



## July-August 2023

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358**

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**NEWSLETTER:** *Susan Fletcher*

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**WEBSITE:** [WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG](http://WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG)

**Facebook Page:** *Compassionate Friends of Charlotte, NC*

**MONTHLY MEETING**

**Meeting place:** St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235

**Meeting Time:** 3rd Tuesday of Each Month at 7:00 pm  
Meetings will also be available via Zoom.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

We hope to see our chapter members at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235 on July 18, 2023, and again on August 15, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

46th National TCF Conference,

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**REGIONAL COORDINATORS**

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*online private closed Facebook pages:*

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/>

## TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!!

**We congratulate you on having the courage to walk through our door for the first time. Please give our meetings at least 3 tries before deciding if they are right for you. We hope, with the resources available through TCF, you will find the right person or the right words to help you. You Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends.**

### TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS:

**We need your encouragement and support. TCF continues because of YOU. You give hope to the newly bereaved - hope that they too can eventually find joy in life again. Please attend when you feel you are able to reach out to another bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling.**

Did you know that TCF Charlotte has its own Facebook page? Just search in Facebook groups for - Compassionate Friends of Charlotte, NC

LIKE our Facebook page and please post any article, quote or personal musings that you feel may help another member. All information for meetings and special events will be listed on our Facebook page.

**PLEASE VISIT US ON OUR WEBPAGE!!**

**[WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG](http://WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG)**

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART OF TCF CHARLOTTE STEERING COMMITTEE?

We need your help. Volunteering to be on our Steering Committee is a wonderful way to give back to the organization that helped you when you were starting your grief journey, and what better way to keep your child, grandchild or sibling's memory alive? Contact any of the leaders at our meetings if you would like more information. We need YOUR help to ensure our Chapter is as successful as possible in helping others. This is YOUR Chapter - help us make it a welcoming and caring place for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings to come to for help.

Our Chapter survives by donations only. There are costs associated with the Chapter, i.e., supplies, books, refreshments, food and supplies for our annual events, and our fee for our website. PLEASE help support our Chapter!!! Please consider donating to your Chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling on their special days or during the holidays. What better thing to do in their memory than to pay it forward for the help you have received from TCF.

You can also help your chapter by being a Steering Committee Member. Just contact one of our chapter leaders. We have lots of different areas that we need help in.

The Charlotte TCF chapter graciously thanks Carol Patton, Martha Currie, and Donna Goodrich for their generous gifts in memory of long time TCF member Doris O'Keefe, Emma Vanzant in memory of her son Rueben, and Susan Fletcher in memory of Michael Jr.

Please Mail All Donations to Our TCF Charlotte Treasurer at The  
Following Address:  
Carolyn Patton  
5902 Rimerton Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28226-8227

## TO OUR MEMBERS

If there are any errors in dates or names in our listing of our children's, grandchildren's or sibling's, please let me know. We are trying to get our database as accurate as possible. Many of our loved ones names do not have a last name listed. In these cases, we assume it is the same as the parent, grandparent or sibling who is listed as a member in our database. If this is incorrect, please let me know. There are many names that do not have a birth date or a death date listed. We know this can be very difficult to list, especially in the early days of grief. If you feel like adding those dates, just email them to me at: [fletcher1mom@gmail.com](mailto:fletcher1mom@gmail.com). We are only human so we do make mistakes, but I have tried to be as accurate as I possibly can. Thank you for understanding.

### REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS \*July\*

Yasmine Anderson	7/11
Leokoshia Baldwin	7/29
Alan Bloom	7/8
Baby Chambers	7/18
Blair M. Crane	7/15
Brenden Cullen	7/29
Kathlyn Joy Davis	7/30
Richard DeVira, Jr.	7/30
Adam Dixon	7/22
Nathan Epley	7/28
Debbie Fernell	7/14
Peter Fowler	7/5
Garrett Howison	7/16
Steven Hulsey	7/1
Daniel James	7/4
Jacquetta Johnson	7/8
Cole Kolker-Hicks	7/23
Abigail LaLone	7/2
James Lovell	7/11
Chase Austin McCowie	7/8
Christina Michailidis	7/26
Jack Pahle	7/17
Jason Pike	7/13

Kevin Roddey	7/7
Jeremy Sprague	7/4
Christopher J. Thorne	7/26
Max Ugarte	7/5
Drew Wright	7/31
Jake Ziegler	7/22

