**January 2016 The Compassionate Friends Volume 30● Number 1**

 ***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.*

**January 10 Meeting: *Out of Order***

**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

Our January program offers viewing of the video, *Out of Order:*

*Dealing with the Death of a Child*.  We will see three couples

whose children have died from different causes, including suicide,

courageously share how they experienced their grief,

what has helped them, and how they honor and keep connections

to the memories of their children. From feeling they have no heart to

live, to searching for and finding meaning and understanding,

this video of Dave and Debbie, Bill and Chris and M.J. and John

sharing their experiences can help us as we travel our own grief

journeys.

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 Attending 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**2**

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The First Snow

*The first snow since you left*

*Fell on the coldest day of the year,*

*Settling onto rooftops and heights,*

*Onto the ground, drifts of white.*

*I drift in thought to past winters*

*To silhouettes against white,*

*Rosy-cheeked children crunching snow*

*In woolen paws for a snowball fight*

*Shrieks of delight streak the air*

*Like rising steam from warm breath.*

*As memories frozen in mind*

*Thaw like snow in the morning sun,*

*I don a coat against the wind,*

*Remembering when past snows*

*Encased snub footprints in white*

*And angels fell blinking in the light.*

*Years have passed since that winter scene*

*Yet those images move my heart still*

*As memories like angels’ wings*

*Disturb the silence, and the chill,*

*And the murmur of the wind protests*

*The coldness of unmarred snow.*

Peggy Walls

TCF, Alexander City AL

***She’s Here, But Not***

*She’s here—but she’s there*

*She’s with us—but she’s not*

*She’s right around the bend*

*But then she’s gone again*

*She’s far away—but so near*

*It’s like she’s gone—but here again.*

Stacy Sharp, age 11

TCF, Defiance, OH

*After the worst thing has happened*

*With nothing left to fear.*

*The sun continues shining*

*With undiminished cheer;*

*And winds continue blowing*

*And skies continue fair,*

*As hearts continue bearing*

*The pain they could not bear.*

 Author Unknown

A New Year Wish

*I wish you all a blessing*

*As the New Year approaches us all.*

*May this year bring gentle memories*

*Of our child that God has called.*

*I wish you all some sunshine*

# That clouds can cover on some days.

*I pray your hearts will mend*

*As mine has along the way.*

*I thank God for our TCF “family”*

*And the Online Sharing each day,*

*For so many are always there*

*To help so many find their way.*

*I wish I could take each one of you*

*And show you what I’ve learned.*

*As time has helped my own heart*

*Your feelings are my concern.*

*The Holidays are the hardest*

*As you all very well know,*

*Yet we can find healing*

*As the New Year unfolds.*

*May you all know I’m thinking*

*About each and every one of you.*

*I give you all my blessing*

*And hope the New Year is gentle for you.*

Sharon Bryant

TCF, Atlanta Online Sharing

Who Knew?

#### Our eyes are red and grief makes us blue.

*We never quite know who to tell your story to.*

*We ponder our lives without you being here,*

*To give us purpose, laughter and often a tear.*

*It seems impossible these days we must endure,*

*Emptiness, helplessness and some fear for sure.*

#### Having no doubt that we’ll not make it through,

*Then we remember just how much we love you.*

*We celebrate your life with us here on earth,*

*No matter how long you lived after your birth.*

*Our lives have been blessed by just knowing you,*

*Because of your love, we’ll make it. Who knew?*

Dan Gardner

TCF, Nashville, TN

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**7 Things I've Learned Since the Loss of My Child**

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hild loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her "good" days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are needed. If you'd like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts a lifetime, here is what I've learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

***1). Love never dies.***

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased children as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours--the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn't so great about hearing about children

gone too soon, but that doesn't stop me from saying my son's name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just

because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn't make him matter any less. My son's life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

***2). Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.***

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds--a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we've never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It's a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

***3). I will grieve for a lifetime.***

Period. The end. There is no "moving on," or "getting over it." There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I

will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no elixir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time where I won't think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love

lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday,

milestone--should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born--an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered *forever*.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

***4). It's a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I've ever known.***

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship--that we could have met another way--*any*other way but *this.*Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining *the club.*If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy. Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a life force to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

***5). The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.***

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to "move on," or "stop dwelling," from well intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains. The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

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***6). No matter how long it’s been, holidays never become easier without my son.***

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why *every* holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it’s been 5, 10 or 25 yars later? It’s because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children, Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two—*anything*—than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than iving without one or more of your precious children. That is why holidays are *always and forever* hard for bereaved parents. Don’t wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don’t have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

***7). Because I now deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.***

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it’s both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve, I also know joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief. Because I’ve clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again—when the joy comes, however and whenever it does—it is a joy that reverberates thrugh every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply; the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but *because* of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don’t in any way make it all “worth” it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say *thank you, thank you, thank you.* Because there is nothing—and I mean absolutely *nothing*—I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I’ve ever known possible. I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I’ve ever been given.

Even death can’t take that away.

***Angela Miller***  is the author of *You Are the Mother of All Mothers: A Message of Hope for the Grieving Heart.*  Find her at ABedForMyHeart.com and on Facebook at **A Bed For My Heart**

**Questions and Answers**

Q: How long will it take to get over this feeling of sorrow?

A: A lifetime.

Q: How long will I continue to feel guilty?

A: As long as it takes you to realize that you did nothing wrong.

Q: How long will it take me to get over my anger?

A: As long as it will take you to drop the blame on yourself and others and realize that it was the combination

of unpredictable happenings that occur in one’s lifetime.

Q: Why do friends give such horrid advice?

A: To cover up their own inablilty to handle the situation

Q: Will I ever be happy again and be able to laugh?

A: An emphatic YES.

Q: How long is long?

A: As long as it takes you to go through the process. Each has his/her own time schedule, but you must

make the decision to start healing.

Irv Schwartzberg

 Ft. Lauderdale, FL

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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 or email 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.

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##### ***Dancing in the Flame***

*Though I am tired and weary,*

*My eyes continue to weep,*

*And my heart denies me the comfort,*

*That I find only in my sleep.*

*So I sit alone in the darkness,*

*Before the firelight,*

*And stare into the flames,*

*On this dark and moonless night.*

*As the flames leap and dance,*

*I am surrounded by an eerie sight,*

*That evokes haunting memories,*

*Brought to life by the fire’s light.*

*My thoughts take me back,*

*To a time when you were here,*

*To times when laughter filled my heart,*

*Times lost forever, I fear.*

*In the flames, I see your face,*

*Your sweet and loving smile.*

*And I know that we will meet again,*

*But I must wait a while.*

*These quiet moments of reverie,*

*Bring comfort to my aching heart,*

*And tell me that you and I,*

*Are never far apart.*

*Now my heart begins to lighten,*

*As sleep arrives to claim,*

*The pain I felt just moments ago,*

*Before I saw you dancing in the flame.*

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux

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