



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Wyandotte & Johnson County

August, Sept., October 2017 Volume 5 Issue 4

AN ONLY CHILD

Parents and the only child learn to adapt in the multi-child culture. Family members, friends, school and the community at large assume that an only child is not normal therefore, something must be wrong or at least could be improved.

The years of Kari's life taught us to do the best we could each day. All of her life, we encouraged her to do her best, because it is important to have a deep self-satisfaction of a job well done.

After the sudden auto accident that claimed her life and in our deepest grief we received some strength from the values we had seen in her life. I did not feel that I was alone in the world without my only child. I felt as if I did not want to live without my child, not that she was my only child. Perhaps the fact that parents of other children who have also died and had other surviving children felt they were not able to live without their precious children either, helped us to understand no child can be replaced.

Again, the community came assuming that you could not survive the death of an only child, just as you could not have normalcy with an only child in life. Many freely gave suggestions ranging from you should move, to adoption (had we been younger, I am sure the advice would have been to have another baby) and other well meaning, misguided advise.

We remembered our numerous encouragements that we had given Kari, we do not live alone in the world: our pain is no greater, we are no different from any parent whose child has died. There are actually some blessings to not having other children in the household. What little energy you have can be spent on your own grief work and not worrying about what you need to do to help surviving children. Parents with surviving children have a blessing. They also have the awesome task of helping surviving siblings understand issues of life and death. Not a topic most parents plan on teaching. Without this distraction parents grieving the death of an only child can spend uninterrupted time toward healing.

The death of an only child does tend to exclude the parents from most family events. They will never experience grand parenting, weddings, holidays and all the other family oriented gatherings. This leaves a very 'left out' feeling in conversations, knowing they will never get to experience these special times.

Each parent that experiences the death of a child, no matter the age or cause, has not had a choice in the event. It does not matter if we have multiple children or only the one child, we love each one and could not make a choice. We each have a difficult time in learning to live again after the death of our child.

We do heal. We do learn to live again. We are not the same person as we were before but in time each will find a new normal. Patience to let time and grief work to help us heal is the path to knowing we will survive.

Gerry Hall
TCF South Central, MO
In Memory of my daughter Kari

I can only bite off chunks of grief in bits and pieces.

How else would I manage to get out of bed?

—Desire' Aguirre

WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Eisenhower Community Center

2901 North 72nd St., KCKS

Richard Moore 913-238-1890

Marlene Moore 913-238-5348

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

- *Kale Stine Memorial Golf*
August 19th
- *WyCo Balloon Release*
Sept 5th
- *Independence, Mo—Walk*
to Remember Sept. 23rd

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind-at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you.

We've said it many times: YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE. Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change-it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

Elizabeth Estes
TCF Augusta, GA
In Memory of Tricia

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.

My Witch and My Angel

For Zoë Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, make-up, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year—1987—I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures. Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes; I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoë's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly. With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath—the same one I take every year at every holiday and milestone. With my unsteady hand I will design witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoë's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my little witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13 year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make-believe?

Zoë will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as OK as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here.

And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoë, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly graze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's OK. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treat' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoë skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom—take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween.

Just like his sister.

Our Children Remembered

Births

August

- 2nd Hope Jeanne Ray, daughter of Greg & Amy Ray
 3rd Sterling Franzwa, son of Fred & Sandy Franzwa
 4th Brandon Warren, son of Debby Atkinson
 8th Helena Grace Melo, daughter of Pam and Rudy Melo
 11th Thomas McCord, son of Therese McCord
 13th Dalton Hawkins, son of Shawn & Rhonda Hawkins
 23rd Sam Delay, son of Kathy Coggins
 25th Dayton Porter, son of Kami Porter
 26th Kathleen Kafka, daughter of Kathy Kafka
 29th Andy Shields, son of Linda Schoonover

September

- 6th Nathen Krasnopoler, son of Michael Krasnopoler & Susan Cohen
 7th Kyle Bunselmeyer, son of Suzette Bunselmeyer
 11th Grace Maryalyce Deck, daughter of Shawne & Joseph Deck
 13th Matthew Vance Stasevich, son of Vance & Cindy Stasevich
 17th Ashton Brunmeier, son of Todd & Julie Brunmeier
 20th Keith McFadden, son of Buddy & Debbie McFadden
 21st Jack Polson, son of Doug and Pam Polson
 22nd Bryan Bandera, son of Janet Bravo, brother to Alexa

