



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

**LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA  
GWINNETT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER**

Meg Avery, Editor Winter 2014/2015  
December, January & February

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month. **next meetings: Dec. 18, Jan. 15 and Feb. 19**

**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](mailto:jc30044@flash.net) or [tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com)

TCF Atlanta website: [www.tcfatlanta.org](http://www.tcfatlanta.org)  
GA Regional Coordinator Sandra Stinson, [sandrastinsontcf@yahoo.com](mailto:sandrastinsontcf@yahoo.com)

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

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://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](mailto: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, Spring 2015 will cover the months of March, April & May.

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.*

*Copyright 2007*

## **PREPARING FOR WINTER BLUES, ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS, AND THE UNWELCOME RETURN OF GRIEF**

Written by Harriet Hodgson

Fall has come to Minnesota. The trees are turning gold and orange and red. White-winged Juncos, birds in the sparrow family and harbingers of winter, have returned to the backyard feeders. Nights are colder, and there is frost on the lawn in the mornings. Much as I love fall, I'm always a bit uneasy because I know winter is coming. Living in this changeable climate requires preparation and courage.

Winters can be beautiful. We usually have several ice storms that glaze the trees with ice and turn the town into a fairy land. Fierce wind chills, however, and temperatures of 35-40 below zero, must be taken seriously. Radio programs tell parents to cover their children's faces and hands. Old, worn, unfashionable coats are pulled from closets and donned with pleasure. Minnesotans don't care how they look as long as they are warm.

Brutal weather and dark winter days can awaken my grief. My daughter was born on November 23rd, Thanksgiving that year, and the holiday is always difficult. She died on February 23, 2007, an odd coincidence. Three other family members, my father-in-law, brother, and my twin grandchildren's father, also died. Experience has taught me that I have to prepare for anniversary reactions.

These reactions – reminders of a loved one's death – can be anywhere. According to a Mayo Clinic website article, "Grief: Coping with Reminders After a Loss," reminders can ambush you. "You might suddenly be flooded with emotions when you drive by the restaurant your partner loved or when you hear your child's favorite song," the article explains. It goes on to say these reactions can trigger sadness, loneliness, anger, anxiety, sleep problems, fatigue, and pain.

What do I do? What can you do?

**Write like crazy.** Writing is my salvation and solace. Losing four family members in succession changed the focus of my writing. I stopped writing health books and wrote eight grief healing books. Though my goal is to help others, writing these books helped me immensely. You may record your feelings in a journal or diary.

**Have blooming plants in the house.** You may have a green thumb, but I am Mrs. Blackthumb, and have not had much success with gardening. For some unknown reason, I have success with African violets, and have four in the kitchen. There is a giant African violet on the coffee table. Once it starts blooming, this violet produces flowers for two months. Every flower is a source of joy and hope. Blooming plants may bring you similar pleasure.

**Spend time with friends.** Since I'm my paralyzed husband's caregiver, I can't connect with friends often. When I do connect, however, I make the most of it. My husband is a retired physician and I belong to an organization for physicians' spouses. Our goal is to improve community health and I believe in it wholeheartedly. I retired from some organizations, but retained my membership this one.

**Give to others.** I give workshops and talks to community groups. Sometimes I mentor fledgling writers and it is always a satisfying experience. We donate money to community groups that have meaning for us, such as the Salvation Army. After our daughter died we gave money to our church to commission a choir piece in her memory. The piece is beautiful and every time I hear it I get chills. Think of ways you could give to others.

These steps help us beat the blues, cope with anniversary reactions, and enjoy each season. Rather than being caught off guard, we are prepared, strong, and ready for life.

