher - refreshments

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell - use of a storage building

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use their facilities as our meeting place - in memory of Nathaniel Peter Bolom

Thanks to the following for donating time to decorate the Lack's Christmas tree:

Mary Delaney in memory of Ryan, Mary Ann Girard in memory of Joe Maland, Carol Johnson & Shane Johnson in memory of Jared Sheets, Patricia Miller in memory of Shanna, Donald Sanders in memory of Jonathan, Charisse Smith & Miranda Smith in memory of Ben, David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy, Carol Thompson in memory of Sarah



Newsletter Submissions

TCF Tyler welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to:

TCF Tyler • 5401 Hollytree Drive, 1204 • Tyler, Texas 75703
Or e-mail text and photos to: info@TylerTCF.org

We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is the 3rd Tuesday of each month. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify us if any of your information is incorrect.

Announcements

Our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony will be held on Dec. 9th, 6:30 p.m. at Calvary Baptist Church, 6704 Old Jacksonville Hwy., Tyler. Please call (903) 258-2547 for more information. The media is invited to attend. If you would like, we encourage you to post this special event in your church bulletin, in your company newsletter or email the info to friends. We have a flier in this newsletter that you may use to post as well. We also appreciate anyone who can bring refreshments that night. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child. **Childcare will be provided:** If your child has a difficult time sitting for an extended period of time you will be able to attend the Candle Lighting and know that your child is being cared for by members from Calvary Baptist Church who have graciously volunteered their time. There is no need to register but you should probably arrive a few minutes early. The ceremony starts promptly at 6:30.

We are accepting canned food at the meetings from now through December 15 for the Lack's Christmas tree food drive. We will have decorated boxes at the meetings if you would like to place a box at your place of work for co-workers to donate too! We will meet at Lacks (Green Acre's Shopping Center) Tuesday, Nov. 13 at 6 p.m. to decorate our tree with our children's photos. Prizes are awarded for the most food collected. First place receives \$200, second receives \$100 and 3rd, \$50. Don't forget to bring your canned food!

Welcome to the following new member who attended her first meeting in November: Sara Fincke, mother of Jamie.

Sam Smith is going to perform at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, LA, Tuesday, Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. If you would like to attend, we will be carpooling. Call Kay Asher for directions or more information at (318) 617-4085. Call (903) 258-2547 if you would like to ride with us. Sam's CDs are for sale at the meetings for \$10.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the fourth memorial quilt, please mail a \$25 donation to P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711. For more information contact us at (903) 258-2547, or email us at info@TylerTCF.org.

Thanks to Teresa and David Terrell for donating their talent and time on these beautiful quilts which will be displayed in our meeting room and at future special events.





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"We cannot offer you any shortcut through the pain. There isn't any. But you can help yourself along the way to healing. We can offer you support, encouragement, and the hand of friendship." —*JoAnn Dodson, TCF parent*

December Birthdays



Jonathan Reynolds
12-14-98 ~ 11-16-02
Son of Addison & Debra Reynolds



Erica Smith
12-21-88 ~ 10-25-03
Daughter of Todd & Sabrina Thone



Zackery Browne
12-14-89 ~ 4-13-02
Son of Timothy & Kay Browne



Heath Hopson
12-8-87 ~ 4-23-01
Son of Karen Hopson



Renee Seale
12-21-63 ~ 7-13-90
Daughter of Lana Kay Taylor



Daniel Anderson
12-27-79 ~ 5-15-95
Son of Kerry & Cheryl Anderson



Christopher John Fisher
12-18-82 ~ 6-22-03
Grandson of Grace & Tom Fisher



Adam Knott
12-29-79 ~ 3-20-03
Son of Bobby & Virginia Knott



Stephanie Settle
12-22-81 ~ 5-27-98
Daughter of Danny & Pat Settle



Salvador Estrada
12-11-79 ~ 11-3-01
Son of Charlotte Estrada



Phillip Kuhn
12-28-73 ~ 3-27-03
Son of Carolyn Kuhn



Jeremy Simpson Brown
12-27-77 ~ 12-12-04
Son of Shari Brown



Tiffany Johnston
12-29-81 ~ 2-20-98
Daughter of Sherrel & Greg Smith



Ryszard Spakovsky
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98
Son of Sherrel & Greg Smith



