



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Spring 2011

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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www.tcfatlanta.org

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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:
April 12, May 10 and June 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.*

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.

Siblings Walking Together (Formerly the Sibling Credo)

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

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Announcements

Dear Parents, Siblings and Friends of
The Compassionate Friends/Atlanta,

I would like to let all of you know I have taken a leave of absence from the card making. I have been creating the cards for our chapter I think since mid or late 2005 after the passing of my youngest boy Billy. Joining the Compassionate Friends and then creating the cards have helped me deal with the pain of losing my son. I am very thankful that such a valuable organization existed for I would be truly lost without them.

I wish to thank everyone for his or her emails and snail mail I have received over the years. Many wrote giving encouragements, thanks and sent stickers or materials toward my card-making projects. I have made the cards through the end of July 2011. If you wish to correspond, my *gmail* account will remain, or you can send mail via the embassy in Jakarta:

U.S Embassy - Jakarta, Unit 8129 - CDC

FPO AP 96520.

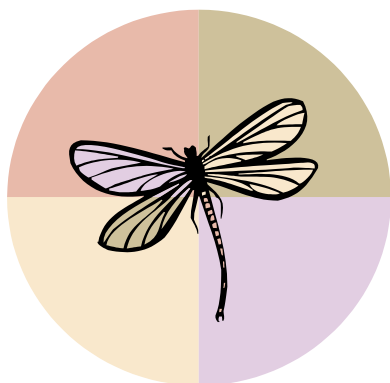
I end this note with a quote by St. Francis of Assisi:

“For it is by giving that one receives;
It is by self-forgetting that one finds;
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven;
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.”

Take care and stay safe,

Carol Hawley

Special a Note: Jayne Newton will create our chapter's Remembrance Cards during Carol's leave of absence.



TCF's 34th National Conference



Save the date: July 15-17, 2011, for the 34th TCF National Conference in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota.

Keynote Speakers Announced for National Conference:

David Morrell is a bereaved parent and grandparent, author of the poignant *Fireflies*, but perhaps best known for creating Rambo (adapted to the big screen with Sylvester Stallone). David's 15-year-old son Matthew died from bone cancer in 1987, a loss that, according to his bio, “haunts not only Morrell's life but his work, as in his memoir about Matthew, *Fireflies*, and his novel *Desperate Measures* whose main character lost a son.” Ironically and sadly, David's granddaughter Natalie recently died from the same rare bone cancer that took his son. David's award-winning writing career includes more than 30 books with more than 18 million copies of his books printed. David will be the Saturday evening banquet speaker.

Carol Kearns, author of *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare* became a psychologist at the urging of the renowned Elisabeth Kubler-Ross after the death of her 7-year-old daughter who was swept out to sea by a rogue wave. She has appeared as an expert on numerous television shows to discuss the psychological impact of such headline crimes as the Polly Klass murder, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the Columbine school shooting. Carol will be the Friday afternoon banquet speaker.

Mary Rondeau Westra, recently published her memoir *After the Murder of My Son*, created following the senseless and brutally violent death of her son Peter in 2001. She has written numerous short stories and articles for grief publications and presented at the Art of Recovery Workshop sponsored by the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Office of Justice Programs. Mary will be the Sunday closing ceremony speaker.

Mitch Carmody, author of *Letters to My Son*, is a bereaved parent, losing his son Kelly to a cancerous brain tumor and is a twice-bereaved sibling, with the loss of his older brother from degenerative cerebral palsy and his twin sister in an automobile accident that also claimed her two young boys. He is the popular workshop presenter of “Whispers of Love, Signs from Our Children.” Mitch also performs interpretive sign language, is a staff writer for *Living With Loss* magazine, an accomplished artist and creator of the innovative *20 Faces of Grief* and the S.T.A.I.R.S. model of grief staging. Mitch will be the Opening Ceremony speaker.

Reserve Your Room Now!

Reservations are now being accepted at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South for those planning to attend the TCF's national conference July 15-17.

Room rate is \$129 per night for a King Room or Double Bed Room, single or double occupancy; \$139 for triple and \$149 for quad. These special reduced rates are available on stays from July 10-19 if the reservation is placed by June 21 (subject to availability). These are specially negotiated rates available only for those attending the national conference.