From [www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)



## National Children's Memorial Day

**Sunday, December 14, 2014**

For the past 3 years we have had a small informal gathering on National Children's Memorial Day, which is always the second Sunday in December. The Compassionate Friends has a World Wide Candle Lighting Ceremony on this day at 7 pm in every time zone for one hour, creating a continuous wave of light around the world in memory of our loved ones. TCF Gwinnett has met at the Lawrenceville Historic Courthouse Gazebo at 7 pm. Depending on the weather, we will try to have a "Gathering at the Gazebo" at 7 pm on Dec. 14 for one hour. There is electricity in the gazebo so we are able to have music. Hopefully the weather will cooperate so we may gather together and light candles in memory of the love & spirit of our child, children, siblings and/or grandchildren whom we love, miss and remember, especially during the holiday season.

If the weather is favorable, and not freezing, icy, or stormy, please join us for this informal candle lighting.

Information will be shared via email as it gets closer to Dec. 14. If you have not ever received an email from TCF Gwinnett, then you are not on that mailing list. Please send an email to [tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com) to be included on chapter email monthly reminders and announcements.

## CANDLE LIGHTING



As part of our monthly chapter meeting on **Thursday, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>**, we will have a very special **Holiday Chapter Candle Lighting** before our sharing groups. This is a special remembrance during our meeting for all of us to acknowledge our children, siblings, grandchildren with each other. Please bring a photo of your loved one, a candle and a special holiday ornament, decoration or memento.

## Mall of Georgia United Hospice Memory Tree

The Tree of Memories is on display at the Mall of Georgia. It is free to choose an ornament and display your loved one's name on the ornament & place it on the Memory Tree.



## Atlanta Tucker Chapter Candle Lighting Service

The Atlanta TCF Chapter wants to invite everyone to join us for our 34th Annual Remembrance Candlelighting on Saturday, December 6, 2014 at 7:00 at The First Christian Church, 4532



LaVista Road, Tucker, GA. Candlelighting will begin promptly at 7:00 pm with Reception and Children's Memorial Video to Follow. See [www.tcfatlanta.org](http://www.tcfatlanta.org) for details & info.

## IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR...AGAIN

Written by Rachel Kodanaz from  
[www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)

The clocks have been turned back and the weather is changing, signaling the end of summer and our moving into a new season. Much like a new season during the year, so it is in life.

Fall is particularly difficult for many people because we are thrust into a world of holidays; Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and the New Year. Each one holds a promise all its own, with messages of faith, gratitude, and hope. But what if we aren't feeling those things? What if we are too sad to feel the presence of God in our lives? What if we aren't grateful because our loved one was taken from us too soon? What if we feel hopeless and lost?

The holidays are a beautiful time of year. However, it is often a reminder of those we loved and lost. Going through the holiday season can leave us feeling empty and lonely. It can remind us of a period in our lives that was filled with grief and despair. In fact, many people continue to feel that way long after their loved one has passed. So, what can we do to get through the holiday season and not just survive, but thrive?

One way is to establish new traditions. Yes, the old ones were wonderful but they can be stored and put away in our hearts; a keepsake. They are a treasure to be taken out and marveled at periodically.

New traditions, on the other hand, help us move on with our lives. They set a completely new tone. If your holiday was once a flurry of presents, what about giving back to those less fortunate? Perhaps attend a service at temple or church? What about meeting up with friends and have desert and coffee, rather than a big meal? Help serve food at your local homeless shelter? Think about memorializing your loved one by getting out old pictures and

scrapbooking with a grandchild or baking cookies from their tattered recipe cards and share the stories you grew up with; the tales you were often regaled with.

What if your loved one died just before a holiday? For some, just going to church or temple or reading from a Holy book is sufficient. For others, carrying on as you normally would is the right thing to do, as that is what your loved one would want. Or perhaps doing something completely different. As the time approaches for a particular holiday, search your heart. See how you are feeling. What do you think is right? The truth is, it doesn't really matter what you decide because in the end, it will be the right decision for you.

### *Things Remembered Wishes Compassionate Friends Love & Light*

From December 5 through December 14, a portion of the sales of our exclusive holiday candleholders will go to support the 18th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony hosted by **The Compassionate Friends**.

