



May/June/July/August 2020

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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

NEWSLETTER: Donna Goodrich

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

TCF Virtual National Conference - July 31 - August 2, 2020

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/43rd-tcf-national-conference/>

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/>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

WELCOME & CHAPTER INFO.....2

DONATIONS & CHAPTER NEEDS.....3

**WE REMEMBER OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN
AND SIBLINGS.....4-16**

THE INNOCENCE SLIPS AWAY.....17-20

**FINDING HOPE THROUGH TCF AND A LIVING
LEGACY.....21-24**

TCF NATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE.....25

**STAYING AFLOAT WHEN GRIEF STEAL YOUR
IDENTITY.....26-30**

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 siblings'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: iluvu2lauren@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 your understanding.

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - May 2020

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Kathryn Anderson | 5/26 - 9/23 | Jeanie & Jim Anderson |
| Robert Ankrah | 5/30 - 8/1 | Philip Ankrah |
| G. Stone Barnett | 5/18 - 10/15 | George Barnett |
| Kevin Bell | 5/16 - 3/1 | Mary Ann Bell |
| Chip Day | 5/31 - 6/14 | Ed & Luanne Day |
| Michael G. Finlay | 5/2 - 3/15 | William & Ayonna Finlay |
| Jack Morgan | 5/26 - 7/2 | Karen Geisler |
| Steve Hale | 5/9 - 3/18 | Karen & Douglas Hale |
| Michael Howard | 5/15 - 8/25 | Karen & Kevin Howard |
| David P. Jackson | 5/25 - 6/21 | Kathy Jackson |
| Jeremy Jenkins | 5/8 - 12/7 | Denise Jenkins |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Carl S. Olson | 5/6 - 4/24 | Gloria Jones |
| Erica Lubeznik | 5/4 - 6/24 | Maricely Lubeznik |
| Timmy Manus | 5/14 - 5/13 | Linda Manus |
| Amber Johnson | 5/5 - 8/2 | Ann McHenry |
| Richard McPeek | 5/4 - 2/8 | Rick & Sarah McPeek |
| Erica D. Mesarus | 5/15 - 10/28 | James Mesarus |
| Ayriel E. Moore | 5/9 - 12/6 | Andrea & Cedric Moore |
| Michael Ragone | 5/31 - 1/17 | Becky & Mike Ragone |
| Joshua R. Holden | 5/4 - 10/7 | Donna Ray |
| Breanna Ringersen | 5/4 - 9/11 | Craig & Loreen Ringersen |
| Allie Brown | 5/17 - 2/21 | Marianne Scully |
| Allen Doak | 5/31 - 3/9 | Sandy Tolbert |
| Baby Turner | 5/8 - 5/8 | Elise Turner |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - May 2020

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Dylan B. Hahn | 11/24 - 5/3 | Alicia Burke |
| Andrew Chester | 8/27 - 5/14 | Mark & Kathi Chester |
| Drew Wright | 7/31 - 5/29 | Bernadette & Bill Christi |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Jessica Cudd | 2/22 - 5/10 | Dennis & Joy Cudd |
| Ben Huff | 2/21 - 5/7 | Martha Currie & Lisa Rainey |
| Dennis Darrell | 1/10 - 5/18 | Diane Darrell |
| Jeffrey M. Hunt | 9/26 - 5/20 | Janet & Justin Hunt |
| Daniel J. Johnson | 7/4 - 5/21 | Jim & Jane Johnson |
| Ashton Sweet | 10/7 - 5/31 | Carol & Dean Jordan |
| Rickey Buchanan | 2/25 - 5/18 | Cayren Lloyd |
| William Buchanan | 4/19 - 5/28 | Cayren Lloyd |
| Sean Patrick Logan | 9/26 - 5/26 | Theresa & John Logan |
| Ben Longenecker | 8/11 - 5/10 | Jeff & Leslie Longenecker |
| Michael Mahoney | 11/23 - 5/3 | Celia & Tom Mahoney |
| Timmy Manus | 5/14 - 5/13 | Linda Manus |
| Austin McRee | 2/16 - 5/20 | Tammy McRee |
| Jenna Ryan | 10/10 - 5/8 | Bill & Chris Ryan |
| Daniel J. Schrieber | 1/10 - 5/18 | Gary & Marilyn Schrieber |
| Ryan Scott | 1/16 - 5/1 | Janet Scott |
| Keandra Sheats | 3/8 - 5/2 | Ken Sheats |
| Corey Smith | 1/16 - 5/28 | Christy Smith |

