



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

Linked Together

Newsletter of the Atlanta Chapter

Fall 2004

"The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive."

Atlanta Area Web Site

www.tcfatlanta.org

TCF Atlanta Newsletter

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The Atlanta Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the second Tuesday of each month at the:

First Christian Church of Atlanta,
4532 LaVista Road, Tucker, GA
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

October meeting – October 12th

November meeting – November 9th

December meeting (regular meeting) – December 14th

Annual Candlelighting Remembrance Service – Saturday, December 4th

The Atlanta Chapter also offers a Sibling Group at the same time as our regular monthly meeting.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. 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 go through the grieving process. 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.

To Our New Members

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

To Our members who are further down the "Grief Road"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

YOU NEED NOT WALK ALONE.
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

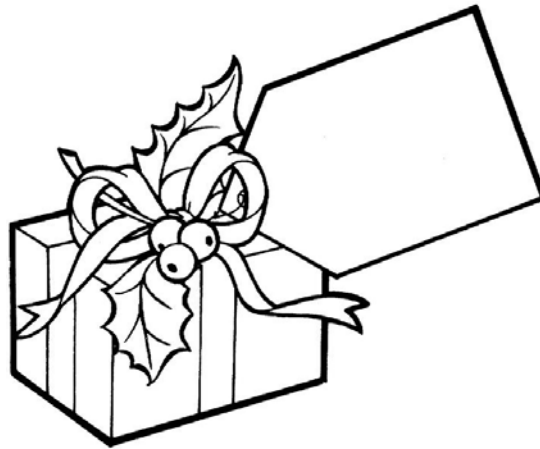
Gifts of Love

by Cathy Seehuetter ~
TCF, St. Paul, MN

As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered. My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and admonish that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears. It has been four and a half years since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about: one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on so



many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memoriesbeautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone. No one can ever take those priceless memories away. Though they may hurt now and probably always will but not as intensely, give yourself a gift.....the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give

yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

Cherished Gifts

by Alice Wisler, Tributes

Take some time to think about the gifts your child gave to you. These gifts can be among "sticky preschool type" like the popsicle-stick craft he made for you for father's day or the handprint she drew on a sheet of white paper. The gift could also come in the form of a heartfelt conversation you had or a meal she prepared when she came home from college. Write a few of these precious "gifts" down on a piece of paper and next to each one, jot down some ways each gift made you feel.

This season of gift-giving, think of ways you can remember the cherished gifts from your child. These gifts may still be visible as in a tangible object, or only grafted in your memory. Either way, they are valuable. Let them bring a smile even in the midst of longing. This time of recollection is a gift you give yourself.

The theme of our 2004 Memory Tree is "Special Gifts from Above". I have included various articles and poems that share those "Special and Cherished Gifts" of our beloved children and siblings.

The tree will be on display Dec. 4-12 at the Festival of Trees in the World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA. The proceeds from the Festival of Trees benefits Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

“Special Gifts”

~from TCF Atlanta Online

The minute I read your message that you were looking for a poem or suggestions regarding "Gifts From Above", I started searching for something appropriate, and since I couldn't find something already written that seemed to "fit" the criteria you wanted, I attempted to write something myself. I am submitting the following poem in love and dedication to the many parents from all over the world who have lost the dearest person to them, their precious child.

"GIFTS FROM ABOVE"

They came from different places, they came from different homes.
These gifts of children from above, that we claimed as our own.

These precious gifts were given with love from God above.
Because He thought us worthy to
care for these gifts with love.

These priceless gifts were
welcomed by parents around the
world.

Celebrating the joys they brought,
these tiny boys and girls.

It amazes us and gives us pause that
we were chosen to receive,
These cherished gifts from above -
what an honor we believe.

We wonder why our gifts could not
stay.
Could it be they were much too
loved?

These precious gifts of our children - Loved, missed and remembered

These precious gifts from above.

They left us much too soon, we think.
And we continue to question, "Why?"
It does not seem fair to us,
That our children had to die.

We are left with empty arms and shattered dreams.
Grief and pain now fill our lives.
Our homes that once were filled with laughter,
Now harbor our anguished cries.

When finally we emerge from the quicksand of fresh raw grief,
We start to search for reasons left to live so we can find relief.

We long to hear from others like us with hearts that understand.
Then someone may tell us of a place where people meet called
The Compassionate Friends.

There we find a group of people like us joined
by the bond of grief and love.
Where we can share together about our children,
These precious "Gifts From Above".

