



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA
GWINNETT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**

Meg Avery, Editor Spring 2014
March, April & May

A non-denominational self-help support group offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause.

“When a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, brother or sister, or grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.”

CHAPTER MEETING AND CONTACT INFO:

Gwinnett Chapter- 7:30 PM on the 3rd Thursday of every month. **next meetings: March 20, April, 17 and May 15.**
Trinity Christian Fellowship, 1985 Old Fountain Road, Lawrenceville, 30043.
We meet in the 100 Building, the first building on your left.

For TCF Gwinnett: contact June Cooper by phone 770-757-4927, or email jc30044@flash.net or tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com

TCF Atlanta website: www.tcfatlanta.org

GA Regional Coordinator Sandra Stinson, sandrastinsontcf@yahoo.com

The Compassionate Friends National Office:
1-877-969-0010

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

Dear Friends,

The Gwinnett Newsletter is available both in print and by e-mail. If you have received this issue in print and would prefer to receive e-mail instead, please notify us at tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com. This will help keep our postage and printing costs down. We welcome your suggestions to improve our chapter newsletter.

We would love your input for the newsletter, Poetry, articles and comments submitted by parents, siblings and grandparents are an import part of each issue. Our next issue, Summer 2014 will cover the months of June, July & August.

We will also continue to recognize birthday and anniversary dates as times of special remembrance within our TCF family. Please communicate these important dates to us if you have not already done so.

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they walk the grief journey. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

Our Credo...

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends

*We reach out to each other with love,
with understanding and with hope.*

*The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many
different causes, but our love for them unites us.*

Your pain become my pain,

Just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life,

From many different circumstances.

*We are a unique family because we represent many races,
creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old.*

*Some of us are far along in our grief, but other still feel a grief
so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see
no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of
strength while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some
of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression,
while others radiate an inner peace.*

*But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The
Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we
share with each other our love for the children who have died.*

*We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for
ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.
We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as
the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as
well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to
grow.*

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends.

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The Robin's Song

By Genessee Bourdeau Gentry

It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back toward the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.



Before my daughter Lori died in the summer of 1991, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd misnamed its larger, boring, American cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was cheep! Then one spring day in the year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!...Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our "boring" American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered the true harbinger of spring, singing, "Cheer up, cheer up, cheerily".

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: "cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily." I thought to myself "cheerily...no, that isn't what I hear." We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said "Cheerio!" to one another when we meant "Goodbye"

or "See you later!" There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say "hello"!

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that first spring song, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths. Of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

Lovingly lifted from "Linked Together" Newsletter of the Atlanta area Chapters, April-May 2003

A Different Easter

Easter bunnies, brand new clothes, egg hunts, candy and baskets, the start of Spring. How exciting is this time of year? A new beginning, everything so fresh, so invigorating! But, unfortunately only painful and sorrowful memories are here for those of us who are bereaved parents and grandparents.

Gone is the laughter, the excitement in a special child's eyes, the feeling of a whole new aspect in life. Spring is here and the world appears ready to bloom again with new life, new hope, and new wonders.

How can we view life in this way when part of ourselves is now gone, forever lost to us? How can our lives continue to go on when one of us is missing, no longer able to share this "newness" of life? It seems so unfair! And yet, out of our "darkness" comes the first signs of hope – a "bud" of survival, a moment of laughter, a memory of a happier time.

The Easter season usually represents rebirth; let this season be the "birth" of your finding your way back to life again, of finding the ability to heal, and of being able to resolve your grief so that hope and comfort are once again in your life. Let this time of the year show you that you CAN make it through this deepest, most difficult, and sorrowful time of your lives.