We're proud to support this organization that brings so much comfort to those who have lost a loved one too soon. For more information, visit us at [www.ThingsRemembered.com](http://www.ThingsRemembered.com)





## WE REMEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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



## February

### December

Christina VauTrot	Dec. 1
Xavier Williams	Dec. 2
Connor Devine	Dec. 3
Tim Walton	Dec. 6
Mark William Evans, Jr.	Dec. 6
Shylah Crown	Dec. 6
Lindsey Marie Townsend	Dec. 13
Amanda Mills	Dec. 15
Jimmy West	Dec. 15
Jessica Norwood	Dec. 16
Donelle Blackwell	Dec. 17
Cristina Jane Vargas Howerton	Dec. 18
Kyle Copija	Dec. 20
Patrick Kelley	Dec. 20
Robert West	Dec. 21
Michael Faulkner	Dec. 24

Clayton Thomas Sechrist	Feb. 1
Kimberly Lange	Feb. 5
Matthew Turner	Feb. 5
Clayton Shadinger	Feb. 8
Ronald "Scott" Long	Feb. 9
Tracy Lauren Childs	Feb. 9
John Andrew Sims	Feb. 12
Marisa Mirkes-Haag	Feb. 12
Dee Cooper	Feb. 14
Christopher Patterson	Feb. 15
Cameron McClure	Feb. 16
Brenden Elbaz	Feb. 16
Xavier PierreLouis	Feb. 17
Drew Adams	Feb. 20
Chelsea Walker	Feb. 20
Stephanie Fortner	Feb. 21
Bryant Lawrence	Feb. 24
David Whitley	Feb. 26
Max Fiandt	Feb. 27
Gerard Robertson	Feb. 28
Ryan Morton	Feb. 28

### January

Ryan Pilgrim	Jan. 1
Terry O'Donnell	Jan. 2
Linda Strauss	Jan. 4
Michael Dale	Jan. 6
Brandon Harper	Jan. 7
Kinsley Knighton	Jan. 17
Tiffany Maxwell	Jan. 18
Kayla delaPena	Jan. 18
Jessica Bryl	Jan. 19
Brayden T. Grimes	Jan. 24
Tyler Ivey Rice	Jan. 28
Christopher Boyd	Jan. 29
Christian Pach	Jan. 30
Justin Ellington	Jan. 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.



## *December January & February 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

### December

Jonathan Hesfeld	Dec. 2
Arnessa Royster	Dec. 3
Jessica Rose Riley	Dec. 3
Bryant Lawrence	Dec. 5
Rachael Fouquet	Dec. 7
Austin Coker	Dec. 8
Frankie Ortiz	Dec. 13
Gavin Burke	Dec. 15
Connor Devine	Dec. 16
Patrick Kelley	Dec. 20
Terry O'Donnell	Dec. 21
Christopher Patterson	Dec. 22
Jarid Smith	Dec. 23
Julie Lyn Donaldson	Dec. 23
Adyson Claire Smith	Dec. 23
Norma Mucha	Dec. 25
Samantha Mucha	Dec. 25
Matthew Turner	Dec. 26
Michael LeVierge	Dec. 27
Larry Tilley	Dec. 27
Brannon Springer	Dec. 28
Michael Rivero	Dec. 28
Ray Back	Dec. 30
Brian Churchill	Dec. 31



### January

Gary Pruitt	Jan. 1
Gabrielle, Malachi & Xavier PierreLouis	Jan. 1
Clayton Shadinger	Jan. 2
Jeff Bradley	Jan. 4
Karissa Palmer	Jan. 7
Hope McKenzie	Jan. 7
Kimberly Lange	Jan. 11
Justin Todd Stephens	Jan. 11
Jayla Cook	Jan. 11
Clayton Olvey	Jan. 12
Brandon Harper	Jan. 16
David Whitley	Jan. 17
Kinsley Knighton	Jan. 17
Michael Dale	Jan. 19
Christina VauTrot	Jan. 20
Amanda & Logan Mills	Jan. 20
Natalie Sparks	Jan. 22
Ansley Powell	Jan. 22