~ by Faye McCord, TCF Co-Chapter Leader, Jackson, MS ~



Sunsets

By Meg Avery, Lawrenceville TCF

I have been thinking a lot about this since it was first mentioned and what came to mind immediately are "sunset". I think about my son James now being above me and what gifts he's sent me from his eternity. Our favorite time of day was sunset. Many times I'd be driving him home from soccer practice on Peachtree Industrial Blvd. in Duluth just about the time of sunset & we had the greatest conversations about the colors of the sky, and the colors & shapes of the clouds. One time I even brought my camera with me so I could get some pictures of sunset over the soccer fields! Just as clearly as I remember those precious times, so too do I remember the first time I saw a brilliant sunset after James died. I was actually walking out of Wal-Mart and there, like an artistic painting, the sunset was right in front of me, so colorful and vivid, of all places in that parking lot! I stopped immediately and couldn't even move – except for the tears flowing. I was just overcome with so much sadness that James wasn't there; so many remembrances of the sunsets we'd shared – how I made it home I don't remember. But I clearly remember my husband's words when I got home and tried to describe the sunset & my feelings; he told me that it was a gift from James "that James & God painted the sunset for me". (And we are not what you'd call religious people!) That is something I've always remembered and think of to this day. The other time I saw a beautiful sunset was one day when I was driving home on Peachtree Industrial Blvd. and it was the first time driving that way home, late afternoon, since James died. You know how we avoid doing certain things or going certain places after we've lost our child. My husband was with me and just as we passed the soccer fields, the sun started setting and the colors were just magnificent. Again, the tears were rolling so fast, but this time I was crying so hard, to be in that same place, that same stretch of road, and James was not beside me. Later I realized I probably should have pulled off the side of the road and either stopped to catch my breath and enjoy the sunset or at the very least, quit driving, but I didn't. I just kept telling myself "I can do this" and I just kept going, shoulders shaking, tears soaking me, and neither one of us spoke till we got home.

Now a sunset fills me with peace & solitude, not aches & pain and not as much loneliness. I can look at a sunset and feel okay and take in all the brilliant colors, the shapes of the clouds, the gorgeous scenery that should be noticed with a sense of awe, not gut wrenching agony. I know that James is part of that sunset and that they are gifts from above. Those sunsets, and the ability to stop and notice not only the sky at sunset, but the sky whenever I can, and be aware of the clouds, the rays, the puffiness of clouds or the darkness of clouds, are all gifts from above.

*Gifts of Love
Gifts of Words
Gift of Tears
Gifts from Nature
Gift of Memory
gifts of virtue such as...
Hope, Love, Faith, Compassion & Grace*



September Birthdays

<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Demeatrice Harper	9/1/1980	7/9/2000	sister	of	LaTonya Harper
Zachary Shane Parker	9/2/1987	11/29/2000	son	of	Steve and Bonnie Caldwell
Chris Mastley	9/2/1967	12/5/1994	son	of	Betty and Dale Mastley
Tony Visk Jr.	9/5/1953	3/4/1975	son	of	Tony Visk
Christopher Roland Dimmick	9/8/1967	10/24/1984	son	of	Barbara and Don Dimmick
Leslie Evans	9/8/1970	2/14/1990	daughter	of	Mary Evans
Kenneth Kirk	9/8/1965	7/21/1991	son	of	Dorothy M. Tate
Michael Hill	9/10/1972	11/10/1996	son	of	Linda Hill
Alan (Todd) Parish	9/11/1961	3/8/1996	son	of	Woody and Millie Parish
Chris Webb	9/11/1983	10/25/1999	brother	of	Debby Webb
Chris Webb	9/11/1983	10/25/1999	son	of	Norman and Tracy Webb
Dominic Alan Nwoye	9/13/1996	6/25/2002	son	of	Juanita Bell
Christopher Robinson	9/15/1984	12/4/2002	son	of	Freddie Green
Matthew Smith	9/17/1981	6/22/1998	grandson	of	Frances Plunk
Laurin Mear	9/18/1969	5/11/1996	son	of	Deb Loyd and Betty Mear
Stephen Bradley 'Brad' Turley	9/19/1992	8/2/1999	son	of	Joyce Brooks
Mark East	9/22/1971	1/25/2004	son	of	Jeff East
Rhett Forrester	9/22/1956	1/22/1994	son	of	LaFortune Forrester
Jessica Dodge	9/25/1987	1/14/2004	daughter	of	Dan and Tamie Dodge
Sherry Engel	9/25/1967	1/12/2004	sister	of	Andrea Huskey
Sherry Engle	9/25/1967	1/12/2004	daughter	of	Lou Ellen Huskey
Corey Etkind	9/27/1995	10/18/2000	son	of	Andy Etkind
Blake Hinson	9/29/1972	8/9/1996	son	of	Gail and Louis Hinson



