



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

Linked Together

Newsletter of the Atlanta Chapter Summer 2008

"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
1364 Sanden Ferry Drive
Decatur, GA 30033
Editor: Cindy Durham 770-938-6511
cindy_durham@bellsouth.net

Atlanta Chapter Co-Leaders

Cindy Durham 770-938-6511
cindy_durham@bellsouth.net

Ghakarhi Btembke 678-291-9935
unicorngab@comcast.net

Tamie Dodge 770-982-2251
Dodgecat2001@yahoo.com

Joe Hobbs 770-879-0023
joe.hobbs@cox.com

Atlanta Chapter Co-Leaders, Sibling Group

Jim Dirr 770-729-2816
jdirr@lavista.com

Nina Florence 404-484-2618
JamarrsMyAngel@aol.com

Georgia Regional Coordinator

Muriel Littman 404-603-9942
muriellittman@comcast.net

National TCF Office (Oakbrook, IL)
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**

Summer Chapter Meetings:

**July 8
August 12
September 9**

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!"

122 Names to be Carried on Atlanta Chapter's Walk to Remember Banner

The names of 122 children or siblings of Atlanta Chapter members have been placed on the banner to be carried by chapter members in the annual Walk to Remember at the National TCF Conference this month in Nashville. The conference will be held July 18-20.

The banner will be carried by chapter members attending the conference: Tamie and Dan Dodge, Cindy Durham,

Katie Durham, Trish Maham and Mary Wellman. If other members of the chapter will be attending the conference and participating in the Walk to Remember, please contact Cindy Durham so you can make plans to join the Atlanta group and help carry the banner on Sunday, July 20.

Cindy can be reached at cindy_durham@bellsouth.net.

Kenneth "Shane" Allen
Jon Michael Altier
Sarah Anderson
Julie Studzinski Anglavar
James Avery
Alexis Marie Batastini
Brandon L. Battle
Vernon Philipe' Battle
Robert Adam Belcher
Larry "Bubba" Benis
Michael Ghakarhi-Aleemh Btembke
Cain Brown
Derek L. Brown
Lori K Brown
Dr. Thomas Brown IV
J. R. Bryan
Jessica Lyn Bryl
Cory Alexander Bute
Joey Capron
Henry Robinson Cart
Julian Oliver Carter
Jason Daniel Cirafisi
Michael Coon
Robin Ann Crane
Jason Curnutt
Jessica Erin Davidson
Marcy Dayton
A.J. DeVol
Christopher Dimmick
Matthew A. Dobbs
Jessica Dodge
Joseph "Joey" Edward Doyle
Alan Dressler
Davey Allison Dunavant
James Anthony Durham
Matthew Dwyer
Geoffrey P. Edwards
Shane Ellis
Christopher Faller
Kristin J. Gillis
Toby Michael Gizzonio
Chad Gordon
Shawn Marie Gordon
Steven Mark Grimm
Jenny Gryzinski

Bonnie C. Haddock
David A. Haizlip
Shari Norton Harlan
Shelley Elizabeth Harmon
Billy Hawley
Sarah Ann Henschel
Micki Henderson
Kay Cee Herring
Matthew Christopher Hinson
Christopher Joseph Hobbs
David Michael Hoegler
Tom Holmes
Joshua Samuel Hughes
Carissa Ellen Hunsaker
Kristopher Hundt
Dorothy Jacobs
Kanda Jacobs
Ronnie Jacobs
Corey James
Michelle James
Mathew Jameson
Vanishia Shantee' Jinks
Malachi Jones-Graham
Arthur Jordan
Hannah Grace Keeton
Craig Kelly
Jeff Kelly
Karla Leija
Joey Lee Long
Jason Maham
Robert Malkin
Candi Gaye Marshall
Mathew "Matt" Scott Marshall
Mandi Lynn Mast
Kimberlee McGrew
Norma Mucha
Mike Mucha
Samantha Mucha
Ricky Otter
Brian Parker
Timothy Parker
Robert Parsons
Jefferey A. Patterson
Derrick Plankenhorn



