**February 2017 The Compassionate Friends Volume 31● Number 2**

***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

**P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) •Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org**

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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief

following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

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*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month in the American Builders & Contractors (ABC) Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 . Park and enter at the rear of the building.*

*We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

**February 12 Meeting**

**Phone Friends**

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can’t reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

**Accidental Death** ………...Mike and Paula Childers

615-646-1333

**AIDS**………………….….…….….......Joyce Soward

615-754-5210

**Illness**………….…………..David and Peggy Gibson

615-356-1351

**Infant**…………………..……………..…Jayne Head

615-264-8184

**SIDS**………….…………..…….……KrisThompson

931-486-9088

**Suicide**…….……………….Ron and Darlene Henson

615-789-3613

**Small Child**….……........Kenneth and Kathy Hensley

615-237-9972

**Alcohol/Drug Overdose**......…...............……Ed Pyle

615-712-3245

***Sharing Mementos***

***of Our Children and Siblings***

W

e all have things that are precious to us, that either

belonged to or remind us of our beloved children.

At this month’s meeting, we invite you to bring any one

thing that can be shared briefly with the rest of the group.

This memento can be something that your child treasured,

something your child gave you or you gave to him, or

something that simply reminds you that your child lived

and was loved, even if his or her life was very short

(a footprint, baby blanket, hospital bracelet, etc.)

Please join us February 12 as we share sweet remembrances

of our dear children. Of course, we encourage grandparents

and siblings to participate by bringing a memento of their

grandchild, brother or sister. Small sharing groups will

follow this program.

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…if you have a memory of someone who has died, give it freely to those who are left behind…in the sharing of memories is born the beginnings of hope and healing.

Darcie Sims

A

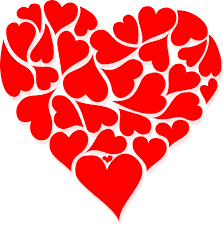
ttending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We need not walk alone.

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010

TCF Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) National Office email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

**bd06374_2 TCF Nashville, TN February 2017**

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**The Season of the Heart**

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his is the season of the heart! Yet many of us will be asking how to live during this season with a heart that is broken. Just what is it that our hearts are knowing during these days? What are the feelings that pulsate,

ebb and flow?

Is it the heart that catches its breath on a memory and is overwhelmed? The heart where hope seems absent? The heart that feels it cannot hold another ounce of pain; that knows the fleeting smile of a loved one? The heart that catches a fragment of joy and is warmed? The heart that knows pain and keeps on loving? The heart that is tempted to lie still and lonely; that searches for the acceptance of a friend?

Questions arise! Why is a heart red and why does it have two lobes? A response might be—A heart is so vulnerable that it is easily bloodied. A heart consists of opposites, changed by sorrow and by joy. A heart, when whole, includes all emotions. A heart can lie cold and sad and broken. A heart can grow and heal and love.

Marie Andrews

TCF, Southern Maryland Chapter

**Acceptance**

*Since sorrow came to live with me*

*I hear folks speak of how ‘twill be*

*When healing’s done its work in me*

*And brings a new maturity.*

*My heart cries out, “I’ll take the old!*

*Bring back my child for me to hold.*

*I’ll gladly give up all the gold*

*Of the new worth of which you’ve told!”*

*I surely have no choice in this.*

*I ache to touch the child I miss*

*And on her cheek to place my kiss,*

*Returning to my former bliss!*

*Since back in time I cannot go,*

*May I of wisdom come to know*

*And may new values in me grow*

*So that compassion I may show!*

Robert F. Gloor

TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

**Letting Go of the Pain**

A

few weeks or a few months after your child has died, you will probably find yourself in a situation where you find yourself laughing or having a good time—then you…think to yourself “How can I dare laugh or have any fun now that my child has died and I hurt so bad?” We’ve all had this feeling in the early stages of our grief. I urge you newly bereaved, PLEASE do not feel guilty about enjoying the happiness that comes with life. When you find yourself laughing and enjoying something in life, it doesn’t mean that you have forgotten your child it just means that you are “letting go” of some of the pain. In all of our lives there will be tears and in all of our lives there should be laughter.

