



# The Compassionate Friends

## Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Wyandotte & Johnson County

May, June, July 2018 Volume 6 Issue 3

### This Mixed-up Grief

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless; on the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatterbrained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing, and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet, if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares. You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow. Grief presses on you like a steamroller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the sun is shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed ... and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still ... there. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.

And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT to remember. And tender memories of Love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

Dana Gensler  
TCF Louisville, KY

#### Alan Petersen

Johnson County Chapter will be meeting Thursday May 24th at 6pm for a pot luck and a presentation from Alan Petersen with Angels Across the USA. Our chapter will provide fried chicken, drinks, plates and utensils. We ask that everyone bring a side and/or dessert. Dinner will be at 6PM, presentation from Alan at 7PM with dessert afterwards.  
Advent Lutheran Church, Olathe, Ks

#### 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](http://WWW.JOCOTCF.ORG)

2nd Monday @7PM

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 16th, Thor Rodenbaugh Memorial Golf Tournament @ Dub's Dred
- June 9th, Keith McFadden Memorial Golf Tournament @ Painted Hills
- July 27-29 National Conference St. Louis, Mo

#### REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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and  
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#### National Office

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## PLEASE BE GENTLE

Please be gentle with me for I am grieving. The sea I swim is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day.

My heart is heavy with sorrow, I want to shout and scream and repeatedly ask, "Why?" At times, my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss.

Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be.

Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me through the weeks and months ahead. Forgive me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within my heart, and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path.

Please, will you walk beside me?

Jill Englar  
TCF Westminster, MD

## 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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu.

## 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.

## Moments

The moment a man hears the word “father” for the very first time he feels a special happiness in his heart. He can’t imagine how lucky he is when he gets to hear this word twice.

The moment a man hears the words “Daddy, catch me,” for the very first time from both his daughters, he smiles so widely that it almost hurts. The trust they have in his arms as they fly through the air makes them squeal out loud with such joy.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, can I sit on your shoulders?” for the first time he is in such delight as they slip up while holding hands. What pride he feels when they both sit so high in the sky.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, I get to go to school today” finds him confused that this has come so quickly. His is so concerned that he must step aside as education changes their little minds forever. He begins to see that his babies are starting to disappear.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, I learned so much today,” he smiles for them but knows that his life is starting to get so busy that the time he gets to spend with his daughters seems to just slip away.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, I made cheerleader,” or “I made the debate team,” he knows that their little lives are changing right in front of him. He watches as they go through braces, prom, then graduation as they change into young women.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, we miss you so much,” he feels a tear between being with his daughters and trying to keep the bills paid. He misses them too.

The moment that a man hears the words, “Daddy, I am not feeling well,” he hurts for them. He has to let their mom take the lead as the illnesses become increasingly worse. As he travels more and more, his time with his daughters becomes less and less as his heart is filled with concern and worry.

The moment a man hears the words, “Daddy, I am in so much pain,” he feels so helpless. What can a man do to take all the pain away from both of his daughters? He would gladly carry their illnesses in his own heart and body if he only could.

The moment a man hears the words, “Both of them have passed,” he is in total shock. His heart now has an empty tear so deep that he thinks it will never heal. He knows that they will never be in pain again but he also knows that they will never say, “Father, Daddy catch me, Daddy, can I sit on your shoulders?, Daddy, I got to go to school today, Daddy, I learned so much today, “Daddy, I made cheerleader” or “Daddy, I made the debate team,” or “Daddy, I miss you so much.” He will never look into their eyes and they will never look into his to say good night.

There are moments when a man will never hear the word, “Daddy”, again.

—Don Batson, Daddy to Amy and Sarah

## 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.

## Our Children Remembered

### Births

#### May

- 6<sup>th</sup> James Brandt Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin  
 7<sup>th</sup> John Reynolds, son of Glenda & Bob Holman  
 26<sup>th</sup> Stephanie Gray, daughter of Steve Gray  
 29<sup>th</sup> James Ernest Watkins III, son of Arlene & Jim Watkins  
 30<sup>th</sup> Jessica Elmquist, daughter of Tracy Price

#### June

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

#### July

- 1<sup>st</sup> Vincent Boos, son of John & Rochelle Boos, (Mariah, sister)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> James Collins, son of Shelley Collins  
 8<sup>th</sup> Jenna Good-Lopez, daughter of Jamie Good and Nikki Krueger  
 20<sup>th</sup> Sara Doss, daughter of Allie & Jason Doss  
 23<sup>rd</sup> Harrison Rupp, son of Seth Rupp  
 26<sup>th</sup> Ryan O'Connell, son of Pat O'Connell  
 26<sup>th</sup> Lincoln William Hurst, son of Tracie & Will Hurst  
 27<sup>th</sup> Austin Newell, son of Tracie Newell

### Deaths

#### May

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

#### June

- 7<sup>th</sup> Jacob Gromly, son of Dana Gromly  
 12<sup>th</sup> Drew Bicknell, son of Sheree Bicknell  
 13<sup>th</sup> Allison Michelle Fisher, daughter of Kelly & Kyle Fisher  
 19<sup>th</sup> John Reynolds, son of Glenda & Bob Holman  
 20<sup>th</sup> Augie Echeandia, son of Augie Echeandia  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Keith McFadden, son of Buddy & Debbie McFadden  
 25<sup>th</sup> James Brandt Heavilin, son of Marilyn & Glen Heavilin  
 27<sup>th</sup> Jenna Good-Lopez, daughter of Jamie Good & Nikki Krueger  
 28<sup>th</sup> Craig Howlett, son of David & Elaine Howlett

