



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2023

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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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

Monthly meetings: September 19th, 2023
October 17th, 2023

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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 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.

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

TO OUR MEMBERS

If there are any errors in dates or names in our listing of our children's, grandchildren's or sibling's, please let me know. We are trying to get our database as accurate as possible. Many of our loved ones names do not have a last name listed. In these cases, we assume it is the same as the parent, grandparent or sibling who is listed as a member in our database. If this is incorrect, please let me know. There are many names that do not have a birth date or a death date listed. We know this can be very difficult to list, especially in the early days of grief. If you feel like adding those dates, just email them to me at: fletcher1mom@gmail.com. We are only human so we do make mistakes, but I have tried to be as accurate as I possibly can. Thank you for understanding.

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS SEPTEMBER

Amanda Barnett	9/26
Michelle Beebe	9/20
Phillip J. Bell	9/2
Michael Boyle, Jr.	9/20
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
Kekoa Teonkina	9/4
Christopher Eastman Tilsch	9/20
Seth Henderson	9/27
Brian Colbert	9/25
David Haney	9/27
Kristin Stinson	9/20
Lucy C. Riley	9/21
Malik Robinson	9/27

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAY
SEPTEMBER

Kathryn Anderson	9/23
Rodney T. Baldwin	9/3
Amanda Barnett	9/11
El Barnhill	9/25
Cliff Golla	9/1
Kendall Hope	9/7
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
James Davis	9/11
Aubrey Wiger	9/12

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
Eric Courtemanchie	10/29
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/?
Jason P. Huff, Jr	10/28
Ashton Sweet	10/7
Scott Aaron Katowitz	10/21
Greg Kemp	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
Emily Upton	10/4
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
Sherman Smith	10/30
Greg Kemp	10/15

**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
Tommy Ishee IV	10/10
Cole Kolker-Hicks	10/26
John R. Madigan	10/9
Samantha Mertz	10/20
Erica 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 Zeigler	10/13
Brian Yaniszwski	10/19
George Dumaine	10/15

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

Autumn is the Season of Grief and Death.

Changing Seasons — They Play a Role in Grief

Seasons are known for the feelings they evoke and the part they play in our life cycle of life and death. Each season changes and brings its own reminders of loss.

Seasonal grief is a situation in which traditions and memories of each season tug at the heart of a grieving person, reminding them of what was lost. More than 50 percent of grieving people say they felt the effects around them through seasonal grief.

How Other Cultures View Autumn

In Asian mysticism and Chinese medicine, Autumn is considered the season of Grief, while summer is associated with the emotion of joy, Autumn is associated with both courage and sadness. If you are grieving, you can probably feel the truth of that association for yourself, because, in Autumn, things are dying.

The light is dying as Earth's orbit around the sun and tilt on its axis combine to carry us in this hemisphere further away from receiving the sun's rays most directly. The days are getting shorter. Plants and trees are winding down their cycle of growth. Sadness – and courage – are natural emotions as these changes are taking place.

That's part of what the Chinese philosophy of the five phases or five elements is trying to convey: for example, sadness is part of the autumn season. It's just part of nature.

Grieving Season

So, for grievers, the Fall season can be harder than other seasons. Here is a thought piece from the ***What's Your Grief?*** Website, explained by someone for whom Fall is her "grief season."

In the summer season, the feel is one of vibrance and abundance. Then, the season turns to one that can evoke the feeling of numbness and pain. This can mimic how we feel when we go from a life filled with our loved one to a new, empty life, with his or her void.

Is This an Accurate Way to Describe Grief?

It does sound like a description of grief. It makes it easy to associate this transition with the initial phase of grief. If the fall season symbolizes loss or death itself, winter is the darkness that follows, as if to be the aftershock of it all.

Fall is a visually a season of loss. Fall is nature's season of death. You can't get much closer to the reminder of a loss and death than the browning and falling of the leaves.

When is Seasonal Grief Present?

Seasonal grief can show up throughout the year for those experiencing grief. Fall transitioning into winter can give us a feeling of bleakness and darkness as if nothing will grow green again or become alive and abundant. The purpose of the shedding of the leaves is to provide enough nourishment for the earth's soil to grow more leaves for the arrival of spring.

As seasons change, we move to the ***“what is the reality left”*** phase of the grief experience. While our lives will never be the same again, grief work can slowly help us identify what is left in our lives.

