



September-October 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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

We are so pleased to announce that we will, once again be able to meet in person. We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, Sept, 21, 2021 at St. Matthews Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235. All CDC, state and local guidelines /precautions will be observed including appropriate social distancing, using hand sanitizer and wearing a mask. For families who are not yet ready to meet in person, the meeting will be accessible by way of Zoom. You will receive a Zoom invitation the week before. We respectfully request members who have not been vaccinated against Covid 19 to participate via Zoom.

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Regional Coordinators for NC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Phone Number: 980-938-4589

E-mail: iluvu2lauren@gmail.com

NATIONAL OFFICE

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

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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.

The Charlotte TCF chapter graciously thanks Connie Tobey for her generous donation in memory of her grandson Zachary Tobey.

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

TCF's 44th National Conference was presented virtually July 16-18, 2021. If you missed the National Conference. Keynote sessions and many additional conference sessions were recorded and are available for 90 days after the conference so you can listen to them when they're convenient for you. Visit TCF website for more information.

Conference Recordings – \$95

Charlotte TCF members Mike and Karen Horeth lost their son Jordan in 2009 after which they established a scholarship in his memory. The 12th annual Jordan Michael Horeth scholarship was presented on June 13, 2021 at St. John Newman church. The recipient was Katherine Bertsch who will be attending Florida Atlantic University in the fall.

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 -
SEPTEMBER**

Amanda Barnett 9/26
Michelle Beebe 9/20
Phillip J. Bell 9/2
Andrea Skillman 9/9
Edward Stephens 9/14
Bobby Dowling 9/20
Michael W. Fletcher, Jr. 9/11
Madelynn C. Golbach 9/21
Charlie Mullis 9/26
Jeffrey Hunt 9/26
Ashley Hurte 9/9
Josh Keziah 9/5
Sean Patrick Logan 9/26
Jonathan Mariano 9/22
Hudson Lee 9/14
Paul McGrath 9/26
Elizabeth Messer 9/4
Bobby O'Shea 9/6
Andrew Pangle 9/21
Maria Elena Petrone 9/13
Keeghan Drake McCormack 9/27
Darron Stitt 9/19
Christopher Eastman Tilsch 9/20
Seth Henderson 9/27

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
SEPTEMBER

Kathryn Anderson 9/23
Rodney T. Baldwin 9/3
Amanda Barnett 9/11
Baby Chambers 8 weeks
Cliff Golla 9/1
June Keiper 9/14
Josh Keziah 9/1
Christopher Lloyd 9/25
Kelsey Morris 9/4
Justin Zuk 9/27

Andrew Pangle 9/5
Maria Elena Petrone 9/2
Breanna Rae Ringersen 9/11
Issac Rowell 9/9
Silje Rowell 9/8
Emily Elizabeth Smith 9/4
Chris Turner 9/11
Danielle Jean Callahan 9/16
Max Ugarte 9/10
Laura McDermott 9/23
Laura Whittaker 9/11
Aubrey Wiger 9/2012

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
OCTOBER

Kyle Bennett Allen 10/25
Sam Wallace 10/19
Kai Parks Berry 10/11
Rodney Trent Baldwin 10/21
Tess Crespi 10/16
Sammie Crespi 10/16
Emily Lauren Upton 10/4
Christopher Flower 10/10
Angel Freeman 10/8
Ryan Hortis 10/29
Christopher Cullen 10/19
Christopher Hall 10/1986
Ashton Sweet 10/7
Scott Aaron Katowitz 10/21
Debra Kern 10/17
Bradley Lovell 10/14
Mason Crist Heller 10/7
John R. Madigan 10/25
Brittany Williams 10/10
Sky Lee 10/25
Richard Maxwell 10/26
Jasmine Thar 10/17

Denny Miller 10/15
Veronica Nicholson 10/14
Blake Carlton 10/1
Billy Patton 10/1
Ezra Santiago Perez 10/15
Jermode Darnell Pharr 10/30
Jason Kendall Ray 10/7
Jennifer Hokanson 10/6
Jenna Ryan 10/10
Amaani Ariana Shah 10/1
Emily Elizabeth Smith 10/13
Liliana Patricia Solano Mevdosa 10/23
Amanda Lee Stanley 10/18
Jonathan Troy Swierski 10/1
Elliot Grayson Thomas 10/2
Sarah Vincent 10/3
William J. Wagner 10/23
Sam Wallace 10/19