Ryan Gilbride	Jan. 28
Shylah Crown	Jan. 29
Kimberly Dawn Marshall	Jan. 30
Amy Hannigan	Jan. 30
Jayvon Hammond	Jan. 31

### February

Christian Pach	Feb. 3
Olivia Rodriguez	Feb. 4
Jamie Ann Quillen	Feb. 9
Jimmy West	Feb. 11
Dee Cooper	Feb. 11
Michael Faulkner	Feb. 11
Nathan Self	Feb. 11
Fara "Nicole" Choate	Feb. 13
Daniel Green	Feb. 14
Brayden T. Grimes	Feb. 18
Clayton Sechrist	Feb. 20
Madison Bush	Feb. 20
Chris Moise	Feb. 24
Kathryn Collier	Feb. 24
Ryan Morton	Feb. 25
Matthew Jones	Feb. 26
Kapri Bradley	Feb. 27

The breath of winter  
painted fragile stars  
on all the windows  
of my quiet house.  
And there I found  
your face,  
more fragile even  
than the season's art -  
a wonder to my eyes.  
How can it be  
that winter paints  
such secret things  
in white-and-silver sheen  
for those who cry alone  
at frosted windows?

~ Sascha Wagner

## 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](http://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

Excerpt from the article: “When It’s Grief, Not Depression” written by Susan Casey

We don’t, as a culture, want to feel the depth of emotion that sears through the heart like a fire through a parched field. We want to slap some salve on the rising blisters, cool the hot, raging ache. But those blisters need to rise. They need to pop, scab over, and scar. I don’t believe we ever “heal” from profound loss or that grieving has an end point. Overtime, our grief transforms into something new. Something different when we allow ourselves to feel our way all the way through it.

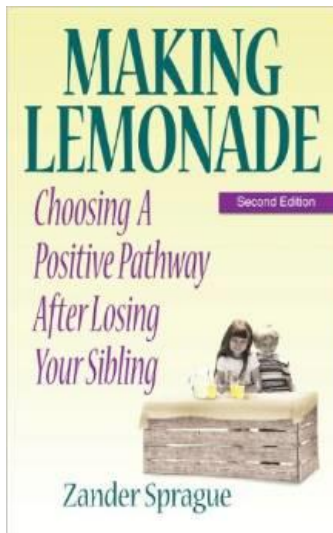
And even if it’s not our pain, but that of a friend, a loved one, it’s no easier. A human being in suffering bleeds an energy that is thick, and palpable. It cups its mouth over yours and siphons your breath. We don’t want to suffer and we don’t want others, too either. It hurts because we, me, you are powerless to transform those blisters into scabs.

As I stood motionless that night, just as my brother had done in a photograph where he and his two college pals tilted heads toward the sky, mesmerized by stars or the moon, maybe both, I thought about how that picture captured his spirit, the way he lived his life one moment at a time, immersed in the wonder of it all.

My brother taught me about love, about loss. He showed me there’s beauty in both. My blisters are not scars yet, I’m not even sure they’ve scabbed over, but I welcome them because the beauty in the pain is that I had the chance to love him in this lifetime. And that I’d choose over and over and over again.

By Susan Casey in memory of her brother Rocky,  
from [www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)

Both Susan’s professional and creative work have been guided by her deep belief that every individual has purpose and inherent strengths and deserves the opportunity to reach their own unique potential. Susan works with kids, incarcerated youth, and adults to help them identify their deepest passions to live a full and thriving life. Susan lives in Maine with her two golden retrievers, Indy and Maisey and her husband, Steve. Check out her blog at [scasey2012.com](http://scasey2012.com)



There are many things that you think you might be prepared for in your life, losing your sibling is not one of them. This book will help you choose your own positive pathway to healing and recovery.

