



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Newsletter

Volume 39 No. 3 March 2018

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Paul Broome in memory of Cynthia Broome

Ed and Carolyn Buchanan in memory of Ashley Buchanan

Jerry and Cindy Wigglesworth in memory of Lee Wigglesworth

Chuck and Marlisa Prestwood in memory of krissy Prestwood

Nora Pinter in memory of Brad Houston (heaven date 03/01)

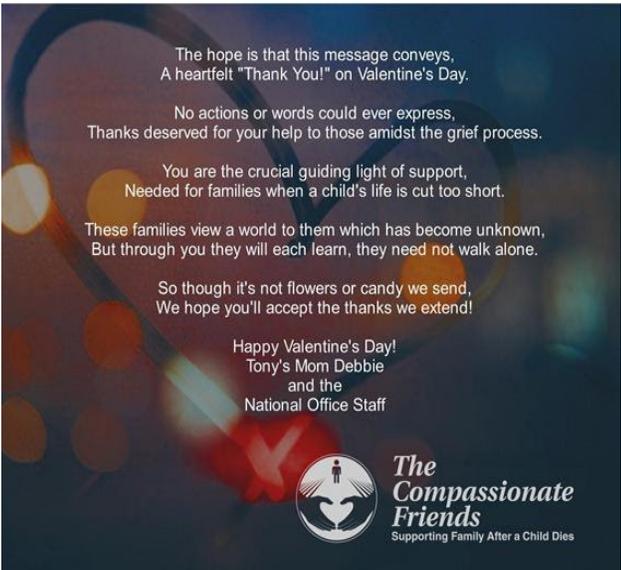
SECURITY SERVICE

Wiley and Beth Greer in memory of Benjamin (BEN) Greer

The Compassionate Friends THANK YOU for your donations

They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

Printing of TCF Monthly Newsletter: Courtesy of BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD OF MS

TCF JACKSON CHAPTER NEWS	TCF MEETINGS
<p style="text-align: center;">MEETING NOTES</p> <p>There were nineteen persons present with one new parent. Marcia Leteroff, our chapter leader, made announcements and welcomed everyone. The facilitator Tina Taylor, and the subject was Valentine's Day and honoring our deceased child. We decorated small bags with a heart. We painted and also added our child's name and any other special way we wanted. It was actually a fun and relaxing time. It takes small ways sometimes to find an outlet to do something so caring but fun, even for adults, a moment of joy and love to honor our child.</p> <p>HONORING A DECEASED CHILD ON VALENTINE'S DAY PROSE POEM</p> <p>Valentine's Day is a day for love, and a day to celebrate with those you love. It's also another holiday to remember your child, who can no longer celebrate with you. It is a difficult day for all us who grieve the loss of our child or children.</p> <p>So, I say, embrace Valentine's Day as a special day to commemorate your child and celebrate your love for him or her. Death may end our child's life, but not end the relationship we had and still have.</p> <p>Bonds of love are never severed by death, nor is the love we shared with our child.</p> <p>Thanks to everyone who came to the meeting. Your sharing about your child helps others in the group. Thank you for bringing food snacks. They are always delicious.</p> <p><i>Virginia Horton, treasurer TCF/Jackson, MS</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">A VALENTINE'S MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">A Quick Note for Our Chapter Leader, Marcia</p> <p>If for some reason our members are not receiving email reminders regarding monthly meetings and newsletter folding and you would like to be receiving these reminders, please let Marcia Leteroff know at mlefteroff@gmail.com, 601-937-1940 or in person. Sometimes I may miss adding you to contacts.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TCF MEETINGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2nd Tuesdays monthly at 7:00 p.m. Fondren Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall 3220 Old Canton Road, Jackson, MS</p> <p>Directions: Take West Lakeland Drive exit off I-55 North until it dead ends into Old Canton Road. Turn right, go to 2nd traffic light. Fondren parking lot is on the right.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Meeting</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Meeting: Tuesday, March 13th, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>Topic: Annual Covered Dish Celebration for our children.</p> <p>This month will be in celebration of the 40th years of Compassionate Friends. We are asking for everyone to bring their favorite dish, large enough to share. If you would like to bring your child's favorite food, that would be great, however, we do realize that for some this is still too painful to do. Former Chapter Leaders and long-term volunteers are encouraged to come but all members are welcome. It will be a great time of fellowship and sharing our children with each other.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*****</p> <p><i>Although our meetings are held in donated church facilities, The Compassionate Friends is not a religious organization, and espouses no religion affiliation or doctrines. Persons of all faiths (or no faith), creeds, color, and race are welcome.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Prenatal Bereavement Support Group</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">*1st Wednesday/ Noon UMC Cong. Ctr. Jackson Medical Mall For more information, call Kelly Hinson @ 601-815-7096</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*If the meeting date falls on a holiday—the following Wednesday</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>For Children Grieving the Death of a Loved One</u></p> <p>The McClean Fletcher Center—12 Northtown Drive, Jackson, MS offers peer support groups for children ages 4-18. This includes the child's family and meets every other week. For more information call:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jennifer at 601-206-5525</p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monthly 1st Tuesday – 7:00 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">River Oaks Hospital Lobby Classroom <u>MS SIDS ALLIANCE offers education to the public and professionals on risk reduction of SIDS and bereavement support.</u> Cathy Files - 601.955- 1057 Leslie Threadgill – 601-573-1458</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Newsletter folding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saturday, March 24th, 2018 at 4:00 pm at the Church. A reminder email will be sent out reminding you of this.</p>