### **REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS \*JULY\***

Leokoshia Baldwin	7/27
Felix Barraclough	7/16
Logan R. Barnhouse	7/24
Nolan Brantley	7/22
Christian Buell	7/8
Eric Courtemanchie	7/31
Frankie Curra	7/15
Kathlyn J. Davis	7/30
Ashton Dickey	7/28
Lee Dingle	7/19
Michael W. Fletcher, Jr.	7/30
Seth Henderson	7/2
Steven Hulsey	7/24
Abigail LaLone	7/2
Hudson Lee	7/24
Erica Lubeznik	7/24
Justin Luckhardt	7/13
Erin K. Lynch	7/6
Jonathan Mariano	7/31
Jack Morgan	7/2
Charlie Mullis	7/14
Jack Pahle	7/8
Emily Parker	7/9
Ezra Santiago Perez	7/22
Jermode Darnell Pharr	7/4
Kerrigan Rohsler	7/18
Liliana Patricia Solano Mevdosa	7/24
Hannah E. Strickland	7/2
Jonathan Troy Swierski	7/6
Zachary Michael Tobey	7/2
Ruben Vanzant	7/20

Sarah Vincent	7/21
Greg Vitiello	7/6

**REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS \*AUGUST\***

Brandon Baldwin	8/8
Jeremy Barber	8/2
Logan R. Barnhouse	8/5
Dan Biffi	8/25
Derik Brown	8/1
Nicholas Cherry	8/16
Andrew Michael Chester	8/27
Caden Pidwerbesky Davies	8/3
Ashton Dickey	8/4
Lee Dingle	8/24
Mike Goepf	8/24
Aidan Donan Guilfoyle	8/1
Kristopher Hartung	8/28
June Keiper	8/21
Justin Luckhardt	8/22
Jamie McKinley	8/14
Stephanie Midkiff	8/17
Greg Moore	8/16
Brian David Palmer	8/3
Cullen Reiland	8/9
Max Rudie	8/30
Joshua Seidman	8/12
Shamar Sheats	8/27
Chris Turner	8/24
Ruben Vanzant	8/21
Nicole C. Willis	8/13
Andy Yeager	8/3

**REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS \*AUGUST\***

Zachary Anderson	8/22
Robert Ankrah	8/1
Amanda Kendall Barbee	8/17
Tim Boyer	8/26
Colleen Louise Brooks	8/19

Kevin Carosa	8/31
Thaddeus Cash	8/17
Caden Pidwerbesky Davies	8/3
Richard DeVira, Jr.	8/1
Chet DeMilio	8/25
Aidan Donan Guilfoyle	8/1
Angela Harper	8/13
Jennifer Hokanson	8/31
Ryan Hortis	8/14
Michael Howard	8/25
Amber Johnson	8/2
Jeramiah Karriker	8/4
Brittney Lambert	8/22
Sky Lee	8/14
Jeremy Lewis	8/31
Benjamin Elliot Owens	8/29
Jacob Preston Penrow	8/2
Jason Pike	8/21
Steven Vaughn Ray	8/21
Christopher Ross	8/5
Billy Trahey	8/12
Jason Walters	8/26

## What To Do With Anger

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for me to express. Reared as a “proper” young lady, I was taught that anger was not becoming. Many of the women I have spoken to were similarly taught.

I found, however, I did not have the tools to deal with the deep anger that came shortly after the death of my daughter. My anger was spilling over to people who did not deserve it, or I vented excess anger by overreacting to some situations.

With the loving care and patience of several people, I developed some tools that helped me to express my anger. Rather than trying to suppress my angry feelings, I learned to release them in constructive ways. Hopefully, some of these coping techniques will be helpful to others.

**EXERCISE** - This is a great way to release anger, plus get into shape! I joined the YMCA, swam twice a week, did “Y’s Ways to Fitness” three times a week, and walked three to five miles each day. At first, I was concerned about doing so much exercise because I have a very bad back, so I took it easy and worked my way up to my present routine. I always feel much better after a good workout, and I had the extra benefit of getting out of our home and back into society.

After my daughter's death, my life felt so out of control; but as I became more fit, I regained some control. This renewed strength aided in my recovery.

Exercise decreases stress levels and aids in controlling depression. Since grief can also make us more vulnerable to physical illness, exercising and taking care of our health is important. Even daily walking is good therapy.

**WRITING** - When the anger bubbled up in me, I would write. Many times I didn't know where to begin, so I just started by writing, "I am angry because. . ." "Soon, my thoughts were coming faster than I could write them down. After I had expressed my anger in writing, I often discovered that the sources of my anger were different than I had imagined. It usually sifted down to just being angry about my daughter's death. The technique of writing about your feelings is especially nice because you can just throw away or burn your words and the anger with them.

**PAINTING** - There is nothing like taking bright oils or acrylics and stroking them over an open canvass. I had not painted in over fifteen years, but I went up into the attic and got down the easel, brushes, and paints. I always felt better after a good painting session. Those times were very private for me and no one ever saw my creations, but they were helpful in expressing my anger.