Zander Sprague is a 2 time sibling survivor and the GO TO Speaker, Author, and Coach for Sibling Loss.

Poignant, Powerful, and Inspiring, *Making Lemonade: Choosing A Positive Pathway After Losing Your Sibling* is wonderful book for those who have lost a sibling. I am happy that there is a book to help this under-served community.

Aurora Winter  
Author of *From Heartbreak to Happiness*

Zander Sprague is an internationally acclaimed Speaker, Author and Coach. His mission is to help sibling survivors define their loss, choose a positive pathway and fully participate in their life.

## 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 Loganville Ministry Village. Contact Kathy Ellington at 770-826-4339. 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](mailto:jennifer.sorrells@nghs.com) for more information.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:sherryunwala@yahoo.com)

## 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](http://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@cryformenomore.com](mailto:deana@cryformenomore.com)



## Wintersun

There are those days in winter  
When your world is frozen  
Into a vision of eternal ice,  
When earth and air are strangers to each other,  
When sound and color seem forever gone.

There are those days in winter  
When you feel like dying,  
When life itself surrenders you to anguish,  
To total mourning and to endless grief.

And then it happens: from the bitter sky,  
A timid sun strides to his silent battle  
Against the gray and hostile universe -  
It changes ice to roses, sky to song.

And then it happens that your heart recalls  
Some distant joy, a gladness from the past,  
A slender light at first, then larger, braver,  
Until your mind returns to hope and peace.

Let memories be beauty in your life,  
Like song and roses in the winter sun.

By Sascha Wagner, from her book "Wintersun: Thoughts of  
Comfort and Understanding for Healing from Grief

## Winter Dreaming

by Sheila Simmons  
TCF Atlanta Sharing Line

Winter sun slants down, no warmth in its rays  
Warm spring is sleeping, under the snow she lays.

Barren tree branches dance  
in time to the cold winds song

Nights are dark and oh so long.

But your memories are my blanket of warmth

And I pull them close to me,  
waiting for spring to come forth.

A time of warm breeze, to chase away the cold

But now in the winter,  
warm memories I hold.

## The Holiday of Love

Valentine's Day is a day of remembering  
our loved ones with small gifts and  
great feelings. When your child was  
living, did you often remember him/her  
on Valentine's Day with a card or a  
balloon, perhaps a gift of candy or  
something special that was wanted? So, why stop that  
tradition?



Remember your child with love on this special day; a  
single rose left at a grave; a special holiday balloon to  
float around the house, reminding you each time you  
look; a special photo in a nice frame to sit on the  
mantle. These are ideas from an old Bereavement  
Magazine.

It seems like a pretty good idea too! What better  
way to celebrate the Holiday of Love than by enjoying  
fond memories of your child?

Try making his/her favorite dinner and treating the  
family. Use special photos scattered around the table  
to talk about some fun facts about him/her. It's  
important to show the others in the family how much  
they are also loved so don't forget some small  
Valentine's gifts for them too!

Just because our hearts are broken, we don't need  
to ignore "The Holiday of Love".

By Art Rogers, Hinsdale, Illinois Chapter of Bereaved  
Parents USA, lovingly lifted from the BP USA Winter 2007  
Newsletter

Grief, like winter, freezes our  
world. Both appear painful,  
horrifying, and devastating, but it is  
our preparation for, reaction to,  
and perception of that



creates our discomfort. It is our need to judge which  
labels discomfort as bad. If we deny that death is  
possible for those we love, we will be stunned and  
terrified by its occurrence. If we react to the first  
blizzard of winter with panic and fear, we will be too  
afraid to honor its power. If we perceive a fatal  
ice storm as an act of God, we will shake our fist at Him  
and spend more time than we have asking why. And if  
we distinguish death as the end of a loved one's  
existence, we will be eternally saddened by their  
absence. The path to spring, to the end of winter,  
requires only our patience and perseverance. The path  
to healing requires that and more: it requires that we  
learn to think differently.

