



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.

GIVE ME A SPECIAL GIFT THIS YEAR

The mother (or father) of a dead child
Will always weep at Christmas time.
On that you can depend.

No matter how many people or how many presents,
The pulsating void that seems too large for her heart to hold
Keeps drawing her attention
Back to the child who's missing.

As others laugh and play, his thoughts fly away
To Christmases past or a lonely cemetery.
To a face their hearts ache to be kissing.
The face of the child who's missing

Fay Harden

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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The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Wyandotte & Johnson County

Nov.-Dec., 2016, Jan. 2017 Volume 5 Issue 1

FOR THAT I AM THANKFUL

It doesn't seem to get any better...
But it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.
The are no more pictures to be taken...
But there are memories to cherished.
For that, I am thankful.
There is a missing chair at the table...
But the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.
The turkey is smaller...
But there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.
The days are shorter...
But the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.
The pain is still there...
But it lasts only moments.
For that, I am thankful.
The Calendar still turns,
The holidays still appear
And they still cost too much...
But I am still here.
For that, I am thankful.
The room is still empty,
The soul still aches...
But the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.
The guests still come,
The dishes pile up...
but the dishwasher works.

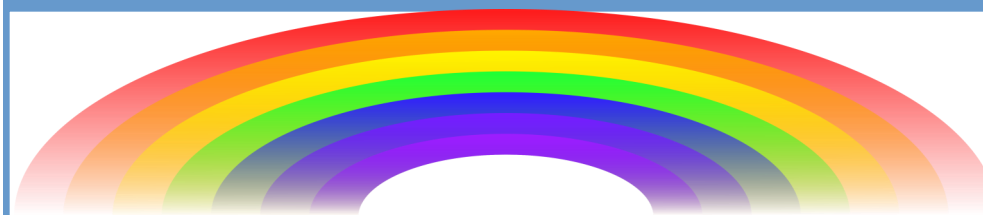
For that, I am thankful.
The name is still missing,
The words still unspoken...
But the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.
The snow still falls,
The sled still waits,
And the spirit still wants to...
For that, I am thankful.
The stillness remains...
But the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.
The moment is gone...
But the love is forever.
For that, I am blessed.
For that, I am grateful...

Love was once
(and still is)
A part of my being...
I am LIVING...

And for that, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled
With reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved is per-
haps the most wonderful reason of all.

Darcie D. Sims, Nov/Dec/92
Bereavement Magazine



The colors of life change as we go through grief. We begin black and white, then gray settles over us seeping onto our pores, surrounding us, smothering us for a long period of time, then slowly the colors change. We may not even be aware of their changing till one day we see a rainbow and know it was meant for us.

—Author Unknown

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

- Dec 6th Candle lighting for WyCo chapter
- Dec 11th Worldwide Candle Lighting at Church of the Resurrection, Leawood Ks

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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WHEN YOU AWAKEN ON DECEMBER 25, WHAT WILL YOU BE PREPARED TO MEET? CHRISTMAS MORNING OR MOURNING?

The inevitable awakening lies ahead for each of us, that moment when we open our eyes and face the climax of weeks of colored lights, carols, frenzied shopping, social gatherings, accumulating gifts...even if we have not taken an active part in all of the preparations. Now the prelude is over and the day itself is upon us. However we have anticipated it, with apprehension or dread, with courage or resolve, this is the moment when we confront the ultimate reality of dealing with the holiday without our child.

Will it be morning or simply mourning? Whether this is our first Christmas since our child's death, or one of many, this is far more than a cute play on words. For the answer lies within each of us and not without. The quality of our Christmas is but another in that long series of countless decisions we each confront when our child dies.

The holiday is more than just another day, but like every other day it does afford moments of grief and occasions for joy. It is simply more intense, more culturally bound in rituals that establish significance for certain parts of our lives. Without a doubt, we will each remember our child's anticipation and excitement for holidays past, and we will hear the unnatural silence of absence above numerous other sounds. Allow yourself to cry and let the hurt course through you as you dress. It is your own grief...it belongs only to you...and it must not be denied. Wash, brush your teeth, feel the hollowness without being consumed by it, for there are others in your life. Even if you are alone, you are an "other", a personality apart from your deceased child and a great deal more than a life summed up in a denial of living. Therefore, grant yourself moments to grieve, but leave room to sandwich instants of joy between.

