



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Fall 2010

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.”

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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 12, November 9, and December 14

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.*

In This Newsletter...

Candlelight Service 2010.....	3
Candlelight Service Set for December 4, 2010.....	3
Overview of the “Dads – The Forgotten Parent” Workshop.....	5
Candlelight Remembrance Service Order Form	6
Announcements.....	7
New Leadership Sought for Atlanta Chapter	7
Conquering Childhood Cancer One Day at a Time	7
Selma Calaman to Serve as Community Outreach Coordinator	8
TCF Parents to Visit Georgia State University Class.....	9
Angels Across The USA Alan Pedersen Concert	9
TCF National Conference 2010: Walk to Remember	10
Grief & Healing.....	11
Parenting Through a Glass Partition — After the Death of a Child.....	11
Halloween.....	12
Chanukah Then and Now	12
To My Miscarried Baby	13
The Fourth Christmas	13
Siblings Walking Together	14
Siblings Walking Together (<i>Formerly the Sibling Credo</i>).....	14
Meet Atlanta Sibling Co-Leader: Rachel Yelk Woodruff	14
Ten Healing Rights for Grieving Children	15
What Are We Waiting For?	16
My Sister	16
I'm Not Contagious.....	17
Autumn.....	18
Reflections: Our Memories	19
Poems for Nikki.....	19
<i>September Sunset</i>	19
<i>Hearing Whispers from Heaven</i>	19
Waiting for the Music to Return.....	19
Milestones	20
The Hawk	20
Kyle's 2 nd Angel Date: October 2 nd 2010.....	21
Heaven's Very Special Child.....	22
First Thanksgiving	22
Beautiful Katherine.....	22
Our Children's & Siblings' Births Remembered	23
Our Children's & Siblings' Angel Dates Remembered	25
Stay Connected	26
TCF National Organization Now on Facebook	26
TCF Atlanta: The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta is also on Facebook.	26
Sign up for The Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter.....	26
Gifts of Love.....	27
TCF Credo	27
TCF Atlanta: Membership Form	28

Candlelight Service Set for December 4, 2010



Be sure your calendars are marked for our chapter's annual Candlelight Service, to be held Saturday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m.

Kelly Farley, a bereaved father who experienced the loss of his two children over an 18-month period, will be our parent speaker.

Dr. Heidi Horsley, a licensed psychologist and social worker who lost her younger brother when she was 20 years old, will be the sibling speaker.

Parent Speaker

Kelly Farley lost his daughter Katie in 2004 and son Noah in 2006. Both losses were due to severe fetal abnormalities. During that time, he realized that there is a lack of support services available to fathers suffering a loss of a child. As a result of that realization, he is working on his first book as a resource for grieving dads. He created and maintains a website for this project at www.GrievingDads.com.

He also has written several articles on the subject of men's grief and has traveled throughout North America to interview other grieving dads in order to create a book that captures the experiences of other men on this journey. Farley writes about many of these experiences on his blog at www.GrievingDads.wordpress.com. The book will be completed by early 2011 and is expected to highlight 30 to 40 real-life inspirational stories from dads who have survived the loss of a child. He is on a mission to bring awareness to dads' grief and provide hope to the many men who often grieve in silence due to societal expectations.

Afternoon Workshop for Dads

In addition to speaking that Saturday evening, Farley will conduct a "dads only" workshop on the afternoon of Dec. 4, just prior to the Candlelight Service. The workshop, titled "Dads – The Forgotten Parent," will run from 5-6 p.m. at the First Christian Church of Atlanta. In

addition to a presentation by Farley, this will be a sharing session for dads attending the program.

Sandwiches will be provided for dads who participate in the 5 p.m. workshop. To help us get a count of how many dads to expect, please e-mail cindy_durham@bellsouth.net to let us know you will attend. See separate article in this newsletter for more detail.

Farley also will be interviewing two or three dads from our chapter earlier in the day – for inclusion in the book he is writing.

For more information about his "Grieving Dad" project, click on the links below:

- Website -- www.GrievingDads.com
- Blog – <http://grievingdads.wordpress.com/>

Sibling Speaker

Dr. Heidi Horsley is a licensed psychologist and social worker. She is co-founder and executive director for the Open to Hope Foundation. She hosts Open to Hope Radio, and is an adjunct professor at Columbia University. Dr. Horsley worked on a longitudinal study for the FDNY-Columbia University Family Guidance Program, providing ongoing intervention to families of firefighters killed in the World Trade Center. She has been interviewed on numerous radio shows and appeared on the national show 20/20.

She says, "At the age of 20, my world was suddenly turned upside down when my 17-year-old brother Scott, and cousin Matthew were killed together in an automobile accident. My brother was part of my past and present and I expected to grow old with him. It was devastating to lose him before his time.

"Since society tends to focus on parents' grief, I often felt overlooked, unacknowledged and ignored as I struggled through my own grief. I also worried about my parents and felt the need to be strong for them, and so I often grieved alone. This experience is not unique, and many of the siblings I have worked with over the years have expressed similar sentiments."

She said, "Much of the work I do today is a tribute to Scott and the life he lived. Over the years I have discovered that while my brother's death defined my life, in no way did it destroy my life. Eventually I went on to – not only survive – but to find joy and hope again. While I am poorer for having lost Scott, I am so much richer for ever having known him. Scott remains with me forever in my heart, my soul and my memories, and he will always be my brother."



Left to right: Dr. Gloria C. Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley. This mother-daughter team, both of whom are psychologists, address bereavement on Open to Hope Radio. Dr. Gloria Horsley talks about loss from the parent perspective, while her daughter talks about it from the sibling perspective.

Candles Will 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 another 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. Or, mail your photo to:

Dan Bryl
7428 Vista Way, # 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, Poinsettia or Christmas Cactus to be used in the decorating for the Candlelight Service.

If you would like to order a centerpiece/plant 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.

Funding the Candlelight Service

While these Candlelight programs are very special, they also are expensive. We rely on contributions from our chapter members to help us with speaker expenses and other costs associated with this program. If you can send even a small contribution toward Candlelight Service expenses, it would be greatly appreciated.

Your contribution can be added to your centerpiece order (see enclosed form) or simply mailed to our Atlanta Chapter treasurer. Checks should be made payable to Atlanta Chapter of TCF and mailed to:

Atlanta Chapter, TCF
Attn: Jayne Newton
808 Brentway Court
Lilburn, GA 30047



Overview of the “Dads – The Forgotten Parent” Workshop

To be held Saturday, Dec. 4, 5-6 p.m., immediately prior to the Candlelight Service.



This workshop by Kelly Farley is designed to allow for interactive discussion throughout the workshop. Open dialogue and participation is encouraged, but not required. The workshop – which will be open to dads only – will touch on the following topics:

Awareness:

It’s important to recognize what dads deal with after the loss of a child. This workshop will identify many of the issues dads face.

You Are Not Alone:

Identifying the issues that dads face will help dads not feel so alone in their grief. Many men will not talk about what they went through or how they feel out of fear of being perceived as “weak.” This workshop is designed to let dads know that they are not alone. We will spend some time discussing this issue so the dads at the workshop will realize that others often feel and think in very similar ways.

Open and Honest:

The workshop will address the power of speaking honestly about what you are feeling and the many emotions you experience. Working on speaking honestly allows you to become “open and honest” to others as well as yourself.

Learning this one skill can start you on the long road to healing.

Empower Dads:

Before you can be open and honest, one has to become empowered. This workshop will teach dads how to become empowered to take control of this grief journey we all must travel.

Cope With the Pain:

We will discuss many of the ways one can cope with the pain we feel. This will be more of an open discussion as to what has worked for others in the workshop and from what I have learned from other dads I have met throughout this project.

Ways to “get it out”:

This will be more of a brainstorm session where I will share things I did to help me release some of the pain I was feeling. Participants will also be encouraged to share with the other dads in the workshop as to what is helping (or helped) them with “getting it out.”



