



March- April 2021

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

CO-LEADERS: Susan Fletcher, Scott Higgins
& Lesa Hartranft
Sibling Coordinator - Courtney Langdon

NEWSLETTER: Susan Fletcher

PHONE: 980-938-4589

E-MAIL: tcf.clt@gmail.com

WEBSITE: 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
Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, our meetings are now being held virtually by way of Zoom. Meetings will still be the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00. Members can look for a Zoom invitation the week prior.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

TCF Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, March 16th at 7:00. Please check your email for a Zoom invitation.

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REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Regional Coordinators for NC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Phone Number: 980-938-4589

E-mail: iluvu2lauren@gmail.com

NATIONAL OFFICE

The Compassionate Friends
(877-969-0010)

nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website:

www.compassionatefriends.org

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

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 you 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.

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
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 - MARCH

Cory Abernathy 3/24
Zachary Anderson 3/5
Mary Mattison Barnett 3/1
Vincent Chandler Edmond 3/19
Michael Crites 3/31
Alexander Williams 3/12
Jennifer Eanes 3/18
Lauren Ehele 3/8
Cliff Golla 3/21
Lauren Marshall 3/22
Homer Denver Graham 3/25
Donald McDermott 3/17
Missy Miner 3/8
Jason Lubeznik 3/14
Anthony Mclain 3/29
Aiden Miller 3/24
Isaac Rowell 3/21
Christina Rupp 3/19
Keandra Sheats 3/8
Danielle Jean Callahan 3/29

Robert Hunter Moyer 3/4
Jimmy Zacharias 3/31
Breondra Rychelle Newman 3/13

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
MARCH

Phillip Jason Bell 3/13
Kevin Bell 3/1
Dan Biffi 3/11
Nick Brendle 3/23
Andrea Skillman 3/25
Eric Carlson 3/9
Nicholas Cherry 3/26
Christopher Diehl 3/8
Alexander Williams 3/12
Nathan Epley 3/1
Michael G. Finlay 3/15
Steve Hale 3/18
Chase Austin McCowie 3/23
Scott Aaron Katowitz 3/13
Joshua Brian Bronson 3/15
Joey McKee 3/3
Lance Ferguson 3/2
Chaylan Tucker 3/27
Veronica Nicholson 3/4
Jaqueline Nicholson 3/4
Cherilyn Jane Crawford 3/24
Hannah Quinton 3/26
Jason Kendall Ray 3/5
Christopher Eastman Tilsch 3/21
Allen Doak 3/9
Cory Vincent 3/3
Robert Hunter Moyer 3/4
Jonathan Holt Whitlow 3/31
Derik Brown 3/23

