



July-August 2022

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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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

Covid numbers are declining, and mask mandates are being relaxed! We feel it is safe to return to “in person” meetings this month. We hope to see our chapter members at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235 on July 19, 2022, at 7:00 pm.

45th National TCF Conference, Marriot Marquis, Houston Tx.
Aug. 5-7, 2022

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<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 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 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. 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.

45TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

AUGUST 5 - AUGUST 7



TCF 45th National Conference
Houston, TX • August 5-7, 2022

Make your hotel reservations now.

We are very pleased to welcome back TCF's annual national conference, this year in person! This eagerly anticipated event for those bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings who attend seeking renewed hope, ways of coping with their grief, and friendships made

with those who truly understand the painful loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. With inspirational keynote speakers, numerous workshops including a wide variety of topics, and the always memorable candle lighting program on Saturday evening, culminating with the popular Walk to Remember on Sunday morning, and so much more, the TCF 45th National Conference is a much-needed gift that we give to ourselves!

This year's conference will be held at the Marriott Marquis Houston. Reservations can now be made [online](#) at TCF's dedicated reservation link. TCF's discounted room rate with Marriott is \$149 per night plus tax. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. Since the conference begins early on Friday and pre-conference activities are offered on Thursday evening, attendees usually find it beneficial to arrive on Thursday. Those not able to make your reservations online, call the Marriott Reservation line at 877.688.4323. When calling be sure to mention *The Compassionate Friends National Conference* to receive your room rate.

Conference registration is now open for the Compassionate Friends 45th National Conference

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS - JULY

Debbie Fernell 7/14
Leokoshia Baldwin 7/29
Peter Fowler 7/5
Richard DeVira, Jr. 7/30
Baby Chambers 7/18
Drew Wright 7/31
Blair M. Crane 7/15
Brenden Cullen 7/29
Kathlyn Joy Davis 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
James Lovell 7/11
Christina Michailidis 7/26
Jack Pahle 7/17
Kevin Roddey 7/7
Alan Bloom 7/8
Jeremy Sprague 7/4
Christopher J. Thorne 7/26
Max Ugarte 7/5
Jake Ziegler 7/22

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
JULY

Felix Barraclough 7/16
Leokoshia Baldwin 7/27
Frankie Curra 7/15
Nolan Brantley 7/22
Christian Buell 7/8
Eric Courtemanchie 7/31
Kathlyn J. Davis 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
Erin K. Lynch 7/6
Hannah E. Strickland 7/2
Jonathan Mariano 7/31

Hudson Lee 7/24
Jack Pahle 7/8
Emily Parker 7/9
Ezra Santiago Perez 7/22
Jermode Darnell Pharr 7/4
Logan R. Barnhouse 7/24
Kerrigan Rohsler 7/18
Liliana Patricia Solano Mevdosa 7/24
Jonathan Troy Swierski 7/6
Zachary Michael Tobey 7/2
Seth Henderson 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
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
Max Rudie 8/30

Greg Moore 8/16
Shamar Sheats 8/27
Jeremy Barber 8/2
Chris Turner 8/24
Ruben Vanzant 8/21
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, Jr. 8/1
Chet DeMilio 8/25
Kevin Carosa 8/31
Caden Pidwerbesky Davies 8/3
Thaddeus Cash 8/17
Angela Harper 8/13
Ryan Hortis 8/14
Aidan Donan Guilfoyle 8/1
Michael Howard 8/25
Jacob Preston Penrow 8/2
Jeremiah Karriker 8/4
Amanda Kendall Barbee 8/17
Jason Pike 8/21
Brittney Lambert 8/22
Jeremy Lewis 8/31
Sky Lee 8/14
Amber Johnson 8/2
Benjamin Elliot Owens 8/29
Steven Vaughn Ray 8/21
Jennifer Hokanson 8/31
Christopher Ross 8/5
Billy Trahey 8/12

