



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, July 19, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

See our announcements on page 3 for a map and details about our new meeting location!

Contact

Phone: (903) 258-2547
Web Site: www.TylerTCF.org
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Chapter LeaderTina Loper
Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat Settle
Newsletter/Web SiteMary Lingle
Steering Committee: Tina Loper,
Pat Settle, Sam Smith, Sherri Tutt
Margie Newman, Mary Lingle

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.

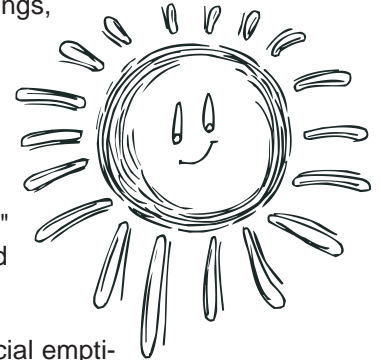
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Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.



For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Sascha Wagner

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.

"Tearless grief bleeds inwardly." —*Christian Nestell Bovee*

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."

Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind-at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you.

We've said it many times: YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE. Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change-it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

Elizabeth Estes ~ TCF, Augusta, GA

Newly Bereaved . . . Burden of Grief

As I struggle with words to find answers
Reading and writing my pain
The pages grow blurred before eyes that are tired
From this crushing emotional drain.
The relief that comes from the writing
Parallels what I feel when I read—
To open myself to the torture of loss
Seems to soothe this unbearable need.
There's no pleasure in life at this moment
It's an effort to get through the day
And I labor to stay above water...
But the shoreline is so far away.
So I pick up a pen or a book about grief
And it serves as a raft for a while.
And I hope, as my tears fall on pages of pain
That I'll learn once again how to smile.
As I swim toward the shore of acceptance
I pray for the peace of belief
That heaven's your home and you're waiting for me
Then I'll finally be free of this grief.

*Sally Migliaccio ~ TCF Babylon, NY
From Tracey, An Extraordinary Child*



We need not walk alone.

“Grief. The pain now is part of the happiness then. That's the deal.” —C.S. Lewis



Love Gifts

Jack & Julie LePelley in memory of Trey LePelley

Margie & Victor Newman in memory of Jeremy Newman

Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice Lingle

The Daniels Family in memory of Sarah Harvey

Mary Delaney in memory of Ryan Delaney

Sherri Tutt in memory of Lisa Tutt



To The Compassionate Friends

Through a horrible tragedy we become a united family with each and everyone who has lost someone they hold dear. As we unite to help others through their tremendous grief, we in return become one step closer to healing our own hurting hearts. “To the world you might be only one person, but to that one person you might be the world!” How true that statement is, and the Compassionate Friends organization has been that one special person to me and to many who have lost loved ones. What better place to turn for comfort but to others who have endured that same pain. I would like to thank the TCF organization for being there for me during the past three months since my son’s death. The special cards and emails always come at just the right times. I gain strength through my faith, family and friends. My prayer is that in the months to come that God might place someone in my life that I too will be able to comfort.

Butterfly Kisses, Julie LePelley ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

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

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler has a new meeting location! We will be meeting at 707 W. Houston St., see map below. The new TCF phone number is (903) 258-2547.

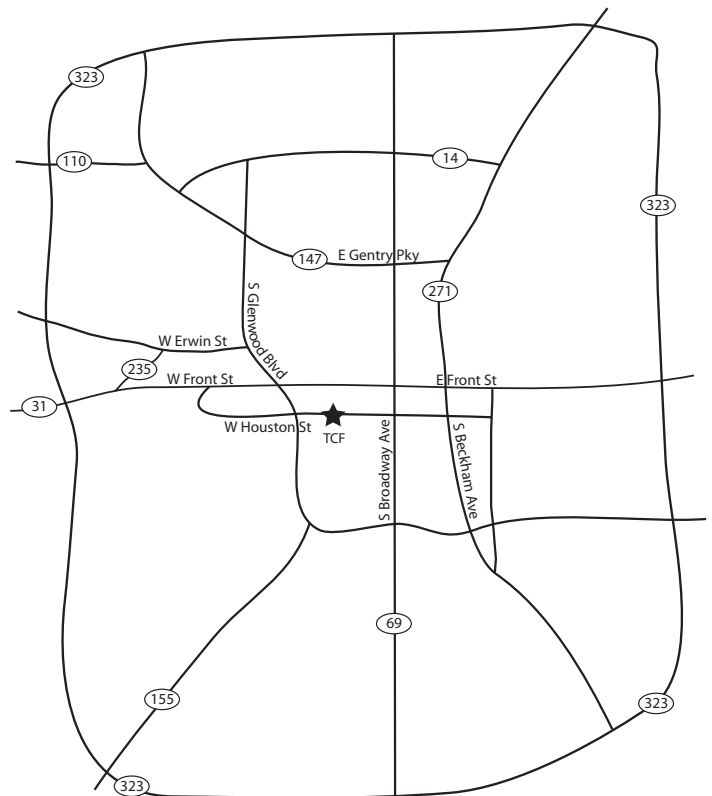
We’re excited to have a more permanent meeting place.

