



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Fall 2009

## Newsletter of the Atlanta Chapter

"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](http://www.tcfatlanta.org)

### **TCF Atlanta Newsletter**

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### **Atlanta Chapter**

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Toll Free 1-877-969-0010

**The Atlanta Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. at the:**

**First Christian Church of Atlanta  
4532 LaVista Road, Tucker, GA 30084**

**Upcoming Chapter Meetings:  
October 13, November 10 and December 8**

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!"



Atlanta (Tucker) Chapter  
29th Annual  
Candlelight Remembrance Service  
Saturday, December 5, 2009  
Centerpieces and Poinsettias for Sale

Sponsor a Centerpiece or Poinsettia  
"In Memory of Your Child/Sibling/Grandchild"

Please consider sponsoring a centerpiece or poinsettia for our December candlelight service. We will display a sign "In Memory of Your Child/Sibling/Grandchild" next to each sponsored centerpiece or poinsettia. We also will include a photo of your child, if a photo is provided. After the reception, you can take the centerpiece or poinsettia home with you as a special remembrance. If you cannot attend the candlelight service, your centerpiece/poinsettia will be donated to a newly-bereaved family to take home after the reception.

The cost of a centerpiece or poinsettia is \$30.

The net proceeds from this fundraiser will help support our annual candlelight remembrance service.

Your Name (Full Name as you would like it to read on the Memory Card)

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Card will read: Sponsored "In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_"

I want to sponsor a: \_\_\_\_\_ centerpiece \_\_\_\_\_ poinsettia

Please check: \_\_\_\_\_ \$30 (centerpiece or poinsettia) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Additional contribution to go toward the candlelight service

If you want to include a picture of your child to be displayed with the centerpiece and Memory Card, please do. The picture will be returned after the service.

Please make your check payable to: "The Compassionate Friends" and mail, along with completed form, to:

The Compassionate Friends  
c/o Jayne Newton  
808 Brentway Court  
Lilburn, GA 30047

The deadline for ordering centerpieces/poinsettias is November 15. If you are ordering more than one centerpiece/poinsettia, please complete a separate form for each Memory Card.

All centerpieces/poinsettias need to be picked up at the end of the reception. If you cannot attend the candlelight service, it will be donated to a newly-bereaved family to take home after the reception.

If you have questions, please call Cindy Durham at 770-938-6511 or e-mail [cindy\\_durham@bellsouth.net](mailto:cindy_durham@bellsouth.net)

Oct. 13

## Special Workshop: Into the Valley and Out Again

Kathy and Patrick Malone will present a special workshop for TCF members during our Oct. 13 chapter meeting. The program is titled “**Into the Valley and Out Again.**”

For many bereaved parents, the utter devastation and tragedy of the death of their child is like a dark valley.

“As much as we would rather not, this valley must be traveled,” Kathy said. “This journey often provides us with unique treasures and gifts that allow us to emerge from the darkness with a new sense of purpose.”

Kathy and Pat will share their journey with TCF members in the hope that it will help each of us find understanding, compassion and perhaps even hope as we make our individual journeys.



In addition to being designed for bereaved parents, many family members and friends will find it helpful in understanding what bereaved parents are experiencing. Invite your family and friends to come with you to this workshop.

The workshop will begin at 7:45 p.m. and run until 9:15. Plenty of time will be included for questions and discussion.

In advance of the workshop, we will hold our sharing sessions – from 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Members of nearby TCF chapters will be invited to join us for the workshop at 7:45 p.m.

### **About our Workshop Presenters**

Patrick and Kathy's third born son, Scott, died less than 24 hours after his birth in 1971. A daughter, Erin, was lost in miscarriage in 1974. Their second son, Lance, was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1995 at age 25.

Kathy is the past co-leader of the Gwinnett County, Georgia Chapter and the past regional coordinator for Georgia and the current leader of the North Georgia Mountains TCF Chapter.

**PLEASE NOTE: we will begin our October meeting early (at 6:30 p.m.) – due to a special workshop:**

**6:30 – 7:30 p.m.: Sharing sessions for parents and siblings**

**7:45 – 9:15 p.m.: Special workshop (see details in this article)**

Patrick has served on the TCF National Board as treasurer and president, and is a former trustee of the TCF Foundation. Patrick is a co-author of the new book, “*Cracking the Code to Leadership.*”

Kathy and Patrick served as co-chairs of the 2003 National TCF Conference in Atlanta. They may be contacted at [malonepk@bellsouth.net](mailto:malonepk@bellsouth.net).