Tiffany LeAnn Tanner
12-2-94 ~ 8-24-05
Daughter of Kathy LeAnn Tanner



Brandon Weatherly
12-14-72 ~ 5-20-95
Son of Ike & Diane Weatherly



Sarah Harvey
12-12-89 ~ 4-26-04
Daughter of Brian & Lisa Harvey



Shannon Scheffler
12-21-70 ~ 8-22-03
Daughter of Dolly Mobley



Ashley McCaa
12-22-82 ~ 1-2-00
Daughter of Pat McCaa



Taylor Davis
12-31-85 ~ 1-21-06
Son of Diane Ecker



Cory Blackmon
12-31-77 ~ 3-13-89
Grandson of Charles & Billie Bridges





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"Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright." —*Jim Lowery*

December Anniversaries



Jake Higgins
6-29-77 ~ 12-4-03
Son of Donna & Joel Griffin



Gena Forest
8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98
Daughter of Joice Bass



Tosha Nichole Minatrea
8-11-82 ~ 12-30-99
Daughter of Tim Minatrea



Christopher Loper
4-28-94 ~ 12-21-00
Son of Tina Loper



Cheryl Graebner Cook
4-25-73 ~ 12-10-02
Daughter of
Connie Graebner



Jocelyn McCormick
1-11-04 ~ 12-7-04
Granddaughter of
June McCormick



Matt Thomas Crooks
4-17-78 ~ 12-24-03
Son of Sylvia Crooks



Theresa Kay Talley
9-16-78 ~ 12-20-05
Daughter of W.A. & Ruby Talley



Jeremy Simpson Brown
12-27-77 ~ 12-12-04
Son of Shari Brown



Whitni Danielle Ray
11-16-86 ~ 12-22-04
Daughter of Rachelle Threadgill
Brooks

Family Chain

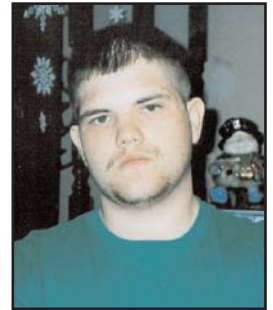
We little knew that morning,
God was going to call your name,
In life we loved you dearly,
In death we do the same.

It broke our hearts to lose you,
You did not go alone.
For part of us went with you
The day God called you home.

You left us beautiful memories,
Your love is still our guide,
And though we cannot see you,
You are always at our side.

Our family chain is broken,
And nothing seems the same,
But as God calls us one by one,
The chain will link again.

Loving you always, Christen (sister)



Scotty McDaniel
Poem by
Christen McDaniel ~
TCF, Tyler, TX

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there, I did not die!

Mary Frye (1932)



Skipper Winningham
Poem submitted by
Lucy Winningham in
memory of Walter
"Skipper" Winningham,
TCF, Tyler, TX

**Please share your stories,
poems or love messages for
inclusion in our newsletter.**



We need not walk alone.

"The Compassionate Friends meeting won't make the pain go away, but it is a place where you can honestly and truly believe when someone says, "I know how you feel." They mean it and their eyes prove it." —*Janice Lopez*

Daisies in Huge Handfuls

"Pick more daisies" was the most popular expression in our family. I picked it up from a magazine article about a 94-year-old lady in Kentucky who, when asked what she would do differently if she had her life to live over, responded "I would take more chances; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would have more real troubles but fewer imaginary ones; I would climb more mountains; I would swim more rivers, and I would pick more daisies."

Our son, Mark, seized the daisy expression as the theme both for his life and his entrance exam essay at UCLA. It helped him live his brief 18 years; his essay helped him get an academic scholarship.

Daisies became our family flower. They marked our attitude about living. And they marked our son's memorial service. After it was over, his friends and fraternity brothers each threw a daisy into the ocean. Daisies still mark his grave every week. It has taken me almost two years to return to really thinking about daisies and what that quote by a 94-year-old lady really means. During that time I made a pretty big mess of things. I did the best I could, but I was often going through the motions outside, but empty inside.

To me, what this quote means is we really do have to pull ourselves together again and go on. Dr. Charles Heuser, a former pastor at our church, notes "going through the steps of grief is like walking through the valley and shadow of death. Keep walking, but don't camp there."