From *The Journey from Mourning to Joy*, by Chris Gilbert, TCF Tampa, FL

WE REMEMBER BIRTHDAYS

*The light of life never goes out, and so we remember
their birthdays*



March

Lance Robert Malone....March 3
Dallas Williams..... March 4
G.W. Fox March 8
Ian Sharpe March 10
Amity Kozak March 11
Brian Ernst..... March 11
Jeff Bradley March 13
Malachai Pierre-Louis... March 16
Melissa "Kiki" Morrow.... March 16
Samantha Mucha ... March 17
Trevor Aaron Jones..... May 19
Richard Kendall "Ken" McCurdy ... March 23
Marcus Reid..... March 23
Kevin Hamilton..... March 23
Ansley Powell.....March 25
Justin Jordan ... March 27
Ashley Lauren Hull March 30

April

Cory Bute ... April 2
Morgan Alexis Burgess.... April 2
Joey Robinson April 4
Johnny Harof....April 4
Jenny Gryzinski April 7
Aaron Stephens April 9
Norma Mucha April 11
Bo Tuggle April 12
Elizabeth "Beth" Rihm April 13
Ben Ellerd ... April 15
Gary Pruitt April 18
Kathryn Collier April 18
Ryan Oliver April 19
Matthew Hinson April 24
Robert Coltman ... April 24
Ricky Ainsworth ... April 25
Kristina Oliver April 25
Richie Yee April 28
Brett Lykins April 28
Rhett Lykins April 28
Billy Foulke April 28

May



Amy Hannigan May 2
Jonathan Ayers May 4
Brent Rose.... May 4
Michael Rivero May 6
David Braund May 8
Mia Penoyer..... May 9
Natalie Sparks May 11
Kyle Harrison... May 12
Thomas Michael Pattillo May 14
Karissa Palmer.... May 19
Chad Gordon May 21
Joshua Waggoner May 25
Richie Petzel May 27
Madison Young....May 28
Brian Churchill.....May 31

Birthday Invitation

Every month we have a Birthday Table and you are warmly invited to please come share your child's birthday with us when his/her birthday is that month. This is your chance to tell us a favorite story, or share a poem or thoughts that either you or your child wrote or whatever remembrance you choose in memory of your child. Our child's or grandchild's or sibling's birthday will forever be a very special day and we at TCF know how important that day is and how helpful and healing it can be to share with others.



Please plan on attending the meeting of your child's birthday and filling our Birthday Table with pictures and/or mementos. You are also more than welcome to bring his/her favorite snacks.

*The children who were with us
In the rush of life
Let them now be with us
In the peace of spirit.*

BY SASCHA WAGNER, FROM HER BOOK "WINTERSUN"

MY GRIEF PROCESS: PAIN AN 'EXQUISITE FORM OF LOVE'

Written by Elizabeth Wagele on Friday, January 10, 2014

*The complete version of this was written by J. J. a year after the deaths of her daughter and granddaughter. It was published in Elizabeth Wagele's book, The Enneagram of Death and excerpted in The Career Within You blog on Psychology Today:
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-career-within-you/201301/healing-after-terrible-loss/comments>*

I write to make sense of the year since the untimely death of my daughter and my 11-year-old granddaughter in a single car accident. I've known for a long time that life is a preparation for death. Still, I get confused and long for someone in my wandering to show me a clear path. I know the importance of reaching out to others despite longing to shut myself away.

When I first heard that they were dead, I didn't know I was in a state of shock, so I tried doing business as usual. I went back to work after a week, not recognizing the physical and emotional exhaustion I was in. Shock tricked and protected me for several months before I realized I wasn't keeping up. Eventually, a colleague noticed. I took a long leave of absence. I needed the healing miracle of time and space.

I was ready to go into and through the pain—the only way to the other side. I learned I must look inside myself and become willing to fully experience what I discover there. I am learning to breathe and relax when my body strains to push pain down or out and away. Although the pain feels too strong for me at times, I am aware that these feelings are, strangely enough, an exquisite form of love.

I am finding the willingness to touch that smoky, hazy, vague place of vulnerability so deep inside me I didn't know it existed. As I attempt to describe it, I feel it evaporate.

The long hours of overwhelming crying are subsiding. But, still, I cry.

Sometimes grief settles in my bones for days at a time, bringing a chill that only solitude and silence can warm again. Grieving is a private business.

At times, grief comes in bright colorful bursts of images. The two of them appear suddenly laughing and teasing. This gift of spirit from out of nowhere or everywhere soothes me. Sometimes I feel a tactile sense of their presence snuggled next to me in bed.

I still relapse into confusion and anger, but more and more I see gifts everywhere.

Their deaths have taught me the profundity of vulnerability. I cannot question this evidence of my own powerlessness in the face of Death. It's not so much about the death of their lives as about the Life of their deaths.