When people used to say to me “You must put it behind you and let go of your child and start living again.” I wondered what they meant by “it.” I would get very angry. How dare those people think I could ever “let go” of my child, or even want to but after a while I realized that I don’t have to “let go” of my child in order to live again. I just have to “let go” of the pain that his death caused. His life will always be a part of me and so will his death; I’ll never forget him, but I don’t have to keep the grief and pain with me always. So if you see me cry, I’m “letting go” of some pain. And when you see me laughing or having a good time, I’m living life again.

Verne Smith

TCF, Fort Worth, TX

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**Healing and Hope**

F

or a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, “It’s different with me! You don’t understand!” This is the “normal” response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child’s death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of “Why?”

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one’s spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—will occur. Although the term “recovery” is used. I prefer the term “healing,” a process whereby our lives come to a new normal. Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and

unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!!

One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child’s death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that’s all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

Robert Gloor

TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

**Little White Blanket**

L

ittle white blanket…first snow on the grave since you left. How can it be? Just yesterday you were here. You left in summer’s humid heat. Cicadas sang your eulogy over fresh-turned soil. Now snow’s first appearance covers your smooth, flawless sleeping ground.

Little white blanket covers and cares for you when I no longer can. I care for you now with prayers and memories and by framing photographs of times gone by. Photos of you and me. When I look at us, I can still feel you sitting next to me, breathing, smiling, living your life with me.

Then I feel you gone from here, from me. I never knew before how to feel what’s not there. Feeling the not-me-ness of me, without you.

Little white blanket, tuck in my loved one. Cover her gently, make her comfortable, send her my love. When spring comes and little white blanket disappears, let the crocuses I planted bloom their first blooms, counting every **first** since you left. First morning without you, first week alone, first month bereft, first Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, first New Year without you…a strange year without you. With the passing of time, I fear I’ll forget you, so I hold on to my grief, as I once held on to you.

Little white blanket, first snow on the grave, assure me she’s cared for, that she won’t forget me, that we are still us, that I am still me…that somewhere in spirit, she is still her.

First snow, nature’s wise surround for my departed, teach me how to mend the hole ripped in the fabric of my life, christen the ground, baptize me in understanding the cycles of life; living, loving, and letting go.

Deborah Antinori

Basking Ridge, New Jersey

Bereavement Magazine, Jan/Feb 1999

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***To My Husband***

*Your tears flow within your heart,*

*Mine flow down my cheeks.*

*Your anger lies with thought and movements,*

*Mine gallops forward for all to see.*

*Your despair shows in your now dull eyes,*

*Mine shows in line after written line.*

*You grieve over the death of your son,*

*I grieve over the death of my baby.*

*But we’re still the same, still one,*

*Only we grieve at different times*

*Over different memories and at different lengths.*

*Yet we both realize*

*The death of our child.*

Pam Burden

TCF, Augusta, GA

**A Message to My Wife**

*The years of our marriage are few*

*When measured against a lifetime.*

*We have encountered a joy*

*And shared confidence in our future.*

*We have known hope’s ending*

*And have borne the death of dreams.*

*We have, together, been diminished.*

*Even minor aspirations have eluded*

*Our grasp in cruel shadow of the loss of our child.*

*Yet, we still share our lives,*

*And though the bitterness, we once knew has fled*

*We have grown enough to sense*

*A return of laughter – an uplifting*

*To shatter the dimness, to remind us*

*That tomorrow will come and*

*Dreams may again be born.*

Don Hackett,

TCF, Hingham, MA

**Subsequent Children: The Result Was Worth the Fear**

O

n March 20, 1991, our lives were changed forever when a motorcycle going in excess of 80 mph crashed into the side of our car and ended the lives of our eight year old Stephanie and five year old Stephen. Stephanie and Stephen were so very special. They had a special kindness for all people and a special love between the two of them. Stephanie was our tap dancer who loved books and working in the school library. Stephen had a quick mind, and shortly after learning from me how to play checkers, beat me regularly— and he was only four years old at the time.

We used to laugh at friends who wanted to wait to have children “until…” Until they were more financially stable, until their career was off to a better start, or until they had a new house. We would turn to each other and laugh because we knew the tremendous joy of loving and being loved by a child. It is an unconditional love like no other. When we became parents, we felt we really became people. After the kids died, we knew how bad we needed to feel that again. We found that we were forced to live in a world we didn’t know anymore. We were going through the motions of getting through the day, but they were just that, motions.