A single smile, one quite laugh, a gentle moment of fondness for the delight of another, even if only from memory...these are all it takes to turn mourning in morning. You cannot and should not smother or suppress grief, but you must also remain open to the light that still can enter your life.

In my own memories of my son at Christmas I will find both reasons to cry and irresistible urges to laugh. His life was sunshine in mine. In the holiday his memory should not become a shroud to hide away my love for him. On the 25th, as on every other day, I will remember him and long for him, knowing he has forever marked Christmas for me with his own happiness, and it is only his permanent physical withdrawal that chills these moments with a seemingly endless sorrow.

If we decide, if we are willing to work for it, we can mix remembrance with mourning and turn it into morning, thus enriching our lives by continuing to feel the laughter and joy our children gave to each of us. This is our lost child's Christmas gift to us this year and in all the years to come. Take it with the same grace and gratitude with which we accepted all the others from holidays past...from other Christmas mornings.

TCF, Bridgeport, CT

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

TO OUR SURVIVING CHILDREN

AND YOU WERE WITH US

*WHEN THE DARKNESS CAME AND STOOD AND GRIEVED AND KEPT
YOURSELF ALIVE*

WE THANK YOU NOW

WE HAVE NOT ALWAYS

*HONORED WHO YOU ARE AND OFTEN DID NOT TEND YOUR HIDDEN
SORROWS*

WE THANK YOU NOW

BECAUSE YOU LOVED US

*WELL ENOUGH TO WAIT UNTIL WE COULD RETURN TO YOU AND KNOW
WITH JOY AND HOPE AND LOVE, YOU ARE TOMORROW*

WE THANK YOU NOW

AND WHILE WE WILL REMEMBER ALWAYS,

*THE ONE, THE MANY SOULS THAT DID NOT LIVE, WE SEE YOU ONCE
AGAIN FOR WHAT YOU ARE: THE WEALTH YOU ARE, THE COMFORT
AND THE PROMISE*

WE THANK YOU NOW

—Sascha Wagner

Sibling Loss

One whose sister or brother has died has a special view of this loss. There is the loss itself, hard enough to bear, and often no one inquires how a bereaved sibling is doing with the grief. And as I've heard one sibling put it, *'I lost my brother, and my parents are so changed that I feel as if I lost them too.'* Much is changed within our surviving family.

Many of us have found the company of other bereaved siblings to be very valuable, a group of listeners who truly and fully understands.

Charley Kopp
TCF Contra Costa, CA

Falsely Placed Guilt

Aileen was convinced Isaac’s death was her fault. She thought she must have done something absolutely horrible to have caused him to die. Cause and effect when all we have is the affect of death.

She could not deal with the reality that it just happened. And no one was responsible. No one to blame. Can’t convict a bacteria which is what did kill him. So she blamed herself.

“I’m his mother. I should have protected him. I should have been able to save him. Mothers take care of their children. Not let them die.”

Or “I’m to blame. I must have done something so terrible that my son died. I’m to blame. I should have gone to the City. I could have saved him. Taken him to the hospital and saved him. I failed him. It is my fault. My fault.” She would keen over and over.

She could not accept the reality that it was meningitis that killed him. Not her. That even though she was his mother and mothers are powerful they are weak too. Feeble in the face of a real killer. She could not accept that his death could be so arbitrary. So pointless.

Mothers give birth. Not bury their children. Mothers nurture, buy clothes, enjoy their children. Not pick out coffins. They wrap their children in cocoons of safety, not shrouds. They make sense out of life. Not deal with the senselessness of death.

Aileen could not stop blaming herself for what she did not do. She could not protect her son. Not fight off meningitis. Not keep him alive. So she blamed herself for what she saw as a failure.