## Candlelight Service Set for Dec. 5

Be sure your calendars are marked for our chapter's annual Candlelight Service, to be held Saturday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.

Patrick Malone, who has served on the TCF National Board as treasurer and president, and is a former trustee of the TCF Foundation, will be our parent speaker.



Jessica Handler, author of a new book “*Invisible Sisters,*” will be the sibling speaker.

Cathy Spraez, a former Atlanta Chapter leader and mother of Evan Sheffield, will sing at this year's Candlelight Service.

Patrick's talk will be titled “You have a Choice.” He says, “When our children died, if we were given a choice, we surely would have chosen any other course of action. But we weren't offered a choice. We can't change the past and while we can plan for the future, we have only a limited effect. The only thing that we can impact is the here and now – the present.”

Patrick will share his thoughts on how each of us can best positively impact the present in memory of our children.

In preparation for his talk, he is requesting the assistance of chapter members. He would like to include some personal information about a few chapter members who will be in attendance at the Candlelight Service. You are invited to e-mail him with your name, your child's name and your favorite memory about your child. E-mail Pat at [Patrick.malone@thepargroup.com](mailto:Patrick.malone@thepargroup.com)

Patrick's involvement started in the Atlanta Chapter, then Gwinnett and now the North Georgia Mountains Chapter in Blairsville.

A frequent speaker at management and industry conferences as well as grief-related national and regional conferences, Patrick is also a frequent contributor to [OpentoHope.com](http://OpentoHope.com), a grief recovery Web site, and "Healing the Grieving Heart" radio show. Patrick is also a co-author of "*Cracking the Code to Leadership*" and an internationally recognized leadership expert.

#### **Candles to be Provided**

In addition to guest speakers and special music, a memorial candlelight ceremony will be held. Candles will be provided for all adults at the service.

#### **Reception and Memorial Video**

After the service, we will have refreshments and a memorial video presentation of our children and siblings in the Fellowship Hall.

We need your help to ensure 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 service, please send your child's picture, so we will have it for future candlelight services. (The deadline to submit your child's picture is Nov. 15.) **If you sent a picture in previous years, you do not need to send a photo.**

#### **Photo Tips:**

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 include with the photo:

- Your child's name (how you want the name written under the picture on the slide). *Please print carefully.*
- Birthday and Angel date
- Your name and phone number

Photos should be scanned and sent to Dan by e-mail at [danbetty23@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:danbetty23@tampabay.rr.com). Or, mail your photo to:

Dan Bryl  
7428 Vista Way, Unit 106  
Bradenton, FL 34202

Your photo will be returned to you unharmed.

#### **Reception and Centerpieces**

We also want to ask everyone who attends the Candlelight Service to bring something to share at the reception after the service. We look forward to seeing everyone and sharing this special evening with you and your child.

Chapter members also have the option of sponsoring a centerpiece or poinsettia to be used in the decorating for the Candlelight Service.

If you would like to order a centerpiece/poinsettia to be displayed at the Candlelight Service in memory of your child, sibling or grandchild, please return the order form included with this newsletter by Nov. 15.

#### Oct. 3 Concert

## Atlanta Mother Continues Heartfelt Mission to Save Lives

Candace Walker's heart may be heavy but her spirit and determination to save lives presses on. Since 2008, after losing her only son Clinton to an undetected heart defect, Candace has been on a mission to raise community awareness about heart defects and create opportunities for young people to receive life saving heart screenings.



For over a year, the Walker family searched for answers to the violent seizures that their only old son Clinton, a previously healthy and athletic boy, suddenly began to suffer from. Clinton received CAT scans, MRIs, EEGs and Sleep Clinic tests only to be told in the end, that they could not find the cause of his seizures. On Feb. 7, 2008, Clinton passed away in his sleep from the complications of a seizure; he was 17 years old. It was not until after his death that an autopsy revealed he suffered from an abnormal heart defect that, if detected earlier, may have saved his life.

