



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.*

## Why We Still Go to TCF

***"Are you still involved with that group?  
Aren't you over it yet? Why do you go?"***

These are questions I often hear now that it has been more than seven years since Mark died. I suspect you hear them too. There are easy answers. But not everyone understands, unless you have been there. Here are ten I can think of:

1. Because we never want the world to forget our child, so what we do we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help someone else, we also help ourselves.
3. Because someone was there for us when we needed it most; now the best way to say "thank you" is to pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do that can bring something positive out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF better friends and closer bonds than we ever thought possible. Here we can cry and hug people even if we don't know their last name or what they do for a living. And it doesn't matter.
6. Because few people are qualified to walk up to a newly bereaved family and say, "I know how you feel." And because we can, we must.
7. Because sometimes we need to talk, too, and to remember and share. We are further along than many around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that one day we will meet our child or brother or sister again, and he or she will ask, "So what did you do with your life after I left?" And we will have an answer.
9. Because our presence might help newly bereaved families understand that they will survive and even laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cookies, and hard metal chairs.

Richard Edler  
TCF South Bay/LA, CA  
In Memory of my son Mark Edler

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



Wyandotte & Johnson County

May, June, & July 2016 Volume 4 Issue 3

## Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and re-reading of that one last card - "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" - will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".

Always we struggle with the eternal questions - how does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain on that day? Where is the fairness and justice in such barter?

The answer comes back again and again - life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a fore taste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?

No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

Mary Wildman  
TCF Moro, IL

### WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Eisenhower Community Center

2901 North 72nd St., KCKS

Richard Moore 913-238-1890

Marlene Moore 913-238-5348

1st Tuesday @ 7PM

### 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

- Keith McFadden Memorial Golf June 11th, 2016
- Pennies from Heaven in Memory of Faith Bruner
- National Conference—Scottsdale, AZ July 8-10

### REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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Mourning Is My Mode

Today I realized that I have become a shell of the person I once was. What would my child think of this? I am alone, my only child is gone, yet I know he would not be pleased with the way I have isolated myself, wrapped in invisible crepe, sheltered by a mental wall. This is not the mom he knew. I am someone different now.

What am I to do with this? I feel like a lonely, mourning swan, swimming endlessly from shore to shore. I have no direction, I want no direction, I just keep moving with no purpose. I must get a grip on myself.

I know my motions must take on some meaning. I look to others for help. Yet I realize that if I do not reach out and help myself, I will crash on the rocks with the raging tide.

I decide I will add one new thing, one new event, one new person or one new writing to each day. I will reach out to others. I will force myself to move slowly back into life.

I will spend some time with my family. I will enjoy their children. I will mentor a child. I will start putting my thoughts into a written form.

I begin to do these things. I feel better. I attend another meeting of the parents who have lost their children. I feel as if I do belong here. It has been four months since my son died. I am overwhelmed.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

I wish they would understand that you never get over the death of a child...only learn to deal with it. Everyone deals with their child's death in their own way, but I still want to include my deceased son when memories are shared. I want his memory to be alive and to know people still remember him. I may have good days but will never again have a "perfect" day.

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 heave 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

A Journey to the "New Normal"

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling Dave died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would have been celebrating Dave's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with a big party, and I'd be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snapp men before him. Instead, I'll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I'll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memories of how he died. I can't recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie "Big", starring Tom Hanks, and "lost it" when his mother stared out the window wondering if she'd ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn't lose it.
- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Washington, in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one way street in downtown Chicago – it might be smart to have a friend drive you to your first few TCF meetings!
- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I've heard other TCF members call this their "roller coaster ride."
- For a year, I couldn't keep the radio on if "Wind Beneath My Wings" came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!
- With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I'd never be "back to normal." My focus instead shifted to finding my "new normal". While I can't point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), THAT was a milestone.
- For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn't put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas, 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.
- It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don't have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid "landmark" to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad's father's death in December, 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather's apartment, and I came across a pile of post cards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a "blind side" such as that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn't know I still had! I saved a few of the post cards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn't feel the need to hang onto them. It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave's death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that "new normal."