Baby Turner 5/8 - 5/8 Elise Turner

Nicole C. Willis 8/13 - 5/3 Jeanna Willis

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - June 2020

Felix Barraclough 6/6 - 7/16 John & Eva Barraclough

Julian A. Barron 6/23 - 6/23 Kimberly Barron

Jeremiah Bellard 6/23 - 1/27 Mary Bellard

Frankie Curra 6/13 - 7/15 Leslie Bevilacqua

Brian Yaniszweski 6/23 - 10/19 Emily Burgholzer

John J. Gabriel, Jr. 6/6 - 12/12 Patti & Fred Burnick

Christopher Diehl 6/21 - 3/8 Lois Clark & Scott Higgins

Kevin Goodnight 6/26 - 2/17 Mary & Tim Cochran

Tarell Cooper 6/19 - 4/6 Alisha Cooper

Kaleb Grant 6/28 - 6/22 Sandy Grant

Amanda K. Barbee 6/15 - 8/17 Charlie Kendall

Brittney Lambert 6/22 - 8/22 Jerry & Leslie Lambert

Jeannie Liebertz 6/8 - 2/12 Linda Liebertz

Jacki Grinstead 6/30 - 1/11 Dan Luce

Scott Lee 6/9 - 1/9 Francesca Marie

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Benjamin E. Owens | 6/1 - 8/29 | Dallas & Lori Owens |
| Kiara Pearse | 6/12 - 11/14 | Yvette Pearse |
| Cherilyn J. Crawford | 6/7 - 3/24 | Lu Prudhomme |
| Christopher Ross | 6/25 - 8/5 | Cindy & Mike Ross |
| Danny G. Scott | 6/17 - 2/24 | Gary & Emily Scott |
| Joseph Sharp | 6/22 - 10/20 | Carrie Sharp |
| Jason L. Armstrong | 6/25 - 12/25 | Patti & Fred Wright |
| Brian Yaniszewski | 6/23 - 10/19 | Linda Yaniszewski |
| Jamaal Miller | 6/7 - 12/14 | Olaniyi Zainabu |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - June 2020

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| Gabriel Jordan | 1/24 - 6/6 | Christina Arethas & Susan & Ron Wilson |
| Julian A. Barron | 6/23 - 6/23 | Kimberly Barron |
| Michelle H. Beebe | 9/20 - 6/3 | Nanci Beebe |
| Christopher Brown | 12/9 - 6/2 | Kimberly Brown |
| Lauren Campbell | 4/27 - 6/21 | Marilyn Campbell |
| Chip Day | 5/31 - 6/14 | Luanne & Ed Day |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Emily Lauren Upton | 10/4 - 6/1 | June English |
| Christopher Flower | 10/10 - 6/16 | Bob Flower |
| Stacey Glickman | 1/19 - 6/15 | Marilyn Glickman |
| Kaleb Grant | 6/28 - 6/22 | Sandy Grant |
| Caitlin Taylor Patton | 11/14 - 6/22 | Brandy Hartley & Christina Heindl |
| Kristopher Hartung | 8/28 - 6/15 | Ryan Hartung |
| David Paul Jackson | 5/25 - 6/21 | Kathy Jackson |
| Jacquetta Johnson | 7/8 - 6/10 | Valerie Johnson |
| Richard Maxwell | 10/26 - 6/21 | Geraldine Maxwell |
| Adyson Faith Mendicino | 1/24 - 6/24 | Melissa Mendicino & Carl Schonacher |
| Elizabeth Messer | 9/4 - 6/24 | James & Michelle Messer |
| Christina Michailidis | 7/26 - 6/8 | Mary & Paul Michailidis |
| Eric Lemarier | 12/12- 6/27 | Gale Muscaro |
| Blake Carlton | 10/1 - 6/16 | Patrick & Renee Nolan |
| Anthony John Pijerov | 1/5 - 6/8 | Nick Pijerov |
| Heath Graves | 12/28 - 6/5 | Teresa & Paul SchmalEinst |
| Emily Lauren Upton | 10/4 - 6/1 | Samantha Shaver |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Gabriel Jordan | 1/24 - 6/6 | Susan & Ron Wilson |
| Andrew John Wesley | 4/12 - 6/2 | Pat & Larry Wesley |
| Jimmy Zacharias | 3/31 - 6/8 | Sherry Zacharias |
| Amanda Jean Ziegler | 12/28 - 6/25 | Joy Ziegler |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - July 2020