Don’t forget about our first Friday of the month dinner meeting. This casual night out will be held at El Charro’s on Fifth Street on July 1. We hope to see you there!

Other dates to remember: October: Green Acres Craft Fair; **November:** Lacks Furniture Christmas Tree and Canned Food Drive; **December 11:** World Wide Candle Lighting

We still have several wooden butterflies from the Butterfly Release personalized with your child’s name. If you would like your child’s butterfly, they are available for \$5.00 each plus \$2.00 postage during the month of July.

Map to New Meeting Location



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





We need not walk alone.

"In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer."
—Albert Camus

July Birthdays



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



Robert Lynn McMahan
7-18-72 ~ 3-6-92
Son of Dana Wright



Ryan Delaney
7-10-80 ~ 7-20-03
Son of Mary Delaney



Stephen "Chadwick" Williford
7-4-62 ~ 8-19-00
Son of Janet Marie Dobbs-Neal



Terry Wayne Brown
7-13-69 ~ 5-27-03
Son of Claudette Brown



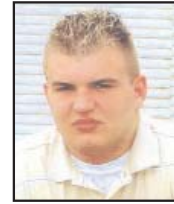
Jamie Allen
5-24-75 ~ 7-8-01
Son of Cindy Allen



Brian Christopher Harris
6-8-72 ~ 7-29-99
Son of Jolyn & Richard Harris



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



Caleb Scott Jones
2-27-86 ~ 7-24-03
Son of LeeAnn Colwell



Ryan Delaney
7-10-80 ~ 7-20-03
Son of Mary Delaney



Brian St. Clair
4-24-60 ~ 7-26-97
Son of Janet St. Clair

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!



Lisa Marie Tutt
3-20-87 ~ 7-30-04
Daughter of Steve & Sherri Tutt



Brian David Stewart
5-16-56 ~ 7-8-56
Son of Melton & Joyce Stewart



Visit us online at www.TylerTCF.org



Allison Carson
10-29-92 ~ 7-5-93
Granddaughter
of Phil & Ann Brown

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





We need not walk alone.

“We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.”
—Martin Luther King

And Then There Were Two . . .

Ten years ago my son and his wife were blessed with identical triplet daughters. The girls were all tiny, and the prognosis was solid for two of them. Caitlin, Julia and Lauren were born on the 18th of April. It started out as a happy day. Todd was in the delivery room, camera in hand, as each girl was placed in an incubator. First out of the delivery room was Lauren, content but tiny. After about 25 minutes Julia was ushered out in her little portable incubator. We waited a very long time for Caitlin. Finally she was brought out, many nurses and a doctors surrounded her incubator. I stood near the elevator and waited for them. I looked at her—hand respirator for breathing, intravenous lines, blue in color, and tears streamed down my face. “Are you a relative?” one of the nurses asked. I told them I was a grandmother. “Would you like to look at her for a few seconds?” The nurse could see my sorrow. All eyes avoided mine. I looked at Caitlin and knew, I just knew, this would not end well.

Todd came out to the hall, still wearing scrubs. He was happy and beaming, but expressed concern about Caitlin. I nodded. He asked me if I'd seen her. I nodded again. He told me they had taken her to a corner of the delivery room and spent a long time with her. I nodded again. “It's not good, is it mom?” he asked. I shook my head and hugged him. I told him how beautiful they all were and that the other two were healthy despite their size.