Many days, I feel content to live in this moment. To live each day well, willing to stand poised on the threshold of life and death, is the miracle of recovery. For me this means to let go of each day, each hour, even each minute sometimes, trusting I am safe to pass through whatever I may find.

My understanding, values, and view of life and death have changed. They have brought an opening, a calming, and a connection to life unlike anything I have known. I feel compassion and love and I treasure others in a wholly different way. And I regard my own life and death with a new acceptance.

Their deaths have brought congruence to the opposition of life and death, a mystery my mind was unable to integrate before. They have left me with a certain notion that one must not leave deeds undone, words unsaid, life unsettled, for the day comes in the snap of a finger.

I miss them very much.

This story from Chapter 5 of Elizabeth Wagele's The Enneagram of Death has been edited to about half its original length. The Enneagram of Death was published by the International Enneagram Association, 2012. Please see www.wagele.com for Elizabeth's other books, reviews, essays, and a list of famous Enneagram types.

March, April & May Anniversaries

So that their lives may always shine, our children are remembered. As long as we live, they too shall live for they are part of us in our memories

March

Max Fiantd	March 3
Wendy McMain	March 4
Marcus Hamrick	March 4
Alan Parish	March 11
Thomas Michael Pattillo	March 11
Donelle Blackwell	March 14
Elizabeth "Beth" Rihm	March 14
Brian Ernst	March 16
Dallas Williams	March 18
Robert West	March 21
Shawn Lippman	March 23
Richard Kendell "Ken" McCurdy	March 25
Joshua Waggoner	March 26
Charles Whittington	March 27
Andrea Nicole King	March 28



April

Morgan Alexis Burgess	April 2
Tyler Ivey Rice	April 2
Jessica Bryl	April 3
Justin Ellington	April 5
Gerard Robertson	April 6
Xavier Williams	April 7
Marcus Reid	April 8
Tiffany Maxwell	April 11
Brian Hatchett	April 20
Joshua Stulick	April 27
Cameron McClure	April 30

The Melody of My Heart

The melody of the child who played upon the piano of my life will never be played quite that way again, but I must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust. I must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who will help me find the music of life again, creating new tunes and harmonies to enhance the melody which will always sing in my heart.

By Carol Cavin, TCF Madison, WI

May

Stephanie Fortner	May 2
Rhett Lykins	May 4
Wynne Wilson	May 5
Amanda Christine Warnock	May 6
Hayden Navarrete	May 9
Joseph Beatty	May 11
Adam Sawyer	May 15
Ian Sharpe	May 15
Justin Jordan	May 16
Justin Cates	May 17
Tom Waters	May 19
Daniel Gilbride	May 20
Dawann Wright	May 20
Justin Street	May 21
Blake "BJ" Jolly	May 23
Quavonte "Tae" Combs	May 28
Lance Robert Malone	May 29
Amity Kozak	May 30



The beauty of spring cannot take the sadness of grief away, it can only soften it as the rays of the sunshine warms our hearts and allows our memories to dance.

From TCF St. Paul Newsletter



WHEN THE MIRROR BREAKS

Written by [Daisy Massey](#) on Wednesday, September 25, 2013

"Siblings are the only relatives, and perhaps the only people you'll ever know, who are with you through the entire arc of your life... Your parents leave you too soon and your kids and spouse come along late, but your siblings know you when you are in your most inchoate form." – writer Jeffrey Kluger observed to Salon in 2011, the year his book "The Sibling Effect" was published.

My brother Andy was more than a sibling, he was my twin. We weren't really twins, we were just close in age and physically favored each other including, despite the 2.5 year age difference, being the same height. We always played together and were constantly told stories of how we immediately bonded from the moment I was born. Being younger than him, I never knew life without him. He was my first friend and best friend. We were affectionately called "the matching pair" by our family.

Although we had two other siblings (I'm one of four), my entire identity was a reflection of my life with him. Our world was rich with creativity in every way. As children, we spent most of our time playing with toys; coming up with different scenarios and personalities for each (which changed frequently.) As we got older, this world of "make believe" manifested in the form of music, theater, print and digital media, etc. Andy was publicly seen as quiet but behind closed doors he could put on quite a show and is still the funniest person I have ever met. He was sensitive and had respect for all things, living and inanimate. If one of us were to toss aside a stuffed animal, he'd immediately run over, cradle it, and say we had hurt its feelings. This kind of behavior really made our toys come to life.