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Debbie Ferrell | 7/14 - 10/16 | Mike, Kay & Michelle Arden |
| Leokoshia Baldwin | 7/29 - 7/27 | Lynette Battle |
| Peter Fowler | 7/5 - 4/5 | Lisa Bellucci |
| Richard DeVira, Jr. | 7/30 - 8/1 | Sally Brown |
| Baby Chambers | 7/18 - 7/18 | Bryan & Andrea Chambers |
| Drew Wright | 7/31 - 5/29 | Bernadette & Bill Christi |
| Blair M. Crane | 7/15 - 10/16 | Matthew Crane |
| Brendan Cullen | 7/29 - 2/24 | Sue Cullen |
| Kathlyn Joy Davis | 7/30 - 7/30 | Beth & John Davis |
| Adam Dixon | 7/22 - 1/30 | Pam & Joe Dixon |
| Nathan Epley | 7/28 - 3/1 | Vicki Epley |
| Yasmine Anderson | 7/11 - 12/16 | Kim Glazier |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Garrett Howison | 7/16 - 11/21 | Angie & Jason Howison |
| Steven Hulsey | 7/1 - 7/24 | Candice Hulsey |
| Daniel James Johnson | 7/4 - 5/21 | Jim & Jane Johnson |
| Jacquetta Johnson | 7/8 - 6/10 | Valerie Johnson |
| Chase Austin McCowie | 7/8 - 3/23 | Angela & Robert McCowie & Beth Jordan |
| Jason Pike | 7/13 - 8/21 | Vicki Keppel |
| Cole Kolker-Hicks | 7/23 - 10/26 | Jenny Kolker & Paul Hicks |
| Abigail LaLone | 7/2 - 7/2 | Laura LaLone |
| Christina Michailidis | 7/26 - 6/8 | Mary & Paul Michailidis |
| Jack Pahle | 7/17 - 7/8 | Jann & Dick Pahle |
| Kevin Roddey | 7/7 - 10/21 | Shelby & Jack Roddey |
| Alan Bloom | 7/8 - 10/9 | Sandi Schlager |
| Jeremy Sprague | 7/4 - 11/30 | Max Sprague |
| Christopher J. Thorne | 7/26 - 1/25 | Jackie Thorne |
| Max Ugate | 7/5 - 9/10 | Belinda Ugate |
| Jake Ziegler | 7/22 - 10/13 | Jackie Ziegler |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - July 2020

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Felix Barraclough | 6/6 - 7/16 | John & Eva Barraclough |
| Leokoshia Baldwin | 7/29 - 7/27 | Lynette Battle |
| Frankie Curra | 6/13 - 7/15 | Leslie Bevilarqua |
| Nolan Brantley | 11/18 - 7/22 | Holly Brantley |
| Christian Buell | 4/12 - 7/8 | Jennifer Buell |
| Eric Courtemanchie | 10/29 - 7/31 | Stephanie Courtemanche |
| Kathlyn Joy Davis | 7/30 - 7/30 | Beth & John Davis |
| Ashton Dickey | 8/4 - 7/28 | Jim & Dawn Dickey |
| Lee Dingle | 8/24 - 7/19 | Bill & Brigitte Dingle |
| Michael Fletcher, Jr. | 9/11 - 7/30 | Susan & Michael Fletcher |
| Jack Morgan | 5/26 - 7/2 | Karen Geisler |
| Charlie Mullis | 9/26 - 7/14 | Kathy Holder |
| Steven Hulsey | 7/1 - 7/24 | Candice Hulsey |
| Justin Luckhardt | 8/22 - 7/13 | Laura LaLone |
| Abigail LaLone | 7/2 - 7/2 | Laura LaLone |
| Erica Lubeznik | 5/4 - 7/24 | Maricely Lubeznik |
| Hannah E. Strickland | 12/6 - 7/2 | Charlotte Manis |
| Jonathan Mariano | 9/22 - 7/31 | Julie & Vince Mariano |

| | | |
|--|--------------|--------------------------|
| Hudson Lee | 9/14 - 7/24 | Francesca Marie |
| Jack Pahle | 7/17 - 7/8 | Jann & Dick Pahle |
| Emily Parker | 4/28 - 7/9 | Jeff & Leslie Parker |
| Ezra Santiago Perez | 10/15 - 7/22 | Julia Perez |
| Jermode Darnell Pharr | 10/30 - 7/4 | Jacqueline & Roger Pharr |
| Logan R. Barnhouse | 8/5 - 7/24 | Marsha Roberts |
| Liliana Patricia Solano Mevdosa | 10/23 - 7/24 | Henry Solano |
| Jonathan Troy Swierski | 10/1 - 7/6 | Scott & Dawn Swierski |
| Zachary Michael Tobey | 2/4 - 7/2 | Connie & John Tobey |
| Seth Henderson | 9/27 - 7/2 | Daphney Torres |
| William Britton Twitty | 11/21 - 7/14 | Kathy Twitty |
| Sarah Vincent | 10/3 - 7/21 | Bill & Elaine Vincent |
| Greg Viltello | 12/5 - 7/6 | Pat & Ciro Vitiello |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - August 2020