**TALKING** - Sometimes I would call a good friend and just rant and rave. My friend was a very good and non-judgmental listener. She realized that most of what I said in anger I did not mean. She never gave advice or held me to my "anger" statements. She just lovingly listened.

This technique calls for a careful choice of friends who can maintain confidentiality and are not afraid of anger. It is even more helpful if the friend has had a similar loss.

**ENERGY** - Convert anger into energy and use that energy to change the world. Angry with the limited support that mothers of children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) had in their communities, I converted that anger into action. I joined several nationwide support groups and helped to bring their support into our community.

My anger was further converted into energy which I used to raise money for SMA research. I baked over 700 loaves of bread (a lot of anger there!) for a fundraiser. My friends saw my energies and joined in to help. Together, our efforts raised over \$6,000 in under six weeks! This kind of energy can be contagious.

Reaching out to others can help in healing. If something good can come from our tragedies, it can add meaning to their deaths.

**EGGS** - Yes, eggs! When I just could not resolve my anger with any of the above techniques, I would take a dozen eggs and a black felt-tipped pen and go into the back yard. Writing the reason I was angry on the egg, I threw it at the back fence. At first, I thought this was a little crazy, but after throwing the first egg and watching it shatter, I felt so much better!

I always used just one word to describe my anger. It might be: Death, SMA (the disease my daughter died of), Husband, A friend's name, God. No one need know what you write on that egg! Afterward, the birds would have a treat eating the eggs; and listening to their happy noises while having their treat, eased my anger.

These are some of the techniques I used to express my anger. It is OK to be angry, and it is important to express, not suppress, anger. Suppressed anger can result in deep depression.

It is also all right to be angry with God. He is forgiving and understands our emotions. He would rather have us be angry with Him than shut Him out.

Penny A. Blaze  
New Canaan, CT



## Summer Days

No one can really give us the comfort we crave that could only be achieved by getting our Chelsea back. There is nothing we want more than to hold Chelsea in our arms: to hug her, to kiss her, and to hear her sweet voice again. However, I found some solace in completing a project she started months before her passing. On our inner yard fence, she had begun painting flowers on the fence boards adding color and décor to our backyard. Summer soon got hot, and we suggested giving it a break. But before she could resume the project, she had passed. Following the shock and turmoil of this horrible event, I had it in the back of my mind of returning to her project. But the thought of it would break me down in tears. I put it aside, but soon I continued to ponder it. And finally, I built the courage, the courage to face the challenge of completing Chelsea's project. I gathered paints, brushes, and sketches. I knew what I needed to do, but I knew it needed one thing that was not in the original plans. Besides the floral designs she had painted on the fence, it now called for butterflies! So, I got started. The first attempts were devastating; brush in hand, I would just look at the fence and start crying. So, I would have to pack it up. But I knew I wanted to do this more than anything to honor our Chelsea. I knew we could look at the finished project and reflect that this is what Chelsea would have done had she been here. So, I pushed on continuing the project with tears flowing from my eyes, and salty sweat burning my eyes so severely that I had to continually wipe them. The heat was intense, the sun was beating on the back of my neck, but I was feeling accomplishment in the project. I couldn't stop. I just couldn't put the brushes down. Days passed, and those days turned to months, as I would add to it day after day. It was growing bigger and bigger, covering the full-back fence and the side fence as well. The butterflies and flowers were blending together in a beautiful orchestration of harmony. I knew this little girl, and I knew how she would draw. Her expressions of art were flowing through me with such vibrance that I could feel her in every stroke. It was indeed a labor of love for the child I loved so much. I know she is looking at that fence. I know she was part of it. I think I have honored her in a way only I could. I love you, Chelsea. There are many different ways of coping with the loss of a loved one, such as in memorial functions, lighting a candle, reading books, writing letters or journals, or even planting a garden. All of these can be part of the healing process but never of forgetting the love of your deceased child.

By Millie Hunton, Co-Leader, TCF Greater New Orleans Chapter 1615

## Embracing The Invisible Kinship of Compassionate Friends

Every morning following the death of my son I awoke and thought, "my child is dead." The enormity of that realization each morning was crushing, the momentary shock was like a knife in my heart. I would drag myself out of bed and shed silent tears. My life was forever changed: my only child's life had ended. The unfairness would rock me into hyper-consciousness as I began my day. Living was a major effort.

Initially I could only cling to my sanity. After the shock passed, the depression and anger had me in a vise grip. My moods would swing every morning, afternoon and night. I would retreat into myself, irrationally lash out at others and then retreat back into myself. My mind would wander, I made silly mistakes in my work, I couldn't recall names of people who had been in my life for years and my word retrieval was at the bottom.