Georgia Wimberly Pierce
Tiffany Hicks Pope
Steven Michael "Mike" Price
William M. "Trey" Price III
Brenden Kyle Rainey
Angela D. Ricci
Ryan Douglas Romanoski
Stephen Louis Roux
William James Sansalone
Melvin Shannon
Phillip Michael Silverman
Christopher Lee Simpson
J. Daniel Smith
Paul Smith
Tammy Renee Smith
Jaime Arin Stefanko
Lynna Greenway-Terry
Amber Leigh Thompson
Evan Throckmorton
Michelle Stanton Turner
Amy Elizabeth Uhland
David Joseph Underwood
Stacey Marie Vindigni
Clinton Walker
Kalie Sierra Watkins
Charlie Wellman
Jacob E. Whitehead
Chip Whitley
Jason Wilshe
Terrell Wilson
Lauren Woodbury
Aaron Michael Woodruff
Randy Wright

July, August and September Birthdays

(On the advice of the TCF national office, we are only including the month and date
– not year – of birthdays and angel dates.)

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthday</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Family</u>
Matt Halloran	July 2	March 11	son	Marti Goldring
Amber Gilstrap	July 3	Nov. 7	daughter	Kathleen Cornog
Me'chelle A. Murphy	July 3	Aug. 7	daughter	Brenda J. Murphy
Tommy Boyert	July 5	Aug. 18	son	Tom and Mary Boyert
Kay Cee Herring	July 7	Dec. 1	daughter	David and Ginny Herring
Christopher Kuzela	July 7	April 24	son	Ed and Pat Kuzela
Jason Curtis	July 8	March 6	son	Sharon Curtis
Jenny Moriarty	July 12	June 16	daughter	Larry Moriarty
Vernon Philipe Battle	July 17	Oct. 18	son	Barbara Knox
Vernon Philipe Battle	July 17	Oct. 18	brother	Glorqua Tarantine
Derric Burgess	July 21	Oct. 25	son	Angel and Robert Burgess
Nicholas Ryan Gardner	July 25	Jan. 9	son	Michelle and Dewey Gardner
Nicholas Ryan Gardner	July 25	Jan. 9	grandson	Pilar Turk
Paul Perry	July 25	July 13	son	Mary L. Perry
Matthew Thomas Crowell	July 27	May 24	son	Barry and Doris Crowell
Arnessa Darlene Royster	July 31	Dec. 3	daughter	Carolyn Gordon
Serenity Emani Watson	July 31	Nov. 10	daughter	Keri Watson
Amanda Irene Smith	Aug. 1	May 29	daughter	Earl and Paulette Cagle
John Sistrunk	Aug. 10	April 16	son	Sarah Smith Sistrunk
Julian Oliver Carter	Aug. 12	May 7	son	Bryan and Julie Carter
Paul Abraham	Aug. 13	June 5	son	Alan and Deborah Abraham
Mashanda Taylor	Aug. 13	Dec. 7	daughter	Michelle Taylor-Scott
Duane Clinton Byrd	Aug. 19	Jan. 2	son	Linda Byrd
Margie Ann Lind	Aug. 21	June 10	daughter	Bette and Bob Lind
Christopher Lee Simpson	Aug. 22	May 9	grandson	Elizabeth Luke
Christopher Lee Simpson	Aug. 22	May 9	son	Tricia and Kenny Simpson
Jennifer Smith	Aug. 24	April 14	daughter	Linda Smith
Brayden Eanes	Aug. 27	Nov. 3	grandson	Al and Jan Pittman
Rachel Diane Trotti	Aug. 27	March 15	daughter	Joy-Lyn and James Trotti
Brayden Michael Eanes	Aug. 28	Nov. 3	son	Kelly Eanes
Brandon Marquis Williams	Aug. 28	March 5	son	Selena Randolph
Thomas 'Tommy' McDonald	Aug. 31	Sept. 22	son	Jerri McDonald
Xavier Khamani Ray	Sept. 7	April 24	son	Stephanie Ray
Michael Hill	Sept. 10	Nov. 10	son	Linda Hill
David W. Burns	Sept. 11	July 2	son	Lydia Burns
Dominic Alan Nwoye	Sept. 13	June 25	son	Juanita Bell
Christopher Robinson	Sept. 15	Dec. 4	son	Freddie Green
Anita Marepally	Sept. 15	April 20	sister	Archana Vemulapalli-Marepally
Mark East	Sept. 22	Jan. 25	son	Jeff East
Jessica Dodge	Sept. 25	Jan. 14	daughter	Dan and Tamie Dodge
Hadiyah Rasheedah Evans	Sept. 25	June 21	daughter	Patricia Evans
Sherry Engel	Sept. 25	Jan. 12	sister	Andrea Huskey
Sherry Engel	Sept. 25	Jan. 12	daughter	Lou Ellen Huskey
Jimmy Ryce	Sept. 26	Sept. 11	brother	Martha Ryce
Georgia Wimberly Pierce	Sept. 29	June 30	daughter	Michael and Anna Pierce
Kawasiki S. Ricks	Sept. 29	June 19	son	Beverly Ricks

