



We need not walk alone.

"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*

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.”

The Gift of the TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting

May 11, 1995, 45 years after I had taken my first breath of life, would now sadly and incomprehensibly mark my precious daughter's last. On a blisteringly hot day, six of our family vacationed in Orlando on a freeway many hundreds of miles from our home in Minnesota. An alcohol-impaired driver fell asleep at the wheel crashing into the side of the car where Nina was seated thereby ending the promising life of my vibrantly beautiful 15-year-old daughter, killing her instantly. A week that began in joyful family togetherness ended in unspeakable tragedy.

Brokenhearted, we returned home to begin the daunting task of learning to live without Nina. We catatonically walked through the mind-numbing chore of making arrangements for our daughter's funeral, our house filled with people aiding us however they could. But soon after the service, the silence in our home was deafening. My son wondered aloud where everyone had gone. Though hard to conceive that the sun still rose and set every day; that people continued to work, breathe, laugh and love, I undoubtedly knew the answer to his question; they had returned to the normalcy of their untainted existence while our lives felt irreparably shattered.

While others had gone back to the “real world”, even in the midst of my cavernous grief I knew I had to preserve Nina's memory; I needed to find others who also desired their loved ones not be forgotten, realizing that it had to be another bereaved parent. I also needed reassurance there was hope that the raw pain of my loss would not continue forever, and that I was not alone on this most difficult of journeys. Thankfully, the funeral director in our city led me to The Compassionate Friends (TCF), a self-help group for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. There I found the support and understanding that I so desperately craved, along with many distinctive, creative ways from seasoned grievers to ensure that Nina would be forever remembered.

This became particularly important as I neared the first Christmas without Nina. They showed me I could bring her into the holiday season she loved so much by attending our chapter's annual holiday candle lighting. A few short years later, I became involved in chapter leadership. During that time, the TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL) came into existence and culminated into what is believed to be the world's largest candle lighting. Held the second Sunday of December at 7:00 p.m. in each time zone around the world candles are lit for one hour. As the candles burn down in one time zone, they are lit in the next, creating a virtual 24-hour wave of light around the globe.

The past few years I have been the MC for our chapter's program in conjunction with the WCL. From my vantage point, I clearly see each tear-stained face. Though the room is dimly lit in the beginning, as each flame is lit for a child gone too soon, the room gradually becomes bathed in a warm and peaceful glow. The candles are held proudly aloft in a show of fortitude and solidarity, with the belief that our children look down and see our lights of love and hope lifted heavenward, signifying that though gone is the life, never is their light.

The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting is the gift I give myself (and Nina) each holiday season, and many family members and friends gift me with their presence at the chapter event or light a candle at 7 p.m. in remembrance of Nina. For all of us whose precious children have died it is a beautiful and special way to ensure forevermore “...that their light may always shine.”

With gentle thoughts over the holiday season, and always...
Cathy L. Seehuetter, ~ TCF, St. Paul Chapter



We need not walk alone.

"To be in one's own heart in kindly sympathy with all things; this is the nature of righteousness." —Confucius

Love Gifts



Mike & Julie Brosang in memory of Adrian Hampton -
200 long-stemmed roses for the Candle Lighting Ceremony

Carol Johnson in memory of Jared Sheets -
donation of a desk

Carol Thompson in memory of Sarah -
donation of books

Don & Leslie Dixon in memory of Austin -
donation of a butterfly lamp

Dale & Phyllis cavazos in memory of Chad

Charlotte Nelson in memory of Wade Goetze

Joyce Stewart in memory of Stephanie Settle

Mr. & Mrs. James Crawford in memory of Jared Sheets -
donation for Candle Lighting

Shand & Carol Johnson in memory of Jared Sheets -
donation for Candle Lighting

Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle in memory of Stephanie

Tina Loper Deramus in memory of Christopher

Ike Weatherly in memory of Brandon, Cameron & Diana

Doyle & Sherry Smith in memory of Scottie Baker

Diane Ecker, Taylor & Blake Davis in memory of Forrest

Jimmy & Cindy Carrington in memory of Travis Welch

Mary Lingle in memory of Jake Higgins

Carol Thompson in memory of Sarah -
donation of butterfly flag

Bridging The Gap Ministries -
Tyler meeting location

Jerry & Judy Olson in memory of Kim Pryor -
refreshments & meeting place for the Athen's meeting

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

Special Thanks!