Living Life Is Still an Effort

My husband’s family held a reunion in July. We planned to attend and told the family to count on us. But when it came time to buy the tickets and make a commitment, I found I couldn’t do it. I simply did not want to deal with the hassles of traveling, leaving home, getting out of my daily rhythm.

I am a different person since my child died. I am a different person than I was six months after my child died. And, I will be a different person in another year. I find that I am evolving; my basic personality is still intact, most of my mind works well enough, my perception of life, love, people and events is probably heightened but fairly unchanged. Still I am a different person.

Now I work at living my life. I make myself do the things that I once took for granted...such as getting dressed each day, going to work, handling a number of responsibilities I have chosen to accept. I make myself laugh at silly jokes. Sometimes I even have to force myself to really listen to others. I am surprised when I laugh spontaneously, smile for no particular reason or say something “prophetic”. What is going on here? Who am I? Why has the joy of life disappeared?

I believe I have found the answer to these questions and even to questions I haven’t yet asked. It lies in the nature of losing one’s child to death. Initially we work very hard to maintain sanity. Gradually we expand the boundaries of our lives. Carefully we add events, people, responsibilities and simple enjoyment. But our progress is measured in months and years, not days and weeks.

My awakening to this new reality came at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends. It has been rekindled at each meeting since then. I learn about myself by observing others. I note the change in their voice, their body language, their perspective. I see the sorrow in each parent. I see parents whose children have been gone for many years still weep openly and later talk about a special event they are planning. Then I see parents whose loss was recent yet they appear to be normal, controlled and sociable on many levels and they suddenly and mysteriously crumble before my eyes.

That’s the journey. We set our own limits as to what is acceptable for us. Over time we shift from minimalist boundaries to a good representation of the person we once were. We have major setbacks: birthdays, holidays, death anniversaries. We have minor setbacks: a picture, a forgotten scent, a baby shoe, a poignant memory. We sob, we scream, we withdraw. But we do go on. With the help of our Compassionate Friends, we move forward and are supported when we suffer a setback. We each deal with the many facets of our grief. We learn from others. We teach others. We grow from the dialogue. Our kindred spirits bring questions, answers and peace.

Who am I today? A fairly well-balanced mother of one beautiful child who no longer is alive. I am where I should be. When will I stop evolving? Probably never.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX*



Waiting for Answers

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring, air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn’t heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared *were* true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max’s life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. “How can I stop this pain?” I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. “Just do what feels right to you,” she said, “Listen to your heart. And we’ll be here to listen, too.”

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

*Mary Clark
In memory of Max
TCF, Sugar Land-SW Houston Chapter, TX*

Forgive Me

There's a hole where my heart used to be.

When I smile at you and say I'm okay,
Forgive me.

I know you want to help me but I turn you away,
Forgive me.

I show no interest, nor do I seem to care.
Forgive me.

For there's an emptiness now where my heart used to be.

*Alannah McGregor
TCF Victoria, AU
In Memory of my daughter and son, Angela and Stuart*



How to Comfort a Friend Who Is Grieving

No one wants to watch a friend suffering with grief, that natural emotional response to loss. It's a painful emotion to observe in anyone but even more so when it's our friend.