SUMMERTIME GRIEF

Summer is a season of mixed emotions for many families in grief. The end of school and after-school activities can be a relief for some, especially if they struggled with having enough energy and concentration for class and homework. Others will miss the structure and social time that school and sports provide. For adults, summer might mean a less demanding schedule, but could also add the stress of finding childcare or having enough financial resources for camps and trips. Families may also wrestle with whether to continue summer traditions they shared with the person who died. These can range from special vacations they took each year to memories of simple things, such as watching the person mow the lawn or wear their favorite t-shirt. Similar to the approach of winter holidays, summer provides a great opportunity for families to discuss their hopes and expectations for the season. If you are the parent or caregiver for grieving children or teens, set aside time to talk about memories and traditions. Everyone might have different needs, which can require some negotiating and group problemsolving. If one child really wants to go camping at their mom's favorite lake, but another doesn't, perhaps the one who doesn't can stay with a family member or friend while you go with the one who does. Reassure yourself and others that there is no right way to do summer and that it's okay to figure it out together. Here are two summer activities that grieving people of any age might find helpful: Bubble Messages: Bubbles are a great way to share memories and messages in a group or on your own, while also being outside. As a group, invite people to say a memory or a message to the person who died out loud or to themselves while they blow a bubble. This is also a good option for children to do on their own whenever they want to say something to the person who died. Sidewalk Chalk Memories: For this activity all you need is a sunny day, some chalk, and a sidewalk or driveway. Whether as a family or individually, people can draw pictures of summer memories with the person who died or write messages. For those who struggle with painful images or regrets, they can write or draw those and then use a hose or a bucket of water to wash them away. Acknowledging and then intentionally erasing those images and regrets may help lessen their intensity. SUMMERTIME AND GRIEF The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families The Dougy Center 503.775.5683 Visit us online at: dougy.org Like us Follow us Subscribe page 1 Whether you are eagerly anticipating or dreading the approach of summer, start with thinking through what's important to you and your family. Being aware of how structure, or the lack of it, affects children and teens is helpful. If you have a child who likes structure and the free time of summer is difficult, work together to come up with a daily schedule they can follow. You could also consider getting a special calendar they can write or draw on and put in all the scheduled events for summer. This visual reminder of what is coming up can help children to feel more at ease. If you or someone you know has questions or concerns about the approach of summer, please contact us at 503.775.5683 or help@dougy.org.

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

A Personal Evolution Through Grief

I have been a bereaved parent now for three and half years. I have learned a few things during that time, and I have much to learn in the future. I am evolving. Evolving from what I once was.....a person who had reasonable expectations of a life that included my son, his children, graduations, holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Now I have become a person who has virtually no expectations that are similar to the ones I had before my son died.

I have evolved into a more sensitive person. I know what some people are thinking before they even say the words. I feel others' joy as if it were my own. I cheer for the success of others. I feel their sorrow, their failures, their missteps. I watch children play and remember my childhood, my son's childhood and I think of the joy that is childhood. I sit for hours watching birds at our feeders, marveling at the beauty of the natural world.

I have slowed down the pace. I no longer feel the pressure to be here or there, to do this or that, to call this one or that one, to wear certain clothes, to "put on the best face" for strangers. I have liberated myself from the mundane and the materialistic. Instead, I simply feel deeply about others. I have become extremely sensitive to all that surrounds me.

I believe the loss of my child has changed me in many different ways. I see this in the attitudes of those who are in the Compassionate Friends as well. While few of us will broach no nonsense in our lives because it is meaningless compared with our experiences, we will listen intently for long periods to the weeping, hysterical cries of a newly bereaved mother. Or we will nod quietly as a parent who is far into grief has a sudden flash of sorrow that is overwhelming. We have a heightened sensitivity to others through no choice of our own. It came with the loss of our beautiful children.

I wonder about what my son would think of events that have unfolded since his death. I have come to conclusions about others that aren't, quite frankly, flattering. Yet, he had come to these conclusions before he died. While I tried to mollify his perception of the dysfunctional people with whom he was burdened, he just said, "that's how it is, mom." And he was right. That's how it is. I have learned to accept people for what they are. If I can help, I will certainly do so. If I can't help, I accept that some things can't be changed, and some people won't change. There is no magic here. It's a simple fact of life. "That's how it is, mom."