A special thanks to Claudette Brown, in memory of Terry Brown, for pledging a monthly donation. Claudette lives too far away to make it to the TCF meetings, but appreciates the newsletter and TCF events.

A special thanks to Dale & Phylliss Cavazos, in memory of Chad, for their regular donations to TCF of Tyler.

Announcements

Our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony is Dec. 14, 2008 and will be held at Crossroads Community Church, 13730 Hwy. 155 South, Tyler. The service begins at 6:30 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. Please consider volunteering to help read a poem, set up the stage, coordinate volunteers, etc. (See flier on page 8. Please post at your church, office or wherever you deem appropriate.)

Lack's Tree Decorating: Thanks to all who helped decorate the tree at Lack's on Tues., Nov. 11. Donations of canned food items to be donated to the East Texas Food Bank will be accepted until Sat., Dec. 13. The tree with the most-donated canned goods will receive a check for \$200.

Athen's Area Meeting: The Tyler TCF meeting is held in the Athen's area the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. **Directions:** The church is located on 198 and Manning Street, Mabank, TX, near Gun Barrel City. On Manning street you can only turn one way. There is also an Eye Center on the corner. You will see the church behind the liquor store and there is an Italian restaurant across the street from where you turn. If you need directions or would like to carpool to the meeting, call Pat at (903) 570-8412 or the TCF cell phone at (903) 258-2547.

New Fundraiser: We have placed a donation box at our meeting place for you to drop off old cell phones for a new fundraiser. We will also accept cell phones the night of the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Yard Sale Donations! If you would like to help with, or donate items for our fundraising yard sale, please contact us for drop off or pick up at (903) 258-2547. We especially need larger household items, volunteers to take on this project, and suggestions for a good location.

We appreciate all our newsletter sponsors for 2008! Please contact us if you would like to sponsor a newsletter. Atlantis Computer Solutions, Susan Cason Parks, LCSW, Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice, Patricia Miller in memory of Shanna Redmond, Jim & Linda Crawford in memory of Jared Sheets, Carol & Ted Thompson in memory of Sarah, Don & Leslie Dixon in memory of Austin, Jim & Cheri Zucca in memory of Leah and Onie Gorman in memory of Susie.

Special Thanks!

Thanks to the following for helping with the 2009 Candle Lighting Ceremony: Fender Exploration Company, Mike & Julie Brosang in memory of Adrian Hampton, Robert Perry more with Lloyd James Funeral Home, Gap Broadcasting and Crossroads Community Church

Special thanks to Bill Skillerns and Steven Sikes at Skillerns Business Systems for helping us with the copying of our newsletter. Skillerns is located at 1604 Grande Blvd. in Tyler.





We need not walk alone.

“Next to love, sympathy is the divinest passion of the human heart.”
—Edmund Burke

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 Thoene



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



Alexander Fleming
12-4-89 ~ 5-8-07
Son of Amy Fleming



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 Harvey & Lisa Kirley



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





We need not walk alone.

"I think of heaven as a garden where I shall find again those dear ones who have made my world." —*Unknown*

December Anniversaries



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



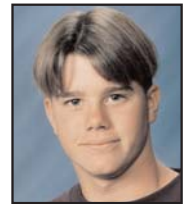
Gena Forest
8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98
Daughter of Joice Bass



Margie Starkey
7-15-91 ~ 12-3-07
Daughter of Bettie Abbie



Mike Loughmiller
11-14-62 ~ 12-6-07
Son of
Suzanne Loughmiller



James Fincke
7-15-80 ~ 12-25-99
Son of Sara Fincke



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



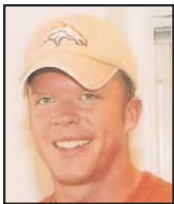
Christopher Loper
4-28-94 ~ 12-21-00
Son of Tina Loper



