



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



*We need not walk alone.*

**Volume 6, Issue 2**

**Tyler, Texas**

**February 2005**

## Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, February 15, 6:30 p.m.  
Clinical Associates of East Texas  
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

### Topic

Reasons to Keep Living and Loving

### Contact

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Chapter Leader .....Tina Loper

Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat Settle

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## National Organization Information

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## The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.....Fellowship

7:00 p.m. ....Welcome; Announcements;  
Introductions; Topic

7:15 p.m.....Open Forum

9:00 p.m. ....Additional Fellowship &  
Refreshments

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## First Family Grief

We still miss our Robin. At times Bar and I each find ourselves vividly recalling the beauty and charm of our little girl. Time has not dulled these happy memories at all.

*George Bush, bereaved father*

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal. I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others. It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time.

*Barbara Bush, bereaved mother*

## Chapter Chat

I want to give everyone the heads up that in the very near future we will be needing help with our Annual Butterfly Release. We already have a few projects in the works and will keep you updated. We would appreciate your input and ideas. We will be holding this special event in May at the First Baptist Church South Campus as we did last year. We will have a map in the April and May newsletter.

Calling all volunteers...please call Pat, Mary or me if you think you would have some time to help with mail outs and making a few phone calls. No long-term commitment here, just a few hours a month and we could more successfully be reaching those who need us.

I know that sometimes taking care of our personal daily tasks is a chore and the three of us are a little overwhelmed right now. Your help would be greatly appreciated and will ensure the continued life of this chapter that is so desperately needed.

Any of you can help right now by making a list of names of people that you know that may either be willing to help with some of the clerical duties of the chapter or have the gift of gab and some contacts. This is not a fundraising effort but more of a mass "word of mouth" effort on paper.

My heart breaks with each new story of another family starting their grief journey. We all know the depth of grief they are experiencing and even with that knowledge in the beginning I still feel helpless. The help that I have received and hope that you all have from this organization (the friendships, cards, conversations and hugs) has been a big part in getting me through the last four years. We know that it does not work for everyone—especially right away—but our goal is to let people know that our organization exists and give them the option of determining this for themselves.

*Sweet memories,  
Tina, Pat and Mary*

**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.*

"In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love." —Mother Theresa

## Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting in January.

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.”

## In Dad’s Lap

Why does that phrase have so much meaning now? It used to be pretty simple. When I could find the time (not as often as I would have liked), my lap was a neat place to hold my young son for a few moments of special time together. Now—no son! Different use of the lap! Problems in Daddy’s lap. (Thank God a 7-year-old daughter is there too, sometimes!) Being male becomes a more difficult task. How can I properly help those who are dependent on me—or can I admit to myself and others that this is one thing Daddy can’t fix, like my son’s broken toys? Is it “manly” to cry in public? Or do I care about “manly” now? It seems like so much garbage when my future has a hole in it.

I feel depressed too. My wife’s suffering aggravates my own, which makes me angry at her for spoiling my attempts at coping. Maybe I should issue a household edict that “Richy’s name or the subject of his death are OFF LIMITS around me.” That should fix it! Except that my wife still looks at me, and I know what’s on her mind.

Also, I keep thinking about it—and wish I had a better outlet for myself. Certainly not work, or sports, or—God forbid—a shrink (think of my image); I need someone who’s been there. My wife suggests we try The Compassionate Friends—maybe so! After the first time, I know it’s not for me. After all, where are all the men? Obviously, they don’t need it, right? Anyway, I go to TCF a few more times as it is one of the few unselfish things I do supportively for my wife, and my being there helps her. And when she’s better, I’m better. PRESTO—we’re both getting stronger again and still together and communicating. Also, I listen to some of the other TCF members, and the message I get is that their “men,” by and large, are denying themselves the privilege of grieving, and are destroying their own marriages by forcing their wives to grieve quietly or not at all around them. That’s manly dumb in my book, and self-destructive too. So some men don’t like groups—okay. But my solution is actually having results (for real), and I’m not suppressing the problem. My family and I will be scarred but not walking wounded. My particular masculine viewpoint is nothing special, except that I’m willing to share it in this newsletter.