September Angel Dates

<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Clarence Deon Belser	7/28/1973	9/1/1996	son	of	Yvonne Belser
Chad Gordon	5/21/1972	9/3/1996	son	of	Jayne and Wayne Newton
Andrew Powell	1/13/1972	9/5/2003	son	of	John Powell
Michael Wade Blakeman	11/10/1960	9/6/1998	son	of	Linda Case
Jennifer Loftin	12/28/1981	9/9/1991	granddaughter	of	Frances Plunk
Ashley Butler	2/9/1990	9/10/2001	daughter	of	Nishell Butler
Carter Martin	11/20/1996	9/12/2004	son	of	Scott and Leigh Ann Martin
Mark Cozine	11/6/1961	9/14/2002	son	of	Anne Franzen
Michelle Kelley	10/8/1958	9/17/1999	daughter	of	Georgia M. Kelley
Carter Hester	7/19/1967	9/21/1983	son	of	Zel Hester
Robert Visk	8/6/1958	9/22/1993	son	of	Tony Visk
Adam Philip Frentheway	3/13/1965	9/25/1986	son	of	Foye and Neal Frentheway
Charlie T. Ethridge, Jr.	11/27/1971	9/27/1992	son	of	Charlie and Kathy Ethridge
Aaron Geathers	11/6/1972	9/29/1982	son	of	Sonya Geathers
Matthew Meehan	2/26/1983	9/30/2003	brother	of	Christopher Meehan
Matthew Meehan	2/26/1983	9/30/2003	son	of	Michael Meehan
Matthew Meehan	2/26/1983	9/30/2003	son	of	Vicki Webb

Coping with October

By Tracy Rhein

BPUSA – Central Arkansas Chapter

The coming of autumn with the beautiful colors of the leaves and their falling will bring different emotions to different families. Maybe your family had a tradition of driving through particularly scenic areas. Maybe the child you lost was the one who raked the leaves. Perhaps all of this will simply be a reminder that winter and a barren landscape are coming.

Halloween is a favorite holiday for most children, but it can be hard for bereaved parents. This formerly innocent holiday, the years “decorated” as graveyards with markers and ghosts and skeletons, the stories of unhappy spirits that must walk the earth, all have a completely different impact on us now.

Many of us have opened the door to give out treats and been faced with a costume so similar to one our child wore for a Halloween past, that either we really want to pull aside the mask to see the face behind or we want to dream that this was one last visit from our precious child.

Some parents have surviving children who still want to join in the fun – and, oh, how hard to “trick or treat” when you feel the victim of the ultimate “trick”.

Stop and think – What can you do differently? For autumn and its beauties and chores, what routines can you change? Hire someone or ask a friend who has been offering to help and asking for specific tasks. Maybe you could do it together.

For Halloween, take surviving children to a carnival (many schools and churches sponsor these). Or if a carnival was an every year event, go to the zoo or go door to door this year. If you don't have surviving children wanting to celebrate, maybe you can leave your house dark and go to a movie and skip this holiday. In any event, planning ahead will help you get through a difficult time.

The Mask of Grief

By Kerry Marston



As the beautiful colors of Fall surround us and the air is sweetened and chilled, we, the broken hearted parents and families of those children who left us too soon begin

to find the strength and perseverance to face another season, another anniversary, another rush of memories. Perhaps Halloween brings with it visions of little candy grabbing goblins and gossamer clad fair children. Perhaps those memories aren't available to some of us. All of us pick up our masks right around this time of year and we put them on. Our masks are different, though. When our children died, we discovered that the raw and horrible pain we were in probably showed up on our faces, in the way we stood, in the way we walked and talked. We soon discovered that, even though we had many close and loving friends and family, they were not very comfortable with watching us bleed to death from the inside out....So we constructed a mask.

Masquerade Balls and Pagan ceremonies are ancient rituals. The idea of “masking” one's identity for a short time and celebrating with wild abandon is as appealing in our society as it was in those ancient times. Unfortunately, the bereaved have a different reason for donning the mask. We force our mask to smile when the lump in our throat and the heaviness in our chest threaten to choke us. Our eyes leak profusely, despite the waterproof mascara and pancake makeup we women keep applying.....Men put on a stoic and strong façade, sometimes failing miserably and breaking down with terrible beauty.

I urge you to be gentle with your mask. Put it on thoughtfully and take it off with great care. There are safe places to leave it and one of those places is with those of us who travel this path with you.