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

Frost

On a cold winter's day
Frost etches a beautiful artistry
On everything it touches every blade of grass
It glitters and sparkles and for moments
Before the sun comes out and the master piece evaporates
before our eyes we stand memorized cherishing the
wondrous sight

Like frost our children were only here for a brief moment
But while they were here
Whether it was moments in the womb
Days, months or many years
They etched their beautiful artistry of love
On our hearts and lives and all of those
They touched

Unlike frost what they etched is forever
It is something that we can cherish and hold onto always
We stand here tonight lighting a candle to remember
children we will never forget
Their light their spirits their artistry lives on
And like the flame of the candle gives warmth on a
cold winter's night

And light in the darkness
The love our children gave us still remains
It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow
It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness
That we feel
And it gives us hope

*Julie Short ~ In Loving Memory of Kyra
2007 Southeastern TCF ~ Candle Lighting Ceremony*

*Condolences to Martha Welch,
whose husband, Travis,
died October 24th.*





We need not walk alone.

"A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved." —*Unknown*

Guilty, Your Honor: The Burden of Guilt After a Suicide

By Karyl Chastain Beal (Article Source: <http://ezinearticles.com>)

Guilty, Your Honor, I whisper.

Have you ever done anything so horrible that you would prefer to hide in a dark closet for the rest of your life than have someone find out you did it? Have you ever done something so bad that even remembering what you did causes you to hyperventilate and shake?

I have. I've made too many mistakes in my life. I should have done better.

Sometimes I envision myself standing before a judge who wears a long black robe, with my head hanging low in shame. I am holding tightly to a large bulging sack.

The judge with the long black robe says, "Hold your head up to answer me. Who are you?"

I answer him quietly. "I am a mother, a wife and a teacher."

"Were you a good mother?" the judge asks. I notice his eyes are staring impatiently into mine.

"No, Your Honor," I reply, shaking my head sadly. "I was not a good mother."

The judge says nothing, so I continue.

"I tried my best, but I made too many mistakes. I brought them to show you. They are all in this sack," I explain, straining to push the sack closer to him so he can see it better.

The judge looks at my sack and mumbles to himself, "Looks like this woman's got a ton of bricks here."

Then, he sighs and says, "Hmmm—how do you plead?"

"Guilty, Your Honor," I whisper. "Guilty."

The reality is, however, I carried that huge sack of guilt with me from the moment the officer told me that my teenage daughter, Arlyn, took her life. I found the largest sack I could and opened it. Then, I threw bricks of guilt into it, one by one.

In the sack, I placed bricks for each memory I had of the times I had raised my voice to my children. I placed more bricks in for times I punished them for making childish mistakes. If only I had been more patient.

In the sack, I stuffed bricks for each time I was too busy grading papers or washing clothes or talking on the telephone to give my children, the most precious people in my life, my undivided attention. If only I had kept my priorities straight.

In this sack also, I added bricks for memories of many times when I had failed to listen to my children with my heart. If only I had been wiser.

After Arlyn died, I walked around carrying my sack of guilt; it was a painful reminder that some of my actions could have contributed to the depression that led to her death. I did not pull the trigger that hot August day, but I felt as if I did.

To me, Arlyn's suicide provided tangible evidence that I had failed in the most important mission of my life—mothering. I deserved to have to spend the rest of my life lugging a heavy sack of bricks around.

This was almost a complete turn-around from the attitude I had before Arlyn's death. Prior to August 7, 1996, I had confidence in myself; I had achieved the goals I set, so I thought I knew it all. If there'd been a Miss Arrogance pageant, I would have won the crown.

But I was knocked to my knees when Arlyn died, and I would never stand tall again. Any crown on my head was shattered.