Reserve your accommodations online at [Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South](http://SheratonBloomingtonHotelMinneapolisSouth.com) or telephone 952-835-7800 and mention you are with The Compassionate Friends. Arrangements are being made free shuttle pick-up to and from the hotel and the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport, (there will also be shuttles during the conference to and from the Mall of America). Those driving to the conference will have complimentary free parking at the hotel (Valet service is available \$8 per day).

To learn more about the conference, please visit https://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/TCF_National_Conferences.aspx.

“There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go.”

~ Author Unknown

National Silent Auction and Raffle

We Welcome Your Donation ... We are in the midst of planning The 34th National Compassionate Friends Conference next July 15-17, 2011 in Bloomington, MN. In addition to the conference workshops and speakers, we have a Silent Auction/Raffle. People enjoy browsing through our raffle and silent auction items in hopes of winning a prize. For just a brief moment during the conference, it puts a smile on their face when they actually do. The monies received from the raffle and silent auction will be used to offset the enormous costs associated with sponsoring such a major event.

All donors will be acknowledged in the conference program, provided we have the necessary information by June 1.

One never knows what might show up there, but we do have some suggestions and guidelines. The items need to be new and we ask that their value be at least \$40. Some ideas for items to be included in our silent auction/raffle are artwork, jewelry, gift certificates for online and national chains, and gift baskets with a theme reflecting your region of the country: possible idea for a donation from a chapter, handmade items such as needlework, quilting or photography. In addition, we are going through proper channels to request donations of the area's national sports team, but if you have a personal connection and could assist us in obtaining sports memorabilia, it would be most helpful.

For more information about donating, where and how to donate, contact Kim Bodeau, 715-833-2009 or email at kimshereel@gmail.com, co-chair of the Silent Auction/Raffle.



Atlanta Chapter Members Speak to Students at Mercer University

By Candace Walker

Recently at The Georgia Baptist College of Nursing at Mercer University, along with my good friend and fellow Compassionate Friend member Mary Ann Davis, I spoke about the death of a child and its affect on parents. I began my talk with the students by introducing my son Clinton to the class through his celebration of life video. The video takes people on a journey through my son's life from his first-born pictures all the way to his 17-year-old smile. It is a very emotional journey for me and sometimes for the people who view it, but I always play it because I feel it is the best way to show how much of a great person my son was. Too often, people do not think of our children as great living souls but as poor little ones who died too soon. The video brings home the point that Clinton died too soon, but his life was more than his death and how he died. His life was beautiful and he was your typical teenage boy full of life and love.



I went on to explain how Compassionate Friends put my entire family back together again after the shattering death of Clinton. I told them that, in the first few months after my son's death our family felt like Humpty Dumpty: we had a great fall and were broken. I said that, unlike the king's horses and king's men, Compassionate Friends was able to put us back together again. I encouraged them to refer parents who have lost children to Compassionate Friends because they will find people who are like them. At Compassionate Friends, their feelings will be validated and there they will hear that they are not crazy and it gets better after a while.

I move on to explain how the medical professionals misdiagnosed my son. I told them that now we have a foundation in his memory dedicated to offering ways that youths can keep their hearts healthy. I urged them, as new

health care providers, to always search for answers for their patients and to leave no stone unturned in order to find the truth to the medical problems of their patients.

I closed with some of the worst things to say to a bereaved parent, such as: "They are in a better place" or "It's been over a year, shouldn't you be over it now." I also told them that there is a list of the 10 worst things to say to a grieving person and the 10 best things to say. I asked them to log onto our foundation's website (<http://thecompassionatefriends.org>) and to keep in touch with me so I know how things are going.

My friend Mary Ann spoke about her son, her only child Kyle. She talked about his birth and the fact that he was a special needs child. She shared how special and smart he was in spite of his physical limitations. She explained the journey that she and Kyle had at Emory Hospital and the problems, she said, they experienced there. She spoke about all the medical procedures that Kyle underwent until his body became septic and he could take no more. Finally, she revealed the private pain she went through in order to make the heartbreaking decision to put him in hospice. She too drove home the point that health care providers need to listen to their patients and people who advocate for them. I admire her brute honesty, her bravery and her strength in sharing Kyle's story. I know it had to be difficult for her but she did it with grace, style and dignity.



Mary Ann also spoke about the help she received at Compassionate Friends and how great it felt to be around people who understood what she was going through after Kyle's death. She too chimed in on some of the worst things to say to a bereaved parent and let the students know that she is now discovering a new identity since Kyle's death.