Our core group of family friends, neighbors, and support system help us preserve and to grow and move forward, as the seasons do.

Those grieving the death of a loved one may find that, through loss, there can be a rediscovery of life, just as, after Autumn succumbs to Winter. Next will come the Spring season of hope and renewal as the cycle begins again.

In the later stages of grief, we are reminded that we can find joy and meaning in life once more.

Darkness is not to be feared if it can lead to the place of light.

Grief in Autumn – I’m alone like the bare trees, and I’m missing my loved ones.

How to combat and support your Autumn grief.

- First of all, **don't fight it**. Feeling your grief and understanding it is a step towards healing.
- **Take as good care of yourself as possible**. Comforting foods, comforting conversations with friends and warmth can help.
- **Reach out to a professional grief counselor**, because you deserve to have the support you need during grief.

- Remind yourself that in years past, the **seasons have come and gone in your life**. From some losses and seasons, have come newness and possibilities.
- ***If you are prone to seasonal depression, seek medical attention and treatment.***
- **Don't remain isolated**, even though it's wintertime. Find solace alone when needed, but find company and life in others and from the outside world.
- **Soothe yourself** with some pampering indulgences.
- **Enjoy comfort foods** that warm and nourish the body and soul.

In any season, Tough Times Call For Gentle Treatment.

Written By [Jill S. Cohen, Family Grief Counselor](#)

SIBLINGS DOING THE GRIEF WORK AND GIVING BACK



Our bereaved siblings are doing great things in our community. Under the leadership of the indomitable Courtney Langdon, Sibling Coordinator, they quarterly carry out acts of volunteerism with various community support groups. Most recently the group gathered and assembled bags of food and snacks for the Crisis Assistance Ministry to deliver to people experiencing homelessness. These ladies and gentlemen put together 100 snack bags! They also wrote personal notes of encouragement to include in each bag. Their other acts of volunteerism include working at the Salvation Army Toy Store and sorting donations for Crisis Assistance Ministry.

These adult siblings feel like this is a great way to get together, talk about their siblings, or whatever is on their mind, all while doing something impactful for others.

Volunteering is a superb avenue to do the grief work. Find something that will honor your child. If your child loved animals, volunteer at a shelter or animal rescue. If your child loved to cook, volunteer at a soup kitchen. If your child loved sports, volunteer at the Special Olympics. If your child loved to read, volunteer at a local elementary school. There is no shortage of deserving groups or agencies that are always looking for help in their efforts to help others. It's just one way to "do the grief work".

Courtney would like you all to know that they will again be volunteering at the Salvation Army Toy Store in December. They will be selecting toys and filling gift bags for children to receive for Christmas. If any of you want to join them (you don't have to be a sib) please email Courtney at cltsibs@gmail.com.

Susan Fletcher
Charlotte TCF Co-Leader

How to cope with the death of a child

If your child has died, your world may feel turned upside-down. Whether their death was anticipated or unexpected, this is out of the natural order and may feel incomprehensible. In addition to grief, you may also be experiencing trauma. Regardless of the label, this is pain unlike any you have faced before. My heart goes out to you, and I hope that this post may be helpful and comforting to you, as you find your footing — one day and one breath — at a time.

It's important to understand the impact that grief and trauma have on us physically, emotionally, cognitively and socially. Bringing to focus how grief and trauma impact our overall well-being can eventually help decrease the intensity of the pain by understanding it better so that it lessens the sensation that it is controlling us; rather, we coexist with it.

Those of us in grief often feel that there is something wrong with us, and may shy away from openly discussing death and grief. Instead, it's important to encourage traits like stoicism, positive thinking, self-reliance and strength. Below are some ways that grief and trauma can impact our functioning.

How grief and trauma may impact someone physically

- Hollowness or discomfort in the stomach.
- Poor appetite, weight loss.
- Over-eating for comfort, weight gain.
- Tightness in the chest, chest pain.
- Tightness in the throat.
- Increased sensitivity to noise.
- A sensation of depersonalization, like nothing seems real.
- Shortness of breath, difficulty catching your breath or feeling like you can take a deep breath and get enough air.
- Muscle weakness.
- Lack of energy.
- Dry mouth.
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Vague aches and pains.

