



The Compassionate Friends
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JOHNSON COUNTY WEBSITE
www.tcfkc.org

The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.

We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief,

but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share,

just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.

We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace,

share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

TCF, Inc. 2007

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*Perhaps our children are like stars in the
daytime—*

*They are still there, but we can't see them
right now.*

A Valentine for My Child

As long as I can dream, as long as I can think, as long as I
have memory...I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and lips to
speak...I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel, a soul stirring within me,
an imagination to hold you...I will love you.

As long as there is time, as long as there is love, as long as
I have a breath, to speak your name... I will love you.

Because I love you more than anything in all the world.
Daniel Houghton, TCF, Massillon, OH



*We Need Not Walk Alone
We Are The Compassionate Friends*

Wyandotte & Johnson County

Feb., March, & April 2016 Volume 4 Issue 2

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

*I've joined a unique group, one that has many members.
Folks that attend show love and kindness even though I often don't want any love or
kindness.*

*I am a life-time member whether I choose to go or stay home.
Some folks never attend meetings; yet, they, too, are permanent members.*

*Sometimes, I think: Why do I go: to remember or to reflect?
Then I realize, I seek connection since I've had a vast disconnection:
my child died.*

*I search for understanding; something the real world just doesn't get.
There, I share hope to survive another cloudy day and to be with others like me.*

Rebecca Pinker
Jana's Mom
TCF Olathe, Ks

PLEASE LET ME MOURN

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling. Will
you try to understand and help me?

Please let me mourn.

I may act and appear together, but I am not. Oftentimes it hurts so much I can hardly bear
it.

Please let me mourn.

Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle.
Sometimes I am not always sure.

Please let me mourn.

Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has
happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are
all I have now. They are very precious to me.

Please let me mourn.

Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it is all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary
and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't
fear my tears.

Please let me mourn.

What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and you
understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will
be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

Please let me mourn.

God give me strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and
yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

Please let me mourn.

Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

Lonnie Forland
TCF, Northwood, IA

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WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Eisenhower Community Center

2901 North 72nd St., KCKS

Richard Moore 913-238-1890

Marlene Moore 913-238-5348

1st Tuesday @ 7PK

JOHNSON COUNTY

Advent Lutheran Church

11800 W. 151st St.

Olathe, Ks

Gay Kahler & Brian Janes

913-764-2669

WWW.JOCOTCF.ORG

2nd Monday @7PM

UPCOMING EVENTS

- *Jana E. Pinker Memorial Run
March 5th, 2016 8AM*
- *Keith McFadden Memorial
Golf June 11th*
- *Thor Rodenbaugh Memorial
Golf Tournament*

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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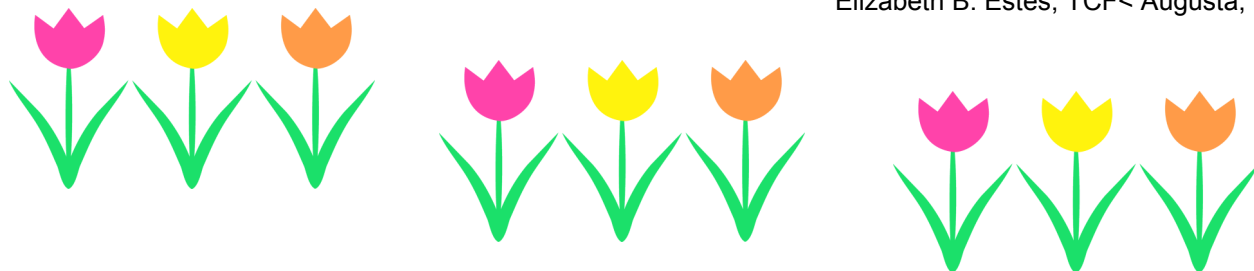
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tionaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
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SPRING COMES AGAIN

In the first year of bereavement, spring is often a painful time of year. Nature reminds us of rebirth when we are not yet ready for it. Easter arrives with its significance for those of us who are religious. Despite the fact that nature is giving out signals of renewed life, we don't feel renewed and are uncertain that we ever shall again. The flowers, dogwoods and blooming shrubs remind us of the fact our child cannot experience the beauty, and we are sad.

However, believe me, a time will come when we will feel the stirring of happiness at warm days and green grass and the bursting forth of buds. Then Spring will seem a promise that love, experienced as we have known it with our child, never goes away—is always there, even when the child is not. The cycles of nature will be a reassurance that as the earth experiences its ups and downs, so will we—that it is natural. Laughter will come, and lethargy, and joy, and tears; but changes will take place just as the earth experiences them, and we will move forward or backward as we can, carrying the love for our child with us. Love does not die, cannot be buried, and continues just as the changing seasons do.