I believe our words hit home with the students. We were genuine, sincere and truthful about this journey of loss that we are both on and how everything has changed since the death of our children. I hope that, in the end, these students will remember us when they encounter their first parents who have lost a child. I hope that they will be gentle and kind because of what they learned from our discussion. Finally, I hope that they will ask members of The Compassionate Friends to speak to future classes to pass our information on for years to come.



Atlanta Walks For Our Children and Siblings Gone Too Soon

The Compassionate Friends National Walk to Remember will be held at 8 a.m. Sunday morning, July 17, in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., the National Conference host city, prior to the closing ceremony.

First held in conjunction with the national conference in 2000, this Remembrance Walk has quickly become a highlight for conference-goers with more than 1,000 people joining together hand-in-hand, arm-in-arm to cover the two-mile course arranged for the event.

This is our way to honor the memories of children and siblings who we will never forget.

Families who have had a child die, but are unable to attend the conference or walk, are invited to include their child's name on our "**Atlanta Walks**" banner carried by members of our local Atlanta TCF Chapter attending the Minneapolis/St. Paul conference.

If you would like to have your child, sibling or grandchild's name included, please complete the following form and return it to us as soon as possible. The deadline is June 15.

Atlanta Walks – 2011 in Memory of our Children and Siblings

Yes, I would like to have my child/sibling/grandchild included on the Atlanta Walks banner.

Child's Name _____
(Please print clearly)

Yes, I would like to help with the *Walk to Remember* expenses and support the work of The Compassionate Friends Atlanta Chapter by making a donation in the amount of:

\$ _____ (\$10, \$25, \$50.....)

Please mail your check payable to
"The Compassionate Friends" to:

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

Thank you for your support. (Deadline June 15)

You can also register online
<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/AtlantaWalks2011.html>



*Sample Banner from 2010 Walk at the
Arlington, Va., Conference*

*"Atlanta Walks...
In Memory of Our Children and Siblings."*

Forever Entwined

By Annette Mennen Baldwin

Katy, Texas, TCF

In memory of my son, Todd M. Mennen

July 24, 2005

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable, yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear, the stuff of nightmares, cold sweats and anxiety. But when our children die, the anxiety of that possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of the reality. At first we freeze in time as our focus is on the primal ... breathe, drink water. After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died? I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward ... the pain is too intense. Death would be a mercy. Life is no longer a joy.

My heart is broken. I will never see my child again. If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends Group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey ... and survived. Our first meeting is the most difficult ... at my first meeting the only word I could say was my son's name. Later, we tell our story to those who have experienced the death of their child and find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others and smile at the memories of their child ... we begin the healing process.

Now our lives are forever entwined with those of other parents who have lost a child to death. Like the Celtic knot, we are now part of an eternal paradigm: we are strands in the knot, weaving our stories into each others' lives. This interlace of our lives is a permanent and beautiful blending of souls seeking comfort from one another. Our reality is shared by others; we lean on them, they lean on us. We give, we receive.

Many friends from our lives before the death of our child hesitate to mention our child's name and even fear talking about our child's life and listening to our memories. But we don't want to forget our child as that would be the worst betrayal. We want to talk about our child's life and keep their spirit with us always. Those in our lives who do not share this feeling are not part of our eternal paradigm; they will never be entwined with us as we complete our journey on this earth.

The Celtic knot, the symbol of eternity, is symbolic of the relationships we have found at The Compassionate Friends. These lives are forever woven into ours; we accept each other's perspectives and share their sorrow and

the joy of their memories. There is a place in our Celtic knot for all parents who have lost a child.

As other parents join us, they are enfolded forever into the eternal paradigm of healing and compassion.



My Old Friend Grief

By Adolfo Quesada

TCF, Colorado

My old friend Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in awhile to remind me that I am still a broken man. Surely, there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely, I have adjusted to a world without him. However, the truth is we never completely heal and we never totally adjust. Such is the nature of the loss that no matter how much life has been experienced, the heart of the bereaved will never be the same. It is as though a part of us dies with the person we lose through death.

And so my old friend Grief drops in to say "Hello." Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. I will hear a song or smell a fragrance. I will look at a picture and I will remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face ... sometimes a tear.