Candlelight Remembrance Service Order Form



Atlanta (Tucker) Chapter

30th Annual
Candlelight Remembrance Service
Saturday, December 4, 2010
Centerpieces, Poinsettias and
Christmas Cactus for Sale

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

We will display a sign "In Memory of Your
Child/Sibling/Grandchild" next to each sponsored item.

This year's centerpiece will be a candy cane wreath and a clear-glass ornament with your child's picture in it. For display at the Candlelight Service, the wreath will lay at the base, with the ornament hanging above from the hook. You later could assemble the ornament into the wreath as shown in the top photo. You will need to provide us with a photo of your child (either a digital photo or hard copy) to be scanned for placement into the ornament.



After the reception, you can take the centerpiece or flowers home with you as a special remembrance. If you cannot attend the candlelight service, your candy cane wreath or flowers will be donated to a newly-bereaved family to take home after the reception.

The cost of a centerpiece, Poinsettia or Christmas Cactus is \$30. Please consider adding an additional contribution to this fee, to help cover speaker and other Candlelight Service costs. 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)

Card will read: Sponsored "In Memory of _____"

I want to sponsor a: _____centerpiece _____Poinsettia _____Christmas Cactus

Please check: _____ \$30 (centerpiece/Poinsettia/Cactus) \$_____ 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/flowers is Nov. 15. If you are ordering more than one centerpiece/flowers, please complete a separate form for each Memory Card. Questions? Call Cindy Durham at 770-938-6511 or e-mail cindy_durham@bellsouth.net.

New Leadership Sought for Atlanta Chapter

By Cindy Durham

This is a hard column to write, as our Atlanta Chapter of TCF means a great deal to me. It has been a good place where I could work through the heartache following the death of my son, Tony, in July 2004. And, it's been one of the places that have helped me turn the corner from only focusing on the fact that he died – and to gradually be able to also celebrate that he lived.

I still grieve Tony's death, and I will always wish that I could have watched him continue to grow into adulthood – to see him happily settled wherever life took him. But, that wasn't to be. In those early days, I couldn't envision life six years down the road. And, yet, here we are today.

For nearly five years now, I've served as one of your chapter leaders. While I wish I had never needed to know about The Compassionate Friends, I'm grateful that I found this group. It's important to so many people.

But, at some point, it's time to step aside and allow a new chapter member to take the lead. And, as hard as change can be, some changes are good. They allow for new ideas and new energy.

In recent months, I've taken on added responsibilities at work and that role is going to require more of my time in the coming year. I am not going to be able to commit to being at monthly meetings, although I will plan to attend as often as possible.

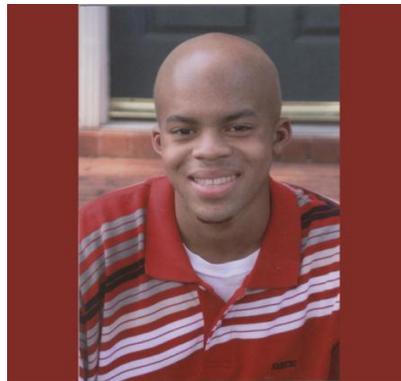
I have told our Steering Committee that I will continue in this role until the end of December. My hope is that someone from this chapter will step forward to take the lead, beginning in January. If that person can be identified soon, it will give us a nice transition period.

So, I ask you to give this some prayerful consideration. Are you at a point in your grief journey where you can step forward to lend a hand to others? I can promise you that you will also be helping yourself – even as you are helping others.

I'd be happy to meet and talk with anyone who might consider this role. You'll have a committed group of Steering Committee members to back you up and I'll be happy to serve as a resource person to whoever steps forward. Please e-mail or call if this is something you'd like to talk about. Thank you!

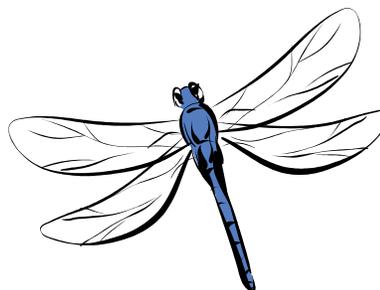
cindy_durham@bellsouth.net or 770-938-6511.

Conquering Childhood Cancer One Day at a Time



It is not too late to join in the fight against childhood cancer although SEPTEMBER was National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. As a participant in the "CURE's Kids Conquer Cancer One Day at a Time" initiative, on Tuesday, September 7, 2010, Herbert Shaw, Jr. was honored. CURE Childhood Cancer featured his story on its website (www.curechildhoodcancer.org), its blog (www.curechildhoodcancerblog.wordpress.com), and on www.firstgiving.com/2010curekidherbertshaw.

The goal is to raise \$1,000 on Herbert's day in his memory to help fund research that will lead to better treatments and cures for pediatric cancers. Get the facts. Cancer continues to be the number one disease killer of children in our country. Together, we can make curing childhood cancer as urgently important as it should be. October 21st is Herbert's birthday. What better way to honor him than a gift towards conquering childhood cancer. Donations can be made through December 2010 at www.firstgiving.com/2010curekidherbertshaw.



Selma Calaman to Serve as Community Outreach Coordinator

By Cindy Durham

In addition to serving the families who attend our monthly TCF meetings, our chapter has a vital role to play in ensuring that others in the community who need to find TCF, do learn about our chapter. That is the role that Selma Calaman, our chapter's Community Outreach Coordinator, plays. I'm grateful to Selma for stepping forward to serve in this role.

Over time, she plans to distribute brochures throughout the community about our TCF chapter. She also is organizing a series of monthly fellowship activities for members of our chapter. This will give chapter members a chance to gather informally in an atmosphere of friendship and support.

Selma says this role in our chapter has given her "a renewed sense of purpose." She said, "I see this role providing opportunities for me to make a positive difference by reaching out to others in ways that provide encouragement for our grieving parents, as well as a forum to enlighten their families, friends and the general public on ways they can 'take time to give a care.'"

The group's first fellowship activity took the form of a pleasant Sunday afternoon dinner at O'Charley's on Aug. 29, and was an uplifting experience enjoyed by all who attended. The September meeting was held at Wonderland Gardens Park during one of the Friday Night Jazz programs.

Selma's goal is to coordinate a monthly fellowship activity for our bereaved families and expand our chapter's mission to encourage and support our newest members. She describes the concept behind the fellowship program as PEACE:

Parents
Encouraging
Acknowledging and
Comforting
Each other.

To be added to her e-mail list for news about future PEACE gatherings, e-mail Selma at: outreach@tcfatlanta.org.

Selma says, "Our goal is to help each other find a sense of peace and comfort through consistent opportunities for us to lift up, inspire, strengthen and encourage each other as we 'walk' together on this life-changing, treacherous journey called grief. As Maya Angelou said, 'We are living art, created to help others, to hang on, to stand up, forebear and continue.'"

She says that plans are underway to distribute information packets to churches, funeral homes, corporate personnel departments, the DeKalb County school system and social services organizations, such as The Salvation Army. She also plans to submit articles to local media organizations about chapter activities, and will look for opportunities for speaking engagements in the local community.

She said, "I look forward to working with our chapter leadership, creating avenues for our chapter to expand our outreach efforts, increase public awareness and maximize our positive impact on bereaved families, communities and the public at large."



October PEACE Fellowship Event

What: PEACE Fellowship Picnic*

When: Saturday, October 16, 2010, 3:00 PM

Where: Wonderland Gardens

**Note: Each family is responsible for their picnic meal. Visit the Wonderland Gardens website for directions: <http://wonderlandgardens.net/contact-wonderland/directions/>*

TCF Parents to Visit Georgia State University Class

By Cindy Durham

Next month, a group of four Atlanta Chapter members will be visiting a graduate-level class at Georgia State University to share with students who are studying to become teachers.

Dr. Elizabeth A. Steed, Ph.D., assistant professor and program coordinator, early childhood special education in the Department of Special Education and Educational Psychology at GSU, invited us to visit her class last year. It was a good experience all the way around – for us and for the students. And, we’ve been invited back again – on Oct. 26. Joining me for this visit will be Abigail Arthur-Chillman, Mary Ann Davis and Brigid Fintak.

