



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Wyandotte & Johnson County

Feb., March, & April 2017 Volume 5 Issue 2

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILD'S THINGS?

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved. Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his or her toys brings us comfort. Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes one month; books another; perhaps toys a few months later.

Some of us find that, as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after a while we realize that if the child were still alive, he/she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it's easier to give them away. Or he would have graduated from college this year and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions. When the time is right and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

Nancy Mower
TCF Honolulu, HI

PAIN

I am not a young man, and I thought I knew the meaning of pain. I have experienced pain from a toothache, arthritis, and even the loss of relatives and friends. But nothing in my fifty-four years had prepared me for the pain I experienced when we lost our son. I had no clue to real pain.

I think only a bereaved parent knows the true meaning. Not to belittle the loss of a parent or spouse, but those who have lost both tell me that it is not the same. My mother said to me at my brother's funeral, "Now I know how you feel." Even though she had lost a grandson, it was not the same.

It has been almost five years now, and there hasn't been a day go by that I don't see his picture or think of him and feel that pain. Pain for what we lost...and for what he lost. That pain is not as intense now. I have learned to tolerate it and still lead a normal life. The Compassionate Friends helped me to realize that I was not alone and that there were many others who felt that same pain. They helped me learn how to deal with it. Now it is my turn to try to help someone else.

Harold F. Underwood
TCF Southern Maryland

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

- *Jana E. Pinker Memorial Run*
March 4th, 2017 8AM
- *Keith McFadden Memorial*
Golf June 10th
- *Thor Rodenbaugh Memorial*
Golf June 17th
- *Pennies from Heaven in*
Memory of Faith Bruner

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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Being Public Takes Its Toll

When one is pretending, the entire body revolts.

Anais Nin

As we attempt to return to our jobs or our social life, or just to leave the house to do errands, we may feel that we must hold our heads up and keep acting brave. So we talk about things that don't interest us instead of talking about what plagues our heart and mind. We reluctantly agree to do things in which we do not have the slightest bit of interest.

All of this takes a tremendous amount of energy. But it does something else, too. Our bodies are under a great deal of stress as we work through our child's death. Trying to create and maintain an artificial front contributes to that stress. And stress, of course, manifests itself in many ways throughout the body - in headaches, rashes, insomnia, digestive disturbances, the inability to concentrate, and the impulse to fidget or be on the move. We may also have more colds and flues as well as unexplained pains in various parts of our bodies.

One of the kindest things we can do for ourselves is to behave, as much as is possible and reasonable, in accordance with our deepest needs and desires. We can greatly reduce the amount of time and effort we put into doing what only seems socially required.

I will not push myself into false situations or require myself to perform in a way that differs significantly from my truest self. I will take care of myself by not forcing certain actions or responses, regardless of the pressure put on me to do so. My self, my body comes first, and I need to remember that my body will revolt against pretending.

Carol Staudacher
From *A Time to Grieve*

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.

Faded Memories

I remember the first time I realized that my sense of my son, Jeremy, was beginning to fade.

I was losing his smell, the exact color of his hair, the tone of his voice when he said, "Oh, Mom," the feel of his arms around me when I got a too-seldom sixteen year-old hug.

Until my son's death, it had never occurred to me that I knew him through all of my senses. I believe the profound sense of loss I've experienced results in part from this total cut-off from his being. It's not just that I can't physically see him, but the essence of who he was is gone.

Perhaps that explains why I would often go to his room when I wanted to recapture a connection with him. Some nights I would sleep in his bed. I would wear his tee shirts. I would make a cocoon of an afghan that wrapped around him many times. Somehow, I felt his energy about me. I smelled his smell.

At other times, I'd get out the Ziplock bag; the one with snippets of his hair that was cut when they had to screw the "halo" in his head to secure his neck and severed spinal cord. I'd study the color of his hair, memorizing the shades of light brown.

And the sounds? Only one. I found a cassette tape that he had recorded himself accompanying a favorite band. I listened to that for hours, eyes closed, trying to capture the vision of those moments.

Although my behaviors might seem odd to some, the fear of fading memories eased.