*Chuck Armstrong ~ TCF, Pikes Peak, CO*

## Danny

Danny, our only child, passed away at the age of twelve. His death was unexpected, and the pain almost unbearable. Our pastor told us that yellow is the color of life. What then could be more fitting than yellow roses? To ensure these symbols of life for years to come, I bought a rose bush for my wife. After all, she was still Danny’s mom and needed more than ever to be reminded of that. I planted the bush on Mother’s Day. On the day before Father’s Day, the roses bloomed—three of them, to be exact. They were arranged in size order, just as our family had been in life. When I bought the bush, there was no way to know that there were to be only three roses. I have no doubt this was a sign from Danny. He wanted us to know that he still lives, and that there are still three roses.

*John W. Carlsen ~ Reprinted from Bereavement Magazine*



*We need not walk alone.*

“I had to accept the reality that I would never be the same person, that some part of my heart, perhaps the best part, had been cut out and buried with my sons. What was left? Now there was a question worth contemplating.”  
—Gordon Livingston, MD

## Announcements

We will be holding our Annual Butterfly Release in May. More details will be provided as they become available. Please contact us if you would like to help with the release this year.



### Love Gifts

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell

Carolyn Love in memory of Kathy Robertson

Victor & Margie Newman in memory of Jeremy Newman

Dolly Mobley in memory of Shannon Scheffler

Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice Lingle



## 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](mailto: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.

## Missing You

I just can't believe it...  
The sun still rises and sets,  
The moon and stars still shine,  
The flowers still bloom,  
The birds still sing.  
I expected a change in everything.  
I just can't believe it...  
It still gets dark and light,  
The ocean still has waves,  
The rain still rains,  
The wind still blows,  
Is it because they do not know?  
I just can't believe it...  
I thought the world would stop  
When in my house  
I found an empty chair,  
A missing smile.  
I thought it would stop  
For just a while.  
I just can't believe it...

*Gretta Viney ~ TCF, Yakima, WA*

## The Gate to Tomorrow

In memory of Todd Mennen

There is a gate that each of us has unknowingly passed through. This gate opens only one way—once we have passed through this gate we cannot return to the other side. Each of us stepped through the gate at a different time and in a different way. This gate opens to the world of parents whose children have died; it is their gate to every tomorrow. There is no other place that compares with life in this world beyond the gate; there is no sorrow like the sorrow inside the gate. The numbing pain and perpetual agony we experience when first stepping through this gate are so overwhelming that we often don't immediately realize that there will be no return. But we will never return to life before the gate.

The new world inside the gate is populated with friends who are strangers and strangers who are friends. Our perspective on life has changed forever. Few of our friends from life before the gate will linger with us now; these people are now the strangers. Our pain is all encompassing; they have lives to live, things to do, plans to make, happiness to capture. We are no longer part of their picture. Rare is the friend who stands by us inside the gate—stands by us until one of us dies and leaves the world inside the gate. The strangers who are now friends live inside the gate with us. Some have just come through the gate; others have been here a long, long time. But these strangers who are now friends share our experience; they understand our need to talk about our children, each life and each death. They applaud our tiny advances toward acceptance and serenity and peace. Although we can never go back to life before the gate, we now have our compassionate friends—once strangers but now kindred souls who share our lives and our world.

Life will not be the same again, yet life can be good again. Inside the gate we will each find ourselves with the help of our compassionate friends. They listen carefully to stories about our child. They know our child's name better than they know our name. And that's how we want it to be. Remember our children. Remember with us.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX*



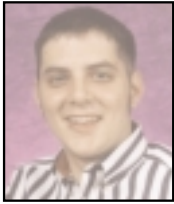
Visit us online at [www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org)



*We need not walk alone.*

"We quickly realize there are no words to describe the experience after losing a child. For those who have not lost a child, no explanation will do. For those who have, no explanation is necessary." —*Mary Lingle*

### February Birthdays



**Justin Clakley**  
2-25-83 ~ 5-15-03  
Son of Teri Clakley



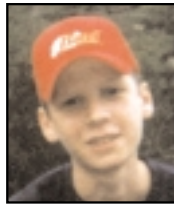
**Michelle "Missy" Green**  
2-09-69 ~ 1-30-93  
Daughter of Elena Glasscock