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Dan Biffl | 8/25 - 3/11 | Mary Beth Biffl |
| Nicholas Cherry | 8/16 - 3/26 | Wayne & Jane Cherry |
| Andrew Michael Chester | 8/27 - 5/14 | Mark & Kathi Chester |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Caden P. Davies | 8/3 - 8/3 | Rodney & Jill Davies |
| Ashton Dickey | 8/4 - 7/28 | Jim & Dawn Dickey |
| Lee Dingle | 8/24 - 7/19 | Bill & Brigitte Dingle |
| Mike Goepp | 8/24 - 2/11 | Kate Goepp |
| Aidan Donan Guilfoyle | 8/1 - 8/1 | Susan & Tim Guilfoyle |
| Christopher Hartung | 8/28 - 6/15 | Ryan Hartung |
| June Keiper | 8/21 - 9/14 | Roy & Sue Keiper |
| Justin Luckhardt | 8/22 - 7/13 | Laura LaLone |
| Andy Yeager | 8/3 - 4/20 | Sharon Macaluso |
| Jamie McKinley | 8/14 - 4/9 | Janet McKinley |
| Stephanie Midkiff | 8/17 - 2/3 | Teresa Moore |
| Brian David Palmer | 8/3 - 12/4 | Joye Palmer |
| Cullen Reiland | 8/9 - 10/1 | Steve Reiland |
| Logan R. Barnhouse | 8/5 - 7/24 | Marsha Roberts |
| Gregg Moore | 8/16 - 11/8 | Linda & Arnold Shaw |
| Shamar Sheats | 8/27 - 11/15 | Ken Sheats |
| Jeremy Barber | 8/2 - 8/30 | Donna Sides |
| Chris Turner | 8/24 - 9/11 | Elise Turner |

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Nicole C. Willis | 8/13 - 5/3 | Jeanna Willis |
| Derik Brown | 8/1 - 3/23 | Lori Young |

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - August 2020

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Zachery Anderson | 3/5 - 8/22 | Tracy & Jeff Anderson |
| Robert Ankrah | 5/30 - 8/1 | Philip Ankrah |
| Tim Boyer | 11/22 - 8/26 | Darlene & Melvin Boyer |
| Colleen Louise Brooks | 11/15 - 8/19 | Sandra Brokaw |
| Richard DeVira, Jr. | 7/30 - 8/1 | Sally Brown |
| Chet DeMilio | 2/10 - 8/25 | Kathy Cahill |
| Kevin Carosa | 4/1 - 8/31 | Lou Carosa |
| Caden P. Davies | 8/3 - 8/3 | Rodney & Jill Davies |
| Thaddeus Cash | 12/10 - 8/17 | Jerrica Gaves |
| Ryan Hortis | 10/29 - 8/14 | Heidi & Jimmy Goodwin |
| Aidan Donan Guilfoyle | 8/1 - 8/1 | Susan & Tim Guilfoyle |
| Michael Howard | 5/15 - 8/25 | Karen & Kevin Howard |
| Jacob Preston Penrow | 2/24 - 8/2 | Beth Jordan |
| Jeremiah Karriker | 2/17 - 8/4 | Jamie Karriker |
| Amanda Kendall Barbee | 6/15 - 8/17 | Charlie Kendall |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Jason Pike | 7/13 - 8/21 | Vicki Keppel |
| Brittney Lambert | 6/22 - 8/22 | Jerry & Leslie Lambert |
| Sky Lee | 10/25 - 8/14 | Francesca Marie |
| Amber Johnson | 5/5 - 8/2 | Ann McHenry |
| Benjamin Elliot Owens | 6/1 - 8/29 | Lori & Dallas Owens |
| Steven Vaughn Ray | 1/27 - 8/21 | Jimmy Ray |
| Jennifer Hokanson | 10/6 - 8/31 | Louis & Jodi Reed |
| Christopher Ross | 6/25 - 8/5 | Cindy & Mike Ross |
| Jeremy Barber | 8/2 - 8/30 | Donna Sides |
| Billy Trahey | 12/25 - 8/12 | Pat Varipapa |
| Jason Walters | 12/10 - 8/26 | Alan & Ellen Walters |
| Angela Harper | 12/15 - 8/13 | Sherri West |
| Jeremiah Karriker | 2/17 - 8/4 | Angie Wolf |

Sibling Corner

Our Sibling Coordinator, Courtney Langdon has started zoom meetings each month for the siblings. The zoom meetings will be the last Saturday of the month at 2pm. To attend these zoom meetings, please email Courtney (cltsibs@gmail) for the zoom link.