I was 24 when my brother passed away instantly in a car accident. This is an untouchable age where nothing bad could possibly happen. The world exists to serve you and you'll worry about responsibility "later." I was unbreakable; we were unbreakable. When Andy died, I shattered. From that moment on, nothing would ever be the same.

The word no longer served me. It was against me and it took from me. I was immediately broken and couldn't see myself; I had lost the pieces of me.

For those of us who have lost a loved one, attempting to put together the shattered glass of our lives is beyond tedious; it's nearly impossible. It is such a struggle that many people get tired after a few initial attempts and give up. This is because there is no easy way around it. The only way to get it done is to work through it piece by piece. First, you have to locate all the pieces and get them organized into one pile. Then you start with one piece and sift through the entire pile until you find its adjacent piece; and repeat. As you continue this process, it starts to take less time to sift through the remaining pieces and find where it fits. Eventually, there are only a few left and you're putting them together quickly and with ease.

It took over three years for me to collect all my pieces into a pile and remember who I used to be.

The first year after a loss is particularly emotional because you are experiencing everything, such as holidays and gatherings, for the first time without that person. The following year serves as reminder of this new reality. Then, even though it's hard and you don't always want to, you accept it. During this time, I thought about what I used to like to do and had to make myself try them again. Activities that used to feel second-nature like exercise (running, biking, rowing) and playing piano now felt awkward and forced. It's really hard to not be good at something that you used excel in. This is where the hard work comes in and you have to make a commitment to yourself that you won't quit; you must rejoin the living. At this point, it is more about your mental state than whatever task or activity you are performing.

They say that when a mirror breaks, the penalty is to endure seven years of bad luck. This June will mark seven years since Andy's death. The process of working through collecting the pieces gave me strength to start living again. My pieces have been found and I am swiftly completing the mirror that once was shared by my brother. The new face has cracks but it is fixed and I am whole in it. The reflection shows a happy person who participates in many activities and loves living life again.

Grief Support For Siblings

When a child has died, siblings are often referred to as “the forgotten mourners.” While parents usually receive much support, siblings usually receive little—often being asked “How are your parents doing?” The Compassionate Friends is an organization that is not just for bereaved parents. It’s also for bereaved siblings (and grandparents).

All TCF National Conferences & many regional conferences offer workshops and other activities specifically geared for bereaved siblings.

Online Support Community (live chats) allows you to talk with other bereaved siblings from across the country during the Online Support Community sessions held every week. These sessions are limited in number of participants and have trained monitors who are also siblings. Check out www.compassionatefriends.org and go to Resources/Siblings.

Siblings Walking Together *(Formerly the Sibling Credo)*

We are the surviving siblings of
The Compassionate Friends.
We are brought together

by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.
Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we must walk alone,
taking our memories with us,
continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister;
however, a special part of them lives on with us.
When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different
from what we envisioned,
and we feel the responsibility
to be strong even when we feel weak.

Yet we can go on because
we understand better than many others
the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be
the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are,
but to walk together to face our tomorrows
as surviving siblings of
The Compassionate Friends.

©The Compassionate Friends

Sammie

My name is Chelsea Carlson. I am 11 years old and in the 5th grade. My sister, Samantha, died in 1998 from being hurt in a riding accident. Sammie was 8 years old when she died. She was not only my sister, but my best friend.

Sammie & I loved to play secret agents and house. It’s six years later and a part of me feels terrible every day because she died & my life will be completely different. I wish I had more time with her.

Before Christmas this past year, my classmate’s brother died. His brother was 8 years old, just like my sister. When I went to school, everybody was saying “I know exactly how he feels.” I said, “No you don’t, because you haven’t lost a brother or a sister.” It made me very very mad to hear this. After I came home from school, I cried, because I was remembering how I felt when my sister died. My mom and dad hugged me and that made me feel better. I told them that I wanted to help my friend. We talked about ways I could do that.