July, August and September Angel Dates

(On the advice of the TCF national office, we are only including the month and date – not year – of birthdays and angel dates.)

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>	<u>Birthday</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Family</u>
David W. Burns	July 2	Sept. 11	son	Lydia Burns
George E. Williams III	July 2	Nov. 11	son	Deborah Denise Williams
Meleia Warren Willis-Starbuck	July 7	Oct. 10	daughter	John and Kimberly Starbuck
Paul Perry	July 13	July 25	son	Mary L. Perry
Padraic Dirr	July 15	April 20	son	Jim Dirr
Zekia M. Rhodes	July 17	Nov. 15	granddaughter	Beverly Ricks
Autumn DuBose	July 19	Nov. 5	daughter	John and Faye DuBose
James Anthony Durham	July 22	Dec. 3	son	Cindy Durham
James Anthony Durham	July 22	Dec. 3	brother	Katie Durham
Allen Palmer Shugart	July 23	March 4	son	Kelli and Henry Shugart
Shemariah Tafari Downer	July 25	March 26	son	Barbara H. Forbes
Dr. Thomas Brown IV	July 27	April 8	son	Lillie Brown
Michael Btembke	Aug. 3	April 1	son	Ghakarhi Btembke
Kimberly Florence	Aug. 3	May 23	daughter	Kate Florence
J'Muar Taylor	Aug. 4	Dec. 30	son	Cheryl A. Taylor
Darren Avery	Aug. 7	March 6	stepson	Lillie Austin
Me'chelle A. Murphy	Aug. 7	July 3	daughter	Brenda J. Murphy
Donald Wesley Carithers	Aug. 8	June 10	son	Susan and John Carithers
Reezin N. 'Chip' Swilley, Jr.	Aug. 9	March 18	son	Reezin and Elsie Swilley
Ronnie Keith Batchelor	Aug. 14	Oct. 30	son	Ron and Judy Batchelor
Mandi Lynn Mast	Aug. 15	June 29	daughter	Diane and Daniel Mast
Amanda Kay Rose	Aug. 15	Dec. 17	daughter	Barbara and Jim Sinke Rose
Jason Maham	Aug. 17	April 28	son	Trish Maham
Tommy Boyert	Aug. 18	July 5	son	Tom and Mary Boyert
Clarissa Cuningham	Aug. 20	Dec. 8	daughter	Winston and Judy Cuningham
Brian Patrick Devine	Aug. 21	June 26	son	Eileen and Patrick Devine
Jennifer Gryzinski	Aug. 21	April 7	daughter	Lisa Mary Katz
Annie Hope Shlevin	Aug. 21	March 15	daughter	Barbara Shlevin
J. Daniel Smith	Aug. 26	Nov. 6	son	Judith Smith
Anita Alford	Sept. 2	June 29	daughter	Selma Calaman
Chad Gordon	Sept. 3	May 21	son	Jayne and Wayne Newton
Ashley Butler	Sept. 10	Feb. 9	daughter	Mishell Butler
Spencer McCrea Oedel	Sept. 11	June 10	son	Amy Lighthill
Jimmy Ryce	Sept. 11	Sept. 26	brother	Martha Ryce
Carter Martin	Sept. 12	Nov. 20	son	Scott and Leigh Ann Martin
Mark Cozine	Sept. 14	Nov. 6	son	Anne Franzen
Victor Alfonso Cruz	Sept. 16	Dec. 19	son	Ana Maria Godinez
Thomas 'Tommy' McDonald	Sept. 22	Aug. 31	son	Jerri McDonald
Sharon Elizabeth Zick	Sept. 25	Jan. 12	daughter	Paul and Rebecca Zick
Marcellus Montez Richardson	Sept. 26	Oct. 29	son	Paulette Perry
Michelle Reeves	Sept. 26	Oct. 28	daughter	Jim and BJ Reeves
Ashley Craig	Sept. 27	Dec. 2	son	La Tangie Craig
Bill Hawley	Sept. 27	March 15	son	Bill and Carol Hawley
Bill Hawley	Sept. 27	March 15	brother	Alan Hawley