The focus that evening will be special needs and medically-fragile children. I want to thank those parents from our Atlanta Chapter who have agreed to share their stories with Dr. Steed’s students. It is our hope that, by sharing with them and telling them about our TCF Chapter, that we can contribute something valuable toward their education. Hopefully, what they learn from us will benefit other parents down the road.



Angels Across The USA

Alan Pedersen Concert

Reprinted with permission by the Marietta Chapter of the Compassionate Friends

Tuesday, November 2, 2010
First Baptist Church
148 Church Street, Marietta
7:00 PM

“When we lose a parent, we lose part of our past. When we lose a spouse, we lose part of our present. Losing a child means we lose part of our future.”

That is how Alan Pedersen felt when his 18-year-old daughter, Ashley was killed in a traffic accident in August 2001. Alan struggled with anger and grief until he decided to devote his songwriting skills and his life to healing the wound left by his daughter’s death. Alan Pedersen is an award-winning songwriter, successful recording artist and nationally recognized speaker on grief and loss. He travels around the country, playing music and speaking for families who have lost children. We are happy to welcome Alan again this year to perform his inspirational music at our November meeting. Alan’s current tour is titled “Angels Across the USA.” For information about his nationwide tour and the opportunity to support Alan’s efforts by sponsoring your “angel,” go to www.angelsacrosstheusa.com or to Alan’s web page www.everashleymusic.com.

Darcie Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS... says: “An evening with Alan Pedersen is an experience like none other. He will make you laugh, he may make you cry, he will surely give you some things to think about, but most of all you will be gently guided to that most sacred and healing place of sweet remembrance.”

TCF National Conference 2010: Walk to Remember

More than 135 names were carried on the Atlanta Chapter's 2010 Walk to Remember Banner at the National TCF Conference in July. The banner was carried by chapter members: Candace Walker, along with Mitch Carmody, Ingrid Otter, Kelly Jameson, Kristy and David Turner, Pat Bradley and Denise Armstrong.



Recordings of Workshops and Programs Now Available from TCF 33rd National Conference

If you were unable to attend the conference, recordings of workshops and programs are now available from the conference. Recordings of many of the workshops, as well as the opening, closing, and Friday and Saturday banquet programs from the 33rd Compassionate Friends National Conference are now available for purchase by our chapter members.

These recordings are perfect: if you weren't able to attend the conference, but want to hear keynote speakers or specific workshops you find of interest, or if you attended the conference but want to relive some of the high points or listen to workshops you were not able to attend.

The opening program, Friday afternoon banquet program, Saturday evening banquet program including the candle lighting, and the Sunday Closing Program are each available on DVD video for \$20 (\$6 for shipping for entire order of three or fewer DVDs). Or you can purchase the entire four program set for \$69 (plus \$10 shipping). Audio version-only is available for less.

Each workshop is \$7 on audio CD (or MP3 for download). You can purchase as many single workshops as you wish on CD and pay just \$6 total for shipping. Or, you can purchase all 59 workshops complete on CD at \$299 (plus \$10 shipping), a savings of \$114 off the \$413 regular price. The complete set also is available in MP3 format on three 1GB flash drives. Workshops recorded include a wide variety of grief topics related to the death of a child. Sibling workshops are not available due to privacy concerns.

To learn more and to order, visit www.freshpublishing.com. Then click on "Conferences" and "2010" and TCF's Conference logo. Workshops may become available via MP-3 download. Watch the order page for updates or TCF's national website conference page.



Parenting Through a Glass Partition — After the Death of a Child

By Alice J. Wisler

Reprinted from the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends, "We Need Not Walk Alone" Fall 2002. Copyright 2001-2010

Alice J. Wisler's son, Daniel, died from cancer treatments in 1997 at the age of four. In his memory, she writes and speaks, conducting "Writing the Heartache" workshops across the country. <http://www.alicewisler.com/>

Raising children and being bereaved makes me feel like I did when I was six years old. My red tights bagged around my ankles, I often had doggy poop on the bottom of my scuffed patent-leather shoes, and I was constantly running to catch the bus. Now, as a mother of three living children and one who died, I feel overwhelmed, forgetful and, to use a word my aunt Mollie often said, discombobulated.

At the fast food restaurant, my children laugh in the play area as I sit drinking coffee behind the glass partition that separates the play area from the dining section. While I have hugged them so tightly their tonsils could pop out, I am still, much of the time, finding myself watching them from a distance. They are mine but so was Daniel, and in the course of a moment I know they could be gone, as he is.

When Rachel, 11, was late coming home from a shopping trip with her grandmother, I thought they had been tied up in traffic, but then my mind leaped off into an insane spin and I was certain she'd been in an accident. My thoughts dove into planning her funeral.

She came home without a scratch, and I gulped my worries away — for the moment.

When my children say, "I love you, Mom," and spontaneously wrap their arms around me, I'm certain this could be the end.

"So you live in fear?" a friend asks.

Well, no. I live in reality.

My reality is hearing my children call "Hi, Daniel" when we drive on Interstate 40 near Exit 270, where there's a view of Daniel's Place, what my children have named the cemetery. Ben, at five, older than his older brother ever got to be, asks which of our toys Daniel liked to play with and with a smile on his face, listens as I share a story about Daniel and the Fisher Price fishing rod. Elizabeth, age four, tells me out of the blue that Daniel isn't dead; he lives with God. Later, she hugs me and says she wishes Daniel was here. She's never been photographed with her oldest brother. She kicked in the womb as Daniel breathed his last. Three months later, this failed-vasectomy child was

born. I was certain she'd be severely traumatized, but so far, at age four; she has only been known to tell the neighbor girl she doesn't like her.

My reality is that a part of my heart wanted to be childless when Daniel died so that I could have time to weep and wail without having to meet the demands of exasperated cries, without having to wipe little bottoms and without having to search for tiny shoes and socks. When infant Liz used to wake crying months after Daniel's death, I'd hold her and we'd sob together.

The hole in my heart looms large today. The new school year and Daniel's birthday are just around the corner. I finish my coffee and tell my kids it's time to attend the Open House. While grinning at my children and me, a friend exclaims, "One in middle school, one in kindergarten, and one in preschool! You will be busy." I paste on a phony smile and think, not busy enough. I need my fourth grader. But Daniel, my would-be-nine-year-old, died four years ago before completing a year of preschool.

When we arrive home from the Open House, Ben trips onto the pavement while playing ball and I hold him as he cries and his knee bleeds. Whispering, I assure him, "It is going to be okay." What a luxury to be able to tell my children this line of comfort. For Daniel, with the cancer treatments he had to go through, it was not "okay." Although I prayed daily he'd be cured, it was beyond my control. A scraped knee will heal.

How do we do it? How do we continue living the role of the nurturing and loving parent with the enormous responsibilities, when at times, we can barely put one foot in front of the other?

Here are some tips that have worked for fellow bereaved parents and me:

- *Take breaks.* This is easier said than done, I know. But I believe you need more breaks than before the death of your child. Your energy for living has been depleted. If you're home all day with the demands of little ones as I have been, you need time alone. If your spouse is at home all day with the children, he or she needs a break.
- *Let anger out in a constructive way.* When you find you're constantly yelling at the kids, it's time to figure out another release for anger. Play basketball, go on a walk or bike ride. Shut yourself in a room and write. Use your pent-up frustration to pull weeds in the garden or sweep the garage.
- *Learn to apologize — often.* When you do find yourself unreasonably upset with your children, apologize for your reactions. Grief can make you irrational.

- *Hug your kids more* — even if the older ones whine and don't want you to. They know now as we do how important hugs and showing our affection really are.
- *Talk it out.* Tell your children why you are feeling sad or discouraged. If you're having a frustrating day, let them know. Even my little ones could understand that "Mommy or Daddy is sad because she/he misses Daniel."
- *Spend time with the kids* — one on one — if possible. Just you and your daughter can go shopping or out for ice cream. Don't force talk of her dead brother or sister. Just be together for the sake of spending time together. We focus a lot on our deceased children; our living children need to feel valued, too.
- *Don't stifle your children* as they grow and grieve in their own ways.
- *Write love letters* to your surviving children. Sometimes it is easier to convey feelings on paper. Give the letters to your kids or keep them to reread later.
- *Share your child who died.* He is a part of the family and his story needs to be told.