Since the tragic passing of her son, Candace has turned her grief into an all out war cry to raise awareness and help other families and communities practice early detection. Her story has appeared in Gospel Today Magazine, Our Voices Mississippi, The Indianapolis Recorder and, Candace has also appeared on Praise 102.5's The Coco Brother Radio show. Clinton's story has also appeared on



Organizing for America's Web site, Parent Heart Watch Web site and in the Rockdale Citizen.

In the fall of 2008, Candace launched the Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund and Youth4Healthy Hearts. The Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund Inc. was created to honor and remember Clinton in a way that continues his legacy of service. The Youth4Healthy Hearts Benefit Concert is a yearly event that features Gospel performers and health vendors who come out and help to spread the word on the importance of knowledge and of early detection through heart health screenings.

"The Youth4Healthy Hearts events are aimed at educating our youth about heart defects and raising funds for The Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund," says Candace. "Eight out of every one thousand children born in the U.S. have congenital heart problems that often go undiagnosed. We are committed to bringing awareness to this problem and educating parents and the community on the steps to take to have their children screened. This information is vital in saving the lives of our children."

The Youth4Healthy Hearts Gospel Concert will be held this Saturday, Oct. 3, from 3-5 p.m. at Greenbriar Mall.

## Kyle's First Angel Date

By Mary Ann Davis

Kyle was my very special angel. I knew when he was born that there would be problems, but it only made me love him more. He was my second child. I had lost his sister 30 years ago. Michelle left us when she was only seven months old. Her problems were similar to Kyle's. But when Kyle was born he was so strong and I knew he was different.



He endured so much in his 25 years: so many surgeries, procedures, tests, medicines, doctors, hospitals. But through all his pain and discomfort, he would always bounce back with a mischievous gleam in his big brown eyes and beautiful smile. He never ceased to amaze all the doctors, nurses and therapists.

Kyle could not talk or walk and had a profound hearing loss. Thus we all had to be very visual with Kyle. We always had the best conversations with our eyes. He loved vivid colors, cartoons, Sesame Street (especially Elmo),

watching a wide variety of sports programs with my Mom, and all of his large collection of stuffed animals.

Kyle was my best friend. My heart aches every day for my little man. I know in my heart that he has his wings and now he can walk and talk and run. I will always be so proud of you Kyle with all your medals and ribbons.

The stars shine,  
The heavens smile  
They finally met my Kyle.

My little fighter. You are never forgotten.

*Your forever Mom*

## Heaven's Very Special Child

A meeting was held quite far from Earth.  
"It's time again for another birth."  
Said the angels to the Lord above,  
"This special child will need much love."

His progress may seem very slow  
Accomplishments he may not show  
And he'll require extra care  
From the folks he meets way down there.

He may not run or laugh or play  
His thoughts may seem quite far away  
In many ways he won't adapt  
And he'll be known as handicapped.

So let's be careful where he's sent  
We want his life to be content  
Please, Lord, find the parents who  
Will do a special job for you.

They will not realize right away  
The leading role they're asked to play  
But with this child sent from above  
Come stronger faith and richer love.

And soon they'll know the privilege given  
In caring for this gift from heaven  
This precious charge, so meek and mild,  
Is heaven's very special child.