#### July

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

*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](mailto:bruners05@aol.com).*

***Thor Rodenbaugh Memorial Golf Tournament*** - Son of Chris and Ron Rodenbaugh

*Thor died at age 37 during a surgical procedure. He left a wife and 3 daughters, though he was never able to meet his 3rd daughter. Every year a golf tournament is put on to raise money for his daughter's college fund. The event is usually held in early summer at Dub's Dread Golf Club, KCKS. This year the tournament will be held on June 16th, 2018. For more information please contact Chris at 816-679-8678. [www.ask4thor.com](http://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](http://www.kmangolf.com). This year the tournament will be June 9th, 2018.*

***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](mailto:paulmaurin76@yahoo.com) or Tim Linquist (913) 927-4792 — [tlindy15@gmail.com](mailto:tlindy15@gmail.com)*

## Am I Down for the Count?

I abhor boxing and have not a shred of comprehension about why it is called a “sport.” That abhorrence, however, did not prevent me from being a fan of the Rocky movies from long ago. So, I have a general idea of the procedures and possible outcomes of this endorsed method of brutally bashing in the head of an opponent. The terminology has seeped into my brain.

It’s been four years since my son died and I wish I had the answer to this question: am I down for the count?

I don’t know.

I get out of bed. I function. I guess I would be considered productive.

Is there joy? Not really.

Is there gleeful anticipation of the future? Not at all.

According to my friend Dennis Apple, this is called “slogging.” So, I slog. I get through the days. I try to fulfill my obligations. I have a schedule. I have a “to-do” list and I cross off items.

And I try very, very hard to respect the advice I get from more seasoned grievors. I try to be open to the idea that this may get better (?), softer, easier. I try to have hope. I try to believe that there will come a day when I can consider a future that I actually *want* to imagine.

But I sometimes can’t help but wonder: am I down for the count? Have the blows been too much? Can I get back to a standing position, even if wounded and bloodied? Can I stand?

Peggi Johnson  
TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

## Gifts from Amy

I recently had to take part in the one-year anniversary of my precious daughter Amy's death, a day that we as parents never want to take part in. I was distressed as it really sank in that this was real and very final. Last year at this time I had been in such a state of shock that now, looking back, I began to realize the daze I was in for several months. This year I was in no such daze—the pain was all too real.

What could I do with this day? How could I make it through? In my pain I remembered one of the first things I had said when Amy died. I had expressed thankfulness for all the things she had taught me by being in my life. As I thought of this now, I began to write down all the many things. Soon I found I was taking my list a step further and listing all the things I had learned since Amy's death, I began to see my list as a list of gifts from Amy. Before Amy's death I had thought of myself as a religious person, going to church, believing in God, even knowing several Bible verses by heart. I was wrong. I have only now begun to see the difference in religious and spiritual. Only now, after Amy's death, have I embarked on my very own spiritual path. What greater gift could my child have left me!

I took my list and put it in a box, wrapped it up and tied it with a bow. I put the box in my closet. This time next year I will open the box and celebrate all the wonderful gifts my daughter has given to me. And I'm sure I will add more as the years go by.

Suzanne Owens  
TCF, West Columbia, SC  
In Memory of my daughter Amy

## **SIBLING GRIEF**

### **Ask Dr. Heidi**

TCF Magazine

- Q. My six-year-old wants to celebrate my three-year-old's birthday in a couple of weeks although she passed just six months ago. How can I do this without it getting out of hand or giving him false hope that she might be there with us?**
- A.** I think it's a testament to you that your six-year-old feels comfortable enough to ask if he can celebrate his sister's fourth birthday. It sounds like you have created a supportive environment, where he can talk openly about his sister. The party can be an opportunity to celebrate the life that they had together as siblings, by looking at family photos and discussing positive and funny memories, while at the same time educating him in an age-appropriate way about the permanence of the death. Children lack abstract thinking skills that allow them to appreciate death as final. It is not uncommon to have a child ask repeatedly when their sibling is coming home. Answering these questions openly and honestly will help children to eventually grasp the permanence. I certainly understand your concerns and would suggest that you also use this as an opportunity to reassure your son that he still lives in a safe and predictable world. Each year on my brother's birthday I look back on family photos, say a toast to him and give thanks to the 17 years he was in my life. Although our siblings are gone, they live forever in our hearts and in our memories.

—Dr. Heidi Horsley, PsyD

### **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



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

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JOHNSON COUNTY WEBSITE  
[www.tcfkc.org](http://www.tcfkc.org)

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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.*

### Team Lift

**Remember being at a store  
A box so huge you'd see?  
A fork lift is not what's required,  
"Team Lift" the notice that you'd see,**

**At TCF, our stickers say  
Our names and kids we've lost.  
Inside these walls sad stories sobbed  
Of precious children who have crossed.**

**Our inner sorrows securely told  
"You should" tips safely spared.  
Whatever age or reason gone,  
Our childless heartbreak shared.**

**So every month as I begin  
To feel my soul run dry,  
I go to group and fill it up  
"Team Lift" my tag, and love supplied.**

**—Barbara Batson, mom to 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.

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