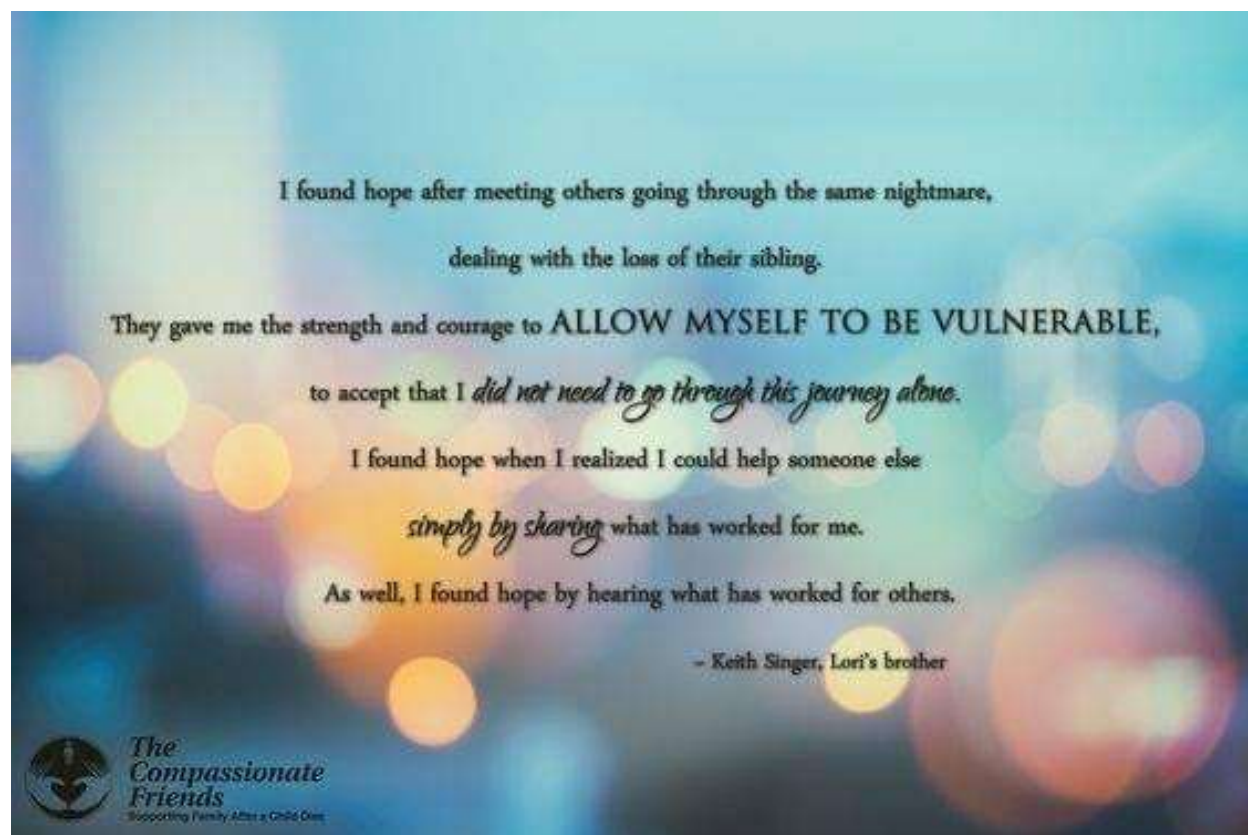
REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
APRIL

Brad Aylward 4/6
Nick Brendle 4/25
Christian Buell 4/12
Lauren Campbell 4/27
Kevin Carosa 4/1
Fausto De Los Santoa 4/2
Garth Marshall 4/23
Ryan Janal Hayes 4/1
Jaxson Hill 4/26
Luke Hoover 4/20
Brady Hopkins 4/27
Jordan Horeth 4/4
Sean McCormick 4/8
Michael Kern 4/30
Russell Kershaw 4/30
Joshua Brian Bronson 4/10
Gevaughnti Lawson 4/25
William Buchanan 4/19
Joey McKee 4/7
Emily Parker 4/28
Gina Rosetta Samuels 4/20
Michael Schexnayder 4/22
Brien Smart 4/15
Jason Smart 4/24
Cory Vincent 4/17
Andrew john Wesley 4/12
Laura Whitaker 4/21

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -

APRIL

Kyle Bennett Allen 4/18
Peter Fowler 4/5
Will Blottman 4/26
Tarell Cooper 4/6
Nicholas Daniel 4/24
Fausto De Los Santoa 4/12
Creed Campbell 4/15
Garth Marshall 4/23
Donald McDermott 4/25
Jordan Horeth 4/7
Jordi Bone 4/26
Sergio Huerta Jr. 4/25
Carl S. Olsen 4/24
Michael Kern 4/13
Brian Michael Kirchner 4/29
Bradley Lovell 4/6
Andy Yeager 4/20
Brittany Williams 4/14
Jamie McKinley 4/9
Jonah L. Gray 4/21
Kyle Bodord 4/23
Adam Powalski 4/12
Gina Rosetta Samuels 4/29
Lauren Silva 4/12
Darron Stitt 4/1



The Questions That Haunt Grieving Siblings

With my brother gone, am I still a sister?

Do you have any siblings?

I don't feel the warm rush of panic flood my chest when I'm asked this question anymore, though I've never quite gotten used to it. As a middle-aged mom, I don't actually hear it as much anymore. When I'm getting to know someone new, our inquiries tend to center around kids or jobs or news.