How grief and trauma may impact someone's emotional and mental health:

- Sadness. Feelings of sadness may show up in intense waves, particularly when alone or engaging in a mundane task, like taking a shower or driving.
- Anger. This tends to come from two places: First, from frustration that the parent could not prevent death. Second, the frustration may be related to feeling very anxious and helpless about the situation. Sometimes this anger may be targeted outwardly (family members, healthcare providers, God, etc.); sometimes it may be targeted inwardly.

- Guilt. Guilt may be related to the feeling that we could have or should have known or done something differently to prevent death, to relieve the child's suffering or to be a better parent.
- Anxiety. Someone might have a sense of insecurity and heightened awareness of death and their own mortality, fears and despair about the future, and worry about the health and safety of other loved ones.
- Loneliness. Someone grieving may feel deep emotional loneliness even when they are not physically alone.
- Fatigue. It may feel very difficult to be active or productive as you have little energy. Mental and emotional fatigue may also feel like not caring about anything.
- Helplessness. It may feel very difficult to navigate daily tasks when your child was your main priority.
- Shock. This is a very common reaction whether the death was sudden or unexpected, or whether it was anticipated. Even when our mind understands what happened, our emotions take time to catch up.
- Yearning. A parent may feel an overwhelming physical need for their child.
- Emancipation. There might be a sense of relief that the child is no longer suffering or that they no longer have to take care of overwhelming caregiving tasks.
- Numbness. This is a natural, protective response to overwhelming grief and trauma. A parent may feel empty, hollow or "blank."

How grief and trauma may affect someone cognitively

- Disbelief. Someone who lost their child may feel things like: *That didn't happen, there must be some mistake, I can't believe it, I'm dreaming.*

- Confusion. It might be difficult to concentrate, think or communicate clearly, or someone may be forgetful or feel in a mental fog.
- Preoccupations. Someone may have ongoing, intrusive thoughts about their child. For example, they might think of their pain, the circumstances of their death, how they feel it could have been prevented, or how much emotional pain they are in.
- A sense of presence. Someone who lost their child may experience that they are still there, watching over them or with them in some way.

How grief and trauma may impact an individual's behavior and social functioning

- Sleep disturbances.
- Appetite disturbances like undereating or overeating.
- Absent-minded behavior, forgetfulness or getting lost.
- Social withdrawal not only with people, but sometimes from the outside world. For example, someone may stop watching television or keep in touch with others and avoid social media, etc.
- Dreams or nightmares about their child.
- Avoiding “triggers” such as reminders of their child, or distressing places or things.
- Restlessness or hyperactivity.
- Crying.
- Visiting places or treasuring objects that belonged to their child.

Coping with grief and trauma

All these reactions are natural, expected, and believe it or not, ok. Usually, these reactions will dilute over time as we build the muscle to carry this pain and adapt to coexisting with it, hopefully with plenty of support. That said, what an exhausting list!

If your experience resonates with what I have described, I don't want you to fear — on top of everything else — that there is something wrong with you or that you are not “dealing with this” correctly. Thus, it is important to not judge others for their reactions or lack thereof, just as it's important to be compassionate and gentle with ourselves about how we cope with our grief.

Seeking help for grief and trauma

Please note that if you feel that your grief is worsening over time, you may want to consider reaching out for help. Examples of when you may want to seek support include if you can't eat or sleep normally after several months, can't take care of your basic needs and responsibilities (taking care of other kids or going to work), you are engaging in harmful behavior (like drinking too much) or you have repeated thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

In the event you are having suicidal thoughts or a plan to hurt yourself or others, please call 911. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline, which can be reached by dialing 9-8-8, can also help when you have thoughts of suicide or self-harm. In addition, your primary care provider can refer you to mental health resources, such as a therapist or a support group.

If you identify with a particular faith, your church, congregation or religious community may be able to provide emotional and spiritual support.

Home hospice agencies and local hospitals usually offer grief support groups too.

Most communities have grief support groups for parents and adult caregivers and group. for siblings. Many of these groups meet weekly, monthly or quarterly

Short-term and long-term coping strategies for grief and trauma

Although there is no timeframe for grief, and it is not a linear experience, it might be helpful to prioritize certain coping strategies in the short term and others in the long term to help alleviate how overwhelming this can be. There is no recipe or ideal approach to follow, but here are some ideas to help nurture yourself during this extraordinarily challenging time

Short-term coping strategies

- Eat regularly.
- Sleep enough, or try to rest frequently even if actual sleep is difficult or impossible; grief is exhausting on so many levels.
- Take a walk for a break, for fresh air, to move your body, and go as slowly/quickly or long/short as feels right.
- Don't neglect your own health (take medications, keep medical appointments or schedule them if they're due).
- Stick to a routine as much as possible. There can be comfort in the structure.
- Try to avoid big decisions or major life changes.
- Ask for help and allow others to help; consider delegating tasks.
- Allow emotions as they come AND allow a break from emotions.