The Innocence Slips Away

But the experience lives on: By Dave Roberts

March 1, 2020, marked seventeen years since my eighteen-year-old daughter Jeannine “walked on” from this life into her new level of existence. The fact that I have lasted this long in my grief is perhaps a testament to my will to survive, the support of many along the way, and my willingness to embrace a different perspective, one that has allowed me to honor my grief for what it is and in some strange way, make friends with it.

A New Year, A Different Challenge

I have experienced unique challenges every year during the days leading up to Jeannine’s angelversary date.

There are always some moments of sadness and of yearning for a life that I once had. One where my family was whole and the challenges we faced had concrete solutions. Solutions that did not require an evaluation of our values and priorities to re-engage in life. This year was no different.

Around the middle of February of this year, I began to feel out of sorts in ways that were reminiscent of my days in early grief. I could feel the heaviness of grief in my back, neck, and shoulders and felt more anxious than usual. I finally was able to articulate specifically what I thought was happening to a fellow unwilling traveler on the path that marks our existence after the loss of a child. It wasn’t only

Jeannine's impending angelversary that contributed to my state of mind and body but the fact that I would soon begin the eighteenth year of navigating grief without the physical presence of my daughter. She will have been living in spirit for as long as she was physically alive. I know that many parents have had similar, visceral emotional reactions when reaching that point in their grief. Now I acutely understood their experience. I was now living it.

I have learned that grief is meant to be experienced and not suppressed. In suppressing it, we deny a part of an existence for which we did not sign up. In the process, we lose opportunities to help ourselves and others as a result of what our grief has and can continue to teach us about life in general.

Time Stands Still

The other thing that was dominating my thoughts in the days leading up to Jeannine's angelversary date was the passage of time in general. Lately, time has been moving at the speed of light. I frequently remark to my wife, Cheri, that I don't know how I have lived this long, this fast. This year I found myself wishing that time would have slowed down to a crawl, particularly during those moments that I shared with my sons, Dan and Matt, and Jeannine when they were younger.

My thoughts also gravitated to a song composed by the late Neil Peart, the drummer and lyricist for the band Rush, called "*Time Stand Still*." A stunning rendition of this song was done recently by The United States Army Band.

I found this reflection on The United States Army Band's Youtube page by SFC Tim Whalen, a lifelong Rush fan. His words spoke to what I had been feeling in the days leading up to March 1st.

"The song is about life moving too fast, due to both things we can control and things we can't, and the desire to hold onto something just a little longer. This is such a universal message, whether it be children growing up too fast, a loved one dying, or a soldier leaving home wondering if they'll ever see their family again."

There was one passage in this song that also consumed my thoughts : **"The innocence slips away"**

With each tragedy that inevitably finds us, a little more of the innocence that we were born with and through which we viewed the world as children slips away. With each loss that finds us, innocence is replaced with sadness, cynicism, and anger at what should have been or what we could have done differently to prevent events that were outside of our control. There may also be a fear to re-engage in life because we try to hang on dearly to what remains of the vestiges of a life that we once knew, determined to lose no more.

The heaviness that I felt in the days leading up to March 1st seems to be, for now, a distant memory. Certainly talking about my thoughts and emotions has helped because what we can acknowledge about our experience empowers us to grow. I wish that I could discover a way to slow down the passage of time or go back in time to relive those moments that passed all too quickly. But what my

grief has taught me so far this year is that we can reclaim some of our innocence, lost for a moment or moments in time, if we so choose.

I have had pets in my life for as long as I can remember. As early as March of 2016, four beautiful cats lived with me and my wife Cheri. Unfortunately, we have had to put three of our beloved cats down since that time, adding to the cumulative losses experienced in my lifetime. Our soon to be fourteen-year-old black cat Zoey remains a major part of our family. Her playful, rambunctious personality never fails to put a smile on my face. The day that she crosses over to Rainbow Bridge will be a profoundly sad one for me.