So when someone asked me recently, I was caught off guard.

We were at my mom's doctor appointment. My mind flitted around from the fire alarm that had delayed her appointment by a half hour to my mom's health to the stubborn disbelief that I was sitting there instead of my dad, who died a year and a half ago.

"Do you have any grandchildren?" the doctor asked my mother. My mom told him about my children. Then, before I could even see the question hurtling toward me, the doctor turned and asked me: "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

The question sat between us, ripe and waiting.

"No," I said. I shook my head, glanced at my feet.

For a moment, I wondered: If the doctor had asked my mom if she had other children, would she have answered the same? Or would she have told the truth?

In the early years after my brother's death, the question haunted me. As a twentysomething at the time, I heard it often.

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

If I said, *No, I don't have a brother*, I felt like I wasn't honoring my younger brother, Will, who died at 21 from substance abuse. Saying no also felt inherently dishonest. It painted an untrue picture — I had not been raised as an only child. I'd been Will's sister since I was three; I could barely remember being unbrothered.

But if I said, *Yes, I had a brother*, I'd have to also say that he died. Otherwise, they might ask where my brother lived, and if I answered, "In a box in my parent's liquor cabinet," things would get weird.

Dropping death into polite small talk almost always turns awkward. We don't learn how to speak about topics like death and grief and overdoses in school — we learn it either by being thrust into the bog of it or by having an unusually open and curious heart.

At some point, I decided on a loose rule for dealing with the inevitable question. If someone I was unlikely to have any type of consequential future relationship with — for instance, a hair stylist in a town I didn't live in — asked me if I had siblings, I'd say no and try to pivot the conversation to safer ground.

If it was someone I might be edging closer to, like a neighbor or a new friend, I'd tell the truth: I had a younger brother, and he died.

The harder, more painful question now is the internal one that pulses just beneath the surface. No one has asked me it; I doubt anyone will. It's deeper and more crushing.

Am I still a sister?

It's been nearly 22 years now since my brother died. He's been gone for longer than he was here. And while the brutal loss doesn't haunt me every moment like it did in those early months, it remains etched on my heart. It continues to evolve, just like our relationship would've.

Should've.

A year and a half ago, when my dad was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and my mom and I sat at his bedside, I sometimes imagined a third chair with us, my brother filling it. In the loneliness of my dad's illness and death, I felt the stark pain of my missing brother rush over me again, the wide reminder of all the awful and beautiful thresholds he should've been here for.

Sometimes I wonder if acquaintances ever see my posts on social media and wonder why I'm still writing about my brother's death all these years later. Why I keep dredging it up, running my fingers through the silt. Maybe I'd tell them it's because I can still summon up those metallic early months after Will died, the vast loneliness of searching for books to accompany me in my grief and finding more literature on pet loss than on sibling loss.

David Kessler, an expert in grief who worked with death and dying guru Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, has posited that there's an often overlooked sixth stage of grief — meaning making. My interpretation of this sixth stage is that by taking some of the love I have for Will and alchemizing it into words that might help other grieving siblings, my love for him has somewhere meaningful and tangible to go.

I often receive messages from people who are wading through the raw and murky days after a sibling has died. I'm always touched by these, always grateful. I usually say a little prayer for them, for the missing galaxy of their lost sister or brother, for all the future they feel robbed of.

And I also say a thank you — to my brother, to the universe, to some unseen power — for allowing me the opportunity to extend my hand, to peer back at all the milestones I've crossed and continue to cross without my brother. Because in these moments of quiet connection, in these slivers of mentorship? I still feel like a sister.

Lynn Shattuck

Writer on sibling loss, grief, parenting, wellness and mental health. Voracious reader. <https://linktr.ee/LynnShattuck>

The Acknowledgement Of The Few

Amy Lied

It's been almost 3.5 years since we lost our son.

Initially, when he died, we received hundreds of cards and memorial gifts in his memory. So many people reached out. People we hadn't spoken to in years (like my husband's ex-girlfriend from high school as an example) because our loss touched them in some way.

I was so very grateful to everyone who reached out. I still am because it was so needed during that initial loss of Asher. We saved every card we received.