Elizabeth B. Estes, TCF< Augusta, GA



Compassionate Friends Offers Grief Related Webinar Series

The Compassionate Friends is expanding its outreach to bereaved families by offering a series of free online grief related seminars on various grief topics, presented by well-known experts in the field.

Webinars have included such topics as “Handling Grief Through the Holidays,” “Getting ‘Stuck’ and ‘Unstuck,’” “Caring for Your Health While Grieving,” and “Coping with Guilt During Bereavement.” These webinars were recorded and are available to view on demand on TCF’s national website.

TO OUR NEW COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who “know how you feel”.

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

Sibling Grief

DAY'S IN THE VALLEY

An early morning phone call brought news that irreversibly changed my life. My parents called to tell me my younger brother had been killed in a car accident. They wept as I spoke to them. I had never heard my Dad cry before. Numbly, I hung up the phone. I didn't cry. There was not time for tears. Flight plans had to be made, clothes packed. I had to think clearly and act quickly.

The 100-mile trip to the airport seemed especially long and dark as I drove alone that morning. Later, aboard the plane, I looked out the window and tried to comprehend what had happened. Maybe it wasn't him, I thought. Maybe they got him mixed up with someone else. I dreaded the scene that waited me at home, yet I couldn't get there quickly enough. I longed to comfort Mom and Dad, to be with them.

Arriving in Des Moines, I was met by relatives. At last I could let myself cry. When I reached my parents' home I was relieved to finally grieve with them, but a terrible pain was burrowing deep within as the reality of what happened began to sink in. Funeral arrangements were made. People gave their condolences. Stacks of cards arrived daily. The pain remained. I sensed God's presence as friends and family gathered. Words meant nothing, but those who came and cried with us were the ones who have comfort. They didn't quote Bible verses. They didn't try to explain why it happened. They just hugged us and cried.

For almost a year, I replayed again and again those events as if they had been stored on videotape. Every sight, every sound, every pain was as vivid as if it had happened the day before. Time has numbed the pain and faded the “tapes” to some degree, but my life will never be the same. There will always be a hole in our family that cannot be filled.

I see life differently now. I've learned things that have made me more mature. Tragic loss demands finding something meaningful in it or retreating into bitterness. When I said good-bye to my brother, I never dreamed it would be the last time I would see him. Words left unsaid echoed in my mind for many months. Now, taking time to say and do the things I used to put off is more important. Treating each opportunity to be with friends or loved ones as if it might be the last time I will see them give me the incentive to resolve conflicts and say the things that need to be said. Problems and disagreements are never insurmountable.

Experts say the grieving process should end with the acceptance of death. Instead of accepting my brother's death, however, I have only acknowledged it. Death, like an unwanted visitor, doesn't have to be catered to, but it does have to be acknowledged for the healing to begin. I can't say I understand why my brother was killed, but God has given me strength to go on. Though at times it appeared that there was no way out of the valley, time has brought me renewed strength. Time does not heal all wounds, but it does bandage those it cannot heal.

Rick Bunkofske

TCF, North Central Iowa Chapter

ALWAYS A PARENT

Becoming a parent changes everything about a person’s existence. Books and magazine articles, talk shows, gurus, observations of other families offer only faint hints about the reality that awaits. From grand philosophical abstractions to picayune details of daily routines—none of it stays the same. Not the things you read, think, or talk about. Not the time you eat, sleep, wake or brush your teeth. Not what you do with your free time or money, if you can even remember back when those were flexible commodities to be enjoyed on your own and you’re own terms. A helpless, dependent, miniature human being, not you, has become the center of your universe, the sun around which your commitments, goals, and dreams revolve. And it is your privilege, purpose and joy to be spinning in this galaxy. Parenthood may not be exactly what you thought you were signing up for, yet from the instant you connect with your child, it is impossible to imagine any other way of being.

Losing a child changes everything about a person’s concept of parenthood. Unlike the plethora of advise and attention surrounding a child’s birth, there is scant media analysis or societal support to soften the trauma of a child’s death...When your child dies, the center of your solar system vanishes, hurling you into a directionless, scary void. You morph into an alien, exiled from your base, Planet Parent. Stunned and disoriented as you may be, one truth remains steadfast and indestructible; though your child may no longer be physically present, you still are the parent. The question for me became, how does one be a mother to a child who has died?

As a parent, anxiety, insecurity, competitiveness, excessive worries frequently undermined my confidence. If things did not work out well for my son, I perseverated that it was my fault, that I was not a good (enough) mother. Was I too strict, too lenient, too involved too distracted. One of the things that parents — for some like me reluctantly — have to accept is they are powerless over the future of their children. We give them life, but their life belongs to them. After my son died, I was consumed with guilt that on some level it was my fault because I had not kept him safe. My thinking self acknowledged to person has control over life and death, not even a mother. My emotional side resisted letting go of the magical belief that I could have changed fate.