Every morning Zoey crawls into my lap and purrs loudly as I pet her. It is during those moments and through her eyes that I can reclaim some of my innocence lost due to the life challenges that I have experienced. Zoey is a reminder to me that in the midst of tragedy, there are beautiful life moments to be honored and forever frozen in time.

WRITTEN BY: ***Dave Roberts*** - *Adjunct professor of psychology-Utica College. Past HuffPost Contributor.*

“Take One for Raymond”: Finding Hope Through TCF and a Living Legacy: By Elaine Plotkin

Ten years ago, on 11/11/2009 (Veterans Day), we lost our youngest son, Raymond, to the H1N1 (swine) flu. It was the year of the world-wide flu pandemic when a disproportionate number of young adults lost their lives to a strain of the flu that they had no immunity to and which the flu shot that year didn't protect them against. In fact, in 2009, one needed two flu shots. The first shot was the regular flu shot and the second was a booster flu shot that carried protection against the H1N1 strain. Unfortunately, that second shot wasn't available until AFTER Raymond died. When we sent our 18 year old son off to his first year of college in the Fall of 2009, little did we know that when he returned home, it would be in a casket.

So what do you do as parents to find hope, to find that spark to help you continue to function, after such a devastating loss? For each of us, it will be something different. For us, it was a combination of things: a conversation that our son had with us when he was sick a few years earlier, a Facebook posting that our son had made a few weeks prior to his death, a supportive network of family, friends and colleagues, professional bereavement counseling, and The Compassionate Friends organization.

Believe it or not, our son, Raymond, gave us hope. When Raymond was suffering with migraine headaches as an adolescent (unrelated to his death), he told us that we should never use his condition as an excuse for not doing something. Our TCF children, grandchildren and siblings would not want us to stop living our lives if the unthinkable happened to them. After Raymond died, we found a quote that he had posted shortly before his death from an anonymous source. It was "Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are." Since this quote obviously resonated with Raymond, it too resonated with us and gave us hope. We engraved this quote on his cemetery stone to comfort all who would come to visit, including us. Losing Raymond was the biggest challenge our family ever faced.

We were fortunate to have an understanding and compassionate network of people to surround us after Raymond died. They knew that we were shattered, and they were available and present, but we also knew that we needed professional help and guidance. We couldn't do this alone. We were fortunate to find a professional counselor, who was a bereaved parent herself and her guidance helped us tremendously that first year and for "tune-ups" off and on afterwards when we needed her. It is not a sign of weakness to seek professional help. It is a sign of strength.

Within six days of Raymond's death and funeral, we attended our very first Compassionate Friends meeting in Houston. We were numb and in shock but knew that we had to see other parents who had been through what we had just experienced and listen to their stories. That first meeting had only a handful of people in attendance, but it was the best thing that we could have done because what we came away with was hope. Hope that if these parents could make it through their most devastating loss, so could we. We continued to go to TCF local meetings and Ronnie began using the TCF online chat between meetings to connect with other parents who lost children. Each day, little by little and with a lot of help and support, we were finally able to live again, to even smile and laugh again. It took time, but we got there by doing our grief work.....and it is work.

A major turning point came two and one-half years after Raymond died when we were able to attend our first National TCF Conference. It was being held in Costa Mesa, CA. We didn't know what to expect from a grief conference or how we'd react to it, but it was life changing. We learned to focus on Raymond's life and not his one day of death. We definitely changed after attending that conference. Since then, there have not been many national conferences that we have missed and we just attended our first regional TCF conference in Houston. There's something about these larger gatherings where you have a lot of parents, grandparents and adult siblings that makes you feel that you are definitely not alone. You have people who can relate to you and can share their experiences of how they made it through

the worst days of their lives. In our case, these experiences have given us a tremendous amount of hope and a forward direction.

The final piece for us was the ability to provide our son with a living legacy by helping others in his behalf. We have established the Take One for Raymond Foundation, which is an initiative to encourage flu immunization for all, but especially for college age students. Each year, the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque partners with our family and offers Take One for Raymond flu shot clinics on campus. Lending Raymond's story has helped immunize thousands of young people since Raymond's death by encouraging them to get their flu shots (Take One for Raymond), as Raymond couldn't get that second booster shot in 2009, which contained protection against the H1N1 strain of the flu. Flu shots now have that protection. Raymond's story resonates with young people and they come out in the thousands to get their flu shots each year on the UNM campus. In addition to Take One for Raymond, we have established scholarships at both UNM and in Houston to help incoming freshmen engineering students (like Raymond) and to send a young person to tennis camp (as Raymond did when he was in middle and high school) respectively. Helping young people in Raymond's behalf has given us hope for the future. It's so rewarding for us to hear each flu season that people have "taken one" for Raymond. Everyone knows about Raymond and says his name!