After two and half months of this grim routine, I attended my first Compassionate Friends meeting. A friend drove me and guided me along into the meeting. I was in a haze. The only contribution I could make was to tearfully say my son's name. But I continued to attend.

As the newly bereaved, I was given the gift of wisdom from those who had been on this journey much longer than I had been. After several meetings I began contributing little bits. I still wept each time I talked, but I was talking. This was a major breakthrough for me.

Despite the negativity that enveloped me as I let go of my life before the death of my son, I continued to attend Compassionate Friends meetings. I missed my son's ability to soften the vitriolic attitude of others who were in his life. Now I was on the firing line. I began sharing my experiences, the horrors of being sued for the wrongful death of my own child and the ache I felt for a once normal relationship with my son's children. Life was forever altered.....for my grandchildren and for me.

The "wise ones" guided me along this path of grief. I learned to live in the moment. I learned to place no expectations on others. I learned that once burned is twice warned in human relationships. I learned that I could survive if I chose to do so. I also learned that to extend my compassion to others was to participate in my healing.

Eventually I wrote an article for our Compassionate Friends newsletter and gave it to the editor. Then I wrote another, and another, and another. Then I began printing the newsletter. Each step, each little contribution brought me closer to sanity. I was participating in the effort to help others in their journey of grief, and in doing this I was helping myself on the journey. I was working with those who had made this journey and survived. Perhaps I, too, would survive. Then I was asked to be the editor of the newsletter. At first I was fearful of this responsibility, but then I realized that I could, in some small way, help others whose children had died. And in offering that help, I could further my personal healing.

It's been 2 years, 8 months and 10 days since my son, Todd, was killed in a car accident. My husband, who was driving, has worked very hard to retain his sanity. I have learned to help him in that struggle. I have learned to accept that my relationship with my granddaughters was forever relegated to pure insignificance after my son died. I have learned that money is the alpha and the omega for some people and the pain they inflict to get money is justified in their minds. I have learned to accept life as it comes. I am the director of my life and no others.

How am I traversing that road from pure shock to accepting new normalcy? How do I keep my child with me and let go of the horrifying, life altering changes associated with his death? How do I deal with the stupefying actions of others that followed my son's death? The answer is as simple and as complex as the grief and compassion that lives within each parent whose child has died.

Through the efforts of the "wise ones", I found comfort and hope. The comfort offered by those who have lost a child is unlike any other we will experience. Their loss is the same as ours: the unspeakable, the worst nightmare, the darkest fear of every parent has now transformed into

their reality. Their compassion is real. Their suggestions are gentle. Their wisdom comes over time and is the culmination of experiences which bring the realization that each of us progresses at a different rate, grieves in a different way and deals with life from a different perspective.

Those who have been here and choose to return, to relive the pain of their child's death in order to help others are the nucleus of our organization. And so, as each day goes by, I learn from others that I must learn for myself. My truth is unique. Each truth is unique. Each parent is unique. Each child is uniquely remembered by bereaved parents and every member of our Compassionate Friends group.

I realized this week that my first thought of the day doesn't overwhelm me like it once did. My child lives in my heart. I have learned to live that reality. It is my hope to help other parents find this tiny vestige of peace.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX

## **BUT YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY NORMAL!**

**Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect.**

**If you've —**

- ♥ **been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough,**
  - ♥ **been sleeping too much or not enough,**
  - ♥ **noticed a change in appetite,**
- ♥ **felt no one understands what you're going through,**
  - ♥ **felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often,**
  - ♥ **bought things you didn't need,**
  - ♥ **considered selling everything and moving,**
- ♥ **had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains,**
- ♥ **been unbearable, lonely, and depressed, been crabby,**
  - ♥ **cried for no apparent reason,**
- ♥ **found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased,**
- ♥ **been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded,**
  - ♥ **panicked over little things,**
- ♥ **felt guilty about things you have or haven't done,**
  - ♥ **gone to the store every day,**
  - ♥ **forgotten why you went somewhere,**

- ♥ called friends and talked for a long time,
- ♥ called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation,
- ♥ not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed,
- ♥ found yourself unable to concentrate on written material,
  - ♥ been unable to remember what you just read,
  - you're normal.

These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same. Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.



Joanne Bonelli, TCF, Greater Boise Area, Idaho

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello Friends.

I hope that you all are enjoying your summer. I hope that you have good family adventures, pleasant vacations, and some restful days. I look forward to seeing you all in August.

Love and Peace,  
Susan  
(Michael's Mom)