As a bereaved parent, these negative emotions about my competence have continued to insinuate themselves into my consciousness. I feel unworthy because I am not doing enough to memorialize my son. I compare myself to others who do so much more: creating foundations, raising money, public speaking, marathon volunteering. I can be petty and judgmental, and have to hold back sarcastic comments as I listen to inane complaints by people about their kids. I am tempted to envy those who seem to have charmed lives.

I’m attracted to stirring a pity pot, feeling sorry for myself. Sometimes I just need to embrace my sadness, let it wash over me in tears, or silence, or frenetic activity, until it surfaces again, which it will. Grieving, no doubt will continue to be part of my psychic landscape. But grieving cannot be all that defines my parental role. A bereaved mother, like any other, needs to let go of myths of control and perfection. We must strive to discover a spiritual path which affirms both the enormity of our loss and our deep gratitude for the years we shared with our child. A mother is gentle and loving toward herself and her children, and being a mother is a forever gig.

By Nora Yood

MIRACLE IN DALLAS?
Decide For Yourself

By Dennis Apple, Author, “Life After The Death Of My Son”

We were walking across the tiled lobby floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas, preparing to check in to our room, when I felt the familiar vibration from my Smart Phone. Looking down at the latest email, I noticed it was from a bereaved mother who had just read my book.

Her story was not unlike the nearly 1500 others who were also checking in for the annual TCF conference that day. Her 27 old son, Graham had died suddenly from an aneurism eighteen months ago. Then, just six days after her son died, she had a serious heart attack. With her own health in jeopardy, she was receiving messages from her friends telling her she shouldn’t cry because it might cause her to have yet another heart attack. Feeling trapped, she reached out for books, anything that could offer her some hope. After reading my book, she felt a connection and decided to contact me by email.

Later, that same night, I answered her back and expressed my concern for her loss, encouraging her to take good care of herself and to seek out the nearest TCF support group. Soon after pressing the “send” button, she replied back to me saying she could not find a group close to where she lived in Upstate New York. In the same email, she asked if I would speak with her by phone. It sounded urgent. I replied telling her that I had a few minutes just prior to the opening TCF session on Friday morning. She agreed on the time.

The next morning, just minutes before Kay Warren addressed the entire group in the Ballroom, I asked my wife, Buelah to save me a seat as I went outside to a quiet place to call Deborah. We talked for ten or fifteen minutes as I tried to offer support and encouragement. It was clear to me she felt broken and barely able to survive her load of grief. After the conversation ended, I went inside, found my wife and listened as Kay Warren shared her grief journey. At the conclusion, my wife spoke, “Before we leave, I want you to meet this couple who just happened to sit down here next to me.” She introduced me to Sue and Pat Vitek, another bereaved couple. It was their very first time to attend a TCF national meeting. I welcomed them and asked what state they were from. They quickly answered, “New York.” I responded, “That is interesting, I just now spoke to a lady by phone who is also from New York.” Sue asked, “What town?” I answered, “Canandaigua.” Both Sue and Pat looked as though they had seen a ghost, “That is the very same town we live in.” Sue went on, “What street does she live on?” When I shared the name of the street, she exclaimed, “This lady is just around the corner from where we live.”

All four of us suddenly realized something special was happening. Sue and Pat quickly gave me their contact information and said I could share it with this grieving mother from their home town. Later, that same day, The Viteks contacted Deborah and arranged to pick her and her husband up and take them to the next TCF meeting in Rochester.

After Buelah and I arrived back home from the conference, this week, I had yet another email from Deborah. She and her husband had just returned from their first TFC meeting with the Viteks. She shared with me how nice Pat and Sue had been to them and how much they had gained from attending the TCF group. According to Deborah, it was the first time she had been able to go out of her house, at night, in over a year. Deborah’s words, “God has answered my question. Has he forgotten me? No...God is at work in my healing. He sent me you and your wife. He put you in this wonderful place to help me in a way we could never anticipate. We could not make this story up...even if we wanted to.”

2016 TCF National Conference
Fairmont Princess, Scottsdale, Arizona
July 8-10th

Rooms still available
at \$129.00 per night.