Karen Snapp

WHAT I WANT OTHERS TO KNOW

That everything—everything— takes extra effort.

Sleeping, working, pretending to be ok, breathing...



Jana

I’ve read the last reader’s comments; I’ve marked the last draft; and I’ve printed the last copy. I’ve turned off my computer. I have finished the book. But am I done? No. I am never done thinking and writing about Jana. Will I get over living with this deep hole in my heart? No. I have passed many of Jana’s death anniversaries and many of her birthday celebrations, and I reflect: I have lived through some of those days without the *huge elephant standing on my chest*. I don’t recall the specific day I felt less anger, but gradually some ordinary days returned. I began to rise, stand, and move slowly. I felt a little stronger, I no longer struggled in the dark abyss as I did after Jana’s death. Now, I experience persons or words that help me climb out of darkness. I start again.

Even though Jana is gone, moments come when I can sense her presence; I smell roasted turkey and remember the many Thanksgiving dinners Jana made. I think I see her standing a distance away wearing overalls with a madras backpack slung over her shoulder. I hear Jana’s voice inside my head: “If I’ve told you once, Mom, I’ve told you a hundred times: Don’t leave the house wearing high-water pants.” I remember sitting in coffee shops, reading and talking many afternoons with her. I hear music from The Beatles, and I ponder the lack of Jana’s presence. When these thoughts come, I tumble down into darkness. I think about Jana’s short life of nineteen years. I cry, usually alone, and again *feel the elephant standing on my chest*. After several days or weeks, I suspect Jana says: “OK, Mom. It’s time to get up. DO SOMETHING.” (She was empathic when she wanted to be) I rise, look at life, and I realize although Jana now lives in my heart, I still live on this earth. When I do anything in kindness, love, or care, it’s not just me; it’s Jana and me looking at a small piece of life that before she died, we never thought to embrace.

I’m not standing upright; being the person I was before Jana’s death. Some days, I fall again: hearing a familiar hymn at church (my pastor takes no offence when I walk out); seeing animal images in the clouds—a game we played: smelling Starbuck’s coffee. Now, those times bring sadness, yet comfort. For I know Jana encircles me and rests in my heart. Finding strength in that sense, I rise slowly, I stand again. After each fall, I stand a little longer.

My son Jonathan has a quote for every occasion. Recently, as we talked, we shared the absence we felt in our lives with Jana's death. I told him that at times I experience a great fall again. His reply came quickly. “Well, Mom, if you’re going to fall, fall forward.” As I left him that afternoon, his words remained in my head. They continued to echo. I realized that although the reality of Jana’s death continues, I don’t fall into the dark abyss as I once did. I can stand. Sometimes I fall. But when I do fall, I fall forward.

Rebecca Pinker, Jana’s Mom  
Introduction to Rebecca’s latest book “Falling forward”

**A Father Mourns Too**

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen—my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son. This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die.

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.

So, support and love is needed and needed badly. Of course, we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. I hope that bereaved fathers will not be forgotten on Father's Day. It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day and remember that the cute little commercials that hurt mothers in May take their toll on fathers in June.

Doug Hughes  
TCF Las Vegas, NV

**Update** on the Truffle Shuffle held March 5th at Johnson County Community College. The Jana E. Pinker Memorial Foundation was able to give scholarships to JCCC, Advent Lutheran Church, Olathe South HS, Olathe North HS, and a substantial donation to KC Hospice. It’s important to remember that good can come out of tragedy. We would do anything to have our child back but we don’t get that option. If we can find a cause or passion to honor and remember our children, it gives us a reason to get out of bed every day.

If you have an event that you would like us to put in this newsletter, please let the editor know.