I've been thinking about this past Wednesday's reprint of “Hiding Behind the Mask” and how it struck such a chord in my heart. My oldest son, Jeffrey took his own life 13 years ago on September 13, 1991. My youngest son, Andrew was only 8 and in the third grade at the time. Both my husband and I were actively involved with our kids' school activities. We struggled to continue to do so even while dealing with our loss, primarily because we knew how important it was for us to be there for Andrew. Halloween was upon us before we knew it and of course there was a class party. I felt awful and the thought of facing all those happy children when I was mourning the loss of my own was almost more than I could bear. My husband and I both went, but because I had always “dressed up” with the kids, I wasn't sure what to do. I didn't want to stay away, but I didn't want to bring everyone down either, so I compromised; I went as a clown, “laughing on the outside, crying on the inside.” Thank goodness for waterproof makeup because before the day was over I had shed many of those tears, but the children were none the wiser!

This is still the worst time of year for me, and I admit that I still seek a mask to get me through some days. I no longer enjoy Halloween; it's too hard to look at the faces of all those children in their costumes because I find myself looking for a beautiful little boy's face that I'll never see again on this earth. Anyway, that is my “mask” story. Thank you for letting me share.

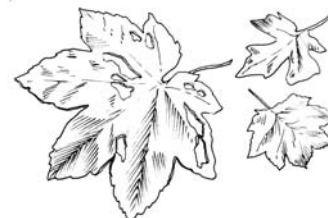
~reprinted from TCF Atlanta Online Sharing by Diane Wolcott

October Birthdays

<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Philip Jordan Grier	10/3/1981	4/2/1983	son	of	Elaine and Jim Grier
Kaxon Harris	10/3/2001	6/10/2003	son	of	Karen Harris
Tyler Tarbutton	10/4/1982	2/16/1999	son	of	Renee Tarbutton
Connor Brown	10/6/1997	5/4/2003	grandson	of	Kaye Hyde
Lane Veteto	10/7/1982	6/11/2001	son	of	Margaret Bear
Craig Harvey	10/8/1990	10/20/2000	son	of	Arline Harvey
Michelle Kelley	10/8/1958	9/17/1999	daughter	of	Georgia M. Kelley
Greg MacEwen	10/8/1968	2/13/2004	brother	of	Christine MacEwen
Charles Lee McKeever	10/9/1993	4/5/1995	son	of	King Holloway
Evan Walker	10/12/2002	6/22/2004	son	of	Kim and Eric Walker
Mark Curtis Smith	10/13/1967	5/1/1989	son	of	Jane Smith
Loren Larson	10/15/1982	11/25/1998	son	of	Susan Larson
Philip E. Walsh	10/15/1980	4/21/2001	son	of	Ruth Paschal
Candi Gaye Marshall	10/16/1965	3/16/1984	daughter	of	Gena Marshall Ivester
Scott Wiseman	10/19/1977	2/3/2002	son	of	Lynn Wiseman
Sallie Scanlon	10/20/1961	5/31/1993	daughter	of	Jane R. Scanlon
Jacob Miller	10/26/1985	3/7/2003	son	of	Sandra and Richard Miller
Matthew Lolie	10/27/1999	1/21/2000	son	of	Tim and Michelle Lolie
Ronnie Keith Batchelor	10/30/1977	8/14/1994	son	of	Ron and Judy Batchelor



October Angel Dates



<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Matthew Abad	6/12/1982	10/2/2000	son	of	Tess Abad
Erika Monique Wilson	7/7/1970	10/4/1999	daughter	of	Eurika Parker
Mark Joseph Gore	4/22/1966	10/7/1993	son	of	Barbara Rodriguez
Matt Johnston	3/18/1967	10/11/1993	brother	of	Julie Johnston
Jody Petty	2/21/1972	10/13/1999	brother	of	Julie Spencer
Corey Etkind	9/27/1995	10/18/2000	son	of	Andy Etkind
Rebecca Lucia	1/14/1977	10/19/1999	daughter	of	Judy Lucia
Craig Harvey	10/8/1990	10/20/2000	son	of	Arline Harvey
Toyal Jackson	7/18/1978	10/20/2000	daughter	of	Emma Jackson
Bo Tuggle	4/12/1975	10/22/1992	son	of	Connie and Johnny Tuggle
Christopher Roland Dimmick	9/8/1967	10/24/1984	son	of	Barbara and Don Dimmick
Derric Burgess	7/21/1984	10/25/1999	son	of	Angel and Robert Burgess
Chris Webb	9/11/1983	10/25/1999	brother	of	Debby Webb
Chris Webb	9/11/1983	10/25/1999	son	of	Norman and Tracy Webb
Melanie Suzanne Frentheway		10/27/1990	daughter	of	Foye and Neal Frentheway
Kathleen Dirr	2/24/1965	10/28/1984	daughter	of	Jim Dirr
Demetrius Breon Benton	3/21/1990	10/29/2001	son	of	Barbra Benton
Marc William Waidner	5/19/1970	10/30/1988	son	of	Mary Alice Wood

“I Love You” Balloon

~reprinted from TCF
Atlanta Online

I need to share with all of you something that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I have had some surgery and things going on in my life and haven't been able to write this until now. But when something like this happens to me I feel I need to share it with all of you, because I don't think of it is merely a message from Nina, but also her way of telling me to pass along to all of you that our children, brothers, sisters and grandchildren are still very much with us; of course, not the way we want them to be, but, yes, with us.