JOHNSON COUNTY
OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS REMEMBERED

Births

February

- 11th Christopher Michael Lutz, son of Kevin & Nancy Lutz
- 15th Brian Hicks, son of Barbara Hicks
- 21st Braiden Andres Lopez, grandson of Jamie Good & Nikki Krueger
- 22nd Matthew Stipancich, son of Angie Pahal
- 27th Peter Daniel Downey, son of David & Christine Downey
- 27th Derek Zarda, son of Kathy & Dennis Zarda

March

- 1st Denny Apple, son of Dennis & Buelah Apple
- 9th Jana Elizabeth Pinker, daughter of Bob & Rebecca Pinker
- 10th Joel Streufert, son of Sherry Streufert
- 12th Kevin Babson, son of Rick & Susan Babson
- 16th Kimberle Gibson, daughter of Wayne & Marcia Gibson
- 18th Anthony Michael "Tony Mike" Bowers, son of Janet & Jimmy Bowers
- 18th Jacob Gromly, son of Dana Gromly
- 26th Jewell Morse, daughter of Darla Demotte
- 28th Becca Menzel, daughter of David & Robin Menzel

April

- 1st Jessica Tracey Thomas Scott, daughter of Randy & Millie Thomas, Erin Vargas, sister
- 4th Shane Day, son of Melody Gau
- 18th Ben Link, son of Maggie Link
- 22nd Tressie Fincher, daughter of Tammy Rodden & Grant Boolin

Deaths

February

- 6th Denny Apple, son of Dennis & Buelah Apple
- 10th Nathan James Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin
- 10th Curtis M.G. Gilmore, son of Anita Gordon-Gilmore
- 11th Carson Bowman, son of Jeff & Sarah Bowman

March

- 4th Peter Daniel Downey, son of David & Christine Downey
- 8th Ryan O'Connell, son of Pat O'Connell
- 10th Becca Menzel, daughter of David & Robin Menzel
- 11th Gregory B. Dermer, son of Diane L. Dermer
- 13th Collin Scott, son of Mark & Cindy Scott
- 15th Helena Grace Melo, daughter of Pam & Rudy Melo
- 24th Sgt. Chad Allen O'Leary, brother of Mary Jackson

April

- 8th Robert "Robb" Aaron Repine, son of Kathy & Brad Brinkopf
- 9th Adam Ward, son of Sharon Ward
- 18th Michael James LaBarge, son of Debra LaBarge
- 22nd Laura Michelle Travis, daughter of Gay Kahler & Brian Janes
- 24th Dalton Hawkins, son of Shawn & Rhonda Hawkins
- 25th Bryan Bandera, son of Janet Bravo (Alexa, sister)
- 28th Sam Delay, son of Kathy Coggins

Upcoming Events

February 8th

Topic not yet decided

March 14th

Guest Speaker—Mary Fugate

April 11th

Topic not yet decided

Events for our Children
Wyandotte & Johnson County

Please let me know if you would like your event added to this listing.

The Jana E. Pinker Memorial Foundation - Daughter of Rebecca and Bob Pinker

Jana died at age 19 from liver cancer. Every year there is a 5k Run/Walk on the 1st Saturday in March called the Truffle Shuffle. It is held at Johnson County Community College. Please go to www.janaepinker.org to see all the organizations that benefit from this foundation. This Year March 5th, 2016.

Faith's Pennies From Heaven - Granddaughter of Nela Bruner

Faith died from cancer at 5 years old. Money is raised year round with different events such as, donation jars at local businesses, cold water challenges, car washes, and t-shirts. Nela is ready and willing to try new things to benefit The Dream Factory and to keep her granddaughters memory alive. You can contact Nela at bruners05@aol.com.

Thor Rodenbaugh Memorial Golf Tournament - Son of Chris and Ron Rodenbaugh

Thor died at age 37 during a surgical procedure. He left a wife and 3 daughters, though he was never able to meet his 3rd daughter. Every year a golf tournament is put on to raise money for his daughter's college fund. The event is usually held in early summer at Dub's Dread Golf Club, KCKS. . For more information please contact Chris at 816-679-8678. www.ask4thor.com.

Keith McFadden Memorial Golf Tournament - Son of Debbie & Buddy McFadden

Keith died at age 28 from a brain tumor. Every year we do a golf tournament to raise money for brain cancer research. All proceeds go to Head for the Cure Foundation which partners with MD Anderson in Houston, Tx. The tournament is held in June every year at Painted Hills Golf Course, KCKS. For more information you can go to www.kmangolf.com. Date Set For June 11, 2016.

Allie's Sale – Daughter of Kelly & Kyle Fisher

Allison Michelle Fisher died at the age of 3 from a brain tumor. Every year in October there is a garage sale to raise money for Children's Brain Tumor Project (CBTP). For more information, or if you have items to donate please contact Team Little Owl at hoot@teamlittleowl.org. Follow on Facebook at [Facebook.com/TeamLittleOwl](https://www.facebook.com/TeamLittleOwl).