



July-August 2021

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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*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, July 20th at 7:00. And again Tuesday, Aug 17th. Please check your email for a Zoom invitation.

Mark your calendar for the upcoming Virtual National Conference, July 16-18. Registration, prices and sessions are available on the National website at <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

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REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Regional Coordinators for NC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Phone Number: 980-938-4589
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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



Uniting Grieving Hearts Across Our Communities

44th TCF National Conference

Presented Virtually
July 16-18, 2021

Save the Date! TCF's 44th National Conference will be presented virtually July 16-18, 2021. Although we would love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through our virtual event. More details about TCF's three-day conference are coming soon, including number of sessions, registration prices, and earlybird prices and dates.

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 - JULY

Debbie Ferrell 7/14
Leokoshia Baldwin 7/29
Peter Fowler 7/5
Richard De Vira, Jr. 7/30
Baby Chambers 7/18
Drew Wright 7/31
Blair Crane 7/15
Brendan Cullen 7/29
Kathlyn Joy Davies 7/30
Adam Dixon 7/22
Nathan Epley 7/28
Yasmine Anderson 7/11
Garrett Howison 7/16
Steven Hulsey 7/1
Daniel James 7/4
Jacquetta Johnson 7/8
Chase Austin McCowie 7/8
Jason Pike 7/13
Cole Kolker-Hicks 7/23
Abigail LaLone 7/2

Christina Michailidis 7/26
Jack Pahle 7/17
Kevin Roddey 7/7
Alan Bloom 7/8
Jeremy Sprague 7/4
Christopher John Thorne 7/26
Max Ugarte 7/5
Jake Zeigler 7/22

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
JULY

Leokoshia Baldwin 7/27
Felix Barraclough 7/16
Frankie Curra 7/15
Nolan Brantley 7/22
Christian Buell 7/8
Eric Courtemanchie 7/31
Kathlyn Joy Davies 7/30
Ashton Dickey 7/28
Lee Dingle 7/19
Michael W. Fletcher, Jr. 7/30
Jack Morgan 7/2
Charlie Mullis 7/14
Steven Hulsey 7/24
Justin Luckhardt 7/13
Abigail LaLone 7/2
Erica Lubeznik 7/24
Hannah Strickland 7/2
Jonathan Mariano 7/31
Hudson Lee 7/24
Jack Pahle 7/8
Emily Parker 7/9
Ezra Santiago Perez 7/22
Jermod Darnell Pharr 7/4
Liliana Mevdosa 7/24
Jonathan Troy Swierski 7/6
Zachary Michael Tobey 7/2
Seth Henderson 7/2

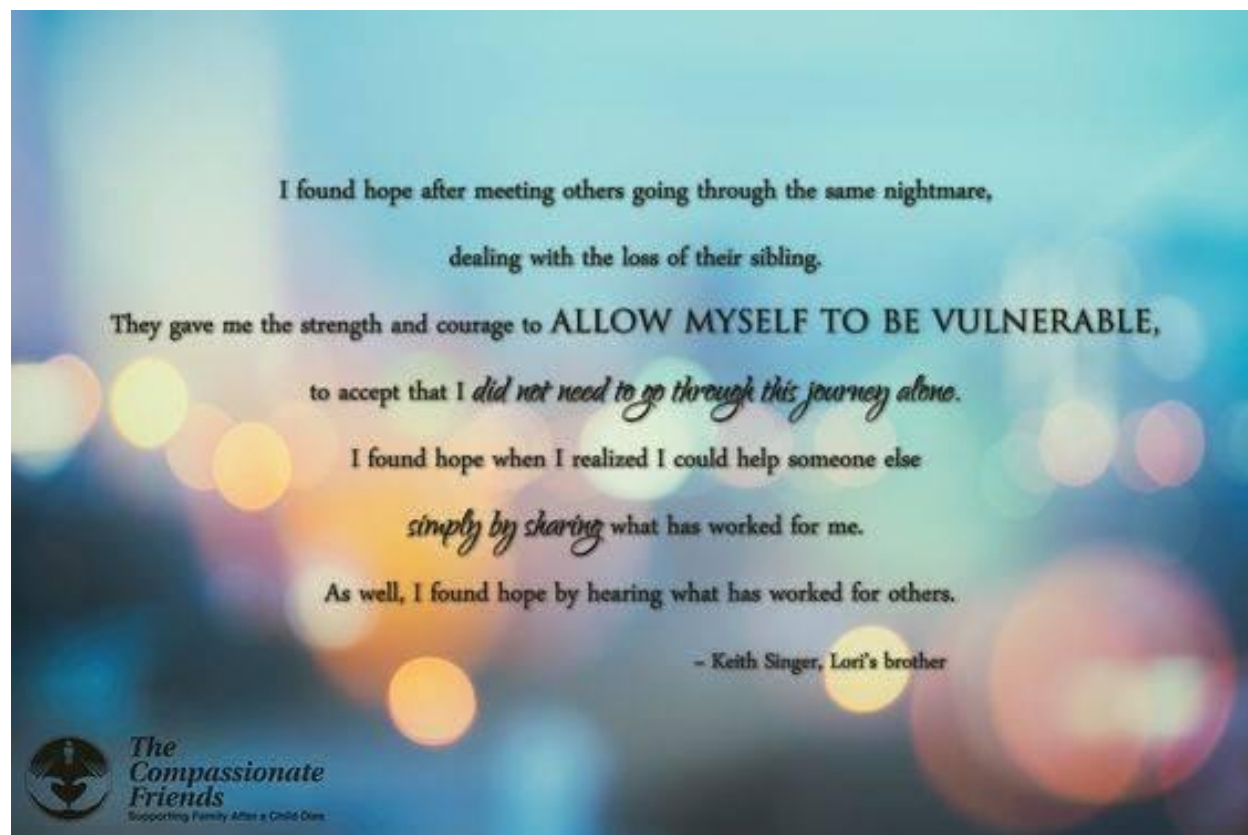
William "Britton" Twilly 7/14
Sarah Vincent 7/21
Greg Viltello 7/6