**Grandparents Remembrance:**

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey  
TCF Rutland, VT

**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*

#### *May*

- 6<sup>th</sup> James Brandt Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin  
 7<sup>th</sup> John Reynolds, son of Glenda & Bob Holman  
 26<sup>th</sup> Stephanie Gray, daughter of Steve Gray

#### *June*

- 14<sup>th</sup> Lara Rogers, daughter of Tim & Janet Rogers  
 19<sup>th</sup> Tanner Lewis, son of Hayley Lewis  
 24<sup>th</sup> Dana Jeanne McCollam-Allison, daughter of Cathy Caplan  
 26<sup>th</sup> Erika Jaremko, daughter of Stephanie Post

#### *July*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Vincent Boos, son of John & Rochelle Boos, (Mariah, sister)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> James Collins, son of Shelley Collins  
 8<sup>th</sup> Jenna Good-Lopez, daughter of Jamie Good and Nikki Krueger  
 20<sup>th</sup> Sara Doss, daughter of Allie & Jason Doss  
 26<sup>th</sup> Ryan O'Connell, son of Pat O'Connell  
 26<sup>th</sup> Lincoln William Hurst, son of Tracie & Will Hurst  
 29<sup>th</sup> Sgt. Chad Allen O'Leary, brother of Mary Jackson

#### *Deaths*

#### *May*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Danny Poore, son of Deb & Darryl Poore  
 11<sup>th</sup> Braiden Andres Lopez, Grandson of Jamie Good & Nikki Krueger  
 19<sup>th</sup> Steven Christopher Burns, son of Brenda & Steve Burns  
 24<sup>th</sup> Annie Reed, daughter of Ginger Sparks  
 28<sup>th</sup> Andy Shields, son of Linda Schoonover

#### *June*

- 7<sup>th</sup> Leo Sorrentino, son of Giovana Dubinski  
 7<sup>th</sup> Jacob Gromly, son of Dana Gromly  
 13<sup>th</sup> Allison Michelle Fisher, daughter of Kelly & Kyle Fisher  
 19<sup>th</sup> John Reynolds, son of Glenda & Bob Holman  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Keith McFadden, son of Buddy & Debbie McFadden  
 25<sup>th</sup> James Brandt Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin  
 26<sup>th</sup> Douglas Morgan Zobkiw, son of Pam & Mike Zobkiw  
 27<sup>th</sup> Jenna Good-Lopez, daughter of Jamie Good & Nikki Krueger  
 28<sup>th</sup> Craig Howlett, son of David & Elaine Howlett

#### *July*

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Robert Damian Barrett, son of Mary Barrett  
 6<sup>th</sup> Dana Jeanne McCollam-Allison, daughter of Cathy Caplan  
 7<sup>th</sup> James Collins, son of Shelley Collins  
 19<sup>th</sup> Kathleen Kifka, daughter of Kathy Kifka  
 20<sup>th</sup> Tori Jade Peavler, daughter of Susan & Tim Peavler  
 26<sup>th</sup> Lincoln William Hurst, son of Tracie & Will Hurst  
 27<sup>th</sup> Patrick Spaulding, son of Yvonne & Scott Spaulding  
 30<sup>th</sup> Sara Doss, daughter of Allie & Jason Doss

### TCF Meetings

#### May 9th

Men & Women Meet

Separately

#### June 13th

Healing Art of Rituals

#### July 11th

National Conference

Recap & Sharing

#### Oct. 22nd

Olathe Charities

More info to come

## *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](http://www.janaepinker.org) to see all the organizations that benefit from this foundation.

**Faith's Pennies From Heaven** - Granddaughter of Nela Bruner

Faith died from cancer at 4 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](mailto: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](http://www.ask4thor.com). This year the tournament is June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**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](http://www.kmangolf.com). This year the tournament is June 11<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:hoot@teamlittleowl.org). Follow on Facebook at [Facebook.com/TeamLittleOwl](https://www.facebook.com/TeamLittleOwl).