September Angel Dates -- Continued

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>	<u>Birthday</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Family</u>
David Underwood	Sept. 29	Feb. 4	son	Sunny Underwood
Henry Robinson Cart	Sept. 30	May 27	son	Roberta and Rob Cart
Matthew Meehan	Sept. 30	Feb. 26	son	Michael Meehan
Matthew Meehan	Sept. 30	Feb. 26	son	Vicki Webb

What My World is Like Without You

They say that death changes the way you think,
It changes the way we eat and drink,
It changes the way we plan our lives
It makes us just want to crawl and hide.

Our future is forever now unknown
Each day my heart aches and I groan
There is no sparkle in my eyes
Unless you count those many tears inside.

I wonder what our future will bring
Not the sound of your children singing
No babies to hug, no son to hold
What would it be like growing old?

Your father and I still talk about you
And all the things we thought you'd do
Those dreams are gone, and so is the rest
Of those things in life that you did best.

Love you Ma 6/20/2008

*In memory of my beloved son, David William Burns
Gone four years
Born 9-11-1972 and left us 7-2-2004
We love and miss you so much.*

Lydia R. Burns



Impact Statement Written by Parents

By Kimberly Willis-Starbuck

July 17, 2008, will be the third anniversary of my 19-year-old daughter's death. She was shot and killed by someone she knew. The defendant was just found guilty of Voluntary Manslaughter in a California court.

My husband and I did not choose to attend the trial. My husband prepared a beautiful Impact Statement to be read at sentencing on July 11 explaining who our daughter was. She was a third-year student at Dartmouth College, she had traveled to Cuba, and Vietnam as a high school student. She believed in social justice and she was a beautiful human being both physically and spiritually.

At the last minute, I prepared a short separate Impact Statement. It doesn't talk about my daughter as much as it discusses the pain I experienced losing this incredible person. Knowing that only people who have experienced what we have can truly understand our pain, I want to share the statement with The Compassionate Friends.



My husband has submitted an Impact Statement to the court. It is a beautiful compilation of stories about our daughter. It is important for me to submit a separate statement coming strictly from my perspective as the woman that carried her for nine months and brought her into the world.

I was recently diagnosed with cancer. I attribute this diagnosis to spending the last three years wanting to die. Much of this involved passive thoughts – if I died I would be with Meleia and finally out of the pain I was experiencing. I stopped going to the doctor for check-ups. Being in so much emotional pain, I didn't feel physical pain.

Some of my desire to die wasn't quite so passive. While driving at night, it would hit me that I would never hear her

voice again, or her laugh, never feel her kiss on my cheek, or her arms around my neck as she hugged me. I would not see her graduate from Dartmouth, or graduate school. I would not see her marry or be with her to wipe her forehead during the birth of her children.