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
AUGUST

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

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
AUGUST

Zachary Anderson 8/22
Robert Ankrah 8/1
Tim Boyer 8/26
Colleen Louise Brooks 8/19
Richard DeVira 8/1
Chet DeMilio 8/25
Kevin Carosa 8/31
Caden Pidwebersky Davies 8/3
Thaddeus Cash 8/17
Ryan Hortis 8/14
Aidan Donan Guilfoyle 8/1
Michael Howard 8/25
Jacob Preston Penrow 8/2
Jeramiah Karriker 8/4
Amanda Kendall Barbee 8/17
Jason Pike 8/21
Brittney Lambert 8/22
Sky Lee 8/14
Amber Johnson 8/2
Benjamin Elliot Owens 8/29
Steve Vaughn Ray 8/21
Jennifer Hokanson 8/31
Christopher Ross 8/5
Jeremy Barber 8/30
Billy Trahey 8/12
Jason Walters 8/26
Angela Harper 8/13



And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of “self help” were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April's meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother's Day and my son's birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I sat at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me,

offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child's story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son's death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be "cured". As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.

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, ID

GRIEVING IS A LONELY JOB

I don't care what anybody says... grieving is a very lonely job. Friends and family try to help in their own caring ways, but sometimes it's almost too much effort to try to explain how you feel inside.

In fact, I'm not so sure that there are words to describe the feeling. It isn't "physical pain," and I don't know if "emotional pain" is any more descriptive. It's just a feeling that's always there. The sadness... the loneliness... the helplessness. On the outside, of course, no one would know. From the beginning people would always tell me how

great I looked or how well I was doing. What did they expect? Sometimes I'm tempted to ask, "Well, how do you expect me to look?" But I don't. They mean well. They just don't know what else to say.

Oh, it's true, the last 15 months since my 17-year old son, Shane, was killed in a motorcycle accident with his friend, I've come a long way. Life is good... and I have much to look forward to each day. A challenging job, terrific friends, a great family... including Shane's 14-year-old brother, Zachary. But there are days when it's just not enough.

It's interesting how your entire perspective about life changes when you're forced to endure a personal tragedy. I call it my "BIG DEAL SCALE." Losing Shane was the "biggest deal" I've ever experienced. It gives me a tool in which to measure the trivial ups and downs of life. We all have the strength to endure a tremendous amount of pain. We just have to get it in perspective.

It doesn't come easy. I consciously work at it every day. I wonder if it will ever go away. Sometimes I hope it doesn't. I guess it's my way of remembering... of holding on.

My biggest source of strength comes from Zachary, though. My heart aches for him; knowing how close he was to Shane. The first few days after the accident, he said, "Shane was my idol. He always helped me and taught me things." It's hard for me to imagine what it must be like for him. Still sleeping in the same room that they shared for 13 years. Although, now he sleeps in Shane's bed. And does his homework at Shane's desk. He says he likes it like that. I guess it's just his way of remembering... of holding on.

Months ago when Zachary asked when the "hurt" would stop, I didn't have an instant answer. Grieving is a lonely job. To be done in individual time frames. But, what I did tell him was, "Trust me. The pain will eventually fade... but, the memories will last a lifetime." And just the other day he said to me, "You're right, Mom. The hurt is much better." I can see it in his face, in his eyes. He has matured so much this last year. It seems like he was just a baby when this all happened. Now, I can see so much of Shane in him. And, I know that if he can handle this "job," he can handle anything. And so can I.