Our children would not want us to "camp there," but to go pick more daisies—to somehow live an even more meaningful life in their name. As I go on I am truly a different person. I don't suffer fools or superficiality very well any more. As one of my best friends said..."I get tired of beige people." Yet, I will drop everything to help another bereaved parent. I certainly have more "real troubles and fewer imaginary ones." But it's OK—I like myself better that way.

And I am returning to embrace life each day again. But this time I am following my heart instead of my expected career. I am taking more chances, climbing more unfamiliar mountains, and picking daisies in huge handfuls.

Mark would want it so.

Rich Edler ~ South Bay TCF, Los Angeles, CA

Reinvestments — What Has Helped Me in My Grief Journey

Newly bereaved parents are always asking me if "it" will ever get better. I know from my journey through grief that the road is always changing. Sometimes it looks smooth and straight when all of a sudden a hairpin curve leaps in front of me without warning. Sometimes I have to maneuver through pothole after pothole.

Now I feel that I am at a fork in the road. I have choices to make on how I am going to travel this grief journey. For me the answer was obvious. With the death of my only child, I felt limited recourse. I was no longer a "practicing" parent. I would never be a grandparent. The only thing left for me to do was to help other parents who found themselves in this perilous situation.

I remember the first evening at the funeral home where my precious child was in state. The first person I went up to and hugged was a high school friend's mother, whose own child had died eighteen years ago. I remember saying to her, "Now I know what you went through." It is true. Only another parent whose child has died can truly understand the magnitude of the pain we all go through as bereaved parents.

The road is different for each parent. Every one will deal with their grief in a different manner. There are many ways that parents can reinvest in life after the death of their child. This is what helped me.

Liz Hodge ~ TCF, Southgate, MI





We need not walk alone.

"I have learned two lessons in my life: first, there are no sufficient literary, psychological or historical answers to human tragedy, only moral ones. Second, just as despair can come to one another only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings." —*Elie Wiesel*

Thirty Years

Thirty years ago today
On a cold snowy winter day
You came into my life, my son
And changed my life in many ways

You taught me unconditional love
And what a mom should feel
You taught me compassion in many ways
The kind only the heart reveals

You taught me how to smile
When heartprints ruled my days
You taught me so much laughter
My love was endless in so many ways

I taught you, as you taught me
The years flew by too fast
And then God's Angels called you home
All I had left, was memories of the past.....

Today's your 30th birthday, Andy
And I sit here all alone
Wondering how you're spending yours
While I spend my at home

Thinking of the ones we had,
The double birthdays we once shared
I close my eyes and remember
It makes my eyes begin to tear

I remember when you were one
And I was twenty-seven
If I'd known then, in four years
God was calling you to heaven.....

I'd held you even more tightly,
I'd have kissed you even more
And probably went to school with you
Each day you went out the door

I'd have tucked you in more tightly
I'd have read more stories at night
And had I known what life held
I'd never let you out of my sight

But none of us knows what life holds
Or what our future will be
God gave us five great years
I treasure those precious memories

Happy Birthday Andy
I love you with all my heart
One day again we will share this day
But for now, I'll share you in my heart

I'll love you forever my son.....
on air, land, and sea
and through eternity

*In Memory of Andy Dunbar's 30th birthday
January 22, 1972-October 24, 1977
By Mom, Sharon Bryant*



Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As . . . we remember

Jacqueline Brown ~ Peace Valley TCF, New Britain, PA



**The Compassionate Friends of Tyler, Texas
invites you to join us for our
Annual Candle Lighting Memorial on
December 9, 2007 at Calvary Baptist Church,
6704 Old Jacksonville Hwy., Tyler.**

The service begins at 6:30 p.m.

**Light a candle in memory of your child.
Family and friends are welcome.
*Childcare will be provided.***

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www.TylerTCF.org • 903-258-2547**

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If we did not hear from you in the last year please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____ Cause of Death: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving the newsletter.

Please include my child's name and picture in the slide presentation at the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF-Tyler Web site. (www.TylerTCF.org)

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____
Please make check payable to TCF

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents.

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter, Web site, Candle Lighting Ceremony or any other TCF event. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

(Signature) Date: _____

Please return completed form to: The Compassionate Friends of Tyler, P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711



"I don't think you ever stop giving. I really don't. I think it's an on-going process. And it's not just about being able to write a check. It's being able to touch somebody's life." —Oprah Winfrey



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