I would think these thoughts as I drove home at night on winding country roads. On more than one occasion I seriously considered driving off the road into a tree. I thought that would end all the pain. I would call my husband sobbing and ask his permission to end it all. I never drove into the tree. Instead I got cancer. This is not to suggest that all people who get cancer have a wish to die. However, in my case, I believe my pain and emotional distress caused my cancer.

I still have Meleia's younger brother to raise. He has Asperger's Syndrome and has endured an unbelievable loss – Meleia was more like a mother than a sister. He cannot lose his remaining mother.

And what about Christopher Hollis, the person who stole my daughter from me? I wish for him to remain in jail for the maximum time allowed. I do have some qualms regarding this decision. I don't feel that jail rehabilitates and I do feel that it is an evil place where people fester and get worse. The thought that keeps coming into my head regarding Hollis is that if he could cause the death of someone he called his sister and proclaimed to "love," what would this individual do to someone who evoked his anger?

Nothing will bring Meleia back. To survive this cancer I have to come to terms with living a full life without her. I am still working toward that goal. I just don't want another parent experiencing what I have endured these last three years because I failed to voice my concerns to the court.

Sorting

By Paula Moore Hurtt

For most of five years she sorted.

One must sort through the papers . . . medical bills in this stack, condolence notes in another, bank statements, retirement benefits, death benefits, life insurance . . . so much paper.

Hours and days she sat at the kitchen table crying and sorting.

"Still sorting?" we would ask.

"Yes," she would say through her tears, "there is just so much."

On and on through the first year she sorted. . . court papers, sympathy cards, letters from friends, tax forms, her kitchen table still piled high with papers.

"Still sorting?" we'd ask.

"Yes, she'd sigh, "There is just so much."

And on through the second year she sorted . . . suits to Goodwill, sweaters and shirts to her grandsons, tee shirts to the granddaughters to wear in the dorm.

"Still sorting?" we'd ask, noticing the house in disarray as it never was when he was alive.

"Yes," she'd answer wistfully. "There is just so much."

And through the third and fourth years she sorted . . . guns and tools, cuff links and tie tacks, golf clubs and fishing poles. Nothing was thrown out or left to chance as the house remained cluttered with his things.

"Is she okay?" we began to ask. "Why does she take so long? Will she ever finish? Can't she get on with her life? Why this endless sifting and sorting of the things he left behind?"

"Still sorting?" we'd ask impatiently.

"You don't understand. There's just so much."

But, now we do understand . . . as we sort. Comforted by her things around us we laugh and cry as we consider each item. And sometimes we find the treasures . . . a scarf that still smells of her, a letter she forgot to mail, a diary we won't read, pictures of her as a girl, a young wife, a new mother.

It's been more than a year now, but we are in no hurry to finish the job, because there is just so much . . . and then no more.

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<http://www.bereavementmag.com/magazine/archives>



Nothing Lasts Forever

Our days on earth we try
to find a bit of joy,
To hold within our arms,
what time cannot destroy.

Like petals in the wind,
we drift from here to there,
Because nothing lasts forever,
except for what we share.

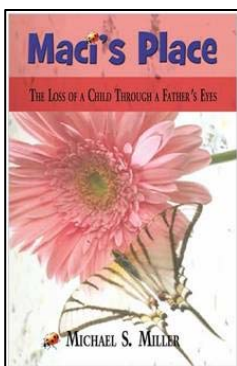
And even though we hold
a dream within each heart,
It's in human nature's way
to tear it all apart.

And so it is we strive
in faith to carry on,
after all is said and done,
when what we've loved is gone.

But if we can contain
some peace within our mind,
Our heart will surely follow,
and happiness we'll find.

*Written by Mark Lee and submitted by Pam Gnanamani in
memory of her brother, Dan Prescott*

New Book Focuses on Grief Process for Fathers After Losing a Child



Losing a child is the most devastating thing that can ever happen to anyone. Learning to live with that loss is equally devastating.

Mike Miller, a member of The Compassionate Friends of West Phoenix has written a book, "Maci's Place," that is intended for men suffering from the loss of their child. He says the book also

will be helpful to women who are trying to understand their spouses' feelings after losing a child.