My story: About a month and a half ago a very special friend of mine sent me a congratulatory balloon bouquet. There were a mixture of mylar balloons with different sayings on them. I brought it into my home office where I could see them as I spend a lot of time there during the day (and night too). It amazed me how long they still stayed up on the ceiling, intertwined. I remember looking at them to see if I could take the ribbons apart and give one each to my grandchildren to play with. But there were so many knots they were totally entangled together.

The next day I went into my office to get something. When I turned around to walk out I had immediately a feeling that there was a presence of some sort behind me. When I turned around right behind me, at waist length, was the heart-shaped "I Love You" balloon! It had somehow, miraculously, broke free from the tangled web. As I walked out of my office and into my bedroom I turned and the balloon followed me into my bedroom. I turned again and walked to the hallway and it followed me that way too! I finally picked it up, a little shaken at first, and brought it back into my office. I put it way in the other corner of my office, away from the other balloons, behind a table. I then sat down at my desk and began to work at my computer and totally forgot about the balloon. About a half hour later I felt something brush my leg. I looked down and there was the "I Love You" heart-shaped balloon that had come across the room and stopped at my leg under my desk! I honestly began shaking and then crying.

For anyone who may be a nonbeliever in these kind of things, I don't know how it can be explained any other way other than it was a message from Nina. Every night before she went to bed she ALWAYS came into my office and hugged me and said Good night and "I love you". I was having a particularly bad day on the day this happened and I can't believe that that was not Nina's way of telling me to remember that she still loved me and that she was still

there. I have tried to dissect it and rationalize how else this could have happened, and it is the only conclusion I can come up with. If you could have seen the balloon bunch, its ribbons all hopelessly tangled so that I couldn't get them apart; how was it possible that of all the 8 balloons in the bunch, that one miraculously untangled itself from the others and that particular balloon just happened to be the one that said "I love you"! And that one followed me and even when I tried to put it away and forgot about it, it managed to find its way back to me again, as if to say, "Believe this, Mom"!!! I get goose bumps just thinking about it.

As I said earlier, I have always believed that any messages I receive from Nina are not meant for me and my family alone, but are meant as a message for me to pass along to all my other TCF and Atlanta Sharing Line friends or anyone who needs the hope of seeing their loved ones again; a message from our children that they do live on, and are just waiting for that time when we will all be together again.

Wishing you peace and hope and belief,
Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom forever
St. Paul, MN

As I read the current newsletter I was entranced by the idea of the Memory Tree for 2004. You mentioned what gift/gifts our children have given us.

I thought about this for only a short time and what came into my mind was the greatest gift anyone can give. Geoffrey, my son, gave me the gift of unadulterated love. Love that never wavered, never lessened, never became old. Love of Geoff was the purist form of love I have ever had.

Even at the worst times, I loved that child with all my heart and soul. I realized what "true" love is and was. It is the love of a mother for her child, warts and all. This love, for me, only became greater as Geoff got older. I was proud of my son and his wonderful ways. He made me laugh and when I looked at him my eyes would shine with love and affection. I have never before or since had that shine in my eyes for as long a time as I had with Geoff. That is the gift my son gave me - love is real and forever.

I love other people but not in the way I love Geoff. He was as precious to me as diamonds and money are to some. I knew happiness, true happiness, during my life with Geoff. There was a contentment and shine on life when he was here. I remember what happiness was. I am glad that my son was and is in my life, no matter that I feel such pain now. I would not trade one iota of time with Geoff, even with the pain and sorrow I feel now. I was blessed by God to have had Geoff - I had that kind of love.