Because of our age, we knew that if we were going to have another child, we would have to do so very soon. Despite medical problems we thought almost insurmountable, we were able to conceive and it happened quite soon after we started trying. All during my pregnancy, I have to admit, I worried continuously. I had miscarried once before between Stephanie and Stephen and the fear was always there. I also had an overwhelming fear that people would feel that we were trying to replace our lost children and that was not the case at all.

You cannot replace one child with another. But when your life is centered around your children from the moment you get up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night, there is an overwhelming void. We were parents and had no one to parent.

When the time of delivery came, the fear welled up inside me. I knew that the baby was safe and protected while inside of me but its appearance in the world brought on a whole new list of “what if’s.” Of course at that point, there was no turning back.

A very happy baby boy was born on August 7, 1992. We hope that we will not be terribly overprotective as he grows older. It is something we will always have to work on. I have to admit, when I am playing with him, the words “when you grow up” get stuck in my throat because I do fear the future. We also recognize, like all bereaved parents learn, that the future is always uncertain and that we must live today and do the best we possibly can. We hope to live each day making sure that Christopher knows just how loved and special he is to us. Holding his little hand in ours, we know we made the right decision to have more children. There is no joy like it!

When people ask us how many children we have, we proudly say three. If a further explanation is necessary, we give it. We realize there will always be things we do for each of our children. We work with other bereaved parents in memory of the love and lives of our Stephanie and Stephen. We have started a TCF chapter in our area. It is our hope that we can also teach medical personnel, funeral homes and other people who come in contact with bereaved parents better ways to handle the situation.

Pat Loder

TCF Lakes Area, MI

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# Looking Forward to 2017:

# https://www.compassionatefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2017-conference-bg-800x533.jpg

# THE 40TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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he Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. “Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope” is the theme of this year’s event. The 2017 Conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. Details will be updated on the national website, www.compassionatefriends.org , as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

**Nashville REgional Conference**

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**I’m Missing You**

#### *I’m missing you –*

*All day, every day.*

*On a bright summer morning, or*

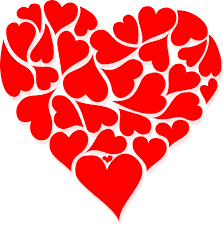
*When the moon is full.*

*In the golden days of fall,*

*As the storm clouds build and it’s snowing.*

*When the willows begin to turn green –*

*You are always with me,*

*In my mind and in my heart.*

*My brother, my good friend*

*I’m missing you.*

Kris Cunningham

TCF, Moro, IL ***Valentine’s Wishes***

*I thought I heard your laugh today,*

*While watching children run and play.*

*You chuckled in that special way*

*And then you were gone.*

*I thought I saw your gentle face,*

*That look which time cannot erase.*

*Then it was gone without a trace,*

*And then I was alone.*

*I thought I heard your voice today*

*And suddenly my world was gay.*

*I thought I heard you softly say,*

*“I love you, Mom,*

*Happy Valentine’s Day.”*

*Oh how I wish ….*

TCF, North Hollywood, CA

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**CHAPTER INFORMATION**

**Are you Moving?**

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 46 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you’ve moved; then we pay another 46 cents to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

**The “Children Remembered” Listings**

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the We Remember Them list on pages 2 and 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the exact way you’d like the child’s name to appear, the child’s birth and death dates, and the parents’ names as they should be listed. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net, We’ll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

**We Need Your Help**

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child’s name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. Our outreach chairperson will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.

**The Birthday Table**

In the month of your child’s birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child’s favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you’d like to bring. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child’s birth and for us to become better acquainted.

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**BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

**Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents**

For general information about Grief Support Services at Alive Hospice, please call the main number: [615 963-4732](tel:615%20963-4732) or email [griefsupport@alivehospice.org](mailto:griefsupport@alivehospice.org). Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at 615-346-8554. Contact John Baker at 615-346-8364 for bereaved parent support or individual counseling.

**Sharing**

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times of meetings. Visit www.nationalshare.org

**Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call 615 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at TSPN.org, and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

**TCF Web site —A Treasure for You**

When you log onto the TCF Web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) you will find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter Web sites and numerous other resources. Check it out.