- If spirituality or religious faith is an important part of your life, try to ground yourself with aspects of it that are comforting during this season.
- Try to relax and nurture/nourish yourself through breathing, exercise, nature, friends, comfort foods or activities/rituals that you find peaceful.
- Spend time with (comforting, safe, supportive) people; even if you're not yourself, the gentle company right now is often a good thing.

Long-term coping strategies

- Continue to plan things (eventually) for personal growth and enjoyment, even small pleasures which are soothing, interesting or uplifting.
- Compassionately permit yourself to be imperfect or to feel like a different person than you felt before. You are not a failure; you are in the worst pain you've ever experienced and you are doing the very best you can.
- Allow yourself to say "No." You only have so much energy and bandwidth, and your priorities may have shifted.
- Spend time in nature, with animals/pets or in a garden.
- Be creative or expressive, either actively or passively. Try writing, art, crafts, music, making a scrapbook/photo album by visit an art gallery, watch a favorite film or listen to music that you enjoy.
- Do something you're good at to ground yourself in your skills and strengths during this time which can feel so upside-down and powerless.
- Use your sense of humor.
- Reflect on your own unique and wonderful qualities, your strength throughout this unimaginable situation, the people who have loved and supported you, the people you've helped and touched and the life experiences that you are proud of.

- Be as gentle and compassionate with yourself as possible, particularly in your inner self talk. If it helps, you can try to talk to yourself like a kind, supportive coach or like you would talk to someone you loved who was going through this.
- Try to openly and authentically express your feelings sometimes. Talking with trusted, caring loved ones, in a grief support group. Express your feelings through writing or crying and allow what comes out to simply flow without judgment
- Remember positive, loving memories of your child. Consider sharing these memories with others when you are thinking about them — this can be in whatever way feels right to you — in-the-moment conversation, texting, emailing, checking in with a close friend or family member or using social media.
- Sometimes doing favorite hobbies, interests or rituals of your child like going to their favorite places or eating their favorite foods can be a comforting connection; being with or speaking with “their people” is soothing since memories and grief can be shared with those remembering and grieving them too (even though everyone will grieve in their own way).
- It may help to think of ways you can honor your child, in large or small ways; you can think of their values, interests or how they positively impacted those around them in considering how you can contribute to their legacy or pay tribute to them.
- Consider reaching out to professionals or a group for support; sometimes people fear that “talking to someone” has a stigma that means something is wrong with them, but reframing it to (more accurately) mean that you are bolstering yourself with more support during an extraordinarily challenging time, giving yourself more tools in your healing and thinking about it as self-growth rather than “treatment” may help.

By Miranda Wichelns, licensed clinical social worker at the [Hyundai Cancer Institute at CHOC](#)

Autumn

In the fall
When amber leaves are shed,
Softly—silently
Like tears that wait to flow,
I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in the fall;
'Tis then I miss you most of all.

Lily de Lauder
TCF, Van Nuys, CA

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 heart-
strings. 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 its 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

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

I am so ready for fall. I am looking forward to cooler temperatures, falling leaves, pumpkins and apples. Mostly, the cooler temperatures!!! I'm not quit ready for snow, but 50's and 60's would fell really nice.

The Charlotte TCF chapter is delighted to have Julie Mariano join the steering committee. We welcome her wisdom and insights as we plan for the chapter moving forward. Another change in our steering Committee is that Carol Patton is retiring as our chapter treasurer. Carol has been doing this job for a decade, so her rest is well deserved. Carol has our ongoing gratitude as she will continue to be part of the steering committee. She is passing the treasurer's books to Kay Thomas who, along with her husband Tim Harasek will serve as treasurers. Our thanks to Kay and Tim for taking on this task. The steering committee is open to any member who is interested in helping with long range planning an oversight. Our goal is to meet quarterly. If you are interested or want more information, contact one of the chapter's leaders.

Remember to be kind to yourself but don't forget that you need to do the grief work. Don't forget that it is alright to feel joy!!!

Love and Peace,

Susan (Michael's mom)