No one wants to see a friend who is sad. It's instinctual to want to ease their pain and sorrow and offer them comfort. Sometimes, because we cannot change the fact that someone has died, we feel inadequate; we feel we can't be helpful. While it's true we cannot bring back the deceased person to our grieving friend, we can ease our friend's distress and comfort them. Here are my thoughts on how to go about it.

First, be empathic by opening yourself up to the other person's pain and staying present to them. By that I mean be aware of their body language, their tears and sighs, their words or even their lack of words.

Second, make an effort to visit your friend as soon as you can after hearing of his or her loss, particularly if the person who has died was a significant part of your friend's life. Also, when possible and appropriate, make a concerted effort to attend the service or memorial because your bereaved friend will always remember those who took the time to come.

Third, remind your friend of some meaningful times you remember about their deceased loved one. For example, "Marilyn, your mom was so smart and funny. I remember when we were kids and how she dressed up during the holiday as Santa's elf. She always made people happy. I'm so sorry for your loss." Or, "Joe, your dad was the most patient man I ever knew. I remember his years of kindness and devotion to your mom after her stroke."

Fourth, take your friend's hand, touch them on the shoulder, hug them. Their body hurts now; it is aching with the absence of the lost person. Your compassionate touch will be merciful and comforting.

Fifth, tell them you will be there for them no matter how long they need to grieve. You see, the world wants us to hurry up and get on with things. This demand – whether from society or other people in your friend's life – doesn't work with the grieving process because loss, as love, is embedded deep in our souls and mourning cannot be rushed.

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Sixth, send a note, card or email every few weeks telling your friend you are thinking about them.

Seventh, remove from your speech this sentence: "I know how you feel." No one really knows how we feel even when the circumstances are similar; each person has his or her own unique experience of what losing that person means.

Eighth, comfort your friend with a few hopeful reminders that they, too, will be able to manage and survive this sad period. Comfort your friend by saying you will pray for them; that you grieve with them and that you are only a phone call, text or email away. That's what friends do for friends who are grieving. That's what friends are for.

by Mary Jane Hurley Brant, M.S., CGP - Grief Specialist

[Many thanks to Chuck Prestwood for bringing this article to our attention.]



Vulnerable

I have found in the years that have passed that **I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance.** The word "Anniversary" no longer holds a promise of celebration. Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be so emotionally devastating.

You'll excuse me if the bounce is gone from my step. Or the depth of my laughter has changed. Issues that were once monumental, now seem insignificant. Please excuse me if I don't commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed.

You'll excuse me if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days "to bear", rather than days to share and enjoy.

You'll pardon me if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and **I'll pardon you** for not understanding that my life will never be the same; that although I'll survive, there will always be sorrow.

*Joan Fischer
TCF Nassau County Chapter, NY*

OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

“They may be deceased by a few days or years, but we still miss them so much and still shed our tears.”

Birth Date	Child’s name	Parent’s name(s)	Cause
03/01	Patti Lynn Gary	Ms. Lynda F. Gary	Auto accident
03/02	John Wayne McFarland	John/Julia McFarland	Suicide
03/03	Carole Hanna Hargon	Jean H. Ainsworth	Cancer
03/03	Clayton Marble	France Marble	Cancer
03/09	Kevin Lefteroff	Marcia Lefteroff	Car wreck
03/11	Chad Aaron Pigg	Rick/Mary C. Pickens	Accidental gunshot
03/12	Lee Bailey Wigglesworth	Cindy/Jerry Wigglesworth	Drug overdose
03/12	John Robert “Robby” Barnette	Donna Barnette	Motorcycle accident
03/12	Sarah Louise Hollis	Jim/Linda Hollis	Auto accident
03/14	Scotti Lynn Mooney	Jill Calendar	Auto accident
03/15	Peck Cranston	Suzie/Phillip Cranston	Suicide
03/16	Brendan Chase Roberts	Deborah Roberts	Auto accident
03/17	Bryant Shanks	Dean/Pat Shanks	Auto accident
03/18	Britney Gail Brinlee	Reba Gail Walker	Accidental overdose
03/18	Britney Gail Brinlee	Belinda Woolard	Accidental overdose
03/19	Walter A. Booker	Tom/Gretel Ekbaum	Hit/run/Easter Sunday
03/20	Ross Allan Hailey	Ben/Charlotte Hailey	Suicide
03/23	Justin Lloyd Hartley	Ron/Terry Hartley	Cardiac Arrest
03/25	Deanna Boyd Knight	Wilma Davis	Leukemia
03/28	Sean Michael Thomas	Denise Douglas	Seizure
03/28	Conner Lind	Marty Lind	Heart Defect
03/28	George “Eddie” Chapman, Jr.	George/Emma Chapman	Vehicle accident
03/28	Jennifer Simmons	Sybil Simmons	
03/28	Walker Woodward	Nathan/Sherri Woodward	SIDS
03/30	Michael Ward	Melody Vaughn	Cancer
03/31	Lance Darryl Wroten	Bruce Wroten	Auto accident