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
OCTOBER

Justin Ferdinand 10/22
Debbie Ferrell 10/16
Michelle DiBernardini 10/12
G. Stone Barnett 10/15
Mary Mattison Barnett 10/3
Kai Parks Berry 10/29
Brian Yaniszweski 10/19
Blair M. Crane 10/16
Michael Crites 10/28
Angel Freeman 10/11
Josselyn Giebeler 10/24
Homer Denver Graham III 10/22
Jaxson Hill 10/14

Luke Hoover 10/17
Cole Kolker-Hicks 10/26
John R. Madigan 10/9
Eica Dawn Mesarus 10/28
Denny Miller 10/18
Raymond Pierce 10/13
Joshua Robert Holden 10/7
Cullen Reiland 10/1
Kevin Roddey 10/21
Alan Bloom 10/9
Joseph Sharp 10/20
Brien Smart 10/8
William James Wagner 10/23
Jake Ziegler 10/13

Autumn Memories

My son and I always enjoyed the autumn season. Yes, when we lived in the cold zone, we knew that winter's winds and snows were on the way. But, yet, we took time to enjoy the beautiful array of colors that nature gave us as a final salute to the growing season.

Todd and I raked leaves in the autumn. I had purchased a home in a town on the Mississippi River bluffs; the home had been built in the 1860s and I am sure some of the trees were well over 50 years old. The leaves would fall and we would rake. We made a game of it. Sometimes his best friend, Allen, would come over and help. The boys would jump into the piles and laugh with delight. We'd create a big pile and rake it to the concrete so that it could be burned. I can still see Todd laughing and dancing around that fire. His pure childhood joy was contagious.

Todd and I loved to look at the changing leaves along the bluffs of the river. We would drive on weekends and find the best view. Then we'd park and marvel at nature's wonder. The big bluffs, the turning leaves, the eagles soaring above us. Ducks flying south....even the occasional group of geese overhead...honking, honking as they journeyed to a warmer climate.

The light is different in the autumn...it's diffused somehow. It's different than the light in any other season. Autumn sun was our favorite light. It seemed less harsh, more forgiving, gentler in a strange sort of way. That was another time and another place.

Now in the autumn I remember all the special times I shared with my child. Looking at leaves, collecting leaves, raking leaves.....we did this together, just the two of us. "Mom, when are we going to go look at leaves?" Todd would ask. That was my cue to load up some soft drinks and sandwiches and head out on the first sunny Saturday. We'd repeat this ritual until the leaves had all fallen and it was time to rake.

When we moved to the Houston area, Todd was 12, and we talked about the seasons. He told me about his great memories of leaves and drives and time together. He said he would

miss autumn with me. That made me feel good. These were memories that we shared, of a time when it was just Todd and me for those special moments. Looking back, I am so glad that I spent the time to make memories. I thought I was making memories for my child, but in fact, I was making memories for us both. And now those memories are my memories.....good memories.....memories that I will cherish always.

Here it is autumn again. Soon Todd will be gone five years. The memories are flooding back: the first day of each school each year, the changes as he grew to become a man. High school, college, graduate school....all began in the autumn. Autumn marks the beginning of many good memories for me. I listen as the school bus stops in front of our house to pick up today's children. Once in a while I go to the door and watch them load up, chatting with each other as they take their seats. I think of my 12 year old son, getting on that bus in front of our home for the first time: the first day of school in Houston. And for a moment, just a fleeting moment, I think I can see him sitting at a window seat, waving at me. Waving goodbye.

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

CHASSIDIC TALE

A man had been wandering in the forest for many days, and was nearing the end of his water and food supply. With each passing hour his sense of fear and despair was increasing. His body was weary with fatigue, yet he was unable to sleep.

Slowly it became clear to him that he had been walking in circles and retracing his steps. He knew that his end was near.

Suddenly, in the distance, he noticed the figure of a bedraggled fellow wanderer approaching him. His joy was boundless as he thought to himself, "At last, a way out of this dark and foreboding forest."

The man gathered all of his remaining strength and ran towards the stranger and exclaimed, "My brother, I can't begin to tell you how happy I am to see you. Which way leads out?"