Don't fear your "glass partition" view of parenting. As with the other phases and experiences of grief, honor it and don't fight it.

You are modeling survival. Even as your tears flow and you are overcome with sorrow, your children can learn this is okay. They will also reflect (although it may be years later) that Mom got out of bed, made us breakfast, shopped for school supplies, and went to our soccer games even when she didn't feel like it. They will learn life is tough and even when the storms hit the hardest, it is possible to live through them.

Believe your surviving children will be all right even as they see you suffering and as they face their own monumental pain. In time, they may learn a deeper sensitivity. Perhaps they will become more compassionate because of their experiences. You can guarantee they're more realistic. Your son or daughter might even become a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. (We can still dream, can't we?)

I have to remember that although once laid-back, I was never the perfect parent before Daniel died. I had vices and virtues then, just as I have now. Perhaps grief has helped us become better aware of what we are all about. Listen. There are many negatives, but there is much to smile about now, too. Devotion made us caring and loving parents before, and it can carry us through during this rocky road of bereavement. There is the ability to parent effectively through the glass partition.

~~~~~

## Halloween

—WINTERSUN by Sascha

It is here, this day of merriment and children's pleasure.  
 Gremlins and goblins  
 and ghosties at the door  
 of your house.  
 And the other children  
 come to the door of your mind.  
 Faces out of the past,  
 small ghosts with sweet, painted faces.  
 They do not shout.  
 Those children  
 who no longer march laughing  
 on cold Halloween night,  
 they stand at the door of your mind —  
 and you will let them in,  
 so that you can give them  
 the small gifts of Halloween —  
 a smile and a tear.



## Chanukah Then and Now

By Stephanie Hesse

TCF Rockland County, New York  
 TCF North Palm Beach County

Then — Chanukah was always a special and joyous holiday in our home. Peter, Carol, Linda, and I gathered around the dining room table, lit three menorahs, and sang the blessings. We had a repertoire of songs and we took turns choosing the song we would sing next. We especially enjoyed teasing Peter with one song that added a verse each night. At least once during the holidays, we had potato latkes (pancakes) which Linda loved.

Sometimes when the girls were at college, they would call and we would sing the blessings long distance. We usually had at least one party with extended family and friends celebrating our heritage and our connectedness.

Now — I light one menorah in the kitchen. If Carol is home, she joins me, but Peter chooses not to participate. The tears no longer stream down my face as they did the first year, but my voice quavers as I sing the familiar words.

There are no latkes just as there aren't some of her other favorites on other days. I have guests on other occasions but there are no Chanukah parties. Although Chanukah brings little happiness at this time, perhaps there will be joy and laughter in the future. But for now, I'm doing what is right for me and coping as well as I can.

# To My Miscarried Baby

By Betty Ruder

Reprinted from TCF, North Shore Chapter Illinois

Out of our love you came.  
Planned, wanted, welcomed.  
Your announcement created excitement, joy.

Friends and family inquired,  
Do you want a girl or boy?  
Will you take Lamaze?  
What colors for the nursery?

Then suddenly you're gone — and silence.  
No one talks about a baby that won't be.

Were you real or a dream?  
I feel alone and empty.

Where can I put my love that was for you?  
Now what does it mean?

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

# The Fourth Christmas

By Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Reprinted from TCF, Katy, Texas

As I walked into a large store last Saturday to pick up some gardening ornaments and pots, I was hit by the reality that this Christmas will be the fourth one without my child. Yes, it's late summer as I write this, but some retailers are already hyping the Christmas merchandise. A weakness swept over me; I didn't think I'd have to deal with Christmas so soon. But here it was... color coordinated Christmas trees, thematic trees, wreaths, decorations, paper. I felt like screaming and shoving the shopping cart into a display.

I remember the first Christmas after my son died. He was killed in an accident six days before Christmas. The day after Todd was killed my cousin came to the house and asked what she could do. We had to shop for Todd's children; they couldn't quite decide what they wanted until a week before Christmas. So here we were, five days before Christmas, one day after my son died, shopping for my son's children. I don't remember what we purchased. I was still in shock as my cousin continued to push along.

Never much of a shopper, I was totally lost on that day; I followed my cousin's green jacket around the stores. We got it done, and my cousin did all the wrapping while I sat and stared blankly at the activity.

This year will be the fourth Christmas without my child ... even though he's been gone for 2 years and 8 months, I dread facing another Christmas. His death anniversary is on the 19th of December.

Seeing this materialistic Christmas outrage in August set me back. My husband was with me; we bought what we needed and left. We went to the grocery store; when we came out, we found that I had left the keys in the car door. This was not a good sign.

"That's it," I told my husband. "What's it?" he asked. "I'm not going into another store until January unless I have no choice." He reminded me that I didn't do much shopping anyway, so that shouldn't be too difficult. I laughed because he is right; I avoid retail stores and malls when I can.

In my rational mind I know that I overreacted to the Christmas display. In my emotional mind I know that this is my reality. Since my son's death I have avoided Christmas. I hang one wreath on the door. I started putting a candle in the window on the first anniversary of Todd's death, and I light it every night as it now remains in the window all year.

We each find our own methods of coping. We each re-experience the shock, horror and helplessness of our children's death with personal triggers — smells, sights, sounds, seasons. We must train our minds to expect the unexpected from ourselves. We must learn to accept our reactions. We must understand this is our normalcy.

If I stop reacting to certain events and dreading other events, if unexpected tears stop rolling down my cheeks, I might be considered normal by some. But, I know in my heart of hearts that these reactions will stop on the day that I die. The duration and frequency have been reduced. But, no, I'll not stop reacting.

My mind tells me that to "get on" with it is to repress a big part of who I am: Todd's mom. My son lived, loved, laughed, cried, learned and taught. He was my singular pure joy. No, I won't erase him. I won't erase the memories because the memories are as much a part of me as my heart.

## Siblings Walking Together

When a child dies, siblings are often referred to as “the forgotten mourners.” The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta Siblings Group provides support to teens and adults after the death of a sibling. For more information or to find meeting time and location see: <http://www.tcfatlanta.org/Tucker.htm>

### Siblings Walking Together (Formerly the Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.  
We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.  
Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.  
Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.  
At other times we need our families to be there.  
Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us,  
continuing to become the individuals we want to be.  
We cannot be our dead brother or sister;  
however, a special part of them lives on with us.  
When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.  
We are living a life very different from what we envisioned,  
and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.  
Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others  
the value of family and the precious gift of life.  
Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are,  
but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of  
The Compassionate Friends.

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### Meet Atlanta Sibling Co-Leader: Rachel Yelk Woodruff

My name is Rachel, I am one of the TCF Atlanta group leaders, and I am a surviving sibling. My brother Aaron died in a motorcycle accident on June 22nd, 2002, 8 days before his 27th birthday.



I received the news from my dad. I clearly and painfully remember the phone call and my dad's voice saying, “Your brother was in an accident last night. He didn't make it.” Even typing these words now I feel my heart physically ache. I remember collapsing ... not just physically, but emotionally and mentally. I went into autopilot and did those things that we do when someone dies: went through belongings, planned a service, made decisions that I didn't want to be making. I had to write the

