



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Wyandotte & Johnson County

Aug., Sept., Oct. 2018 Volume 6 Issue 4

IF THEY ONLY KNEW

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death. I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved – this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him. I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him, as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, I do not cry in self pity for what I have lost. I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, and for all he still longed to hear, for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death. If only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken – that “time heals,” that “you’ll get over it,” that “it was for the best,” that “God takes only the best,” – and realize that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we are prepared to try to stand in the shoes of others. We will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

Jan McNess
TCF Victoria, Australia

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.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

- August 18th, Kale Stine Memorial Golf Tournament at Sunflower Golf Course
- Sept. 4th, WyCo Balloon Launch and dinner

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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We Remember Them, Too

A nurse's open letter to families who have lost a child

This letter, in various forms, has lived on my desktop for over five years. Every time I smile while thinking of a patient, share memories with my colleagues, or see a grieving family, I am reminded that you need to know this. Thoughts of your loved one have motivated this letter. For some of you, we knew you, as if we were your extended family. Together we celebrated holidays and watched your child grow up, even if it was in the hospital. I would like you to know that even if they didn't go to school, form networks of playmates, or have friends over at your home, your loved ones live on in us, too. You are never alone as you miss these children, as you laugh recalling moments with them. Don't worry that the memory of them is fading—their presence is strong and lives even beyond you and your love for them. We remember them, too.

Thank you for sharing them with us. I'm smiling as tears well up in my eyes just typing this to you. Thank you. I hope you take comfort knowing that we too remember them. We remember all of you...you are all a part of us. You might be surprised to know how often you come to our minds and at what special occasions you are remembered.

We celebrated the wedding of our charge nurse last month. While celebrating the best day of her life, a group of us sat together and told stories about your daughter. I had never heard the story shared by a couple of her favorite night nurses. It was as if it had just happened—I imagined her expressions and enthusiasm, especially when she was talking about barbecues. We reflected on how funny and charismatic and wise your daughter was. As the life of a married couple started, memories of your child were vivid and uproarious to those of us who also grew to know and love her.

The NP that cared for your family and I often run together. We have spent countless brisk winter mornings talking about your grandson. The sun shines bright in our eyes as we admirably recall his love for the outdoors and the igloo he built with his grandfather. His desire to live a full life despite his tumor inspires our steps. We will always remember how proud you are of him.

While grocery shopping, I saw a bag of sour cream and onion chips. I could never forget how much your little sister loved those chips! She would come in to her clinic appointment with a bag as big as she was, shoulder deep in the foil wrapping as she grasped another chip. It is small and simple, but those chips will always remind me of her; you are never alone as you recall her life.

Sadly, we attended the funeral of another patient this winter. We drove two hours home on the expressway, sharing memories of the child who was being mourned. We remembered your child, too. The physician, coordinator, and nurses you knew in the last journey of that story all shared memories of your child during our ride home. We remember how strong and brave these children were.

We will never forget how much you love them.

It's not just milestones, anniversaries, or ceremonies designed to help us remember your children that prompt this. We remember them because they became a part of us. We tell stories about events that we weren't even present for because they have been told so many times by colleagues. We talk about them because there is joy in our hearts when we recall them. The spirit they possessed and courage we witnessed—we will never forget those things.

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We will also always remember that they were kids—kids who liked to play, challenge us, interpret the world, and outwit their caregivers. You all became a part of us. You taught us unconditional love, resilience, and coping. We watched tears illuminated by the lights of pumps and monitors stream down your cheeks in the darkness of HEPA-filtered hospital rooms, only to be replaced by stoic smiles and looks of fierce determination as the sun rose. The lessons you taught made impressions far beyond anything our textbooks could have described. Please don't ever think that we "do this all the time" or that it is "just part of our job." Please don't fear that you are the only ones who still remember and miss your children. Their memory lives within each of us as well. Thank you for sharing your child and family with us. We promise to take gentle care of the memories as we stand beside new families walking in similar shoes.

Jessica L. Spruit, DNP, RN, CPNP-AC, CPHON, BMT-CN
Children's Hospital of Michigan

You Are Braver

You are braver than you will ever know. You may not realize it but you are valiant, magnificent and strong in spirit. You are courageous. You have endured and somehow survived the most horrific injury that anyone in this life can suffer. Your child has died. But somehow you have miraculously found the strength to still breathe in and out. And after a while, you managed to put one foot in front of the other and have tried to the best of your ability to adapt to a strange new world; one that exists without your precious child in it. A world you must step out in to and face every day without any outward signs that you are altered for life. If you were to wear your most grievous wound displayed on the outside of your body like permanent stigmata, would people recoil from the sight or would they perhaps offer compassion and understanding for your piteous condition? That's why you are so brave. Although no one else can see how horribly injured you are, you are still doing your best to function and participate in this life. I want to challenge you to be brave just once more. If you have not been to a Compassionate Friends meeting, please muster all of the strength and courage you have and walk in the door for that first meeting. We'll help you from there. We care. We understand. We too have the same wounds as you. We need not walk alone.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX



2018 National Conference

St. Louis, Mo

This event was another amazing experience. Over 100 workshops for all aspects of a grieving parent, grandparent, and siblings.