I thought it would be a good idea to talk to my class about what they could do or say that would help our friend and classmate. My mom talked with my teacher and she said she would give me some time during the day to talk with my class. I made a list of things that I thought were important to share. I sat on my desk and told them what was said that helped me when Sammie died, like, “I’m sorry,” “You can talk to me about it,” “It’s okay to share your memories”.

I also told them what was said to me that didn’t help at all, like “I know exactly how you feel”, “I don’t want to talk about it”, “Aren’t you over it by now?” I explained how Sammie died and how I felt at the time. That when I went back to school and no one talked about Sammie, it scared me. I thought everyone had forgotten her. I didn’t want our friend to feel that way. I wanted my classmates to know that it was okay to talk about our friend’s brother. I passed Sammie’s picture around the classroom so my friends could get to know her. It made me feel like they were remembering her even though they had never met her. That felt great.

I’ve been sitting next to my friend in class. He feels a lot better because he knows we can talk about his brother anytime. He knows I really understand. I gave my friend books to read about dealing with death and grief that were given to me. I’m always talking to him to see how he is doing, and personally, I think I’m helping him a lot. It makes me so happy to help him.

My sister, Sammie, would be pleased with what I’m doing.

By Chelsea Carlson, From “We Need Not Walk Alone”
Compassionate Friends National Magazine

Mother's Day

Our last Mother's Day together
You bought me a hammock
I remember your excitement
As I opened it and my
Anticipation as you
Gleefully put it together
We all tried it out of course
Each of us one at a time,
Gently swinging in the breeze
Under the warmth of the sun
Later we both got in together
Your sister snapped our picture.
A year passed and another
Mother's Day arrived.
The hammock still sat in the yard
The photograph of the
Two of us swinging together
Still hanging on our fridge.
This year and every year after
I climb in the hammock alone
Sometimes...
I feel you next to me.

By Deb Kosmer, TCF Redlands, CA
in memory of her son Shawn Jeremy Schmitz

Justin's Heart Grief Group

A place for the bereaved to gather to support each other in times of loss. Meets the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 – 8:30 at the Loganville First Baptist Church. Contact Steve Williams at 678-670-3549. This support group was organized by Kayleigh Ellington, in memory of her brother Justin. Their mom, Kathy Ellington, belongs to TCF Gwinnett.

GAINESVILLE SUPPORT GROUP

The Northeast Georgia Medical Center has a grief support group for parents. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month from 5:15 – 6:45 pm. The meeting is held at Lanier Park, Gainesville. Contact Jennifer Sorrells at 770-219- 0271 or jennifer.sorrells@nghs.com for more information.

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Chicago, Illinois, will be the site of the **37th TCF National**

Conference on July 11-13, 2014. "Miles of Compassion through

The Winds of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great national conference experience. The 2014 conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, just minutes from the airport. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience. Check www.thecompassionatefriends.org for further details. Early registration for the conference will be \$90.00 for Adults, \$40.00 for Children (9-17), and \$40.00 for Full-Time College Students. Online registration will be available starting March 1.



The Hyatt Regency O'Hare, 9300 Bryn Mawr Ave., Rosemont, IL 60018, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference. To make your reservation, please access the following link, which will take you directly to TCF's reservation portal on the Hyatt's website. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.

Comments from Compassionate Friends who attended the 34th National Conference held in Minneapolis:

"The conference was great as usual. It is great to have a place like the National Conference to be ourselves. The unfortunate part is going home and back to the real world."

"Attending the conference was the best thing I could have done for myself. It's a vacation with my son that I will take every year!!!"

"I attended my first conference and it was one of the best things I have ever done. The friends I made were incredible and the feeling throughout the whole weekend was so healing. I never thought I would have to belong to such a club, but am grateful it is there to help. Thank you TCF!"