She did not take comfort in the reality that she did what she could. When Isaac called her at 4:16 in the afternoon, she calmed him down. Made him feel hopeful. Made him believe his mother’s appropriate belief that he had the flu. She made his last minutes calm and secure in her love. Her warmth. Her adoration of her son. He felt her through the phone and felt better. To the point that he ordered some food to be delivered. She was his mother and gave him everything she could.

She was and is a superb mother. She wrapped him in her affection. Gave him security. She could not keep him alive but she gave him a last vision of hope and love. She was not a villain here. She was a hero who now because she could not save the world from the unseeable, unfightable foe of death blamed herself.

To this day she still holds herself accountable for not being able to save him. Like mothers everywhere. They feel they are real superheroes in their children’s’ lives. But even Superwoman cannot win over meningitis or one of the so many causes of our children’s deaths. She is not to blame. They are not to blame but we will never convince them of that. She was and is after all, his mother.

Neal Raisman, TCF Central Ohio Chapter, Columbus, OH

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last, to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now right now it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess to swell and undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green
TCF Livonia, MI

THE SINGLE MOST MEMORABLE HOLIDAY I’VE EVER HAD

I am not writing her to sadden anyone, but as a tribute to LOVE, FAMILY, and FAITH. On Dec. 6th, 1985, my daughter was murdered. While gathering her things to bring home, we found Michelle had lovingly made Christmas gifts for everyone in the family. Family came from Florida, Canada, Arizona and here in Georgia and remained through the holidays.

Sometime before the incident, my daughter told me that she had a dream that the whole family was together at Christmas time and she was outside the window looking in. She said that in her dream she felt such a feeling of contentment at seeing us all together. It had been years since all the family had been together.

We decided to have Christmas as Michelle would have wanted it. My husband and I wrapped the gifts Michelle had made for those she loved. On Christmas morning, while we were opening the gifts, my husband told me to look out the window. There are two rocking chairs on the porch, and one was rocking back and forth. My husband reached over and held my hand, and it was at that moment I remembered what Michelle had told us about her dream, and I realized then that dream had become a reality. Michelle was still with all of us and was indeed content at watching the family she loved so much sharing the joy of Christmas together.

I also realized Michelle would always be watching me and that, though in one sense she had been taken from us, she would always be a part of all of us. The little gifts she made for everyone that Christmas would be treasured for many Christmases to come, but what would be treasured most was her LOVE OF FAMILY and the FAITH of knowing that one day we will be together again.

—Ann Marie Parman
TCF, Augusta, GA

HOW MANY STOCKINGS SHALL I HANG?

What a torment! Funny how you worry what your friends will think. For days I worried...and finally hung three stockings on the fireplace and laid one gently on the mantle.

But that was last year. This year I shall hang all four above the fireplace. For this year the confusion of my mind has found new answers—with conviction. Whether my oldest daughter lives in Tucson, or my youngest son is dead—these are my children—our family—and as long as we hang the Christmas stocking, we shall hang them all—with love.

Shirley Melin, Hinsdale, IL, TCF

Make no mistake, we do not meet just to cry our own tears and tell the story of our pain.

*We come together to learn how to bring new meaning and life from the ashes of our lives
and to help other do the same...*

**And not just the inferior, crippled life that you might expect considering the trauma from
which we are recovering,**

*But good life—filled with deeper meaning and greater ability to love—precisely because of
the pain that has been transformed.*

JOHNSON COUNTY
OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS REMEMBERED