Tom Robbins, in his book *Jitterbug Perfume*, says "Death is impatient and thoughtless. It barges into your room when you are right in the middle of some- thing. It doesn't even bother to wipe its boots." True. I was in the middle of parenting my only child. Death not only left the dirty mess of grieving for me to clean-up, but I had no warning.

Had I had warning that a three-quarter ton pick-up truck was going to run head-on into my son's Toyota Celica, I would have long before bought a camcorder and taken hours of audio and video. Lights. Camera. Action. The opening scene is me yelling, "Can you quiet down a little? You're sounding great, but those drums are going to drive the neighbors crazy." No answer.

Next scene. In his room, head-set on, eyes closed, tongue showing, intensity high, drumsticks alive with action.

Next scene: At the soccer field. I'm feeling the pride of watching my half-back move the ball down the field, demonstrating his years of experience.

Next scene: Middle of the night. I wake up to go to the bathroom; pass by his room. I see the light from the computer screen. "Jeremy, you've got to go to school in the morning. Turn that thing off." Fade out. Regrets. I didn't have a camcorder.

Often, just when I'm struggling with trying to remember the details, the minute details, I'll have one of those experiences. It's something that I'm hesitant to tell anyone about, partly because it feels so private and partly because I fear I won't be understood.

I'll be sleeping, and he'll come to me. Instantaneously my senses take in his presence; all of who he is. I feel the weight of his body against me as we hug. I see his eyebrows that almost, but not quite, meet. I smell that smell that is his alone. I hear his voice, oh so familiar. I find myself surprised that he is so real.

I used to awaken disappointed that it was "only" a dream. Today, nine years after his death, I treasure these infrequent experiences. While I don't understand it, and I have no explanations, each time it happens I believe I have spent a brief time in the presence of my son.

I thank God I don't have to rely only on faded memories.

Judi Simmons Estes
Prairie Village, Kansas
In Memory of my son Jeremy

JOHNSON COUNTY
OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS REMEMBERED

*Births***February**

- 11th Christopher Michael Lutz, son of Kevin & Nancy Lutz
 12th Zachary Wallace, son of Sandy & Doug Wallace
 13th Craig Howlett, son of Davie & Elaine Howlett
 15th Brian Hicks, son of Barbara Hicks
 20th Amy Batson, daughter of Barbara & Don Batson
 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
 18th Anthony Michael "Tony Mike" Bowers, son of Janet & Jimmy Bowers
 18th Jacob Gromly, son of Dana Gromly
 24th Mario Wards, son of Leah Wards
 25th Israel Adams, son of Dan & Leanne Adams
 26th Steven Bradford, son of Nancy Bradford, grandson of Barbara Ackerman
 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

*Deaths***February**

- 1st Tanner Lewis, son of Hayley Lewis
 1st Nathan Giron, son of Lynn Giron
 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
 12th Erika Jaremko, daughter of Stephanie Post

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
 14th Steven Bradford, son of Nancy Bradford, grandson of Barbara Ackerman
 15th Helena Grace Melo, daughter of Pam & Rudy Melo
 19th Sarah Batson, daughter of Barbara & Don Batson
 19th David Goodwin, son of Shirley Goodwin
 24th Sgt. Chad Allen O'Leary, brother of Mary Jackson

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April

- 3rd Jason Holmes, son of Kathi & Mike Holmes**
8th Robert "Robb" Aaron Repine, son of Kathy & Brad Brinkopf
9th Adam Ward, son of Sharon Ward
15th Brian Cupp, son of Kathy Grassy
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

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 4th, 2017.

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 will be 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 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 10, 2017.

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).

Big Plans

Before my daughter died I had big plans. I was an avid gardener. Every chance I got I was out in the yard. My entire back yard was a butterfly, hummingbird garden. It was a certified backyard habitat registered by the National Wildlife Association and a certified Monarch butterfly way station registered with National Monarch Society. If I wasn't riding my John Deer mower in the front yard, I was probably planting or pruning in the back. I was taking classes to receive my organic gardening license and my husband and I even bought a lovely little 13 acre vegetable farm in Comfort, TX, complete with a homestead on it from the 1920's and a year-round, spring fed creek. I was going to retire in Comfort and raise and sell organic vegetables.