The Walk to Remember was one of the best I have ever done.

Next year the conference is in Philadelphia, PA

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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*
- 7th *Curtis M.G. Gilmore, son of Anita Gordon-Gilmore*
- 10th *Nathan Giron, son of Lynn Giron*
- 10th *Ian Matches, son of Terri Matches*
- 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

- 1st *Max Michael Galloway, son of Shannon Galloway*
- 3rd *Tom Nesbihal, son of Jane Zaccardi*
- 5th *Drew Bodenhausen, son of Lisa & Brian Bodenhausen*
- 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 **Joshua Wilson, son of Wayne and Kelley Wilson**
- 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**
- 30th **Austin Newell, son of Tracie Newell**

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**
- 28th **Thomas McCord, son of Therese McCord**
- 29th **Elisabeth Legrande, daughter of Rick & Cheryl Shook**

Wyandotte & Johnson County

Events for our Children

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

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.

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. Date to be determined for 2019..

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 18th at 1PM. 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

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The Loving Listener

One day last month, seemingly out of nowhere, my dark and dreaded companion “grief” came roaring back in to my life. Just as I thought I was “doing all right,” grief came once again to wrench, rip, and tear at the thin delicate membrane of scar tissue that had formed over the wound in my heart, that I had foolishly believed allowed me to be normal again. I was in unbearable agony. I thought, “Oh my God, I can’t believe I ever hurt this bad. How did I ever survive this agony?” I finally pulled myself together as best I could and reached out to one of our beautiful angels of mercy. I called our “Loving Listener.” “Hi, do you have a minute?” She chirped “Absolutely!” I went on to pour out my heart to her. She listened patiently. She offered no quick fixes or advice, trite phrases, or empty platitudes. She just spiritually embraced me and suffered along with me; quietly offering her love, compassion and understanding. When most of my pain and sorrow had finally emptied out, I realized it was coming up on the anniversary death date of my child. It would mark five years since the death of my beloved daughter Angela. This was the catalyst that had plunged me back into the abyss of grief. I could not bear the thought that my beautiful child had been dead for a half a decade. As soon as I realized what had caused this awful digression, I began to feel a little better. If your chapter has a Loving Listener, please give them a call. They will give you solace, comfort and companionship. We Need Not Walk Alone.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

If you have any interest in being a “Loving Listener” please contact your chapter leader and we will list your contact information in the newsletter.

The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were. “Parent” is a living word. It is an eternal word.

Our children would want us to remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name of “parent” that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts. We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

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*My sister Laura*

Laura passed away just before I turned 5. With a heart of gold, she was out to save the world. Whether that be through recycling, leadership, or purest of cheer, she would have seen it through. Passionate and determined, people stood behind her.

Laura enjoyed sports, anything from tether ball to football, she was the champ. My mom retells the stories of when she would play football with “all the boys” better than I could exclaim. They never let her in the huddle but when they passed it to her, no one could catch her, and they knew it.

In her passing, there was a sweetness that was sapped from my childhood, and my family; a gloom it would seem. This gloom has not faded, it is merely our eyes that have adjusted.

Years passed, as did many seasons of doubting God’s existence, goodness, or provision beyond this life. I came to know the Lord, in part, through Laura’s death. Through the ripping of pages, the death of a sibling, I found new life.

By Steven Janes

A Sibling's Feelings

The pain of a sibling is so real we sometimes hide it deep inside of ourselves. As we watch our parents hurting we see the pain in their eyes. We are also hurting not only for the loss of our brother or sister but also for our own parents. We need to reach out to each other to let each other know we are hurting inside.

Our lives have all changed forever. I know they lost a son but I lost my younger brother I loved, and as siblings we share a special bond that will never have anymore for he no longer lives...my brother, my friend.

I will always miss you and I will never forget you for you will always live in my heart, and I have wonderful memories no one can ever take away from me. In my heart you will stay, love you forever.

Marie Porreca
TCF Rockland County, NY

**TCF “ONLINE SUPPORT COMMUNITY” OFFERS
OPPORTUNITY FOR GRIEF SHARING**

The Compassionate Friends national website offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you’re experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click “Online Support” listed under the Find Support menu.



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

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.

WHERE DO I GO?

Now that you're gone, where do I go

to see your fair smile
to hear your tingling giggle
to smell your dank hair after a swim
to listen to your questions
to touch your gentle cheek
to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go

to share all my years of wisdom
to find someone who'll tell me truth
to answer the phone that won't ring
to tell you I'm sorry
to know that I am loved and
to pour out my love and my tears?

I shall go

to the pictures that hold you forever
to the books we shared
to the music you taught me to love
to the woods we explored as one
to the memories that never fail
to the innermost reaches of my heart
to where we are always together.

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

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.

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