*Author unknown*

*Reprinted at the request of Mary Ann Davis  
in memory of her son Kyle.*

## *October, November and December Birthdays*

| <u>Child's Name</u>           | <u>Birthday</u> | <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Family</u>                      |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Azariah Suvari Anderson       | October 2       | daughter            | Michelle Stewart Anderson          |
| Richard Alan Cartin           | October 2       | son                 | Nancy Murphy                       |
| Kaxon Harris                  | October 3       | son                 | Karen Harris                       |
| Stephen Ledford               | October 4       | son                 | Luella and Mike Ledford            |
| Maeve Elizabeth Fintak        | October 5       | daughter            | Steve and Brigid Fintak            |
| John Thomas Arnold            | October 6       | son                 | Donna Arnold                       |
| Connor Brown                  | October 6       | grandson            | Kaye Hyde                          |
| Jamaal Addison                | October 7       | son                 | Patricia Roberts                   |
| Meleia Warren Willis-Starbuck | October 10      | daughter            | John and Kimberly Starbuck         |
| Candi Gaye Marshall           | October 16      | daughter            | Gena and John Ivester              |
| Scott Wiseman                 | October 19      | son                 | Lynn Wiseman                       |
| Sallie Scanlon                | October 20      | daughter            | Jane R. Scanlon                    |
| Herbert Shaw Jr.              | October 21      | son                 | Arlena M. Shaw                     |
| Carrie Ann Plumley            | October 22      | daughter            | Deborah Plumley                    |
| Dilia Plummer                 | October 25      | daughter            | Dijon Plummer                      |
| Jacob Miller                  | October 26      | son                 | Sandra and Richard Miller          |
| Michelle Reeves               | October 28      | daughter            | Jim and BJ Reeves                  |
| Marcellus Montez Richardson   | October 29      | son                 | Paulette Perry                     |
| Amelia Sutterthwaite Ward     | October 29      | daughter            | Lisa and Greg Ward                 |
| Ronnie Keith Batchelor        | October 30      | son                 | Ron Batchelor                      |
| Tyreek Seivwright             | November 1      | son                 | Donna Attridge                     |
| Latoya Peart                  | November 1      | daughter            | Alvin Dorman, Patsy and Morrinette |
| Brandon Jack Phillips         | November 1      | son                 | Susan and Jack Phillips            |
| Jameka Deshon Holmes          | November 4      | daughter            | Charlotte Hamm                     |
| Autumn DuBose                 | November 5      | daughter            | John DuBose                        |
| Mark Cozine                   | November 6      | son                 | Anne Franzen                       |
| James Daniel Smith            | November 6      | son                 | Judith Smith                       |
| Matthew Luke Davis            | November 7      | son                 | Lena L. Price                      |
| Jennifer Marie Dailey         | November 9      | daughter            | Joanne and Bob Dailey              |
| Rose Ann Thompson             | November 12     | daughter            | Kevin Thompson                     |
| Carlos Ramone Weaver          | November 12     | son                 | Carlos Weaver                      |
| Amanda Christine Warnock      | November 13     | daughter            | Amy Osier                          |
| Keith Perry                   | November 14     | son                 | Oveta Perry                        |
| Zekia M Rhodes                | November 15     | granddaughter       | Beverly Ricks                      |
| Carter Martin                 | November 20     | son                 | Scott and Leigh Ann Martin         |
| Kameron Rutherford            | November 21     | son                 | Judy and Khristopher Rutherford    |
| Matthew Marcus Long           | November 27     | son                 | Timothy Long                       |
| Robert A. Lind, Jr.           | November 29     | son                 | Bette and Bob Lind                 |
| Clayton Olvey                 | November 30     | son                 | June Smith                         |
| Ashley Craig                  | December 2      | son                 | La Tangie Craig                    |
| Brandon Burke                 | December 2      | grandson            | Shirley A. Kendrick                |
| Connor Dunn Devine            | December 3      | son                 | Kathleen Devine                    |
| James Anthony Durham          | December 3      | son                 | Cindy Durham                       |
| James Anthony Durham          | December 3      | brother             | Katie Durham                       |
| Joshua Polain                 | December 3      | son                 | Kimberly Polain                    |
| David James Teddlie           | December 5      | son                 | Anne and Don Teddlie               |
| Averil Brown                  | December 7      | son                 | Carolyn Brown                      |

## *October, November and December Birthdays*

| <u>Child's Name</u>     | <u>Birthday</u> | <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Family</u>                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Clarissa Cuningham      | December 8      | daughter            | Winston and Judy Cunningham                  |
| Katherine A. Chillman   | December 17     | daughter            | Abigail Arthur-Chillman and Michael Chillman |
| Amanda Kay Rose         | December 17     | daughter            | Barbara Rose and Jim Sinke                   |
| Meseret Debru           | December 18     | son                 | Kila Gebru                                   |
| Steve Inman Jr.         | December 22     | son                 | Steve and Linda Inman                        |
| Dianne Martha Shlevin   | December 27     | daughter            | Barbara Shlevin                              |
| Jacob Martin Drollinger | December 28     | son                 | John and Virginia Drollinger                 |
| J'Muar Taylor           | December 30     | son                 | Cheryl A. Taylor                             |
| Christopher Hobbs       | December 31     | son                 | Joseph and Gwendolyn Hobbs                   |