Then Angela died. I thought I was going to die. I lay on the couch for a year. I screamed, I cried, I went to counseling and to TCF meetings. Slowly, I tried to get back into the rhythm of life. My back yard was a mess due to lack of maintenance. My front yard didn't look much better. I half heartedly tried do my gardening. I didn't have the energy or the enthusiasm I once did. Things weren't as beautiful as they once were. The colors of the flowers weren't as vivid as they once were not nor did they smell as sweet. When I planted, the earth didn't feel good in between my fingers like it once did. I started getting horrible headaches every time I tried to work outside. It felt like the back of my head was coming off. I thought that it was either stress or perhaps allergies. I came down with one sinus infection after another. I finally went to a specialist. I needed sinus surgery to correct my abnormally small sinus passages. After all these years I spent loving the outdoors and gardening, I now needed sinus surgery? It didn't make a lot of sense to me at the time. I now believe that somehow the grievous loss of my daughter was such a blow to me physicaly that it weakened my defenses and my precarious sinus condition manifested itself.

Take good care of yourself. The loss of a child is the worst blow a person can suffer. When we lose a child we are encouraged to reach out for help through family, friends, clergy, professional counseling, support groups, etc. All of these outlets can be invaluable in helping us as bereaved parents to survive the impossible. One important aspect of dealing with loss that is often over looked is our physical health. The physical effect that the loss of a child has on our bodies can be just as real and devastating as the impact that it has on us spiritually, mentally and psychologically. Make sure that your doctor is aware of what you are going through. Be careful not to miss your annual checkups. Try to get enough sleep and if you can take a walk and get some fresh air. Come to TCF meetings. You will find empathy and understanding. And most of all, try to keep on loving yourself.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

A friend is one who knows you as you are . . .

Understands where you've been . . .

Accepts who you've become

And still gently invites you to grow. ~ author unknown

It has been said that time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it's never gone. ~ Rose Kennedy

Sibling Grief

Two Viewpoints

The following letter, signed "Sibling," appeared in the Louisville, KY newsletter. It is a poignant expression of love and pain that is typical of siblings' reactions. It is hoped that, for those of you with teenagers, it will offer clues leading to freer communications and sharing of feelings.

Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right. I also hold my emotions back from them. I always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents. I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back. I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him. Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them. I miss my brother a lot, more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more. Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Love,
Sibling

CHOCOLATE ANGEL

I attended my first TCF (Compassionate Friends) national conference in Philadelphia, Alan's second hometown, in 1995, shortly after the third anniversary of his death. The first workshop, for siblings, was called Dreams and Visions. Here I had hoped to learn how to live my future without Alan. There was a typo in the program; it should have been called Dreams and Visitations. I was about to walk out. I had dreamt for months after Alan's death that he was still alive but was not ready for the unknown.

A few years later, during tropical storm Floyd while walking to my car during heavy rain and winds, I suddenly got very worried, and upset thinking that the storm could damage Alan's stone at the cemetery. Then I stepped on a Hershey Bar wrapper and immediately stopped worrying. Alan and I had visited Hershey, PA very often, including a two-night stay, by ourselves, at age 14. I felt that this was his way of telling me not to worry.

Recently I was worried about another problem. I took my nephew to Burger King; where they advertised Hershey Park. The next day I saw a girl wearing a Hershey Chocolate t-shirt. The following day someone from Hershey checked into my hotel. I finally decided what to do about my problem; I like to think, with assistance from Alan.

I was once asked by a fellow TCF member to visit a medium. I am not sure if it's just by chance, but I like my way of hearing.

Daniel Yoffee
In Memory of my brother, Alan



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

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JOHNSON COUNTY WEBSITE
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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.

For My Compassionate Friends

How is it that I know you? How'd you get into my life? Sometimes when I look at you, It cuts me like a knife. I do not want to know you, I don't want to cross that line. Let's both go back into the past, When everything was fine. You've held me and you've hugged me, And dried a tear or two, Yet, you're practically a stranger,	Why do you do the things you do? Of course, I know the reason, We are in this Club we're in, And why we hold on to each other Like we are long-lost kin. For us to know each other, We had to lose a kid, I wish I'd never met you, But, I'm so thankful that I did.
	Marilyn Rollins TCF Lake/Porter Counties, IN

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