After Arlyn died, the world no longer made sense. I doubted every thing I had ever learned, my beliefs, and my values. Most of all, I saw myself as a huge failure in life.

So here I was, trying to muddle through each day, attached to this huge burdensome sack of guilt that I could not and would not put down.

Continued on next page.





We need not walk alone.

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.”
—Kahlil Gibran

Continued from page 6.

Ugh! My sack of bricks was so heavy: the bricks representing all the mistakes of my life were so heavy that I'd need the help of a bulldozer to move it, at least.

Most of the bricks in the sack had to do with Arlyn: sins of commission and sins of omission. Arlyn had killed herself, and the guilt I felt was consuming me.

Every day after I woke up, I'd stand at the foot of the huge ugly load and looked up at it. As much as I hated it, I felt connected to it. I sometimes reached out and stroked the bag up and down with one hand, never letting go with the other. It was MINE.

Day after day, I stood there, holding on to my sack full of bricks of guilt. Friends would walk by and shake their heads at me.

"Let go of your guilt, Karyl. It's not your fault!" they'd say, often shaking their heads in disgust. "You're wasting your life," others would say. "Arlyn would not want you to lug that sack around forever."

I tuned them out. What Arlyn would want or would not want did not matter. She was not here to speak out.

Sometimes, I'd try to explain how much I needed to hold on to the guilt, but they'd argue louder. So then, I closed my ears and turned away. They could not understand.

And so it was. Life went on for those around me, and I was alone. Except that I had my sack of guilt to keep me company.

But then one day, for no particular reason, I reached into the sack and pulled out one of the bricks. It was dated July 5, 1996. It said: I went to Germany, so I was not here to take care of Arlyn during her last month of life.

I thought about it. If I had been here, would I have noticed that something was wrong with Arlyn?

It's possible I would have.

At the same time, it's more probable that I wouldn't have noticed anything.

Arlyn was a master at deception, it seems; She'd been hiding her pain for years. So what makes me believe that she'd suddenly have changed and become transparent?

My tears began to fall then. I felt warm tears streaming down my cheeks. They were for Arlyn: Arlyn, my gentle little girl who was trapped in her own dark world by something beyond her ability to comprehend.

It hurt so badly to remember. So, so badly.

But then, the tears began to fall faster, and they felt even hotter against my face. These tears were different; they were for me.

I, too, was trapped in my own dark, lonely world, lugging this heavy load of guilt around. I, too, was trapped by something too complex for me to understand.

Did I really deserve the additional weight of the brick dated July 5, 1996, just because I went to Germany? Was I a terrible mother because I took a vacation that I had dreamed of for years?

In my heart, I knew that I had not neglected Arlyn by going on a vacation. In my heart, I knew that I did not need that extra brick adding weight to the overloaded sack.

But could I bear to toss it out? Would the world fall apart if I removed it from the sack?

I thought a while as I ran my hands over the brick. It felt rough, hard and cold.

Yes, I needed it. No I did not. Yes, I needed it. No I did not. Yes, I needed it. No I did not.

Finally, I placed the brick on the ground beside me, and waited. I heard no loud crashes of thunder; the earth beneath me did not tremble.

I looked up at the sack I'd been lugging. It really didn't look any different. I tried to push it; it didn't feel any lighter, but I knew it was. I had lightened the load just a little bit.

I took a step forward, and I felt a gentle breeze brush my cheek. A butterfly flitted by.





The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting

Come be part of the Candle Lighting Service.
For 24 hours straight candles stay lit in every time zone around
the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORGOTTEN
children. Please mark this day on your calendars.
All family members and friends are welcome.

Light a candle in memory of all children who have died.

Sunday, December 14, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.
Crossroads Community Church, 13730 Hwy. 155 S., Tyler, TX

Call The Compassionate Friends at 903-258-2547 or email
info@TylerTCF.org for information or to have your child's picture
added to the slide presentation. Visit our website for additional
information at www.TylerTCF.org. Candles are provided.



...that their
light may
always shine.

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

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711



We need not walk alone.



www.TylerTCF.org