October

- 2nd Houston St. John, son of David & Theresa St. John
 2nd David Goodwin, son of Shirley Goodwin
 3rd Sarah Batson, daughter of Barbara & Don Batson
 4th Laine Goff, child of Becky Thurlow
 6th Annie Reed, daughter of Ginger Sparks
 6th Leo Sorrentino, son of Glovana Dubinski
 7th Curtis M.G. Gilmore, son of Anita Gordon-Gilmore
 7th Angela Schofield, daughter of Joe & Julie James
 10th Nathan Giron, son of Lynn Giron
 15th Robert Damian Barrett, son of Mary Barrett
 15th Bryan Owens, son of Kay & Dean Owens
 16th Allison Michelle Fisher, daughter of Kelly & Kyle Fisher
 18th Tom Nesbihal, son of Jane Zaccardi
 18th Alan Maxville, son of Marty & Beth Maxville

Deaths

August

- 3rd Tom Nesbihal, son of Jane Zaccardi
 9TH Paul David Walter, son of Betty Walter
 10th Nathan Krasnopoler, son of Mitchell Krasnopoler & Susan Cohen

 16th Alan Maxville, son of Marty & Beth Maxville
 23rd Jack Polson, son of Doug & Pam Polson

September

- 2nd Jimmy Gorman, son of Kathy Gorman
 7th Bryan Owens, son of Kay & Dean Owens
 8th Hope Jeanne Ray, daughter of Gret & Amy Ray
 13th Michael Paul Early, son of Suzy Early
 18th Mario Wards, son of Leah Wards
 24TH Matthew Vance Stasevich, son of Vince & Cindy Stasevich
 27th Matthew Stipancich, son of Angie Pahal
 30th Alex (Allie) Lahr, daughter of Amy & Rob Lahr

October

- 6th Misty Warren, Daughter of Jamie Good and Nikki Krueger
 6th Israel Adams, son of Dan & Leanne Adams
 23rd Jeffrey Neil Crump, son of Paul & Ann Crump

Upcoming Events

August 14th - Meeting

September 11th—Meeting

October 9th—Meeting

**Fifth Annual Walk to Remember
 On September 23rd
 At Waterfall Park in Independence,
 MO
 Just behind Bass Pro.
 Registration will start at 8:30 and
 the
 Walk will start at 9:00AM**

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. 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 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. This year the tournament was held June 17th, 2017. 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 they 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. This year the tournament was June 10, 2017.

Kale Stine Memorial Golf Tournament—son of Melva Stine
Kale died from Colon Cancer at the age of 39. Every year they have a golf tournament to raise money for the University of Kansas Colon Cancer Research. The tournament is held at Sunflower Hills Golf Course in Bonner Springs, Ks. This years event is August 19th, 2017. For more information or to register please contact Steamboat Maurin (913) 638-1760—paulmaurin76@yahoo.com or Tim Linqvist (913) 927-4792 — tlindy15@gmail.com

The Closet

I haven't cleaned out her closet yet.
 I've put off packing away for a long time.
 I feel that I need to move some of the clutter;
 I tell myself: today's the day.

I'm cleaning that closet today
 Her green lace dress waits for another dance.
 The white T Shirt with bold LIFE GUARD
 Anticipates another summer.
 Three plaid flannel shirts wonder when they will go to college.

On the back of her door, the shoe rack holds:
 Maroon high-top canvas shoes covered with graffiti;
 Black strappies that she wore to her first dance;
 Tap shoes from her last recital;
 Boots and sandals thin with wear, but not enough.

What will I do with these clothes, shoes, memories?
 Give away? Keep? Pass Down?
 I feel these decisions too vast for me to make today.
 I'll just close the closet door and wait for another day.

—Rebecca Pinker, Jana's mom

"Time Heals"**"Time Heals"**

They told me that to comfort me
 When my child had died.
 Four years and two children later
 I think maybe they lied.

Friends and family tried their best,
 God sheltered me under his wing.
 Still, the mother inside me
 Cries for that child,
 And time hasn't changed a thing

The gaping wound granulated to a scar.
 The tears are now slower to spill
 But deep in my heart there's an empty hole
 That only that child could fill.