## *October, November and December Angel Dates*

| <u>Child's Name</u>           | <u>Angel Date</u> | <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Family</u>                |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Michael 'Kyle' Davis          | October 2         | son                 | Mary Ann Davis               |
| Mark Joseph Gore              | October 7         | son                 | Barbara Rodriguez            |
| Vernon Philipe Battle         | October 18        | son                 | Barbara Knox                 |
| Vernon Philipe Battle         | October 18        | brother             | Glorqua Tarantine            |
| Bo Tuggle                     | October 22        | son                 | Connie and Johnny Tuggle     |
| Carlos Ramone Weaver          | October 27        | son                 | Carlos Weaver                |
| Kathleen Dirr                 | October 28        | daughter            | Jim Dirr                     |
| David Ferguson                | October 30        | son                 | Christina and David Ferguson |
| Marc William Waidner          | October 30        | son                 | Mary Alice Wood              |
| Matthew Luke Davis            | November 2        | son                 | Lena L. Price                |
| Brayden Michael Eanes         | November 3        | son                 | Kelly Eanes                  |
| Brayden Michael Eanes         | November 3        | grandson            | Al and Jan Pittman           |
| Katherine Jane Wentz Williams | November 6        | daughter            | Jane and Clyde Wentz         |
| Amber Gilstrap                | November 7        | daughter            | Kathleen Cornog              |
| Mervyn Lanier 'Corky' Twyman  | November 14       | son                 | Carol McNeal                 |
| Azariah Suvari Anderson       | November 17       | daughter            | Michelle Stewart Anderson    |
| Nick Posey                    | November 20       | son                 | Diana and William Posey      |
| Meseret Debru                 | November 23       | son                 | Kila Gebru                   |
| Kay Cee Herring               | December 1        | daughter            | David and Ginny Herring      |
| Arnessa Darlene Royster       | December 3        | daughter            | Carolyn Gordon               |
| Victoria Fields               | December 4        | daughter            | Tricia Chasse                |
| Mashanda Nicole Taylor        | December 7        | daughter            | Michelle Taylor-Scott        |
| Samuel Thomas Peek            | December 10       | son                 | Carol and Bobby Peek         |
| Vanishia Shantee Jinks        | December 13       | daughter            | Yuonne Jinks                 |
| Connor Dunn Devine            | December 16       | son                 | Kathleen Devine              |
| Brian Trunnel Rounds          | December 18       | son                 | Floyd and Janice Rounds      |
| Dijon Plummer, Jr.            | December 22       | son                 | Dijon Plummer                |
| Dilia Plummer                 | December 22       | daughter            | Dijon Plummer                |
| Jamie Dalziel                 | December 24       | son                 | Martin and Donna Dalziel     |
| Apollo Holmes                 | December 25       | son                 | Dorothea Eastman             |
| Steve Inman Jr.               | December 26       | son                 | Steve and Linda Inman        |
| Jennifer Hower                | December 27       | sister              | Julie Fischer                |
| Christopher Hobbs             | December 27       | son                 | Joseph and Gwendolyn Hobbs   |

# Nikki's Third Angel Date

By Selma Calaman

Sept. 2, 2009, was my Nikki's third angel date. My heart still aches as I am writing these words: three years and many tears later.

This is an excerpt from my letter to Anika Vai: my precious "very beautiful," loving daughter (composed October 2006).

Nikki, although my faith tells me that you are in the arms of the angels, I miss you so much every day. I deeply miss my office manager, my nutritionist, my business and community advocacy partner, my loving, compassionate, affectionate, joyful daughter.

This poem was sent by your "Auntie Del" Blocker-Ray on Sept. 8, 2006 and composed by your "buddy" Debbie Blocker-Mulkerein:



## Our Angel

God sent angels on this earth to  
guide us safely through  
And I'm so glad that when your  
name was called,

He chose to give Anika to you.

She came into this world disguised as your little  
girl,  
But, all the time she knew your heart and mind.  
She was in, but not of, this world.

Be grateful for the times you had,  
The love you shared  
And lessons learned along the way.

Praise your Lord and bless His name  
Because He'll bring you together again someday.