The stranger responded, "My dear friend, I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I too have been wandering in this forest for days on end. I can't save you - I too am looking for a way out.

In a fit of despair the first wanderer shouted, "Then all is lost. It is over. There is no use in continuing," and fell to his knees in a fit of tears.

The stranger responded in a deeply caring and comforting voice, "My friend, why are you giving up hope? Let us journey together. I will show you the paths I have taken that have led me nowhere and you will show me the paths you have taken that have not brought you to your destination. Let us walk together and find a path home."

-Chassidic Tale

FALLING FOR YOU

Falling for you....

....while leaves fall, the river drifts by and friends sit, speaking of loved ones lost to suicide. Like the river, conversation drifts. Some smile at memories shared. Others cry tears of regret, anger, guilt, despair; tears for what could have been, but is no more. Through the years, this group of friends has learned that words fall short of describing sorrow. And so we sit silently, watching the....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....until the time comes to fall in line and drift toward a table adorned with recently fired clay shapes. At an earlier gathering, I molded soft gray clay then impressed it with words and symbols of your life. Although I don't speak of it, I know that yours is not the only life interrupted. My life is also damaged, diminished, in danger of falling apart in oh so many ways. This small group shares space with those we miss and love, both living and dead; in this, my child's birth and death season. How I long to see you float free with the....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....and I long to connect again with you but my plea falls on deaf ears. I'm left with the task of creating your wind chime. A year ago, on your birthday, leaves fell as I stamped the soft clay heart with musical notes, falling stars, hovering doves and the words "treasured memories." Now the clay has cured and along the holes in the edge of the stamped heart, I tie other clay

shapes with lengths of string – my heartstrings. I add an anchor, a porcelain leaf inscribed with the words “falling in love.” The pieces fall in place like....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....and then I playfully brush my fingers through your wind chime; fingers that long to run through your hair. The chime whispers your name but it's music can never fill my heart like the sound of your voice. Fall – a time for friends to make wind chimes and memories. A time for....falling leaves....falling tears....falling eternally for you.

Carol Clum
TCF Medford Oregon

DO IT FOR BRIAN

Posted on August 24th, 2021

The quality of one's life is not determined by length but by depth...what that person brought to this world while they were here. I can proudly say that in the 17 years that my son Brian was here on earth that he brought so much to so many.

My story began on August 29, 1997, the day I was blessed with this beautiful brown-haired, blue-eyed baby boy...the happiest day of my life. Fast forward 17 years later to November 7, 2014, the day my son was in an auto accident and did not survive. The day my life, as I knew it, would be changed...forever.

The day started off like any other morning. I woke up, got ready for work, and woke up Brian for school. Brian came downstairs while I was drinking coffee, all wet in his towel, asking me to iron his clothes for school that day. I, as usual, said “okay.” As I was ironing his clothes, I had a package sitting on the kitchen counter that was delivered the prior evening. New black boots. I told Brian, as I was ironing, that he could open

the box for me. He opened the box and started laughing and says, "Mom, really...these are ugly." I came into the kitchen and, my God, they were. We are both laughing and I burst out into song and sang, "These boots are made for walking, and that's just what they'll do. One of these days these boots are going to walk all over you," and as I'm singing I'm poking Brian. We're laughing. As he is laughing, he hugs me and says, "I love you." Looking back now at that morning, I cherish that hug, as it was the last time I would ever hug my son. I get in my car, Brian gets in his car, and as I look at him he signs, "I love you" with his hands. I signal back. Little did I know that a few hours later Brian would be gone.

The following weeks and months, I just did not know how I was going to do this; how to live my life without him, as if I even wanted to. Each day was filled with endless crying and the why him and how could this happen to such an amazing young man with his entire life in front of him. He was supposed to be getting ready to graduate high school in June, not be gone! Brian is my world...my life...my purpose. What is life without him?

And then it happened about six months later... the first time I laughed. I paused and thought to myself, how can I be laughing? My son is gone and I'm laughing. I felt guilty. But then I realized my laughing didn't mean I have forgotten he was gone. It didn't make the pain in my heart hurt any less. It didn't make me not miss him any less. What it did mean is that I was still alive and that I could miss him, be heartbroken and in pain, but still experience joy. Brian had a mother who was full of life. Who was ditzy, funny and who didn't take life or herself too seriously. What kind of mother would I be if he was looking down from heaven watching me deteriorate? Brian hated when he saw me upset. I know he would not want me to live the remainder of my life in sorrow, every single day. I had to accept joy and happiness again, just like I had to accept the sadness and pain. I had to accept that while I was sad and crying that at the same time it was okay for me to laugh and enjoy life. Not an easy task to do hand in hand.