No, I don't really think that it's true about time,
 For I know that the love bond remains.
 Time never heals the loss of a child,
 You just learn to cope with the pain.

—Marsha Fredrickson, TCF SD

What Would He Tell Me About His First Day of School?

Okay, I didn't think it was going to bother me this much.

I've been saying for weeks that I couldn't wait till school started to get Scott and Ashley out of my hair...

So here it is, the eve of the first day of school, and I'm thinking, "What would tomorrow be like of Nicholas were here?" His turn finally comes to stand outside with backpack and new shoes, waiting for the big yellow school bus...What would he come home and tell me about his first day of school?

And what about the kids—his class? Will I forever look at these kids and wonder "what if?". They don't even know that they're missing a classmate...

This is harder than I thought it would be. Another milestone of life—first day of school—that Nicholas (and I) missed.

The thing is, nobody will think of this. It's not a birthday or Mother's Day or Christmas. It goes by unnoticed except by a mother with kids too excited to sleep tonight—one starting fifth grade, one starting second grade and one...

Linda Moffatt, TCF, St. Louis, MO

GRANDPARENTS GRIEF

My Daughter

“Never were you more precious to me, nor have I ever loved you more that I do now.” These were the words I spoke to my daughter upon seeing her for the first time following the loss of her five-month-old daughter, my granddaughter. My love for her was so intensified that it actually hurt. Filled with my love for her, but at the same time helpless, angry and torn to pieces, I knew that no amount of ointment, bandages, etc., would ever be able to heal this wound.

Anger, a terrible anger that this was allowed to happen. A daughter, a beautiful kind person who wanted a baby so very much and couldn't understand why it was being denied her. After five long years of trying and praying, it happens, and a little girl is born. Now she has something of her own, something that is part of her. Something to cherish and to lavish all the motherly love that she has in her to give.

Five years of trying, five months of having, then nothing but emptiness. An empty heart, and empty arms.

A child is hurt and Mother is there to bandage the wound and wipe away the tears. Now this grown-up child stands before you wounded, and you are helpless, knowing there isn't a bandage big enough to wrap a torn and bleeding heart in. You wipe away the tears, but they keep coming and mingle with your own. Her hurt is your hurt, and you know that there will always be tears in her life. You know because you have also lost a child.

You hold her in your arms, but the Mother in you wants to hake her back into your body so she will be safe and protected. You don't want her grown up. You want your little girl back so you can hold her, rock her, and keep her warm and happy. You are helpless, you can't go back.

Two little girls, a daughter, and granddaughter. A little granddaughter that we only had for five short months to enjoy. Too young to be taken from her Mother. A daughter too young to have to carry such a terrible sorrow the rest of her life. A daughter that a part of me now has back as a little girl again, but only in my heart. I can't protect her from the sorrows in this life, but I can put my arms around her, kiss her and say, “Mother loves you. You are special.”

—Vera Babb, TCF, St. Louis, MO
Vera has lost both a son and a granddaughter.

“In A Split Second”

We've always had fears of family tragedy, Seemingly distant, yet always so near

We prayed our family to pass through this life, Without tragedy's heavy burdens to bear

*But then, on that day so brutal, So suddenly our lives turned into pain
Normal life we knew was gone, And never again would be the same*

*We lost two little Grand Daughters, In a split second they were taken forever to be
This day our life just turned upside down, Yes, we lost Loral and Macy you see*

*Now our lives, we must continue, It hurts, and wasn't supposed to be this way
Our souls yearn to reach that great destination, While weary and worn, we trod forth each day*

*We still find some happiness, but more often sadness, We sometimes laugh and sometimes cry
With grief and longing for our lost girls, Yes, with our faith, we know we'll get by*

PawPaw-Donald Moyers
TCF Galveston County, TX,
In Memory, of Loral and Macy



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

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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.

Bittersweet

This town is where our girls were born,
Their start in life was great.
Then teens arrived and illness came
With milestones missed, or late.

No college graduations,
No wedding bells were rung,
No baby showers celebrated,
Choice baby names unsung.

Close friends support our double loss,
Their sympathy such aid
Yet our hearts ache with mixed emotions,
To watch *their* landmarks made

In retrospect, would we forgo
Our daughters, so dear and clever
To skip this pain their deaths have brought
No way, not ever, never

—Barbara Batson, in memory of Sarah and Amy

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