By Sandy Goodman, from Winter of our Souls

## **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

## **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 Meg Avery by email, [tcfnewsletter@outlook.com](mailto:tcfnewsletter@outlook.com)

## **Thank you to new TCF volunteers:**

**Nancy Coker**, Austin's mom, and **Patty Key**, Ryan's mom are our chapter's newest volunteers. Nancy will be maintaining our yahoo email account (checking for new messages, sending messages/reminders & adding new addresses to our contacts). Patty will be updating & editing our TCF member database as needed, adding new parent info and making any necessary changes for addresses, phone numbers and/or email addresses. Many thanks to Nancy & Patty!

Thanks to **Terry Sparks**, Natalie's dad, who has volunteered to be chapter co-leader for one year. Terry has already been helping a great deal with TCF Gwinnett as facilitator and providing new parent packets. Along with Terry, Meg Avery (James' mom) will also be a chapter co-leader for one year as well as newsletter editor.

**There is still room, and need, for new volunteers. We will have a Steering Committee Meeting in February and we welcome those who would like to help.**

**TCF Gwinnett will need a new treasurer in April.** Our current treasurer, Barbara Dwyer, (Matthew's mom) will be moving out-of-state. Barbara has been doing a great job keeping up with our bank account. We know there is someone out there who is also good with numbers and balancing statements, especially with an easy low account like ours! Barbara estimates it would take about 30 min./month to

keep up with our account and the treasurer is also responsible for completing a year end treasurers report for the national office. The treasurer needs to have his/her name & address on our BB&T bank account. If you are interested in volunteering as treasurer, please attend our Feb. steering committee meeting, date to be decided. Or email Barbara at [Barbara.dwyer@bellsouth.net](mailto:Barbara.dwyer@bellsouth.net)

**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: **Terry Sparks**, Co-Leader & provides newly bereaved packet info & as group facilitator, in memory of his daughter, **Natalie Sparks**; **June Cooper**, Parent Phone Contact, in memory of her daughter, **Wendy McMMain** & in memory of her sister, **Noreen Keenan**; **Meg Avery**, Co-Leader & Newsletter Editor in memory of her son **James Avery**; **Barbara Dwyer**, Chapter Treasurer in memory of her son **Matthew Dwyer**; **Diane Wolcott**, Memorial Garden Committee Chair in memory of her son, **Jeffrey Wolcott**; **Gary Fox**, facilitator, in memory of his son, **G.W. Fox**; **Nancy Coker**, email account volunteer, in memory of her son, **Austin Coker**; **Patty Key**, database maintenance in memory of her son **Ryan Morton**; **Claudine Nickens**, Steering Committee Member & facilitator in memory of her son **David Whitley** and **Clare Norwood**, creating Remembrance Cards in memory of her daughter **Jessica Norwood**.

### TCF Email Account

We have experienced problems with our email account, [tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com) and have had to recreate our contacts. Hopefully you are still receiving news & announcements via email. We also now have [tcfnewsletter@outlook.com](mailto:tcfnewsletter@outlook.com) expressly for the quarterly newsletter distribution. Please contact Meg Avery, Newsletter Editor, at that email, if you ever have any submissions for the newsletter. If any of your contact information has changed, please be sure to send an email to one of those accounts, or a handwritten note to Meg Avery at 4575 Forest Green Drive, Sugar Hill, GA 30518.

### TCF Newsletter

Due to the expense of printing & postage, the TCF Gwinnett Newsletter will only be available by email and at the monthly meetings. After this newsletter, we will no longer continue to send it by US Postal Mail.

### Cry For Me....No More / Healing the Family Workshop



Great news! We now have January 2015 dates for our Healing the Family Workshop available for registration.

We will be in **Toccoa GA Jan 9-11** and we have plans to be in the Chicago/Wisconsin area April/May of 2015.