eulogy because no one else in my family was capable. I'm not sure I was either, but it's one of those things that siblings do ... we try to stay strong and do the things that our parents understandably may not be capable of doing. Sometimes I'm not sure how I made it through those first days, months, year ... I guess one moment at a time.

I started attending The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta Siblings Group about two months after Aaron died. It was so reassuring to be able to talk to other siblings who were going through similar grief and pain. The siblings and parents I have met through TCF have done so much to help me through my grief, and I am so grateful for them and the support they have provided. I hope you also find comfort and support through TCF.



# Ten Healing Rights for Grieving Children

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Reprinted from "Bereavement Magazine,"  
8133 Telegraph Drive,  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80920-7169,  
[719] 282-1850.

Dr. Wolfelt is a clinical thanatologist and director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, in Fort Collins, CO.

Author's note: This "bill of rights" for grieving children is intended to empower them to help themselves heal – and to help direct the adults in their lives to be supportive as well.

Someone you love has died. You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Together those thoughts and feelings are called grief, which is a normal (though really difficult) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died.

The following 10 rights will help you understand your grief and eventually feel better about life again. Use the ideas that make sense to you. Post this list on your refrigerator or on your bedroom door or wall. Re-reading it often will help you stay on track as you move toward healing from your loss. You might also ask the grown-ups in your life to read this list so they will remember to help you in the best way they can.

## 1. I have the right to have my own unique feelings about the death.

I may feel angry, sad, or lonely. I may feel scared or relieved. I may feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No ONE will feel exactly like I do.

## 2. I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking.

When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don't want to talk about it, that's okay, too.

## 3. I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way.

When they are hurting, some kids like to play so they'll feel better for awhile. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and scream. This does not mean I am bad, it just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.

## 4. I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me.

Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.

## 5. I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems.

I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.

## 6. I have the right to have "griefbursts."

Griefbursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes – even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.

## 7. I have the right to use my beliefs about my God to help me deal with my feelings of grief.

Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

## 8. I have the right to try to figure out why the person I loved died.

But it's okay if I don't find an answer. "Why" questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.

## 9. I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died.

Sometimes those memories will be happy, and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, these memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.

## 10. I have the right to move toward and feel my grief and, over time, to heal.

I'll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I'll always miss this special person.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*"Normal day let me be aware of the treasure you are.  
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you  
before you depart.  
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect  
tomorrow.  
Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.  
One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face  
in the pillow,  
or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,  
and want more than all the world for your return."  
~ Mary Jean Irion*

# What Are We Waiting For?

By Ann Wells

Reprinted from TCF, Laguna Niguel, California

My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade, and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure was still attached. "Jan bought it the first time we went to New York eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the special occasion."

He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the funeral home. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment. He slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning home. I thought about all the things she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special.

I still think about his words and how they've changed my life. I read more and dust less. I sit on the deck and admire the view without fussing about the weed in the garden. I spend more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I try to recognize those moments now and cherish them. I don't save anything. We use our good china for every special event — such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, or discovering the first camellia blossom. I wear my good blazer to the market if I feel like it. I don't save my good perfume for special parties. "Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing, hearing, or doing, I want to see, hear, and do it now.

I am not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrows we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. It's these little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew my hours were limited — angry because I put off seeing good friends, angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intend to write, angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I am trying not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. Every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it's a special day.

# My Sister

By Kim Bernal

Reprinted from TCF, Sugar Land-Southwest Houston, Texas

In memory of Lezlie Dyane Davis  
June 7, 1966 to October 1, 1997

I am not sure where to start. My older sister, Lezlie, died on October 1, 1997. It has been a little more than four months and I still catch my breath and start to tear up when someone mentions her name. I am a private griever, I guess. When I heard the news that she was in the ER, I fell to my knees and prayed to God. I told Him I was going to put this in His hands and that it was up to Him now — as if it was not earlier. "She did not make it." These are the words that I heard my father say through a cloud of tears and pain. While holding my mother, he explained that she was gone. My immediate reaction was to cry. I really did not know what this would mean. I am slowly finding out just what it does.

What do we do now? I wanted to take immediate action, calling relatives, the minister, and helping in a time when my parents needed someone to lean on. I was bound and determined to be the strong one for a while. And I was.

As we made funeral arrangements and memorials plans, I, like the rest of them, sat in silence as the tears and pain flowed from my eyes. It hurt, but I was determined to remain strong for my children and for my family who seemed to be crumbling right before my very eyes. A very difficult thing to do for a little girl who thinks her daddy is the strongest person she has ever known.

I dreaded the viewing at the funeral home. I did not want to go to the funeral home and see her like that, not even one last time. My parents insisted it would be a good thing for all of us. As the time approached, I was more and more frustrated at the prospect of falling apart upon seeing her. However, as we entered the funeral home and went into the room where her body lay at rest, something happened. I could not shed a tear. It was as if my brain and body (and soul, for that matter) went on autopilot. I sat quietly on the first row watching my father fall to his knees and sob. My mother could not speak; my baby sister holding onto them both, in tears. I was on the outside looking in on the strangest and yet saddest heartbreaking moment of my life. But that's just it: I was on the outside looking in. I was the strong one, but not by choice. I did not consciously decide to lock out my feelings and, yet, the entire episode was painful. I can't explain my reaction.

I went through the memorial service with minimal tears. I greeted those wishing to personally offer condolences because I know my family was struggling with having to look them in the eyes and share their pain along with their own. Then I saw my friend, Julie. Julie has survived through the same experience I am going through. The key word is survived. As I hugged her, my strength

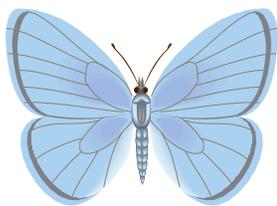
lapsed and I started to cry, sort of uncontrollably. This was good.

Julie told me, “Things are never going to get better.” I thought to myself, what a terrible thing to say to someone in my circumstance, but she was right. Her honesty now is appreciated. Things will never get better, we just learn to handle and cope. I am grateful for her kindness and friendship. We belong to a club that I hope no one will ever have to join. We have lost a piece of ourselves and our family will never be the same. This is a permanent state.