Little did we know, before, Nikki, that you were God's gift to your family, an angel God sent to visit with us and teach us how to love, how to be compassionate and constantly concerned about others, how to reach out and touch hearts, how to be sure our caring includes doing, how to look past our own pain to "GIVE A CARE," to nurture someone who is suffering.

Nikki, as you grew up, we spent so many days and nights in the hospital because of your seizures. Your nurses

would always visit our room to visit with you and enjoy your chuckles and chatter; your special gift of joy and laughter. They were always so charmed by your delightful, engaging personality and when you fell asleep, they would say, "She looks just like a sleeping angel, you would never know she is so sick."

Anika Vai, you anointed your name by the way you loved. You always knew your name was derived from West African words which translate into "very beautiful." Through Divine Intervention, you lived long enough to demonstrate a spirit and character which truly illustrated the meaning of those words. So many who knew you have told me: "to know Anika, was to love her."

Sweetheart, I remember with so much pride how proud you were of your volunteer projects with the United Way Community Investment program and the Partnership Against Domestic Violence. I remember how you beamed as you recalled how the United Way executives listened to your opinions on providing resources and support for disabled children.

Of course, sweetheart, you were the expert because you had lived through it and overcome so many of the physical and mental challenges associated with your disability. What they didn't know as they listened to you speak, was that you had lived so far above and beyond the neurosurgeons' prognosis. Through God's grace, you beat the odds, to live a life which was so much more articulate and abundant than any of your neurosurgeons would have predicted.

I am so proud of all the plans you had made to attend the Atlanta School of Massage, become a massage aromatherapist and continue taking care of others. I remember how enthusiastically you spoke about your vision and future plans the evening of Sept. 1, 2006. I had no idea that evening would be our last together.

I am so grateful that God chose me to usher your precious spirit into the world. I am so blessed and honored to be your mother and so proud of who you became.

Nikki, you will always be in my heart. Through my heart aches everyday because you are gone from me in the physical realm, I am grateful that God has ended your suffering. Your laughter and joy, your living and compassionate spirit will always be with me, in my memories and in my heart. And though our time together feels so painfully short, I thank God for the time He gave to me, to treasure and cherish.

Nikki, you taught us how to look for the love in it and take time to "Give a Care." In loving memory of you, always.

*Selma Calaman (Nikki's mommy)*



# TCF Online Support Community

## Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national Web site offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats).

This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions, as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "Men Only Sharing Session," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

**Save the Date!**  
It's never too  
early to think about the next  
National Conference  
July 2-4, 2010 -- Arlington, Va.  
Watch the national TCF Web site for  
details!  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## Life Can Be Good Again

By Don Hackett  
Kingston, Mass.

For nearly 16 years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could

immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.
- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.
- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.
- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.

- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

*Reprinted with permission from "We Need Not Walk Alone," the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.*

## Worldwide Candlelighting

Excitement has been building as the thirteenth Worldwide Candle Lighting December 13, 2009, approaches. The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

You will be invited to post a message in the Remembrance Book, which will be available during the event at TCF's USA national Web site. Last year, in that short one day span, thousands of messages were received and posted from every U.S. state and Washington D.C., every territory, as well as dozens of other countries, some in foreign languages.

Here in the United States, publicity about the event has been widespread, being featured over the years in Dear Abby, Parade Magazine, Ann Landers column, Guideposts magazine, Annie's Mailbox and literally hundreds of U.S. newspapers, dozens of television stations and numerous Web sites and personal blogs.

Watch the national TCF Web site for more information: <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>.



®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 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, creeds and relationships. 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 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. ©2007

# *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, candlelight service, 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 in memory of other's 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.

Love gifts to the Atlanta Chapter of TCF should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends and mailed to our treasurer: Jayne Newton, 808 Brentway Court, Lilburn, GA 30047.