Why I Attend TCF Meetings

After a busy day at work, when I’m rushing home to eat dinner, then hop back in the car again, going to a TCF meeting sometimes feels like just another thing added to an already busy day. Although there are days I hate my hectic lifestyle, that same hectic lifestyle is what disguises my pain. I think of my son every day, the moment I wake up, on the drive to and from work, and before my head hits the pillow every night. But the busyness is what keeps me from dwelling on a pain that is now all too familiar. Then I arrive. The same people, who were there for me at TCF from the beginning, almost five years ago, greet me. The faces that were once strangers, I now call friends. The “How are you doing?” greeting is genuine; they really listen and care when I tell them that things aren’t that great. I can be honest and know that THEY GET IT. As we go around the room and share our stories, I find myself saying, “I do that too ... I’ve thought about that too ... That’s something I’ve been struggling with too ...” When our meeting ends, on my drive home, I can’t believe I even hesitated on coming to the meeting tonight. I needed to be there. Although the pain of losing my son has subdued over time, it still remains. I’m thankful for TCF, a place I can go where everyone knows my name and my hurt. At TCF, I can share a "glimpse" of what really weighs on my heart, which is very often different than the mask on my face.

*Jennie Ewert
TCF Gladwin, MI
In Memory of my son Zach*



OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

Heaven Date	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
03/01	Bryant Shanks	Dean/Pat Shanks	Auto Accident
03/01	Bradford Dale Houston	Vora Pinter	Unknown
03/03	Jesse Allen Gates	Bob/Joy Gates	
03/04	Dean Allen McGhee	Chick/Nancy McGhee	Auto Accident
03/04	Carole Hannah Hargon	Jean H. Ainsworth	Cancer
03/07	Michael Pham	Hal Lindsey Pham	Murder
03/07	Michael Pham	Gerry/Victor Gray-Lewis	Murder
03/07	Jason Douglas Beard	Mary Pierce	
03/08	Shamburger Jimmy	Vicki Shamburger	Suicide
03/12	David Vantrease, Jr.	Leah Wheelless	Suicide
03/15	Susan Michelle Ware Canoy	Ted/Mary Joe Ware	Lung clot
03/18	Scott (Scotty) Austin Reese	Layla Reese	Drug Overdose
03/19	Peck Cranston	Suzie/Phillip Cranston	Suicide
09/19	Shannon C. McNeil	Bob/Jeanette McNeil	Murder
03/24	Kristi Kay Brandon	Gary/Wanda Brandon	Auto Accident
03/24	Mitch Giles	Aden Giles	Drug Overdose
03/24	Carrie Lee Elliott	Dottie D. Elliott	Suicide
03/25	John E. Brown, Jr.	Vincent/Dawn Venturini	Auto Accident
03/26	Kyle Horn	Julie Diaz	Drug Overdose
03/26	Dalton Proctor	Michael/Tammy Proctor	Suicide
03/26	Daniel "Dan" Yates	Harry Larue/Marilyn Yates	Homicide
03/31	Andre' Conway	Sigrid Conway	Suicide/Depression

REPLY FORM—IMPORTANT

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be on the "special days" list, you must fill out this form, which gives us permission to list this information.

I/We are () bereaved Parents () grandparents () siblings () step-parents () friends () relatives () professional
 Please () add () remove () keep me on the mailing list.
 Remember my () Child () Sibling () Grandchild on Special Days. Please () have someone call me.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Name of Child _____

Age when deceased _____

Cause* _____

Child's Birthday _____ Child's Heaven

Date _____

*You need not list cause of death. We ask this only so that parents whose children have died in similar ways may reach one another.

Optional: Your donations are tax deductible and allow us to reach to other bereaved parents.

Enclosed is \$ _____ given in memory of

I would like my contribution used to fund: Check one: _____ Postage _____ Children's Memorial _____ Love Gift

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends; P.O. Box 1396; Jackson, Mississippi; 39215-1396