I still cry. I am able to get through a conversation using her name without crying – well, at least sometimes. There are times; I call them “Moments of Truth,” that I am starting to experience. The first occurred on December 1, 1997. I was sitting having lunch with my coworkers. We were not talking about anything related to my loss but all of a sudden, I blurted out, “Oh, my God, it’s been two months since my sister died.” I had to get up and run. It’s odd I seem to have this need to get up and bolt frequently. I mostly control it and move on to something else, but the urge is still present and strong.

There are songs, music, books, and a little newsletter published by The Compassionate Friends that will bring me to uncontrolled grieving. I sit and hold my children as I totally let go of all the pent-up pain and sadness. It’s funny, I have remained strong for them and in my weakest moments they are all I hold on to. Anyway, these “Moments of Truth” come frequently.

The closest analogy I can think of to explain this whole experience is: I am like a child whose nose is pressed up against the window pane of life when all of a sudden, the window shatters. I am so busy trying to pick up the pieces to protect the others and insure that no one else gets hurt that I do not realize until much later that my arms and hands are bleeding heavily. I can finally see the devastation and now feel the pain.



## I'm Not Contagious

By Martha Clark Scala

Reprinted from the national magazine of *The Compassionate Friend*, “We Need Not Walk Alone.”  
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Martha Clark Scala is a psychotherapist whose brother died at age 45 following an illness that required a heart transplant in 1985 and a kidney transplant from another sibling, Margo, in 1995. Summer 2001

In the two or three weeks immediately following my brother Nick’s death, I received numerous calls, cards, plants, flowers, and offers of help. My loss sat on the front burner of many wonderful people’s stoves for about 21 days. I was in their thoughts, prayers, and blessings.

Unfortunately, many issues and events vie for front-burner status. Part of me understood why the love, attention, and concern started to recede. Another part of me wanted to throw a full-blown temper tantrum live at Madison Square Garden. “My brother, Nick, is dead. Gone. Finished. Have you forgotten?” I would cry, and have a grand time berating others for overlooking my plight. No wonder I resonated so deeply with Madeline Sharples’ poem, “Aftermath.” I could have written the same poem, simply replacing her word “son” with my word “brother.”

In my fantasy, I would tattoo a large “G” for grieving on my exposed forehead so that no one could possibly forget what had recently happened. They would have to remember to ask me, “How are you doing?” Either that or they’d be feigning blindness!

The front-page headline of my imaginary newspaper would always have “Martha’s Brother Has Died” as its leading story. Political scandals, tragedies, and stock market crashes would never get top billing. I suppose I would have some fine arguments with my imaginary editor about this! When it’s our loss, it is the headliner for quite a while. When it’s someone else’s loss, it just isn’t. In a journal entry written seven months after Nick died, I wrote:

*Inside of me, there’s a voice screaming to be heard:  
“No, you don’t get it! I just lost my brother! Lost my brother! One of the most significant people in my life!  
Don’t you dare move on to the next topic... I’m still on this topic and I am not ready to move on and I won’t be ready to move on for quite some time.”*

My heartfelt request to the world goes something like this: “If you feel like you don’t know what to say, don’t say much. Just show up! I have not just come down with strep throat! I’m not contagious!”

When you have strep throat, a kiss, hug, or even a handshake is discouraged. The well-wisher will keep a distance, offer sincere apologies, and the sick person will understand. But we don’t have strep throat. We have grief. It’s not a sickness, but a condition with symptoms and circumstances. Sorrow. Pain. Longing. Regrets. Tears. Unanswered questions. Forms to fill out. Belongings to give away. Shock. Insomnia. Memories, good and bad. Wills. Death certificates.

These symptoms last much longer than two weeks or a month; perhaps some will last a lifetime. They may be acute at first, but they don’t go away when the initial wave of sympathy cards, visits, and other greetings ebbs. The intensity of the symptoms may ease, but they do persist. Unfortunately, many well-wishers disappear or forget or have new things on their own front-burners. Under our

breath, we grievors are saying, "Please don't disappear. I need you." We don't really need that much, yet some friends and family members seem to feel like attending to us is the equivalent of running a marathon. In fact, all that's needed is empathy... that ability to walk a mile in our moccasins, as the old saying goes.

What do we need? The answer may be a bowl of chicken soup because we've forgotten to eat. We may need some groceries or a prescription filled at the drugstore. We may even need some solitude. However, don't confuse solitude with solitary confinement or quarantine. We are neither dangerous nor contagious. Well-wishers accrue karmic gold stars for showing up at a time when many can't.

We may need someone's presence or vitality or willingness to listen. We may need someone to hear the same story or memory or lament twice, three times, or more. We need others to let us move through our grief at whatever pace our particular journey selects. We do not need to be talked out of our feelings, unless we have asked for it. We don't need cheering up or problem-solving, unless we have asked for them. No one can hasten our return to pre-loss levels of activity or interest. The gift of attention we need is one that permits us to just be where we are in our grieving process. We will get better. Our condition will improve, but it takes time and patience: gifts we can give to ourselves and hope to receive from others.

In my teens, I took a walk on a city street in Athens, Greece. It was easy to distinguish the tourists from the natives. The tourists were in light-colored clothing while the denizens of Athens were, seemingly without exception, in black. Black skirts, dresses, pants, sweaters, shoes, socks, hats, and coats. Black. This was long before wearing all-black clothing was considered hip, vogue, or Goth. Sometime later, I was told that the Greek tradition is that you wear black for a year after someone close to you dies. My lasting impression of Greece, other than its stunning beauty and ancient architecture, was that an awful lot of people had died there.

In our country, grief can be invisible. If you met someone who was unaware that you'd recently suffered a major loss, how would that person know? Perhaps you appear a bit sadder or more distracted than usual. More than likely, you look much the same on the outside as you looked the day or two before your beloved died. By comparison, if you were walking on that same sidewalk with crutches, it would be instantly obvious that something was not right. Your injury would elicit a question and open the door to further conversation about the trauma: "What happened?" "Are you okay?" In the aftermath of a death, crutches are not prescribed for treatment of our heartache. Because there is nothing visible to signal our grief to the outside world, it's easy to feel even more contagious.

We rarely get to see the pain of those still living, though perhaps feeling like the living dead as they suffer

with the loss in their everyday, moment-to-moment existence. Much energy is directed toward containing the suffering, even in settings such as funeral homes, gravesites, or temples. Many a prescription for mild tranquilizers or sedatives is filled after the death and before the funeral in an effort to suppress any show of emotion. In my psychotherapy practice and elsewhere, I hear grievors consumed with the challenge of hiding their tears, looking strong, and by all means not losing "it."

I salute those Greek women, men, and children who expose their loss in their choice of clothing day after day. If we only had some universal symbol, some universal color or badge that would announce to the world that we are grieving... shouldering a fragile and vulnerable myriad of swarming feelings and emotions underneath our clothing and inside our skin... perhaps then others could and would remember to attend to us. Our grief is frequently silent and out of sight – an experience not too different from that of those who have been quarantined with a virulent ailment. When we're without support, our feelings start to swarm; there is nowhere to go with them, and no one to talk to about them. It becomes difficult to temper our thoughts or feelings when we feel no link to the outside world.

I like to think I'm wearing my grief badge when I talk or write about my brother's death. By sharing my experience with others, my grief becomes more visible. I join a community. I hear and feel nods of recognition and support, and I feel a lot less contagious. This isn't a community that any of us wanted to join, as the entry requirements are very painful. It is, nonetheless, a loving community with sympathetic arms to hold us. What a gift to receive in the aftermath of such a profound loss.