Todd spent some time with his wife, then proceeded to visit his three daughters. When he got to the neonatal ICU he knew that he would be staying there. We all scrubbed and went to see the babies. We touched their little feet. But we weren't allowed to see Caitlin. Only Todd was allowed in her area. My son stayed in the neonatal ICU with Caitlin. He got to know the nurses and doctors and other parents while he was visiting with Julia who was also in level 1. I left the hospital about 10:30 p.m. Todd remained in the neonatal unit with Caitlin.

The next morning I awoke to a phone call from Todd. He'd spent the night with Caitlin. She was still hand bagged, a nurse was manually pumping air into her lungs. He thought she had a chance. He would stay with her, he said. About 11 am he called and we talked. He hadn't eaten anything, and I asked what he would like as I was driving down to the hospital. “You don't have to do that, mom,” he said. But I knew I had to be there.

I arrived with the special food he'd requested and we sat in the visitors' lounge outside the neonatal area. Todd was hungry and exhausted. We talked. “I don't know what I'll do if she dies, mom”, he cried. I cried, too. I knew what was coming and I knew it would be soon. I told him that if she were meant to live, she would live. He didn't want to accept that.

We walked to his wife's room for a quick visit and the phone rang. The family needed to return immediately to the neonatal ICU. Todd pushed his wife's wheelchair, her mother and I walked silently through the tunnels. The long walk was punctuated by the clicking of heels on the concrete floor. The tunnel echoed. None of us said anything. There were no words. This was the worst time.

We arrived at the neonatal unit and were immediately ushered into a special room. A nurse was still providing manual respiration for Caitlin. The doctors said it was hopeless and this couldn't continue. Her heart and lungs were not developed. Todd reached over and touched his tiny daughter, tears rolling down his face onto her little blanket. His heart was broken. Caitlin was disconnected from the tubes and the manual respiration was stopped. Todd's wife held Caitlin and then Todd held her. I stood behind my son, hand on his shoulder, watching him as he suffered this unimaginable and immense pain. Pain that I couldn't cure. Todd asked if I wanted to hold her. I said, “you hold her, she knows your voice. I'll hold her later.”

Caitlin's little cap fell off. Her eyes were closed, her mouth a tiny rosebud with lips slightly parted. I touched her arm and head. “She's gone, sweetheart,” I whispered. The nurse came over, checked vitals and confirmed a grandmother's intuition. I hugged Todd and told him that this was the worst pain he would ever endure. He wept and his body shook from shock, pain and exhaustion. We lingered for a while, looking at the baby whose life was never meant to be. Finally, all left the room but me. Caitlin was peacefully wrapped in her little blanket, a beautiful child whose time had come. I touched her sweet face and tiny hands. Her soul was gone, but her fight for life both before and after her birth touched my Irish heart.

Later Todd told his son, “Caitlin didn't make it, Buddy.” His son crawled up on his lap and patted Todd's head and arm. There were no words. We were all devastated.

Now it is I who weep for my lost child. Todd was killed December 19, 2002, and his pain is now my pain. The proud father of five, a man whose life was so extraordinary, whose attitude was so upbeat, whose love for his children was so deep and profound, whose accomplishments were so significant, was now gone. I like to think that he has joined Caitlin and together they are happy.

Thinking of that day, 10 years ago, brings tears to my eyes. I love my son more than life. I couldn't imagine his pain. Now I live his pain. My only child was ripped from my life. Life isn't fair, life isn't equitable. There is no reason. It just is. I no longer have to keep it together for my son as I did on April 19, 1995. I no longer try. If I have a bad day, that's the way it is. If my friends don't like my tears or my sorrow, there's nothing to be said. If others don't like the ways I choose to memorialize and remember my child, that's fine. Those who know me, really know me, understand that my pain is deep and it is forever. My tears are pure and cleansing. Life will never be as good as it was. The love for my child is real. He lives on in my heart. He is my inspiration to go on, to keep on living, to make the best of what I am given. For that is what he did. I keep him in my heart—he is one special son.

Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX ~ In Memory of Todd Mennen and Caitlin Mennen

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

We rely entirely on voluntary donations to support our group. With your help we can continue to provide our valuable services to everyone affected by the loss of a child.

Yes, I would like to make a donation in the amount of \$ _____ . (Please make check payable to TCF)

My donation is made in honor and in memory of _____ .

Tyler TCF greatly appreciates your support. These 'love gifts' are used to provide our monthly newsletter, printed materials, website, special events, our library and more.



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





**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

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www.TylerTCF.org