**Caleb Scott Jones**  
2-27-86 ~ 7-24-03  
Son of Lee Ann Colwell



**Shane McDade**  
2-17-85 ~ 4-12-03  
Son of Lajeania Culligan



**Sean Smith**  
2-2-87 ~ 10-27-01  
Son of Randy & Judy Smith



**Mary Jennifer Stone**  
2-22-81 ~ 9-21-96  
Daughter of Dick & Denise Stone



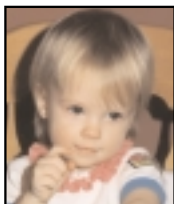
**John Andy Terrell**  
2-11-72 ~ 11-25-03  
Son of David & Teresa Terrell



**Cheryl Heerd**  
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81  
Granddaughter of Larry Batte



**Ijuan Deshaun Simms**  
2-20-79 ~ 11-7-01  
Son of Sharon Simms



**Candice Lingle**  
2-21-91 ~ 11-8-93  
Daughter of Mary Lingle



**Cheryl Heerd**  
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81  
Granddaughter of Larry Batte



**Jackie Heerd**  
6/30/1946 ~ 2/22/1981  
Daughter of Larry Batte



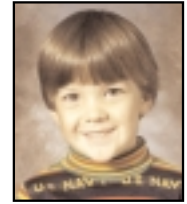
**Ryszard Spakovsky**  
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98  
Son of Sherrell & Greg Smith



**Michael Schmidt**  
3-11-83 ~ 2-10-03  
Son of Patricia Jeffery



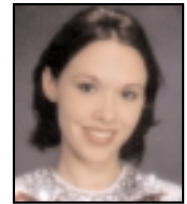
**John Wallace**  
7-1-80 ~ 2-2-99  
Son of Barbara Wallace



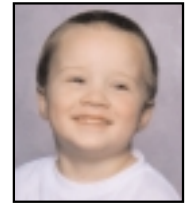
**Richard Heerd**  
10/31/76 ~ 2-22-81  
Grandson of Larry Batte



**Darell Bolton**  
7-21-61 ~ 2-22-2003  
Brother of Kathey Bolton-Polk



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



**James Brady Langston**  
10-13-96 ~ 2-15-01  
Son of Jaime Langston Davis

**Thank you** for your generous donations to TCF of Tyler. These 'love gifts' allow us to provide our local chapter with special events, the TCF Newsletter, our Web site and more!

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





*We need not walk alone.*

"I don't think of him every day; I think of him every hour of every day."  
—Gregory Peck, in an interview many years after his son's death

## Sixteen Years Later

How do we describe the emotions experienced when we lose our child? Are there words?

Heartbreak. Yes heartbreak would be appropriate. When your child dies, your heart breaks. But it is more than breaking. The heart stops—for the longest time. During that time, we are not sure we even want it to start again. While it is not beating, we cannot breathe. A long as we are not breathing, we do not think about the pain that we know will come with the next breath. Our heart is silent, no lub-dub. Our breathing is silent, no air. It is like drowning on dry land. Like trying not to breathe under water, for we know the breath will kill us. We feel guilty to be alive. Why should we breathe if our child isn't?

"IT'S NOT FAIR," we scream. And we are right, it is not fair. I am the oldest. If one of us has to die, it should be me. That's the way it works. I die first, not my child

Anger. Yes anger sounds right. We are mad—mad-dog mad. We don't know whom to blame. We would blame God, but that just doesn't seem right. God wasn't driving the car. But He could have stopped it. He could have prevented it. He could have healed the wounds. He could have—but He didn't. Why?

How many times do we scream "WHY"? Who remembers? Whom are we screaming to? I guess it is to God—who else. There is no one else to scream to. We await a reply. We scream "Why God?" and we wait for an answer. We would love to hear one: "Because it was her time." "For every life there is a season." "Her purpose on earth was completed." "It was her reward." "She had suffered enough." "Trust me, I have it all under control." We wait in the stillness, our eyes to heaven, our ears strained to the silence, our hands lifted to the sky, with hearts wide open. Nothing. No sign, no words, no voices inside our heads. Nothing.

We pray to die. "Take me, not her." "Take me with her." "She cannot go without me—take me." "TAKE MEEEEEEEE!!!" Nothing. We live on. Despite our desire to go with them, we stay here.