—Susan Hedlund, TCF Portland, OR

BUTTERFLIES MAKE ME HAPPY



Sometimes in our grief we truly believe we are going crazy. We hurt so bad we don't think we can manage to go on living without our precious child here with us. Part of the grieving process is learning how to do just that. Some parents need the reassurance that their child is okay. I think the human mind can only take so much pain and jumps at the chance to see signs from their children, reassuring them that they are okay.

The way I look at it, if you get comfort from a dream or a sign — enjoy it. You've suffered enough, and believing in signs, butterflies, dreams or whatever else gives you comfort and hurts no one else, is your right as a bereaved person.

Are these signs real, or just in my imagination? Can I prove they are messages from my son? Does it even need to be proven? No, I can't scientifically prove it. But I know that dreams, butterflies, signs and enjoyment in nature makes me feel closer to Eric, and therefore I will continue to enjoy them. It hurts no one, I'm not obsessive about it and anyone who chooses to think I'm nuts for believing in such things, can think I'm nuts.

We've all heard how the butterfly is a symbol of rebirth. Whether it's our child moving from this world onto a higher plane, or a bereaved parent emerging from the cocoon of grief into a world without our child here. With us, butterflies are a comfort for many. When I'm missing my son and see a butterfly flitting from flower to flower, I smile and feel better. When I'm in a happy mood and see a butterfly, I enjoy the beauty of such a delicate creature. Taking the time to slow down and watch such a fragile creature going about its business is calming and I don't think anyone should discount the benefits from having a calming moment.

About four months after Eric died, I had a dream about him. I woke myself up from tears of joy running down my face, I knew he was okay... what a relief that was. I still hurt terribly and missed him more than I thought I could endure, but I felt comforted by the dream. Some could say it was my subconscious trying to sort things out, but I choose to believe it was his way of trying to comfort me. Either way, it made me feel better.

Maybe it's because bereaved parents walk around in such a fog and function on automatic pilot that we are moving slow enough to notice the signs that are around us. Maybe dreams are one way for us to accept messages we need to hear and take into our hearts without logically trying to interpret them. Maybe faith is what we rely on when nothing else makes sense and we instinctively know we need something to hold on to. Whatever it is, just give me a second helping; I like feeling closer to my son!

Lynn Vines - TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

Peace

Today is the one year anniversary of the day my son realized he could no longer live. I know this because he told us so in the writings he left behind. It is not the anniversary of his death.

What I remember of the day is that it was not unlike any other. There were no family fights or friend drama. There were no failed tests or poor academic projects.

It was just a day like today.

That week was just like any other as well. Tom attended high school and college classes, and we worked, going through our days just as we always do. But Tom found a way to spend special time with each of us before he left. He and L.J. spent Monday night playing music together. I tried to record it, but it was not perfect, so I deleted the file that night. Tuesday night he and I made his favorite meal together, pasta with hot sausage red sauce. Then, we played a complicated Wii game which consisted of me pushing random buttons to fend off the bad guys while he worked his magic on the most powerful villains. We played for a few hours, until my hands hurt and I could not see straight from all of the blurred images on the television. He played the music he loved and told me which was his favorite song. I listened to it through his ears, but cannot remember the song name. That night, he peeked his head in our room, and played with the light switch, turning it on and closing the door behind him with a mischievous grin. He spent the next few days with his father, doing the things they loved to do together, including gaming with a great bunch of folks on Friday night. He spent Saturday and Sunday at our house, doing homework, playing on the computer, and listening to music.

That Sunday, as I cooked in the kitchen and talked casually with him, he wrote his final farewell to us. We had no idea of his pain, his plan, or our future. In his note, he told us that past week had been the happiest he could remember because he was able to live during that time without fear and anxiety of the future. So a part of me is at peace, if that's possible, because he was able to spend his final hours free from his demons. But how I wish, in that week, he had found the strength to fight through the darkness and tell us of his inner war. How I wish I had seen past his armored wall into his soul, so I could pull him through to the light of our love. I wish we could have shown him how many people appreciated him and were impacted by him, and how many would have stood by his side as he fought his undiagnosed illness so he could win his battle with a full army. I wish...

I miss him every hour of every day. I miss his humor, his intelligence, his presence, his thoughtfulness and his soul. Someone recently responded on one of my posts that maybe Tom misses me, too. I hope he is beside me as I write, and can feel the outpouring of whatever is stronger than love, that I have for him. I pray that through his death, he found the peace he could not find in life.

Kimberly Starr
TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son Tom