Kate's Club

Kate's Club is a non-profit organization that empowers children and teens facing life after the death of a parent or sibling. By creating friendships with kids and young adults that share the experience, Kate's Club guides children through their grief journey in a comfortable, safe & uplifting setting. For information, contact Debra Brook, Program Manager, at debra@katesclub.org or phone 404-347-7619.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP

Meets the first Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm at The Warehouse at Family Festival, 5095 Post Rd, Cumming, 30040. The Meeting Room is located past The Land of 1000 Hills Coffee Bar, down the hall, first door on the right. For info contact Sherry 404-660-0907, sherryunwala@yahoo.com or Karen, 770-355-1024, Karen_copija@att.net

GOOD GRIEF" Support Group in Jefferson

Meets the first Saturday of every month at 10 am at the Integrity Counseling & Personal Development Center, phone 706-387-0573, www.integrityofjefferson.com Deana Martin, TCF member and mom to angels Amanda & Logan helps coordinate and organize this group. You may also contact Deana at deana.martin@merial.com

TCF Gwinnett Small Sharing Groups

Monthly support group meetings are the heart of The Compassionate Friends. These gatherings provide a safe and caring environment in which bereaved parents and siblings can talk freely about the emotions and experiences they are enduring. Parents receive the understanding and support of others who have "been there".

We are here to provide hope and encouragement, understanding & friendship as we all travel the grief journey. Our lives have been turned inside out & upside down and we are the walking wounded who must now figure out where to go from here, how to put our lives back together to some degree, and share coping skills and survival techniques. Together we can share our ideas and emotions, the questions and trials and tribulations that we have found ourselves in the very unwelcome world of bereaved parents.

HELP WANTED!

As we all know, the death of our child, no matter what age or circumstance, is a shattering experience for a family. When a child dies, to whom does a family turn for the emotional support they will need during the grief journey that lies ahead? If you are reading this newsletter, you have already learned that The Compassionate Friends understands that grief for a child lasts longer & is more intense than society commonly recognizes. Together as grieving parents we can offer empathy and understanding of this loss, while also recognizing that each person's grief is unique.

However, there are many families who have not found TCF and may need the support & friendship our chapter can offer. We all read about accidents, crimes, illnesses and our hearts ache because we, better than others, realize what the parents of that child are now going to have to cope with.

We are in need of a **Community Outreach Volunteer**, who will reach out to funeral homes, social services, hospices, etc. to create awareness of our TCF Chapter. We have a Special Edition Newsletter available for new parents that can be mailed or given to organizations. It may be as simple as sending emails, or making phone calls, and/or mailing the special newsletter. The internet is a great resource and aid for creating education & awareness of TCF Gwinnett for families and organizations. If you would be interested in filling this volunteer role, or if there could be a team of 2 or 3 people to work together in this effort, please contact Candace Jordan by email, tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com

A volunteer is also needed to create and mail Remembrance Cards for birthdays and anniversaries. We all love receiving a card acknowledging our child's birthday & anniversary. The chapter provides cards and stamps and any other materials needed. Either one volunteer can create all the cards or if two parents volunteer, one can send birthday and one can send anniversary cards. If you have a little extra time each month, please consider becoming our **Remembrance Card Volunteer**.

News From Candace Jordan, TCF Gwinnett Chapter Leader:

New Beginnings

I began January with a little inspiration about having new beginnings. I'd like to keep that theme. We as bereaved parents have a journey to blaze unlike parents who have not experienced losing a child. On our journey we must carry along with us the sweet memories of our children to keep their light shining in this world. Birthday celebrations are different. Anniversaries and weddings are different. Holidays are still Holidays, but celebrating them with a missing person is painful.

We all are still moms and dads, but Mothers Day and Fathers Day is different for us. We have to raise awareness of this difference with a special Bereavement Day for parents. This makes it easier and less awkward for family and friends to acknowledge me during this painful time. It also gives our family and friends the liberty to share in our grief.

Losing a child is an ever increasing tragedy. Let's lead the way in New Beginnings.

Cookbook Fundraiser

I am collecting recipes of our kids favorite dishes as a fundraiser for Gwinnett TCF. If you'd like to be featured, please forward a word document to Candace at candace1288@gmail.com.

Parents with Murdered Children

King David Mason Lodge #3 of the Sons of The Revelation are hosting a Mothers Day dinner for moms of murdered children. May 11 from 2-4:00pm, in the Lakewood district of downtown Atlanta. It is free, but you have to RSVP to Candace at candace1288@gmail.com

Also from Candace: Please be advised it is my honor to know that Alan Pederson is the new Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends! As you know Alan was just here in Georgia this past fall with a workshop in Marietta GA. For the past 10 years he has traveled across the U.S. speaking and playing music for nearly 300 of our local TCF Chapters in memory of his daughter Ashley.