## Autumn

*By Lily de Lauder  
TCF Van Nuys, California*

In the fall  
When amber leaves are shed,  
Softly — silently  
Like tears that wait to flow,  
I watch and grieve.  
My heart beats sadly in the fall;  
'Tis then I miss you most of all.

## Poems for Nikki

By Selma Calaman  
Nikki's mommy, 4AR, forever

In memory of my "walking sunshine," a "beautiful spirit"  
heaven to earth: June 29, 1980  
earth to heaven: September 2, 2006



### *September Sunset*

Children are the flowers  
GOD allows to blossom in our hearts;  
and only HE knows when  
the beauty of their spirit  
has reached full bloom.

When HE brings our children home  
to beautify HIS garden;  
their lives have fulfilled HIS purpose  
and their legacy of love will glorify HIS name.

### *Hearing Whispers from Heaven*

Inspired by "Whispers from Heaven" poem and wind  
chimes, your 6.29.10 birthday gift from your auntie, Susie.

When we hear whispers from Heaven,  
it's to let us know that Someone is always there.  
Whispers from Heaven show us how to deeply care.

When we hear whispers from Heaven  
it's to let us know that Someone is watching over us.  
Whispers from Heaven show us how to truly trust.

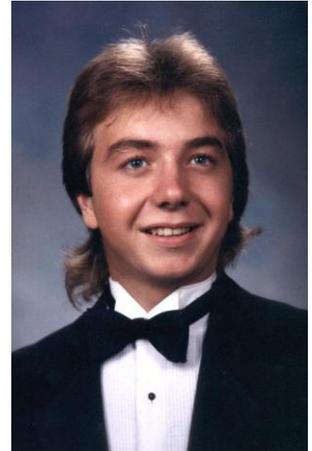
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Waiting for the Music to Return

By Jayne Newton

In Memory of My Son Chad Gordon ><(((^>
May 21, 1972 -
September 3, 1996

September 3, 1996 is a day that changed my life forever. My 24-year old son, Chad, died suddenly and unexpectedly from a blockage to his heart. He had graduated from Auburn University with a degree in chemical engineering June 1995 and married his sweetheart, Mandy, April 1996.



So many of my friends on Facebook are also bereaved parents and you all know how that day defines the rest of your life. I like to think certain things about me changed for the "good." I love deeper and never miss the opportunity to tell those I love how much I love them. My priorities changed. Some people patiently waited for me to "return to normal" ... "find closure" ... or "get over the loss of my son." For those of us who have lost children ... that never happens. For those who haven't lost children, I pray you never find out. There are a few rare individuals who can understand our pain without going through it ... but most cannot. I resented those folks in the beginning ... I hated all the advice they wanted to give me ... Oh I know just how you feel: I lost my grandmother or grandfather or spouse or some even said, I lost my dog. My own mother-in-law proceeded to tell me it was harder to lose a spouse than a child. She had never lost either and been married for 50+ years. I was one of those people too ... before I lost my son.

I share this story to say, that if it had not been for TCF and other bereaved parents, I have no idea how I would have survived. I found a local chapter in Tucker, Georgia and began attending the meetings two months after Chad died. About six months later, someone at the meeting asked for a volunteer to set up a Chapter website. Wayne knew a lot about computers so I volunteered him. He did not attend the meetings. Needless to say Wayne was upset that I had volunteered him to do this since he knew absolutely nothing about setting up websites. I called the lady back the next day and told her Wayne did not feel comfortable doing it. She said one of the siblings volunteered her husband (a Georgia Tech computer major) to work with Wayne to set one up. Wayne agreed to work with him. That was the beginning of the Atlanta Area of



Another September 11th meaning

The year after the attack on September 11, 2002, we were all gathered to celebrate David's 30th birthday. He didn't feel like celebrating because of all the lives lost that day the year before. It was difficult trying to be happy for him, yet being sad for them. We were lucky we did get to celebrate one more birthday – his 31st, and last one earthbound.

I know there are sad people on September 11. He didn't die in the Twin Towers. But for us, September 11 will always be his birthday, without presents or cake, just a terribly sad empty day.

Thanks for listening,
Lydia Burns
David's mom 9/11/1972 - 7/2/2004



Kyle's 2nd Angel Date: October 2nd 2010

By Mary Ann Davis

2009 was the first complete year without my son Kyle. I will have to say it was also the worst year of my life. If it was not for my mother, TCF, especially Cindy, Jayne, and my friend Judy, I would have lost my mind.

Grief is the most paralyzing emotion to travel; it is horrible. So I also have been reading a lot and therapy has helped through the five stages of grief. Until now I knew nothing about:

1: Shock/ Denial

I remember this one so well

2: Anger

This for me was just about all of 2009, mad at friends, doctors, family, ME, GOD, felt deserted, felt abandoned, lost at sea.

3: Bargaining

“What Ifs.” What I could have done differently. You make yourself crazy doing this.

4: Depression

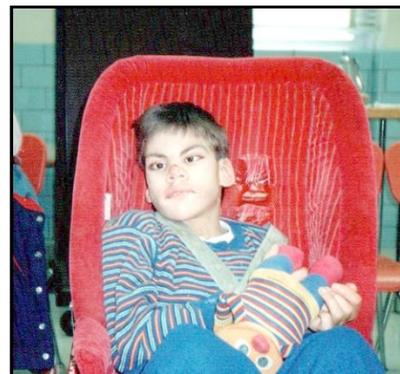
This is where I moved right into. Kyle's loss settled so far down in my soul that the realization that Kyle did not get better after all the times he had bounced back – all those 25 years. At times, they were too much to bear. So many meds to just keep me sane. I had lost my identity also. I had never felt this way before.

5: Acceptance

Accepting the reality that Kyle is physically gone and the reality is the permanent reality. I will never like this reality, but will eventually accept it. It is a new life that Kyle is missing. I know I have to readjust. Acceptance meant my having more good days than bad. Whenever Kyle got sick, I would always feel guilty if I had fun or smiled. And when he first passed, I certainly could not have any fun or smile. That was the ultimate betrayal. I now know I have to live again and enjoy my life. I can never replace Kyle, but I can make new connections, new meaningful relationships. I will listen to my needs. I know I am changing, growing and will evolve into a new person. I can feel I have turned a corner, so I will give this grief its time; such a horrible emotion.

A nurse recently told me something I will hold dear in my heart: that GOD gave me Kyle as a gift for a time, and He had to come and take him back, that my time with him was up. He was a gift; I miss my little man ... ☺

That is why he is “*Heaven's Very Special Child.*”



Heaven's Very Special Child

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

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

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First Thanksgiving

*By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from "Stars in the Deepest Night -After the Death
of a Child."*

The thought of being thankful
fills my heart with dread.
They'll all be feigning gladness,
not a word about her said.

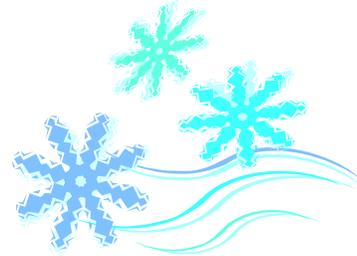
These heavy shrouds of blackness
enveloping my soul,
pervasive, throat-catching,
writhe in me, and coil.

I must, I must acknowledge,
just express her name,

so all sitting at the table,
know I'm thankful that she came.

Though she's gone from us forever
and we mourn to see her face,
not one minute of her living,
would her death ever replace.

So I stop the cheerful gathering,
though my voice quivers, quakes,
make a toast to all her living.
That small tribute's all it takes.



Beautiful Katherine

(December 17, 2007 - January 26, 2008)

*By Becky Kenitzki for the Arthur and Chillman Families
Inspired by God on January 27, 2008*



Beautiful brown eyes; wisps of brown hair to behold
Beautiful Baby Kate now walks on streets of gold.

Some say she left too early;
Leaving her parents and sister to cry;
Why did such a perfect beauty, have to say good-bye?

Only God knows the answer,
Kate's life was part of a plan.
We trust in Him, praise Kate's life;
Until we meet her again.

For all those who believe in Him;
Know Kate's not really gone,
For she did not leave in vain,
Kate's beautiful spirit lives on.

Our Children's & Siblings' Births Remembered



October, November, and December



Azariah Suvari Anderson
October 2
Daughter of
Michelle Stewart Anderson

Richard Alan Cartin
October 2
Son of Nancy Murphy

Kaxon Harris
October 3
Son of Karen Harris

Stephen Ledford
October 4
Son of Luella and Mike Ledford

Tyler Tarbutton
October 4
Son of Renee Tarbutton

Maeve Elizabeth Fintak
October 5
Daughter of Steve and Brigid Fintak

John Thomas Arnold
October 6
Son of Donna Arnold

Jamaal Addison
October 7
Son of Patricia Roberts

Meleia Warren Willis-Starbuck
October 10
Daughter of
John and Kimberly Starbuck

Ian Gabriel Keller
October 13
Brother of Dru Miller

Jonathan-Diondre' Holloway
October 15
Son of
Cynthia Edwards-Holloway

Candi Gaye Marshall
October 16
Daughter of Gena and John Ivester

Scott Wiseman
October 19
Son of Lynn Wiseman

Sallie Scanlon
October 20
Daughter of Jane R. Scanlon

Herbert Shaw Jr.
October 21
Son of Arlena M. Shaw

Carrie Ann Plumley
October 22
Daughter of Deborah Plumley

Dilia Plummer
October 25
Daughter of Dijon Plummer

Jacob Miller
October 26
Son of
Sandra and Richard Miller

Michelle Reeves
October 28
Daughter of Jim and BJ Reeves

Quin-Chay Johnson
October 29
Daughter of Tara Johnson
Sister of Amber Johnson

Marcellus Montez Richardson
October 29
Son of Paulette Perry

Amelia Sutterthwaite Ward
October 29
Daughter of Lisa and Greg Ward

Ronnie Keith Batchelor
October 30
Son of Ron Batchelor

Tyreek Seivwright
November 1
Son of Donna Derricho

