



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 6, Issue 5

Tyler, Texas

May 2005

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, May 17, 6:30 p.m.
Clinical Associates of East Texas
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

Contact

(903) 581-2831 or (903) 780-7104
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Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat Settle
Newsletter/Web SiteMary Lingle
Steering Committee: Tina Loper,
Pat Settle, Sam Smith, Sherri Tutt
Margie Newman, Mary Lingle

National Organization Information

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P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
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www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with drinks and 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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Month of May Brings Tears, Fond Memories

The month of May is a time of many memories and many tears for mothers who have lost a child to death. The memories are tied to our natural association of May as being the "Mother's Day" month. We can't escape the reminders. Second only to the Christmas season in commercialization, Mother's Day is thrust at us in television commercials, billboards, radio spots, magazine and newspaper ads and special features, local and national news shows and each store we enter. Heart breaking, emotional, touching movies or television shows are aired in May in big part because of Mother's Day. The reminders are endless. Our emotions build and build until we think we will snap.

Most of us have memories of happier Mother's Days, time spent with our children opening their gifts and reading their special cards, talking, laughing and enjoying the moment. The counterpoint to our memories is that Mother's Day intensifies the deep void that will always remain in our lives. In the words of one mother, "One day after my son had been gone for several months, I realized that this nightmare life is my life forever." May is doubly difficult for this mother because of Mother's Day and because her son died in May. May is doubly difficult for me as my son was born in May.

Even without a birth or death anniversary, May can be extremely stressful and sad. We enter the countdown on the first day of May. Some of us begin to improve after Mother's Day passes, some of us can't let go until the month ends. Some of us suffer lingering effects for several weeks or months.

My first Mother's Day without my son was a horrifying time. No gifts, no cards, no call. I took all the cards he had given me for Mother's Day and put them on my piano—the time honored place in our home for special occasion cards. My second Mother's Day was different. I simply refused to acknowledge it. My husband gave me a card and a small gift, and we left it at that. A few tears, but we decided to relax and do things that would keep us away from the Mother's Day celebrations.

This will be my third Mother's Day without my son. I do miss him terribly; there will be no replacement for that relationship in my life. Unlike losing a parent, a spouse, a grandparent, a sibling or a friend, the loss of our child means the loss of a big part of ourselves. That is our new reality. What will I do this Mother's Day? I don't really know, but it will dawn on me that I should do one thing or another.

What you do this Mother's Day is your choice. You owe no explanation to anyone. 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. Our emotions are not intended to offend; but sometimes the pain is so overpowering that we must block out the world. And sometimes, we are able to overcome it. I will handle in the best way I can. So will you.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX
In Memory of my only child, Todd Mennen*

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.”

Stacey Marie’s Hope Chest

In a small storeroom beside the garage, there is a wooden chest. It was a project for my daughter's shop class in middle school. Stacey built it herself. She did a great job on it. She called it her hope chest, and she filled it with all sorts of keepsakes and memorabilia: mums and corsages, cards and letters from friends and relatives, gifts of all kinds, trinkets and special pieces of jewelry. Stacey was a wiz at putting jigsaw puzzles together, and we would tape them so they would not fall apart. They are in her hope chest. She collected unicorns, and some of them are in there. Her diary is in there, too, along with many other items that she considered important enough to keep forever.

Unfortunately, forever on this earth was not very long. About one year after Stacey built her hope chest, she left this life. On an October day in 1988, her life of barely 16 years ended and God took her home. She left us with holes in our hearts, beautiful memories and her hope chest. It is an invaluable keepsake for me, but now 16 years later I still can't find the courage to open it. I am not sure why. I have progressed to the point in my grief that I can do almost anything else: I can talk about her without crying, I can watch the home movies with her in them [sometimes], I can drive down the street where the accident happened, I can go weeks at a time without visiting her grave and not feel guilty. But that hope chest—that precious hope chest—simply contains memories I cannot bear to remember. I suppose that will be the final healing time, when I can open that chest and go through it. I really don't know how to explain it, but the hope chest seems almost too sacred to disturb, as though I would be violating a sacred shrine. That sounds silly, doesn't it?

I believe that somewhere deep in my heart I want to leave her hope chest undisturbed. I go in and look at it once in a while. Once I went in with the intention of opening it, but no. Maybe I feel that if I open it, the last of her memories will somehow disappear—that as long as the hope chest is there and just as she left it, that part of her will be there, too. Of course her memory would never leave; as long as I am alive and all that knew her are alive, she will be, too. Honestly, it is unexplainable. But that's O.K. I don't need to explain it. Somewhere in my soul I know exactly what I mean.

The day will come when I will be with Stacey in heaven. We will be gloriously reunited and spend eternity in the presence of the Lord. Will I open her hope chest between then and now? I do not know. If I do, I am sure it will be sweetly painful. If I do not, Stacey will tell me all that was in it, and we will laugh at my reluctance to open it. Knowing her wonderful sense of humor, she will get a good laugh out of it. I know I will, too. Meanwhile, I will enjoy the peace and comfort of knowing her hope chest is in that storeroom, and that my hope and assurance of seeing Stacey again is in Jesus Christ. May you have that hope and assurance, as well.

Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry ~ TCF, Tyler, TX
ssmithkate@aol.com



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“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

Announcements

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler would like to announce their **Second Annual Butterfly Release**. The event takes place May 14th, 2005, at the First Baptist Church south campus. The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization for families who have lost a child at any age and from any cause. This is a non-profit organization, operated entirely on the local level by volunteers. More than 250 people attended the Butterfly Release last year. Please contact Tina Loper at 903-594-2132 or Margie Newman at 903-561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Please let us know of any promotional opportunities available to help spread the word about this event.

You are invited to meet with us for dinner at El Charro's on 5th Street at 7:00 p.m., Friday, May 6. We are planning to meet for dinner the first Friday of every month and the locations will be announced.



Love Gifts

Thanks to the many people who donated their time and/or money to help with our operating expenses and to prepare for the upcoming Butterfly Release.

- Misty Morales in memory of Donna Mae Morales
- Pat & Clayton Turner in memory of Mark Turner
- Dale & Phylis Cavazos in memory of Chad Cavazos
- Charlotte Nelson in memory of Wade Goetze
- Janet St. Clair in memory of Brian St. Clair
- Joice Bass in memory of Gina Forrest
- Debbie & Floyd Holcomb in memory of Allen Price
- Connie Graebner in memory of Cheryl Cook
- Sherri Tutt in memory of Lisa Tutt
- Virginia Knott in memory of Bobby & Adam Knott
- Carolyn Kuhn in memory of Phillip Kuhn
- Brian & Lisa Harvey in memory of Sarah Harvey
- Tina Loper in memory of Christopher Loper
- Pat Settle in memory of Stephanie Settle
- Brookshire's (Gentry) donation for the Butterfly Release
- Brookshire's (Loop East) donation for Butterfly Release
- Brookshire's (Overton) donation for Butterfly Release
- Brian & Lisa Harvey collected the Brookshire's donations
- Anonymous Donation



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.

Graduation – A Time to Remember

I was driving down the road the other day, thinking of how the retail market makes any event an opportunity for revenue. Graduation seems to fall into that category, with cards and gifts for every Graduate. This time of year reminds me that my graduation from high school was a bittersweet time.

Really, it was the first time I had “surpassed” my older brother, David, in anything significant. I turned the age that he was when he died, 18, in the beginning of my senior year of high school. That year was difficult for me, as I felt that I was getting to move past where he had been cut short. Graduation day was no exception. I was happy to be getting out of high school, and looking forward to that coming August when I would go to college. But why was I getting to do these things, and not David? What made me so special that I got to stay here and experience these things? I still am not quite sure of the answer to those questions.

Graduation from high school was really just the first of many events which I have gotten to experience that David never will. College graduation, my wedding, and the birth of my two children are examples. And for me, each event has been a bit bittersweet.

The good news is this: that while time does make it easier to bear day-to-day activities without your sibling, each major event in your life presents itself as a new opportunity to remember your brother or sister, as well. For me, figuring that out was a huge relief, as it meant that my fear of forgetting David was not something I needed to worry about any more. His memory is just as alive for me today, 15-1/2 years later, as it was when I took that walk across the stage to accept my high school diploma.

Amy Baker Ferry ~ Heart of Florida TCF, Longwood, FL



Visit us online at www.TylerTCF.org



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"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*

May Birthdays



Stephanie Carol Hester
5-9-88 ~ 4-2-04
Daughter of Troy & Glenna Nicolls



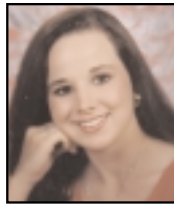
Jamie Allen
5-24-75 ~ 7-8-01
Son of Cindy Allen



Donna Morales
5-8-96 ~ 5-14-01
Daughter of Misty Morales



Tami Roberts
5-17-72 ~ 6-10-00
Daughter of Kenn & Ann Sommerville



Stephanie Harris
5-18-79 ~ 9-5-98
Daughter of Rick & Susan Harris

"...a bear wedged in great tightness."

"In a tape called, 'To Touch a Grieving Heart' there is a wonderful little reminder of the Winnie the Pooh story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight—so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort—and thus to help 'a bear wedged in great tightness.'

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being 'a bear wedged in great tightness.' And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that 'we need not walk alone.'

Opening remarks of Richard Edler's keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference

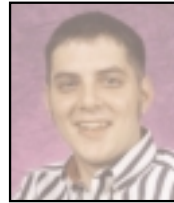
May Anniversaries



Brady Bryant
4-30-01 ~ 5-2-01
Son of Windy & Bradley Bryant



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



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



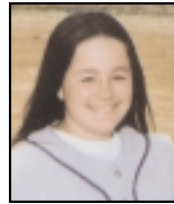
Samantha Johnson
9-23-86 ~ 5-13-02
Daughter of Dennis & Vicki Johnson



Kenny Ivy
3-10-65 ~ 5-12-85
Son of Jo Anne Ivy



Donna Morales
5-8-96 ~ 5-14-01
Daughter of Misty Morales



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



Marshall Charles Donahue
10-18-65 ~ 5-18-00
Son of Joyce Neely



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



Colleen Herriage
2/23/67 ~ 5/14/83
Daughter of Ruth Herriage

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



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"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."
—Dale Carnegie



The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

Second Annual

Live Butterfly Release

May 14th, 2005, 1:00 PM

For Details please call

903-581-2831 or 903-561-1447

log on to

TylerTCF.org



**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



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