And from TCF National: Alan Pedersen attended his first TCF meeting in Littleton, Colorado in 2001, after the death of his 18-year-old daughter Ashley, who died in an automobile accident that year. Alan has been an active volunteer for TCF, having served on his local steering committee and as a member of the TCF National Board of directors in 2012 and 2013.

In 2003, the focus of his Alan's professional life as a singer/songwriter and speaker changed as he began using his talents to help families grieving the loss of a child. In the past 10 years, Alan has performed music and presented workshops for countless conferences and events, including nearly 300 chapters of TCF traveling with his wife Denise (Sean Patrick Sullivan's mom) as part of The Angels Across the USA Tour.

Alan is certified as a Grief Services Provider (American Grief Academy) and lives in Roseville, California

THANK YOU! Many parents give back to TCF through volunteer opportunities as a means of honoring their child. Without volunteers our group would not exist. We are grateful to these volunteers: **Candace Jordan**, Chapter Leader, in memory of her son **Marcus Reid**; **June Cooper**, Parent Phone Contact, in memory of her daughter, **Wendy McMain** & in memory of her sister, **Noreen Keenan**; **Meg Avery**, Newsletter Editor in memory of her son **James Avery**; **Barbara Dwyer**, Chapter Treasurer and **Leo Dwyer**, group facilitator in memory of their son **Matthew Dwyer**; **Terry Sparks**, provides newly bereaved packet info & as group facilitator, in memory of his daughter, **Natalie Sparks**; **Diane Wolcott**, Memorial Garden Committee Chair in memory of her son, **Jeffrey**; **Gary Fox**, facilitator, in memory of his son, **G.W. Fox**; **Joy Crowe**, Steering Committee Member in memory of her son **Brenden Elbaz**; **Claudine Nickens**, Steering Committee Member & facilitator in memory of her son **David Whitley**; and **Sandy Lavender**, Database Maintenance in memory of her daughter **Ashley Lauren Hull**.

Gifts of Love

A love gift is a financial donation to The Compassionate Friends Gwinnett Chapter. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but it can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. Love gifts are acknowledged in each quarterly issue.

In Memory of Matthew Dwyer, from his parents, Barbara & Leo Dwyer

In Memory of Natalie Sparks, from her parents, Terry & Evelyn Sparks

In Memory of Robert Coltman, from his dad, Barnet Coltman

In Memory of G.W. Fox, from his dad, Gary Fox

In Memory of Nathan Self, from his mom, Cynthia Self

In Memory of Brandon Harper, from his mom, Debby Smith

Stamps for Remembrance Cards donated by
Marvin Choate
in memory of his daughter, Fara Nicole

Butterfly stickers & stamps donated by Cookie Brunet,
in loving memory of her son, Michael Rivero

If you make a monetary donation to TCF Gwinnett, (which is tax-deductible) you may specify whether you would like your contribution to go toward the memorial garden account or general account. You may also choose to donate a book to our Lending Library, or cards to be used for our Remembrance Cards. If you would like to donate cards, please bring them to a meeting and labels will be added to the back of the card "card donated in memory of _____ (your child's name).

\$\$\$ Where does the money go? \$\$\$

Our chapter is self-supporting and donations fund our chapter activities. We pay \$300 annually to Trinity Christian Fellowship Church for the use of our meeting space and \$100 annually to TCF National Office for yearly dues. Funds from the general account pay for: remembrance cards, postage, labels, printing, postage & labels for our newsletter, picnic pavilion rental, supplies for monthly meetings and for information packets for newly bereaved parents. **We do not receive funds from The Compassionate Friends National Office** and we are always extremely appreciative for any contributions. Please be assured, however, that there are no financial dues to be a member of TCF or to receive this newsletter.

Please fill out the information below, clip and mail with your tax deductible donation to:

Barbara Dwyer
TCF Gwinnett Treasurer
4905 Pond Ridge Lane,
Cumming, GA 30041.
(Please make checks payable to **TCF Gwinnett.**)

Name _____
Address: _____

In Memory
of: _____