## Love Gifts

In Loving Memory of Michael Btembke, from his father Ghakarhi Btembke, Norcross, GA  
In Loving Memory of Anita Marepally, from her sister Archana Marepally-Vemulapalli, Chapel Hill, NC  
In Loving Memory of Christopher Kuzela, from his mother Patricia Kuzela, Tucker, GA

In Loving Memory of Brian T. Rounds, from his mother Janice Rounds, Lithia Springs, GA  
In Loving Memory of Julian Oliver Carter, from his mother Juliette Carter, Stone Mountain, GA  
In Loving Memory of Xavier Khamani Ray, from his mother Stephanie Ray, Lithonia, GA

In Loving Memory of Elijah Jerome Sheppard, from Stephanie Ray, Lithonia, GA  
In Loving Memory of Brandon LeVar Battle, from his mother Beverly Battle, Cedartown, GA  
In Loving Memory of Maeve Elizabeth Fintak, from her parents Steve and Brigid, Duluth, GA

In Loving Memory of Reezin N. "Chip" Swilley, Jr., from his parents Elsie and Reezin Swilley, Atlanta, GA  
In Loving Memory of Derrick M. Kelly, from his mother Deborah Kelly, Decatur, GA  
In Loving Memory of Kennon Jernigan, from his parents Pamela and Ken Jernigan, Atlanta, GA

In Loving Memory of Corey Adam Price, from his grandmother Angie Williams, Norcross, GA  
In Loving Memory of Melvin Shannon, from his sister Juanita White, Tucker, GA  
In Loving Memory of Autumn Dubose, from her father John Dubose, Lilburn, GA

In Loving Memory of Jessica Lyn Bryl, from her parents Dan and Betty Bryl, Bradenton, FL  
In Loving Memory of Richard Alan Cartin, from his mother Nancy Murphy, Decatur, GA  
In Loving Memory of Brandon Marquis Williams, from his mother Selena Randolph, Stone Mountain, GA

In Loving Memory of Jill Michiko Nakawatase, from her parents Kenneth and Eileen Nakawatase, Lodi, CA  
In Loving Memory of Ashley Craig, from her mother LaTangie Craig, Hampton, GA  
In Loving Memory of Bo Tuggle, from his parents Johnny and Connie Tuggle, Snellville, GA

## NEW SUBSCRIPTION - RENEWAL - CHANGE FORM - DONATIONS

If you are receiving our newsletter for the first time...everyone within The Compassionate Friends Organization wants to say .... We are sorry you have the need for this publication but we are glad you found us and we hope our newsletter will be helpful on your journey. Someone may have lovingly sent you the newsletter...and if so and you find it helpful, please complete the data sheet enclosed and return it so that we may add you to our newsletter database for future mailings. This is to insure that all the information we have is correct and complete. *This is for internal use only.*

**Please print, filling in all applicable blanks/boxes:**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (including area code) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you prefer to receive the newsletter by (check one):  Mail  E-mail (provide e-mail address above)

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Child's Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Death Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cause of Child's Death (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Child's relationship to you (e.g. son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild) \_\_\_\_\_

Names and ages of all surviving siblings living with you:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- How did you find out about The Compassionate Friends? Please circle one: (1) Friends (2) Family (3) Hospital (4) Church (5) School (6) Funeral Homes (7) Internet (8) Newspaper (9) Employers (Human Resources) (10) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Note: **The information you have given above will be confidential (used for internal purposes only) unless you answer "yes" to one or more of the following questions:**

1. Do you want your child's name to appear in the newsletter's "**We Remember You**" section of birth and death dates? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Do you want to receive the daily e-newsletter from TCF Atlanta? If so, please include your email \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you wish to have your child's name included on the Wall of Memory on our TCF Atlanta Web Site? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. May we include the above information in the TCF Atlanta Chapter directory? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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Voluntary donations are TCF Atlanta's only source of income. The Compassionate Friends needs to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

**Yes, I want to help with TCF outreach...a donation is enclosed in Memory of** \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to apply my donation toward the following outreach: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ newsletter (2) \_\_\_\_\_ birthday/angel date cards  
(3) \_\_\_\_\_ newly-bereaved packets (4) \_\_\_\_\_ annual candlelight remembrance service (5) \_\_\_\_\_ TCF Atlanta Web site  
(6) \_\_\_\_\_ library (7) \_\_\_\_\_ general expenses

**Make Checks Payable to:** The Compassionate Friends  
**Please return to:** The Compassionate Friends, c/o Jayne Newton (treasurer), 808 Brentway Court, Lilburn, GA 30047  
**Or Make Donations Online by Pay Pal** <http://www.tcfatlanta.org/donationdataform.html>