*Karen Jenkins, Mother of an Angel with Pink Wings -
Geoffrey P. Edwards*

November Birthdays

<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Tyreek Seivwright	11/1/1982	5/12/2000	son	of	Donna Attride
Michael Scotland Haug	11/1/1958	5/7/1994	son	of	JoAnn Galster
Kenneth David Kemp	11/2/1972	5/31/2001	son	of	Kimberly McCain
Al Bath Wilson	11/2/1978	5/8/2002	son	of	Susan Wilson
Autumn DuBose	11/5/1972	7/19/1990	daughter	of	John and Faye DuBose
Mark Cozine	11/6/1961	9/14/2002	son	of	Anne Franzen
Aaron Geathers	11/6/1972	9/29/1982	son	of	Sonya Geathers
Daniel Smith	11/6/1981	8/26/1991	son	of	Judith Smith
Jennifer Marie Dailey	11/9/1982	3/12/1997	daughter	of	Joanne and Bob Dailey
Michael Wade Blakeman	11/10/1960	9/6/1998	son	of	Linda Case
Charles Allen Millard	11/11/1966	12/28/1993	son	of	Donna Price
George E. Williams III	11/11/1971	7/2/2002	son	of	Deborah Denise Williams
Anthony Scott Millard	11/12/1970	8/16/1974	son	of	Donna Price
Keith Perry	11/14/1966	6/11/2004	son	of	Oveta Perry
Stephen Zebehazy	11/16/1969	3/15/1999	son	of	Nancy and Bud Zebehazy
Reuben Alicea	11/17/1982	6/28/1999	son	of	Georgina Perez-Davila
Carter Martin	11/20/1996	9/12/2004	son	of	Scott and Leigh Ann Martin
Glenda McDade	11/20/1958	5/19/2001	sister	of	Yolanda Tapia
Kameron Rutherford	11/21/2003	5/11/2004	son	of	Judy and Christopher Rutherford
Tommy Hester	11/23/1964	12/5/1993	son	of	Zel Hester
Charlie T. Ethridge, Jr.	11/27/1971	9/27/1992	son	of	Charlie and Kathy Ethridge
Chris Collins	11/29/1983	12/31/2003	brother	of	Daryl Philip Collins Jr
Marc Mobley	11/29/1961	11/2/1983	son	of	Charlotte Howe
Robert A. Lind, Jr.	11/29/1961	6/10/1979	son	of	Bette and Bob Lind
Richard Mather	11/29/1975	11/19/2003	son	of	Deborah McLendon

November Angel Dates



<i>Child's Name</i>	<i>Birthday</i>	<i>Angel Date</i>			<i>Family</i>
Marc Mobley	11/29/1961	11/2/1983	son	of	Charlotte Howe
Leanna Piver	1/16/1978	11/7/1998	daughter	of	David and Janet Piver
Timothy E. Dixon	1/7/1980	11/8/1999	son	of	Georgia Ware-Dixon
Michael Hill	9/10/1972	11/10/1996	son	of	Linda Hill
Daniel Rogers Elder	12/29/1981	11/12/2000	son	of	Dennis and Debbie Elder
James T. Kieley	3/2/1946	11/12/1985	brother	of	Ann and Nelson Sechrist
Kevin Lamar Brady	8/24/1965	11/18/1993	son	of	Evelyn V. Brady
Lawrence Dean Anderson	8/3/1977	11/18/1995	son	of	Faithe Williams
Richard Mather	11/29/1975	11/19/2003	son	of	Deborah McLendon
Meseret Gebru	12/18/1980	11/23/2002	son	of	Kila Gebru
Meseret Gebru	12/18/1980	11/23/2002	nephew	of	Mary Gebru
Loren Larson	10/15/1982	11/25/1998	son	of	Susan Larson
Zachary Shane Parker	9/2/1987	11/29/2000	son	of	Steve and Bonnie Caldwell

The Empty Chair

by Darcie Sims

There's an empty chair in our house and I am not sure what to do with it. It's been empty a long time, and though we've moved more than a few times since it became empty, we still haul it around with us. It's not a particularly classic chair or even a very pretty one, and it is empty all the time. Whenever we move, I never really know which room to put it in, but once it has found its place, I've noticed that it simply stays there. No one moves it, no one suggests putting it away. No one sits in it. It's just an empty chair.

We have been a military family for many generations, and we are used to having members of the family off in faraway places for what often turns out to be long periods of time. My father would sometimes be gone for up to a year, or even two. His chair was often empty at the table. My husband's military career took him away for many months at a time, and his chair was often empty. Then, when our daughter was commissioned in the military, we knew her chair would also be empty sometimes. So empty chairs at our house are not an uncommon thing, but this chair.. this chair should never have been empty

As the holidays approach, I am always faced with the task of deciding what to do with our empty chair. Should we put it away for the season? Should we decorate it or should we just ignore it? One year we did decide to put it away, but even though it was an empty chair, it left an even bigger empty space when we moved it to another, less occupied place. How can that be? How can something that is empty leave a bigger empty space when it's gone?!

We've tried to ignore it, but its emptiness is very loud, and it is hard to miss an empty chair in a room filled with people sitting in all the other chairs. And even when we could manage to ignore it, others could not, and they always commented on it. An empty chair is not invisible.