It's been 10 years since Raymond died of the H1N1 swine flu virus and we still are involved in TCF. The difference is that we have been able to tell our story to other newly bereaved parents, grandparents and adult siblings and be a source of hope for them. When we attend a national conference now, we attend to see our TCF family and talk to newly bereaved parents. We have been in their shoes and we know the value of peer-to-peer conversation in the TCF setting. We feel that we have come full circle and can now say that there is life, there is hope beyond a child, grandchild's or sibling's death. Taking the time to do the grief work by helping yourself (and your immediate family) first and then helping others will get you to that hope that you need to move forward and beyond.

Not a day goes by that we don't miss Raymond, but we know that he would be very proud of his parents and family for what has been done on his behalf to help others...and that, gives us hope each and every day moving forward.

Elaine and Ronnie Plotkin never thought that when they sent their younger son, Raymond, off to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque from Houston, TX for his first semester of college, he would never return. Raymond died on 11/11/2009, 5 days after contracting the H1N1 swine flu and two months before a booster flu shot with protection was available nationwide. Within six days of Raymond's death, Elaine and Ronnie attended their very first Compassionate Friends meeting of the Inner Loop Chapter in Houston, TX. Elaine was later secretary of the local chapter, served on the Houston Regional TCF Committee, and has continued to volunteer at TCF national conferences. Elaine and Ronnie have one surviving older son, Jason and his wife, Aliza, along with one grandson, Isaac Ray Plotkin, named lovingly after his Uncle Raymond.

**DUE TO CLOVID 19 OUR NATIONAL CONFERENCE,
SCHEDULED FOR ATLANTA, GA HAD TO BE CANCELLED**

**WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE TCF'S FIRST VIRTUAL CON-
FERENCE**

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE - FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 TO SUNDAY,
AUGUST 2, 2020**

Thank you to all who completed our survey last month requesting feedback about conference alternatives due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We had over 1,000 responses with overwhelming support for TCF to offer the safer option of a virtual national conference this year. Since that time,

we have been working diligently to evaluate the possibility of organizing a virtual conference.

TCF's Virtual Conference will provide an important opportunity for our community to connect in a way that is feasible right now. It also offers the opportunity for many people to attend who may not have been able to do so in the past for a variety of reasons.

The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Speakers
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment
- Additional regular conference activities that are suitable for a virtual environment

Additional information:

- The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.
- Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17th, 2020.
- Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks.
- Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

Although we would all love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through a virtual event. We will continue to navigate this new environment we're in and we hope you will join us!

Registration will open soon, and we will make an announcement with a registration link provided when that happens. For now, please save the dates and look forward to connecting virtually with your TCF family through an enriching and inspiring virtual event.

Sincerely,

Shari O'Loughlin

CEO, The Compassionate Friends

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER: <https://www.compassionate-friends.org/event/43rd-tcf-national-conference>

Staying Afloat When Grief Steals Your Identity – patti.mealer@gmail.com

The hardest part of grief as well as the obvious loss of your loved one is the physical and internal changes within yourself. Your being. The body's response is sudden and arduous; truly your mind is not conscious of what is happening to you, only what has happened to your loved one. Yet, it may be months or years when you notice it.

After the shock has worn off, you may have had a chance to glance at your reflection in a distant mirror and you don't recognize who you see in the reflection. The you that used to be is gone.

In that single horrible moment that I heard you were gone, a huge part of me went with you...a great big part of me anyway. So much of me disappeared the day you left and so much of me has changed that I am learning that I really don't know who I am right now. I question everything. Those of us that have lost someone so close to us so often say, "I don't know who I am anymore."

What happens to us? Our hearts are shattered and within our bodies the explosion of all that emotion and mental shock have caused so much damage we get short circuited. It's almost as if we are burned out. We are empty shells of who we used to be, left to figure out how to regain some form of who we are supposed to be now.

I questioned how any one thing could possibly hurt so much and not kill me. The grief is not comparable to anything I could ever explain. I still cannot comprehend how I lived through the first six months after I lost you. How any of us did. The gut-retching, screaming without a sound pain you and only you alone can go through. I believe I know now that Konnor was watching us and trying to comfort us. His gentle hand on our shoulders, his tears raining down with ours. Perhaps he had a hand in helping us get through it.