It literally is like being on a roller coaster, which is funny because I hate roller coasters. Brian, for years, tried to get me on one, but that's what this journey is like. One minute I can be laughing having a good time, and a couple hours later be on the couch crying because I miss my son

so much. It took time to accept and truly understand that for me, in my life now, that sadness and happiness go hand in hand with each other and that's okay. It was okay for me to cry, but it was also okay for me to laugh. I wasn't betraying my son or his memory by still enjoying life. Because of the relationship I have with my son, the opposite would be true. I would be dishonoring him, our relationship, the bond and love we have, if I chose to crawl into a ball, hide in a dark room, and let what is the remainder of my life pass me by.

Our love is too deep for me to allow that to happen. The first day I laughed after Brian's passing was the day I realized there was HOPE.

I have learned so much about myself, about death and about love. Prior to that horrible day, I had thought I knew all I needed to know about life, love, relationships, and heartbreak. I was wrong. The funny thing about death is that it really does not tear two people apart. It never wins.

Here I am, 28 months later, living this life without Brian physically here with me. For 28 months, I have taken deep breaths, holding onto the strength he left behind for me.

When people ask me how have I made it this long, how have I been able to still be moving forward without Brian, my answer is simple.....I don't know. I know that isn't the answer they want to hear, but it is the most honest one.

There are no easy answers after we lose our child. There are no simple directions to follow. You do not go through the "stages of grief" after you lose a child and miraculously wake up after the last one and say, "Hooray, I made it; I am healed." This will last a lifetime.

What I can tell you is that I have made it 28 months without Brian because I had no other choice. I made a choice to rise. I made a choice to take the tragedy of his death and not have it mean everything. His death shakes me to the core. But his life—his life—brings me so much joy and smiles. Seventeen years of being his mom is the greatest gift I was ever given. The joy he brought to me, the laughs, and the fun memories; the tears, the chats, just everything. There are so many moments that could never be taken away from me; they are what I try to focus on daily.

I have shed tears each day for 28 months. In the midst of my pain, I have learned to laugh again. I have learned to accept joy, in spite of the pain. I am continuously learning how to navigate through this world without my son. I fall...a lot. But I always get back up.

If someone would have told me that I would still be here 28 months later after losing Brian in that car accident I would have told them they were crazy. But I am here. I am living; not just going through the motions each day.

My dad was right, I would find a new purpose. My purpose was Brian when he was alive. My purpose now, funny enough, is still Brian. The greatest lesson that I learned was that I may not be a mom in the typical sense as I was before when Brian was here, but I definitely have not stopped mothering Brian in the spiritual sense. Death could not change that; through me, he lives on...through all that I do for Brian in his name, memory, and honor. This makes me a mom. It makes me Brian's mom.

Because I am Brian's mom I choose to embrace the laughing, the smiles, and the joy.

Today, like every day, I choose to #doitforbrian.



LISA HEATH

Lisa Heath is a resident of Fayetteville, North Carolina. She is a mom to Brian who resides in heaven after losing his life in a car accident. She continues to bring teen awareness of distracted driving to her community, as well as keeping Brian's memory alive through scholarships in Brian's name, volunteer work, her writing, and through her leadership of Finding Light

through Darkness, which is a group she created that helps other grieving parents.

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello Friends,

I am so excited that we will be able to meet in person this month. Grief is much better expressed and comprehended when face to face. Words are only part of the message. Our facial expressions, body language and gestures communicate much of what we are feeling and trying to communicate. I'm looking forward to being able to have more complete conversations. That being said, I am very concerned about the recent up-tick in the number of Covid cases. Hospitalizations are increasing as well as the number of children being infected. Some schools have already had to return to all-virtual learning. I would hate for that to be the fate of our "in-person" TCF meetings. Please help us keep everyone safe and healthy. Come to the meeting prepared to follow all safety guidelines. Thanks! I can't wait to see you!

Warmly,

Susan (Michael's mom)