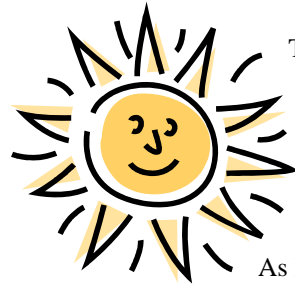
He says the book is available through Barnes & Noble's Web site, as well as other online bookstores. He suggests searching on the book's title, "Maci's Place – The loss of a Child through a Father's Eyes."

Miller can be contacted at:
mike.miller@primosolutionsllc.com

Summer Memories

Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country: vacations, holidays, family reunions, relaxed days at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mowed grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him.



The summer solstice on June 21 was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year.

As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST), I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year. Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light...the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience.

We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship. Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night. We light candles, take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions. Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, Texas*

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

*In Loving Memory of Our Children~
Susan Van Vleck, Marietta TCF Chapter*

On July 18, 1992, two police officers came to our door with news that no parent expects or wants to hear. "We are sorry to inform you that your son was killed by a suspected drunk driver tonight."

SHOCK~ My first reaction was disbelief. How could Marc be dead? He has his whole life ahead of him. He was driving a friend home and I was waiting up for him. No, this can't be! But it was the harsh reality that I could not fathom at that moment that caused me to slip into the nice protective overcoat named "SHOCK." Thank goodness for the "shock" factor because that is what allowed me to make the necessary arrangements for the days that were to follow.

ANGER~ From the minute I was told that Marc had died I was angry with God. I talked, screamed and wrote in my journal about being so mad that God did not protect us under His umbrella that I thought was in place for our family. No, I do not believe that God planned for Marc to die at age 19 or even that it was God's will. It has taken me years to understand that we, all of us, have "free will" and one 42-year-old man used his "free will" to drink and drive that fateful night that killed our son within one mile of our home.

BARGAINING~The funeral was held here and a week later we drove home to Topeka, Kan., where we had a Memorial Service for friends and family. We drove back to Georgia arriving late one night after the 14-hour drive. I unpacked a few things in the kitchen while my husband was upstairs taking a shower. When I had finished I tried to climb the stairs, but I froze and then fell grasping at the carpet on the stairs sobbing loudly in the entryway. I cried out to God asking, "why didn't He take me instead?" I told him he could make the change right here, right now and no one would ever know the difference.

PAIN~As the shock began to wear off, I felt the intense excruciating pain. It was so deep and cut like a knife. I

thought that the pain was going to kill me it hurt so bad. It felt like someone had ripped my heart out. I felt gutted and empty inside. I was surprised to learn that grief is not just about feeling sad. When you experience grief, there is a real physical pain and mine was in my chest that hurt for many months every waking moment. I remember I wanted to die. More importantly I wanted to be with Marc.

TEARS~ I did not know there were so many different ways to cry or different sounds one could make while crying. I would be sitting in my chair and begin to cry and invariably I would end up on the floor, face down in the carpet crying my eyes out. At other times, I rocked back and forth sobbing so hard and speaking gibberish that even I could not understand what I was saying. Our older son told me that I even cried in my sleep because he had heard me one night.

DEPRESSION~ I kept the drapes drawn that first year and withdrew from the world. I was like a frightened animal huddled in a corner. My first thought upon waking each morning was that Marc was dead. I would curl up in a fetal position and cry. I had trouble concentrating, remembering things and making decisions. My mind would wander constantly. I had no energy – none – zip! I remember being so proud of myself the time that I completed mopping my kitchen floor that had taken me three days to do.

RECONCILIATION~ For me, it has been about "leaning into my pain" and stumbling around in the dark searching and trying different ways to cope since the death of our son, Marc. I read grief books, I journal, I attend bereavement seminars, I visit the cemetery and most importantly, I cry.

"DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT" – but stand toe to toe with the beast called grief! Do not be afraid of your thoughts, feelings, and pain. They are ALL normal reactions to the death of your dear child. Instead I ask you to wrestle grief down to the ground, screaming, kicking and crying until you have made grief your equal and more manageable.