Please go to our website to register for our January 2015 workshop for bereaved parents and siblings over 18. Other family members may attend if they held a very close relationship to the child who was lost. Jan. workshop is from 6 pm on Friday Jan. 9 to 4 pm on Sun. Jan. 11. A \$50 refundable deposit is required at time of registration. Contact Deana Martin at [deana@cryformenomore.com](mailto:deana@cryformenomore.com)



### 2015 TCF National Conference in Dallas

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dalls, Texas will be the site of the 38<sup>th</sup> TCF National Conference on July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Sines Bright...Deep in the Heart" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great national conference experience. The 2015 Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas. More details will be available on the national website as they become available. [www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org)



## Why “Happy New Year” is Tough on Bereaved Parents

When the ball at Times Square drops, champagne corks pop. Ample hugs and kisses are dispensed all around.

A new year, new hope, new ventures, new possibilities. Wow, it’s all so exciting!

However, for the parent who has lost a child in the previous year, the dawning of a new calendar year can be rough. In fact, most of the time, it is.

The bereaved parent can feel isolated, lonely, and sorrowful while everyone else is celebrating.

Daniel died at age four in February 1997 and entering 1998 was hard. My mind was filled with questions like: *What am I doing entering a new year without him? How can this be? Why do I get to live and he died?*

I was overcome with the feeling that I was leaving him behind. Because there it was, a fresh untouched year and I knew that none of the 365 days in it would contain a hug from him. There would be no new memories, no sixth birthday to watch him blow out the candles. 1998 was the year he was to start first grade and be in school with his big sister. At least in 1997, he had been with me. 1997 was the year he died, true, but he had also lived 33 days of it.

1998 knew nothing of a blond-haired boy who became bald from cancer treatments and had a love for being read to and a generosity for giving out stickers.

How could I be excited about a new year?

Change isn’t easy for many of us. While most want to get rid of an old used year, and enter

something new and hopeful, for the bereaved mother or father, that is not always the case. Many can say, “Good riddance to 2013; it was a lousy year.” But for others, that was the year their son or daughter died, and moving from it, means a parent is moving further from the last time he or she saw her/his child.

Bereaved parents have fragile hearts. They might look okay, wear matching socks, use the correct salad fork, and even smile, but deep down in the fibers of their heart, they are struggling. Life seems so normal for everybody else—but them. They can think life is easy for others—but them. Getting out of bed can be a major accomplishment. Celebrating holidays can be consumed with sadness instead of happiness.

If you have a bereaved friend, help her/him by letting this year be a year where she/he can freely share stories about a deceased son or daughter. Let those in your lives with broken hearts speak of the memories etched in their minds. Let your friends know that you will not forget their children for however short or long these children lived.

So, it’s a new year. May we all strive to make it an empathetic one where we learn richly from each another.

By Alice Wisler, in memory of her son Daniel, from [www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)

Alice J. Wisler, founder of a grief-support organization, Daniel’s House Publications, is a full-time writer and author of contemporary novels. In 1997, her four-year-old son Daniel died from cancer treatments. Since then, her writing focus has been on how to help others in grief. She gives Writing the Heartache workshops across the country. Through her organization, she designs and sells comfort cards/remembrance cards and at her Carved By Heart imprint, carves personalized remembrance plaques. Her devotional, *Getting Out of Bed in the Morning*, offers comfort and purpose for those dealing with grief and loss. Her cookbooks of memory—*Down the Cereal Aisle*, *Memories Around the Table*, and *Slices of Sunlight*, contain stories of food and memories of children who have died. In 2009, Alice married Carl in Las Vegas, and they live with her three children in Durham, NC. To learn more about Alice visit her website: <http://www.alicewisler.com>



## 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.

From Claudine Nickens, in memory of her son David Whitley

From Patty Key in memory of her son Ryan Morton

From Dolores Gryzinski in memory of her granddaughter Jenny Gryzinski

From Betty Bancroft in memory of her granddaughter Kayla delaPena

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

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: \_\_\_\_\_