"God," we cry, "How do you expect me to live without her?" "How can I go on in a world without my child. She is my life, my breath, my heartbeat. How can I live without my heart?" We do.

We take that next breath, and it is as painful as we expected it to be—even more so. Our heart beats again, and a knife stabs with every beat. We can't stand the pain, but for some unexplainable reason we don't want the pain to stop. I must hurt, it is the least I can do. Feeling better would mean I don't miss her. That can never be. Oh sweet pain, please never leave.

Gradually it eases, though. We realize one day that we just laughed again. We realize that we went a few minutes without thinking of them. As we doze off to sleep, we realize that we did not cry today. We did not speak their name today. We had peace today.

And it scares us to death. "Oh no, this cannot be. I am getting over her death. I am going on with my life without her. I am healing." We feel that we are disgracing them, dishonoring them, neglecting them because we feel better.

How many of us lose precious healing ground because we feel that way? Too many. We all know the feeling. It is one of the millions of emotions that only a bereaved parent can feel. Guilt for feeling better. We cling to our grief as though it was our trophy for enduring the loss. That sounds harsh, but I believe it is true for many of us. I can say it, because I have done it. My child died, the least you can do is respect my pain.

As I wrote the last line, I feel almost ashamed to admit that I have done exactly that. I have worn my grief like a banner, "My child died." I bring it up in nearly every conversation. When I meet someone for the first time, I put my banner across my chest. "My name is Sam Smith. I live in East Texas. My child died. Pleased to meet you. My child died." Not only do I never want to forget, I want to make sure everyone else knows. Why do I do that? Do I really want pity that badly, or do I search for the opportunity to share my pain? I think it is neither of those reasons. I think it is because I have a testimony to share. I survived the death of my daughter for one reason—Jesus Christ saved me. I know that many people are lost, because they are missing the most important thing—Jesus. I know that one of the most important results of Stacey's death is to help others find Jesus and know the power of His death and resurrection. He saved me. He will surely save them.

Sixteen years later, I still grieve. I miss her as much today as I did on October 4, 1988. But I can breathe normally. My heart beats without pain. I can speak her name without crying. I can look at old family pictures of her and smile. I can drive by the accident site without falling apart. I don't take alternate routes any more. I don't feel as though I have to go to her grave every day. I can read her letters, and even watch home movies of her (although, that is still the hardest). I am o.k., but only because of Jesus.

If we have never met, and we happen to some day, I will probably tell you about Stacey. I will tell you about all my children. I will say that I have four daughters. Stacey, my first child, is in heaven. I will probably tell you about Jesus. If you appear interested, I will tell you a beautiful story about a dad in an I.C.U. room with his dying daughter. I will tell you about a miracle—not the miraculous healing of my daughter, but of myself. It may bring tears to your eyes, but it will bring joy and peace to your heart. That is my answer to "Why, God?" So that others will know, "Jesus saves and heals. Jesus loves—all of us."

Stacy died, and her dying left a hole in my soul. Jesus filled it in with His love. You may have a hole in your soul, too. Jesus will fill it. Every hole in every soul is Jesus shaped and Jesus sized. Ask Him to fill it, and He will. Sixteen years later that is all I need to know. Beloved, that is all you need to know as well.

Sixteen years later, I understand so much more about the love of God. We are told that we will never be given more than we can handle, but that is true only if we trust God to get us through. We can feel so alone, but we are never alone. God has a perfect plan for all of us. We have all we need to have peace. With Jesus as our Savior, we have the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. We have guardian angels to watch over us. They are always with us. Those are absolute truths, and if we will accept those truths we will have peace. We who have survived the death of a child have a story to tell. If we know that Jesus is healing us, we have a beautiful testimony to share; and we should share it—in whatever way we feel led to do so. Sharing our story not only helps others, it helps us. The more we share, the more we heal.

One last thought. At the candle lighting service for The Compassionate Friends, the Garth Books song was played that has the line, "I could have missed the pain, but I would have had to miss the dance." The only thing worse than losing Stacey would have been never knowing her at all. As painful as it was to lose her, I praise God that she was in my life for 16 years. I look forward to heaven all the more because I know she will be there. Thank God for His perfect plan. Amen.

*Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministries ~ TCF, Tyler, Texas*





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