Then, one year, we decided to simply include it in our holiday decorating scheme and that was the cause of some interesting discussions. Should we put a special holiday pillow in it? What about tossing a colorful quilt or afghan over the back! Should we put something in the chair so it wasn't empty! Now that was a novel idea! But nothing we tried could fill the emptiness of that chair. It just sat silent like a sentinel, waiting for something...or someone. It took us many years of living with that empty chair, day in and day out, to finally figure out what to do with it. When we serve our meals, those chairs that would have been occupied by the assigned person (yes, we do assigned

seating at our house) can be filled by other family members or guests. You get to use the sterling silver napkin ring with that person's name on it, and if you are lucky, that person has not lost a knife or fork or spoon over the years, so you

will have a complete place setting of silverware. You must endure listening to tales about the person whose chair you are occupying.

It makes for some lively conversations and that way, even though you may not be with us for this occasion, your presence is still in our life. That works for our empty chair as well. It is a military custom to always set a place at the table for those who are not with us at this time, but whose lives are still within our hearts. So, we have a place setting, complete with silverware (all 6 pieces), dishes, crystal goblet and napkin ring. Our empty chair is pulled up to the table and a single rose is placed on the plate, a symbol of everlasting love.



We join hands in thanksgiving, completing the circle with the empty chair within our family circle, for even though death may have come, love never goes away. That empty chair now represents all of us who ate not with us for this occasion but who live within our hearts forever. It is not a sad sight, because we know that empty chair represents a love we have known and shared, and with that gift, our family is forever blessed.

So, if your holiday table will have an empty chair this year, remember that it is not truly an empty space. That place is still occupied by the love and joy of the one who sat in it. Don't hide that chair away. You may not wish to bring it to the table as we do, but take time this holiday season to remember the laughter, the joy, the love, the light of those who are no longer within hug's reach, but whose love still fills us with gratitude. Join hands around your table, however small, and say a prayer of thanksgiving ...for the love you have known and still hold deep within your heart. You are rich beyond measure for having had a chair fulfilled. Don't let death rob you of the heart space that love keeps.

No one has sat in our little empty chair for twenty-five years. ..until this season. The table is still set with a place for all of those who are not with us on this occasion, but the empty chair at our house has been filled with the tiny spirit of a new life as she found that chair to be, "just the right size, Grandma." We are a family circle, some chairs filled and others not, broken by death, but mended by love. ~reprinted with permission to TCF by Bereavement Magazine Nov/Dec 2001

The Atlanta Chapter Annual Candlelighting Remembrance Service

Saturday, December 4th at 6:00 p.m.
First Christian Church of Atlanta

The Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service is an annual event to honor and remember our children and siblings who have gone too soon. We have changed the date this year to Saturday, December 4th.

We have a special guest speaker, Alice Wisler, editor of Tributes and author of Down the Cereal Isle. Alice has given seminars and workshops at both the TCF and BPUSA annual conferences.

Alice writes: After battling cancer and then a staph infection, my 4-year-old Daniel's life ended on this earth February 2, 1997. His strength of character and wonderful sense of humor are continually remembered and the love I hold for him is demonstrated in small ways as I reach out to others at TCF and other grief support groups. The compassion and understanding I have found at these groups also shows me how each of us has a necessary role to play as we walk on this rocky journey together, remembering our children and being a beacon of light for one another.

We also have special sibling speakers, Nikki and Shelly Piver. Nikki and Shelly lost their older sister Leanna, November 7, 1998 in a auto accident. Nikki and Shelly are also going to perform a special song written In Memory of Leanna "I Guess This Is Goodbye".

We have special music and a memorial candlelighting ceremony planned.

After the candlelighting we will have refreshments and a memorial video presentation of our children and siblings in the fellowship hall.

We need your help to insure your child or sibling is included. Please send your child's picture as soon as possible to Dan Bryl. Even If you are unsure you are attending the night of the Candlelighting, please send your child's picture, so that we will have it for future candlelighting services. (Deadline to submit your child's picture Nov.15th)

- The photo displayed on the slide will only be as good as the photo you send. If the photo is a quality color copy or a quality reproduction, there should be no problem.
- Please indicate with the photo or on back of the photo:
 - a. Print the name of your child (How you would want the name written under the picture of your on the slide)
 - b. Birth date and Angel date
 - c. Your name and phone number
- If you sent a picture last year, you do not have to send another.

Send pictures to: Dan Bryl , 95 Cypress Run, Bluffton. SC 29909
Home #: 843-705-2790
Or E-Mail: dan23betty@datv.com

We also want to invite our members to bring a finger food to share at our fellowship after the candle lighting. Candles will be provided. We are looking forward to seeing everyone. We look forward to sharing this special evening with you and your child. May their Lights Continue to Shine.....