I volunteer more these days. I give of myself, my knowledge, any wisdom I may have acquired on life's path to others who are in need. I give of my time, my talents and my labors to those who don't ask as well as those who do. I am comfortable with this.

I have less appreciation for money than I once had. Perhaps that is the best thing to come out of this. What was I chasing? What was my son chasing? What was the point? Bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more. It's a shallow existence when one is so focused on the material things that one is defined by materialism. I have learned to let go of preconceptions, and in that letting go, I have been pleasantly surprised by many people.

How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It's as close to a near death experience as I can imagine. Instead of great epiphanies, there are moments of clarity. Instead of instant gratification, there is much work to achieve tiny steps forward. But the effort is well worth making. When I came out from the pits of hell, I realized that my reality was changed; I realized that I was a different person. I discovered that the world doesn't run on the dollar. I found that all people have a capacity for goodness, but that many will never use this capacity.

But most importantly, I discovered that after leaving the pits of hell, there is a road toward hope that is traveled by each of us. Some walk more quickly, some more slowly. But we each walk that road to hope. Hope represents a life that is tolerable once again. Hope represents the acceptance of our child's death and the acknowledgement that we will keep our children alive in our hearts for all eternity as we continue into our tomorrows. Hope is reconciling those two elements: yesterday and tomorrow.

I have learned to adjust to change, because change is inevitable. I have learned to stand up for what is right because that is our duty as human beings. I have learned much about the fears of others and even more about my own fears. I have conquered my phobias as a result of my son's death. Nothing my imagination could conjure would equal that gripping pain, the ache that hangs in my heart forever because my child has died.

But most of all, I have learned that my son was right. "That's the way it is, mom." Shortly before he died, he said he wanted to give me a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* He never had the opportunity. But I will read it. I have a feeling I know what it will say. Perhaps Todd gave me the plot line when he died. I'd like to think that he was subconsciously preparing me.

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

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

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

Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

Eva Lager
TCF/Western Australia
(Eva's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide on 4 March 1990.)

I Felt I Was Healed

I felt I was healed, felt I was ok
Ten years had passed to make me this way.
Worked with others who were feeling the pain
So tears and the heartache would soon go away.
I make the newsletter and work on the slides
That we watch as we remember the better times.
But life has a way of throwing a curve
That rocks to the core and shatters the nerves.
My brother has died and though he was ill

A hole has re-opened once again I must fill.
I know all the steps that take me through grief
Of the traps to watch out for, oh what a relief.
Though same it is different, the hurt is still there
I miss my little brother and wish he were here.

Stew Levett
TCF Pikes Peak Chapter

A Thousand Little Moments

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of all the things I lost
the day you went away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the pain I feel in my heart
that never fades away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the piece of my soul
that you took with you that day

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the time we've lost
and the games you'll never play

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of all the memories we never got to make
and all the words I never got to say

But a thousand little moments
each and every day
also remind me of all the things I've gained
in the short amount of time you got to stay

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the love I hold within my heart
that will never fade away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me that the missing piece of my soul will be restored
when we meet again on my final day

A thousand little moments

each and every day
remind me to be thankful for the time we had
and reassure me that you hear my words every time I pray
And a thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me that I am one moment closer to the day
that I'll once again see your smiling face

Tracy Smith
In Memory of my niece Madison Lynne Smith

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello Friends,

I am always on the lookout for articles, stories or poems that might be meaningful and/or comforting for our readers. I would welcome your suggestions for reading material so, if you come across something that resonates with you, please pass it on to me to be included in our newsletter. If you have written something in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling that you would like to share, please submit it to me and I will gladly include it in our newsletter.

We are approaching the “dog days” of summer and the 45th National TCF conference is only a month away. You still have time to register! While I am not looking forward to going to Texas in August where the average temperature is in the mid-nineties, I am so looking forward to learning, engaging, recovering, comforting and being comforted. For those who are not attending, I look forward to sharing thoughts, ideas and resources when we return.

Peace and Love,
Susan
Michael's mom