The change in cognitive function. I was merely able to stare blankly at the television, cry and sleep (with the help of meds). I cannot bring to my recollection how I spent my time the first year after the loss of Konnor. I explained in previous blogs I had gone through a few jobs, I've been unable to concentrate, to cope with any stress at this point. My mind was shutting everything out. I, in turn, let my body go with it. I figured I would rejoin life when I was ready. Even today, I find myself forgetful, at times staring off into space, a disconnection of sorts, yet my mind is racing when I try to sleep. My thoughts will take me to horrible places at night, whether it is reality based or not. Why my psyche feels motivated at this specific time to attack with deep thoughts of situational probabilities and emotional conversation is beyond my comprehension.

Social skills. This is laughable. Who wants to hang around someone who is so depressed that all they do is cry? When I couldn't cry anymore, (surprisingly I was finally able to stop after crying *every day for eight months*) Now I have become so socially uncomfortable from NOT being around people for so long that I just gave up. The friends I do have that really know me, by that I mean the ones I have had for twenty-plus years, I do see from time to time. They make the effort to call and pull me out of my head and my home because we have the longevity and love that is needed to keep the friendship alive. I don't think I would have made it out of the dark without them.

Irritability. I don't know what is happening to me here. There is no distinguishing what can set me off. One thing may set me off and another issue you may think would anger me will not bother me what-so-ever. I do know that it does not take much to put me into frustration mode. I used to think I was a pretty strong person. Death has stolen my ability to be strong. It has crushed me. A minor traffic jam can put me into tears. A small non-complicated issue will have me searching for alternative ways around it. Avoidance is my new best friend. I used to be the "go to" person. In self-preservation mode, I can barely help myself. I can only hope that those I love and that love me will respect and understand my journey and not give me additional things to worry about.

Along with irritability, mood swings are its constant companions. There is no rhyme or reason for the ups and downs of my moodiness. Although I have figured out that the closer I get to the 22nd of the month, the more sensitive I

get. Everything makes me cry around this time. I wish this number held a different meaning than the day Konnor passed away. The number two used to be my favorite number. I am very aware of my mood swings. If I'm not crying, I'm angry. In an instant I can be spewing obscenities out of frustration because something didn't go the way I felt it should. They frighten me in that they have no obvious warning. With relief I only have my son to apologize to if I get out of hand. Otherwise, I just hide and ride it out.

Seventeen months have passed since Konnor left this earth. Seventeen. I have never asked myself when I think I will be over it. There is no OVER IT. I realize this is a process, an adjustment that may last the rest of my lifetime. Every single thing that has changed within me, every mood, every tear, every small step I have taken to figure out who I am now, is because of Konnor. It's still because my love for him is that strong. I can't let that go. Maybe that's the part of loss we have been trying to fight against. The letting go. Accepting the fact that we have lost them forever. We don't know who we are without them in our lives. And they were the part of us that is forever gone. But...maybe they aren't.

If we use what we have learned and remind ourselves that our loved ones are here with us. I know... It's difficult to comprehend, some don't believe but they are still with us in spirit. It's up to us to put the pieces together and move forward with this as our guide. As hard as that is to do, I know Konnor would want me to.

Every day is a struggle to move forward in this grief journey. Although I am finding a new me in this process there is no question who I will always be – ***Konnor's Grandma.***

Thank you.

Patricia is a Professional Registered Nurse, mother of four, grandmother to seven, one being angel Konnor Mason, who passed suddenly November 22, 2015, at eight years old of a gastric perforation caused by a very rare bacteria. Patricia started [Konnor's Lullaby as a Grief Blog](#) to share her emotions with those who were suffering as she was but may have been unable to express how they felt. Grief has a voice and it has a face. As Konnor's grandmother she needed to

share his story, her story and her families - the story of love and loss and hope.

BECOMING MELANCHOLY: HOW MY GRANDSON'S DEATH CHANGED THE WAY I LIVE

I continue to learn and grow as this new person I have become, a griever making my re-entry back into life among those untouched by loss. In adjusting to the new me, I have come to accept things about myself that at first I assumed were temporary. I now know that I am permanently changed.

Self-awareness is a good thing. If grief has provided anything positive, it would be the soul-searching that I needed to do in order to overcome my loss. Grief shatters you, tears you apart. Rips open your soul, breaks your heart and forces you to open your eyes. When I was able to put myself back together, I found my perception of everything had been completely altered.