I heard a speaker say, "We did not expect to outlive our child, but we can make a choice as to whether we will become bitter or better with the time we have left." Let's begin to take control of our life, picking up the pieces and make the choice to be a better person. If not for ourselves, let's do it for our children.

A Journey to the 'New Normal'

This article was originally published in the summer of 1995 in the TCF Stages Newsletter. It was written by Karen Snepp of Frisco, Texas.

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling Dave died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would

have been celebrating Dave's 40th birthday with a big party, and I'd be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snepp men before him. Instead, I'll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I'll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memories of how he died. I can't recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie "Big," starring Tom Hanks, and "lost it" when his mother stared out the window wondering if she'd ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn't lose it.
- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Wash., in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one-way street in downtown Chicago – it might be smart to have a friend drive you to your first few TCF meetings!
- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I've heard other TCF members call this their "roller coaster ride."
- For a year, I couldn't keep the radio on if "Wind Beneath My Wings" came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!
- With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I'd never be "back to normal." My focus instead shifted to finding my "new normal." While I can't point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), THAT was a milestone.
- For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn't put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.
- It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don't have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid "landmark" to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad's father's death in December 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather's apartment, and I came across a pile of

postcards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a "blind side" such as that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn't know I still had! I saved a few of the postcards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn't feel the need to hang onto them.

It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave's death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that "new normal."

July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was she
Having been, and left her mark.
A glorious incandescent life,
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of
my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
With love that never dies.

Sally Migliaccio, TCF Babylon, Long Island, N.Y.

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 Tamie Dodge at 770-982-2251 or Dodgecat2001@yahoo.com

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.

In Loving Memory of Michael Btembke, from his father Ghakarhi Btembke, Norcross, GA
In Loving Memory of Jeremy Frank, from his mother Sheila Frank, Alpharetta, GA
In Loving Memory of Ryan Jones, from his parents Stephen and Rachel Jones, Cumming, GA

In Loving Memory of J. Daniel Smith, from his mother Judith M. Smith, Tucker, GA
In Loving Memory of Todd Stien, from his mother Lorann Stien, Eau Claire, WI
In Loving Memory of Joey Capron, from his mother Carmen J. Capron, Chamblee, GA

In Loving Memory of Ashley Craig, from her mother La Tangie Craig, Hampton, GA
In Loving Memory of Stephanie Weber, from her parents John and Cecilia Weber, Roswell, GA

In Loving Memory of Bill and Billy Snapp
from
Robert P. Duffy and Marcia L. Foshee-Duffy, Dunwoody, GA
Tonda and Michael Miller, Indianola, IL
Muriel M. Soileau, Conyers, GA
James R. Burrell and Nancy Johnson, Conyers, GA
Marcia J. Lambert, Georgetown, IL
Diana C. and Peter White, Chicago, IL
Connie R. Davis, Danville, IL
Robert and Amy Gillingham, Hinckley, OH
Jayne and Wayne Newton, Lilburn, GA
Paul and Christine Predick, Mount Prospect, IL
Kirby and Ronnie Knutson, Love Park, IL
Tim and Katie Crowley, Loveland, OH
Jerry and Gail Ward, Bluffton, SC
Linda Anderson, Danville, IL
Laura A. Kaster, Princeton, NJ
Rich Coker, Kent, WA
Barney and Ellen Coltman, Buford, GA
David and Leigh Garza, Conyers, GA
Ann and Nelson Sechrist, Snellville, GA
Don and Bonnie Wostratzky, West Chicago, IL
David and Sandra Brown, Ridge Farm, IL
Weyman Johnson, Athens, GA
David Sisson, Dayton, OH
Steve Forsyth, Peachtree City, 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 _____

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>



®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



The Compassionate Friends Atlanta Chapter
1364 Sanden Ferry Drive
Decatur, GA 30033

Honoring 28 Years of Support and Friendship for
Bereaved Families

Summer 2008 Newsletter