Days of Thanks

In a year when much was
given,
Much was taken, too.
So we pause and give our
Thanks for what now is,
Think, too, of what once was,
And we are grateful for
The threads of lives gone by
Threads that enrich the fabric
Of this, the life know.

By Lois Wyse

A Love Song

The mention of my child's
name
May bring tears to my eyes,
But it never fails to bring
Music to my ears.
If you are really my friend,
Please don't keep me
From hearing the beautiful
music.
It soothes my broken heart
And fills my soul with love.

Nancy Williams

Chapter News

We reach out to you with the understanding and love only another bereaved parent can offer. Attending meetings and learning from others what has helped them is one way to ease the pain of losing a child. We welcome you to join us at the Atlanta Chapter of TCF.

Lending Library

We have a large lending library at our meetings. We also welcome book donations. If you have grief books you would like to donate, we will include inside the front cover of the book a "Donated In Memory of _____" And include your name and your child or sibling's name.

We also welcome "book reviews". If you have read a book which you felt was helpful on your grief journey, please let us know. Send book reviews and other articles, poems, pictures and remembrances to Jayne Newton for submission in our monthly newsletter. Email Jayne@tcfatlanta.org or mail to The Compassionate Friends, P.O. Box 656, Tucker, GA 30085

Also, a friendly reminder, if you have books at home you have checked out and are finished reading them, please remember to return them to our library.

Books recently donated to our chapter library
In Memory of Wesley Carithers:

"Good Grief" by Granger E. Westberg

"Why me? Coping with Grief, Loss and Change"
by Pesach Krass

"This Too Shall Pass" by Multiple authors

"Helping People Through Grief" by Delores Kuenning

"Silent Grief" by Clara Hinton

Special Birthday Table

Our Chapter has a monthly Birthday Table. This is a special table set up for those who have a child, grandchild or sibling's birthday in that month. Please bring a photo/memento and share a special memory of your child. You are also welcome to bring your child's favorite food or birthday cake to share with the group. We hope you will take this opportunity to share your child with us.

For more information, please call Susan Carithers, our birthday table coordinator, 770-474-6243 or email wescar20@yahoo.com.

Picture Buttons

Reminder...if you want a picture button (3 ½") made of your child or sibling or grandchild, please remember to bring a photo or snapshot to the meeting. The pictures will be returned (unharmed)...original pictures or snapshots are much cleared than copies....there is no charge. This is our gift to you.

TCF Atlanta Online Daily E-Newsletter

TCF Atlanta Online Sharing is a daily online e-newsletter and sharing group available to anyone with internet access. The Online Sharing began in September 1999. Currently we have 1500 active members and are growing at a rate of 5 per day. We send out articles and poems and messages from other bereaved families. Our hope is to give you hope.

For More Information and all the new additions, please visit our web site:

<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/TCFOnline.html>

To subscribe, just send an email to Jayne requesting to be added to the daily newsletter. Jayne@tcfatlanta.org

When I think of "Gifts from above" the image of snowflakes comes into my mind .. so soft, whispery, and fragile.. just like our lives..

Rita, TCF Atlanta Online

*Life is a journey
And
LOVE
is what makes
that Journey
Worthwhile*



Gifts of Love



A love gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta . 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, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapters. The following donations are in support of the Atlanta Chapter newsletter, web site and other outreach.

All chapters within TCF are totally dependent on funds from our families. We DO NOT receive funds from our National Office. Everything we need to operate our local chapters are paid directly from our local resources and our local family contributions. Thank you to all who contribute and support your local chapters. Some people contribute to Memory of Other Children.....this is a wonderful way for others to say "I am Remembering your child" Other "Gifts of Love" are evident by all the compassionate and giving volunteers we have within our TCF Atlanta organization.

In Loving Memory of Robert Malkin, from his parents Elaine and Jerome Malkin, Clermont, FL
In Loving Memory of K.C. Davis, from Jo-Ann and David Goodman, Loganville, GA
In Loving Memory of Chris Simpson, from his grandmother Elizabeth Luke, Auburn, GA
In Loving Memory of Stephanie Weber, from her father John Weber, Roswell, GA

In Loving Memory of Steven Michael Price, from his mother Peggy Miller, Bogalusa, LA
In Loving Memory of William "Trey" Price, from his mother Peggy Miller, Bogalusa, LA
In Loving Memory of Brian Parker, from his mother Pat Parker, Forest City, PA
In Loving Memory of Tim Parker, from his mother Pat Parker, Forest City, PA

In Loving Memory of Guy Leon Gower, from his mother Lori Gower, Nicholson, GA



®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.

Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes 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 and creeds. We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; 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 our children.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and
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