Over time, the number of people who remember the hard days or say his name has severely dwindled.

I don't fault people for that. Their lives have moved forward, as has mine.

Our loss isn't fresh for them like it is for me every day.

I understand that many can't relate to this pain, nor would I want them to be able to, so it's harder to find ways to continue to support us.

However, the lack of acknowledgment from the many *makes me so grateful for the acknowledgment from the few.*

This year was my 4th Mother's Day without Asher, my second with children in my arms.

I received one card from someone acknowledging that it is, and always will be, a hard day for me.

Thank you for that.

I randomly get texts from non-loss friends checking in to see how I am doing emotionally with everything.

Thank you for that.

Learning To Live With Grief Brain

Rachel Whalen

from Still Standing Magazine

Losing my daughter has changed the way I think.

I don't just mean my perspective on life has changed, I mean the actual cognitive process of thinking.

I have grief brain.

Grief brain is what happens to your exhausted mind after the loss of a loved one.

I'm not sure how much scientific evidence there is to back it up, but I've read plenty of anecdotal accounts to know that it's a thing.

For me, grief brain settled in after the stillbirth of my daughter.

At first, I thought my memory lapses and my inattentiveness could be chalked up to the exhaustion of experiencing a stillbirth.

It seemed normal that I would have a tricky time remembering when to take my medications and keep track of appointments.

A complicated medical situation was new for me and I had also just delivered a baby.

Anyone in my situation would feel confused.

But, as my physical condition improved, I noticed that the fog didn't seem to be lifting from my brain.

So, I figured it must be exhaustion.

After three months, and plenty of sleep, I came to wonder if this was something more.

This cloudy, scattered brain seemed to be a symptom of my grief.

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Posted on January 15th, 2021

Those of us who have traveled a while
Along this path called grief

Need to stop and remember that mile,
That first mile of no relief.

It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal.
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs.
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

By

NANCY MYERHOLTZ

TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH

AROUND THE CORNER TO SPRING

Posted on March 10th, 2020

Heavy, gray clouds; wet, cold rain; winters in the Pacific Northwest can be long and lonely. The promise of spring is a faraway thought. But just as winter engulfs us now, spring is peeking around the corner. Daffodils will bravely break the hard ground, colorful tulip cups will catch spring showers, and slowly but surely, trees will bud, birds will sing and the sun will shine.

We have all encountered unspeakable pain in the loss of our child, and the seasons of recovery may also seem overwhelmingly dark and cold. Through this tremendous trauma, each of us finds a way to survive—a strength many could not imagine, yet here we are. Each day, season, and year that we survive beyond that unforgettable day, I believe our children nurture the seeds of love they planted in our hearts; and it is this enduring love that helps us discover life again.

Spring is often known as the “season of hope”. Yes, there will still be spring showers (just as there will always be a tear for our loved ones), but they are often punctuated by breathtaking rainbows stretching across the heavens and the promise of blue skies once again. The air seems lighter and fresher, filled with floral aromas and the scent of ‘life’!

As we close out these last weeks of winter and look ahead to brighter days, my wish to all families is that you celebrate your strength, honor your tears, and share a word of hope and support to others who are newly bereaved. May we all find spring in our hearts!

D. BARTA

From Portland, Oregon.

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

There are a lot of things I used to do before my son, Michael died in 2011 that I just do not do anymore. I planted a garden every summer, kept houseplants in every window and filled several bird feeders in my yard. They were not “big” things, but I had lost interest and motivation. This winter one of the bird feeders became so weathered that it fell to the ground and broke. For some reason, I felt compelled to replace it. So, I bought a new one and two different kinds of seeds to fill all the other feeders that

had fallen into disuse in my yard. Well, I am so glad that I did! There is a “Cardinal” party going on in my yard. Sometimes there are more than 5 or 6 on my deck. Cardinals have long been a symbol of hope in the midst of grief and are thought to be messengers from departed loved ones who are letting us know they are near! What a delightful thought! My son, my husband and your sons and daughters are letting me know that they are alright, and that they are with us.

Wishing you love and peace,

Susan