Births

- November
- 6th Kyle Gabriel Eller, son of Jennifer & David Eller
 - 11th Gregory Bernard Dermer, son of Diane Dermer
 - 16th Brett Mitchell Hayes, son of Debbie Hayes
 - 20th Colin Scott, son of Mark & Cindy Scott
 - 25th Alex (Allie) Lahr, daughter of Amy & Bob Lahr
- December
- 8th Steven Christopher Burns, son of Brenda & Steve Burns
 - 10th Jimmy Gorman, son of Kathy Gorman
 - 11th Tori Jade Peavler, daughter of Susan & Tim Peavler
 - 11th Cody Monroe Kincheloe, son of Cherie Burnett
 - 14th Mark Skedel, son of Ralph & Laura Spillers
 - 16th Austin Hawkey, son of Kim Bergeron
 - 21st Tyler Nelson, son of Jennifer Rechsteiner
 - 21st Tyler Nelson, son of Mark & Jill Nelson
 - 23rd Augie Echeandia, son of Augie Echeandia
 - 25th Nathan James Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin
 - 25th Ethan Thomas Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin
 - 30th Laura Michelle Travis, daughter of Gay Kahler & Brian Janes
- January
- 4th Misty Warren, daughter of Jamie Good and Nikki Krueger
 - 7th Fredrick O'Donnell, son of Jeannine Cordes
 - 8th Adam Ward, son of Sharon Ward
 - 9th Patrick Spaulding, son of Yvonne & Scott Spaulding
 - 12th Paul David Walter, son of Betty Walter
 - 12th Danny Poore, son of Deb & Darryl Poore
 - 16th Thor Rodenbaugh, son of Chris & Ron Rodenbaugh
 - 15th Jason Holmes, son of Karhi & Mike Holmes
 - 19th Michael Paul Early, son of Suzy Early
 - 20th Brian Cupp, son of Kathy Grassy
 - 22nd Michael James LaBarge, son of Debra LaBarge
 - 23rd Jeffrey Neil Crump, son of Paul & Ann Crump
 - 25TH Jacob Madden, son of Julie Madden
 - 26th Douglas Morgan Zobkiw, son of Pam & Mike Zobkiw
 - 26th Robert "Robb" Aaron Repine, son of Kathy & Brad Brinkopf

Deaths

- November
- 4th Ben Link, son of Maggie Link
 - 5th Kevin Babson, son of Rick & Sue Babson
 - 5th Houston St. John, son of David & Theresa St. John
 - 6th Brett Mitchell Hayes, son of Debbie Hayes
 - 11th Thor Rodenbaugh, son of Chris & Ron Rodenbaugh
 - 13th Brandon Warren, son of Debby Atkinson
 - 17th Angela Schofield, daughter of Joe & Julie James
 - 18th Stephanie Gray, daughter of Steve Gray
 - 22nd ChristopherMichael Lutz, son of Kevin & Nancy Lutz
 - 23rd Jana Elizabeth Pinker, daughter of Bob & Rebecca Pinker
 - 29th Kyle Gabriel Eller, son of Jennifer & David Eller

Continued on next page

Upcoming Schedule

Nov. 14th—

Social—Bring something to share that you have in memory of your child and a snack to share

Dec. 11th—

Worldwide Candle Lighting at Wesley Chapel, Chirch of the Res-
surection

Dec. 12th—

Holidays

January 9th—

December

- 4th Ashton Brunmeier, son of Todd & Julie Brunmeier
- 7th Mark Skedel, son of Ralph & Laura Spillers
- 11th Tyler Nelson, son of Jennifer Rechsteiner
- 11th Tyler Nelson, son of Mark & Jill Nelson
- 12th Jacob Madden, son of Julie Madden
- 13th Grace Maryalyce Deck, daughter of Shawna & Joseph Deck

January

- 1st Jessica Tracey Thomas Scott, daughter of Randy & Millie Thomas (Erin Vargas, sister)
- 5th Ethan Thomas Heavilin, son of Marilyn and Glen Heavilin
- 5th Lara Rogers, daughter of Tim & Janet Rogers
- 5th Kyle Bunselmeyer, son of Suzette Bunselmeyer
- 7th Frederick O'Donnell, son of Jeannine Cordes
- 9th Anthony Michael "Tony Mike" Bowers, son of Janet & Jimmy Bowers
- 12th Amy Batson, daughter of Barbara & Don Batson
- 12th Shane Day, son of Melody Gau
- 18th Cody Monroe Kincheloe, son of Cherie Burnett
- 21ST Vincent Boos, son of John & Rochelle Boos, (Mariah, sister)
- 30th Derek Zarda, son of Kathy & Dennis Zarda

*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.

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.

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. This year the tournament was June 18th, 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.kmanagolf.com. This year the tournament was June 11th, 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. This year the sale was at Valley View United Methodist and raised over \$40,000.