Latoya Peart
November 1
Daughter of
Alvin and Patsy Dorman

Brandon Jack Phillips
November 1
Son of Susan and Jack Phillips

Kenneth David Kemp
November 2
Son of Kimberly McCain

Jameka Deshon Holmes
November 4
Daughter of Charlotte Hamm

Autumn DuBose
November 5
Daughter of John DuBose

Mark Cozine
November 6
Son of Anne Franzen

James Daniel Smith
November 6
Son of Judith Smith

Matthew Luke Davis
November 7
Son of Lena L. Price

Jennifer Marie Dailey
November 9
Daughter of
Joanne and Bob Dailey

Rose Ann Thompson
November 12
Daughter of Kevin Thompson

Carlos Ramone Weaver
November 12
Son of Carlos Weaver

Amanda Christine Warnock
November 13
Daughter of Amy Osier

Keith Perry
November 14
Son of Oveta Perry

Zekia M Rhodes
November 15
Granddaughter of Beverly Ricks

Kathleen Beamer
November 17
Daughter of Maureen Beamer

Carter Martin
November 20
Son of Scott and Leigh Ann Martin

Najah Maryaam Greenwood
November 20
Daughter of Fadeela Rasheed

Kameron Rutherford
November 21
Son of
Judy and Khristopher Rutherford

Matthew Marcus Long
November 27
Son of Timothy Long

Robert A. Lind, Jr.
November 29
Son of Bette and Bob Lind

Clayton Olvey
November 30
Son of June Smith

Brandon Burke
December 2
Son of Charlene and Johnny Burke
Grandson of Shirley A. Kendrick

Ashley Craig
December 2
Daughter of La Tangie Craig

Connor Dunn Devine
December 3
Son of Kathleen Devine

James Anthony Durham
December 3
Son of Cindy Durham
Brother of Katie Durham

Joshua Polain
December 3
Son of Kimberly Polain

David James Teddlie
December 5
Son of Anne and Don Teddlie
Brother of Lynn Teddlie

Averil Brown
December 7
Son of Carolyn Brown

Clarissa Cuningham
December 8
Daughter of
Winston and Judy Cunningham

Tony Edge
December 12
Son of Victoria Schutter

Katherine A. Chillman
December 17
Daughter of Abigail Arthur-Chillman
and Michael Chillman
Sister of Alyssa and Mia Chillman

Amanda Kay Rose
December 17
Daughter of
Barbara and Jim Sinke Rose

Meseret Debru
December 18
Son of Kila Gebru

David Hoegler
December 18
Son of Doreen and James Hoegler
Brother of Denise and Lori Hoegler

Steve Inman Jr.
December 22
Son of Steve and Linda Inman

Michael B. Faulkner
December 24
Son of Wayne and Lise Faulkner

Dianne Martha Shlevin
December 27
Daughter of Barbara Shlevin

Jacob Martin Drollinger
December 28
Son of
John and Virginia Drollinger

Debra Joy Littman
December 28
Daughter of Muriel Littman

J'Muar Taylor
December 30
Son of Cheryl A. Taylor

Christopher Hobbs
December 31
Son of
Joseph and Gwendolyn Hobbs





October, November, and December



Matthew Abad
October 2

Son of Tess Abad

Michael 'Kyle' Davisk
October 2

Son of Mary Ann Davis

Desha Beamer
October 3

Daughter of Maureen Beamer

Mark Joseph Gore
October 7

Son of Luis and Barbara Rodriguez

Vernon Philippe Battle
October 18

*Son of Barbara Knox
Brother of Glorqua Tarantine*

Bo Tuggle
October 22

Son of Connie and Johnny Tuggle

Carlos Ramone Weaver
October 27

Son of Carlos Weaver

Kathleen Dirr
October 28

Daughter of Jim Dirr

David Ferguson
October 30

Son of Christina and David Ferguson

Marc William Waidner
October 30

Son of Mary Alice Wood

Matthew Luke Davis
November 2

Son of Lena L. Price

Brayden Michael Eanes
November 3

*Son of Kelly Eanes
Grandson of Al and Jan Pittman*

Katherine Jane Wentz William
November 6

Daughter of Jane and Clyde Wentz

Amber Gilstrap
November 7

Daughter of Kathleen Cornog

Mervyn Lanier 'Corky' Twyman
November 14

Son of Carol McNeal

Azariah Suvari Anderson
November 17

Daughter of Michelle Stewart Anderson

Elliott Vahid Brown
November 18

Son of Edward and Maria Brown

Nick Posey
November 20

Son of Diana and William Posey

Najah Maryaam Greenwood
November 20

Daughter of Fadeela Rasheed

Kathleen Beamer
November 21

Daughter of Maureen Beamer

Meseret Debru
November 23

Son of Kila Gebru

Stephanie Christele Simon
November 25

Daughter of Sandra Simon

Janet Ford Lambert
November 27

Daughter of Troy and Natalie Ford

Kay Cee Herring
December 1

Daughter of David and Ginny Herring

Arnessa Darlene Royster
December 3

Daughter of Carolyn Gordon

Victoria Fields
December 4

Daughter of Tricia Chasse

Mashanda Nicole Taylor
December 7

Daughter of Michelle Taylor-Scott

Sam Peek
December 10

Son of Bobby and Carol Peek

Vanishia Shantee Jinks
December 13

Daughter of Yvonne Jinks

Connor Dunn Devine
December 16

Son of Kathleen Devine

David Hoegler
December 16

*Son of Doreen and James Hoegler
Brother of Denise and Lori Hoegler*

Brian Trunnel Rounds
December 18

*Son of Floyd and Janice Rounds
Brother of Floyd T. Rounds*

John Riggins
December 20

Son of Richard and Kate Riggins

Dijon Plummer, Jr.
December 22

Son of Tracy Wilson

Dilia Plummer
December 22

Daughter of Dijon Plummer

John Brendon Hope
December 23

Son of Terri and John Hope

Jamie Dalziel
December 24

Son of Martin and Donna Dalziel

Apollo Holmes
December 25

Son of Dorothea Eastman

Steve Inman Jr.
December 26

Steve and Linda Inman

Jennifer Hower
December 27

Sister of Julie Fischer

Christopher Hobbs
December 27

Son of Joseph and Gwendolyn Hobbs



TCF National Organization Now on Facebook

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's new Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the link from TCF's national website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org. Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA.

“We want this to be both an informative and supportive place for those of us who are mourning the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild,” says TCF's Executive Director Patricia Loder. “All are welcome to leave messages and talk about the child and their grief. As in our meetings, we especially appreciate shared insights about anything that has brought you comfort, hope, or some measure of peace.”

Our Facebook page will provide a forum for free and open conversation. While messages will be reviewed, they will not be screened before they are posted. So we are asking members to be gentle and respectful of one another and to use common sense in their posts – no offensive language, no overt selling of products or services and no religious proselytizing. Also, keep in mind that all opinions expressed are those of the individual poster and do not necessarily reflect those of The Compassionate Friends, Inc. or its sponsors.

In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page will have information about upcoming events such as conferences, the Walk to Remember, and the Worldwide Candle Lighting. Please visit often and contribute to the conversation.

In the near future, TCF will also be expanding our social media presence in Twitter. Watch for an announcement. These social media initiatives are important to TCF because they will help increase public awareness about our organization and better enable us to fulfill our mission to help bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.

For more information, you may call TCF's National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010 or write Wayne@compassionatefriends.org.

TCF Atlanta: The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta is also on Facebook.

We invite you to join. For more information, visit the following links:

- <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=43057397614>
- www.facebook.com/TCFAtlantaSiblings

You will need to log into Facebook to join the group. You will also need a Facebook account (it's free).

Our hope is that you will be able to connect to someone to help you in your grief journey. Remember “*We Need Not Walk Alone*.”

Sign up for The Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its 630 chapters.

Published once a month (as well as occasional special editions), the e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

Each e-newsletter also includes a story specially selected from a past edition of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. For the siblings, the e-newsletter features a past question and answer column by Dr. Mary Paulson.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on e-newsletter at the top of the Home page.



*“The passage of time alone does not cause our grief to end,
but its softening touch helps us to survive.”*

~ Wayne Loder

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 chapter.

The following donations are in support of the Atlanta Chapter newsletter, candlelight service, website 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 is 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 A. Btembke, Norcross, GA
In Loving Memory of Daniel Smith, from his mother Judith M. Smith, Tucker, GA
In Loving Memory of Ashley Craig, from her mother La Tangie Craig, Hampton, GA

Birthday Remembrance Donations

In Loving Memory of Matthew Meehan, from his father Michael Meehan, Stone Mountain, GA

Remembrance Cards Donations

In Loving Memory of Jill Michiko Nakawatase, from her parents Kenneth and Eileen Nakawatase, Lodi, CA
In Loving Memory of Chris Simpson, from his grandmother, Elizabeth Luke, Auburn, GA

Candlelight Remembrance Service Donations

In Loving Memory of Tony Durham, from his mother Cindy Durham, Decatur, GA

TCF 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.

TCF Atlanta: Membership Form

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 e-mail _____
2. Do you wish to have your child's name included on the Wall of Memory on our TCF Atlanta Website? 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 Website
(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>