One may say that remembrance is unhealthy ... that we should not dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. Grief revisited is Grief acknowledged and Grief confronted is Grief resolved. But if Grief is resolved, why do we feel a sense of loss when we least expect it? Because healing does not mean forgetting and moving on with life does not mean that we do not take a part of our lost love with us. Of course, the intensity of the pain decreases over time if we allow Grief to visit from time to time.

Sometimes my old friend Grief sneaks up on me. It is as though the ones we have lost are determined not to be forgotten. My old friend Grief does not get in the way of living. He just wants to come along and chat sometimes. Grief has taught me a few things about living I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of loss, I end up having to deny life altogether. Old Grief has taught me that I can survive great loss and although my world is different, it is still my world and I must live in it.

My old friend Grief has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the permanence of death. My friend will be back repeatedly to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

Thoughts about Mother's Day

By Paula Funk

TCF Safe Harbor Chapter, Petoskey, Michigan

As I think about Mother's Day this year I become very nostalgic. Every spring during my elementary school days, I looked forward to the day the order form for our plants for Mother's Day came from our local florist. I always ordered pansies for my mom, the ones with purple and yellow or yellow and brown. I could hardly wait for the delivery day to come, so that I could present them to my mother. She always received them with much surprise and appreciation, as if it were a gift she had never received before or even expected.

As a child, Mother's Day was an important occasion to my family. My dad always insisted we wear the traditional carnations: white if one's mother was deceased, red if still living. He would make a special trip to the florist to purchase them. We would attend church, then drive to a nearby city for lunch.

I remember clearly my first Mother's Day being "the mom." Our Anna was only about three weeks old, so I had a very limited idea of what it really meant to be "the mom." But I do remember being treated like a queen and enjoying every minute of it.

Over the next several years as we raised our two daughters, my husband continued to affirm the women of our family. On Mother's Day he always bought roses for each of his girls. Anna would get a yellow one. Debbie would get a peach-colored one. The red roses were for me. When the girls were young I would receive and treasure their hand-made cards. As they grew into young adults, their choices in purchased cards were just as significant. Every year as Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, and make memories ... That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. Our daughter, Anna, died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years, we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away or stay in bed with the sheets over my head. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being

surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

The feelings that I have shared are not uncommon in the early years of grief with those who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. If you or someone you care about has experienced the death of a child, I offer some suggestions from those who have been there to help you make it through this time.

- Realize this day is full of potential for a multitude of feelings to sneak up on you and catch you by surprise.
- Especially during those early years, do whatever works for you. This may be a time of being in "survival mode." Trying to please everyone else can cause undue stress.
- If you have surviving children who want to honor you, communicate your feelings to them. Let them know that while you are grieving the death of their brother or sister, you still love them.
- Try to keep things simple and uncomplicated.
- Visit the cemetery.
- You may choose to pretend the day just does not exist and do something completely unrelated to Mother's Day. Clean the house, take a nap, get out of town. One of my Compassionate Friends spends Mother's Day at Home Depot.
- No one bothers her there or mentions Mother's Day.
- Have a good cry. If you have trouble crying, just stop by a card shop and read a card or two. Maybe even buy the card that you believe your child would give you.
- Go to the recycle bin and break glass into the proper receptacle.
- Know that the days before the holiday may be worse than the actual day.

As with all holidays, be reassured that what you do this year does not have to be what you do next year. As my Compassionate Friends and I have found, with proper grief work over time, the intensity of our feelings has softened. This will happen for you, as well. In the meantime, be gentle with yourself. And remember, "you need not walk alone."



Spring's Tears

By Sally Migliaccio

TCF Babylon, New York, Chapter, Remembering Tracey, always

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent
blue

A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.
Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are
done.

It is this vow of nature's resurgence in the spring
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my
suffering.

For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will
reappear.

For nature has no power over death that holds you still,
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.
Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.

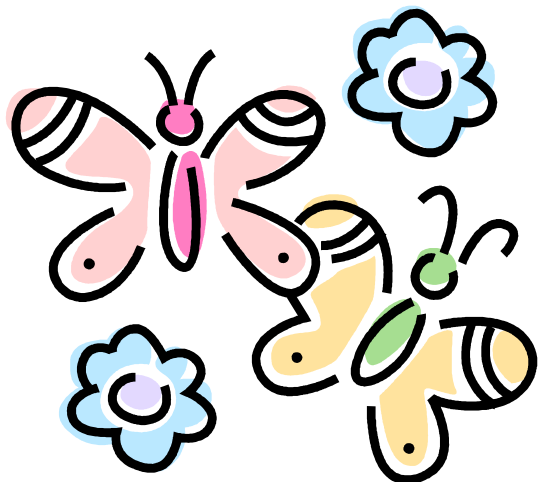
Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are
done?

Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new
Dawn and feel the warmth of sunshine relish in the
Greening earth ... to open arms, embracing life
Why can't it be YOUR birth?

You were so young, your life so new when death crept in
the door,

And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes
'round each year

Yet in your grave you're silent still, and I condemned am
here.



Father's Day

By Doug Hughes

TCF Cincinnati, Ohio, Chapter

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I, too, die.

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

Therefore, that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course, we have The Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter, there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and "warm fuzzies" when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

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>

Meet Atlanta Sibling Co-Leader: Nina Florence

My name is AntoNina Florence and I am a surviving sibling. My younger brother Jamarr Jordan passed away on February 14, 2000, a few months after receiving his third heart transplant. Jamarr had just turned 19 years old about two weeks before his passing. The last time I saw my brother was about four days before he died. Even though it has been 11 years, I remember the day Jamarr left us like it was yesterday and not a day goes by that I do not think of him. There has definitely been a noticeable void in my life without my brother. Jamarr would be 30 years old this year, (2011), and I often wonder what his life would be like if he were still here. Everything I do, that I know Jamarr would have wanted to do, I do those things in his memory. It took a long time for me to make up my mind that I was once again going to enjoy my life, because after Jamarr's death, I never thought I would enjoy living again. I can enjoy my life now, knowing that Jamarr would want me to live my life to the fullest.

I started attending TCF meetings a few months after Jamarr passed away, and TCF has played a major role in my journey to healing. After about two years or so of attending meetings regularly, I was asked to step into the role of “sibling co-leader” and I was excited to take on this role. My mom and I attended leadership training together and my goal since then was to reach out and help those people whose shoes I was once in. Over the years I have talked to people on the phone, communicated via email with people who could not attend a sibling meeting, and have been able to comfort people who lost someone in their life (other than a sibling) – and this is all from the help of TCF and the foundation that was laid by them. In the beginning of my grief journey, I felt so alone; as if I were the only person to experience the loss of a sibling, but TCF helped me see otherwise. I am forever thankful to have met and become a part of such a wonderful group of supportive people.

*“Sorrow is like a precious treasure,
Shown only to friends.”*

~ African Proverb

Ask Dr. Paulson

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appears in the quarterly TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*. Copyright 1998-2011. These excerpts were reprinted from the March 2011 E-Newsletter of *The Compassionate Friends*.



Q. My brother took his life a few months ago. He was very special to my daughter. I am trying to be there for my parents, but it is exhausting when I'm stuck between mourning and trying to handle everyday life. Any suggestions?

A. You have a very big job right now! Your daughter needs you to be able to continue with the everyday chores of being a mother and help her through the loss of her uncle. Your parents need you to support them through their loss, and the loss of the family unit that you grew up in. AND, you need to be able to mourn the loss of your brother and all that this entails! You have a lot going on at once! It is going to be very important that you think about what nurtures you. What relaxes you. What helps you be able to pick up and go on to the next task. Those are the things you should be doing – REGULARLY! This may mean that you figure out how to include more downtime, more sleep, and more time off the clock – time where you don't have any commitments and you are unavailable to others. Think of it as preparing for a marathon. It requires training, good running shoes, and the right nutrition the night before the run! What you have to realize is that you don't have to have an excuse right now to give yourself a little extra TLC – you've already got at least three that you mentioned in your question! Filling your tanks will make sure that you are able to meet the demands of what is now a very exhausting “everyday life.”

Our Children's & Siblings' Births Remembered



April, May, and June



Michael Btembke

April 1

Son of Ghakarhi Btembke

Matthew McMichael Taylor

April 1

Son of Jim and Elaine Taylor

April Leshay Nesmith

April 5

Daughter of Carla Adamar

Jenny Collver

April 7

Daughter of Meredith and Michael Collver

Jennifer Gryzinski

April 7

Daughter of Lisa Mary Katz

Charisma Tyar Inez Sanders

April 7

Daughter of Marva J. Peters

Dr. Thomas Brown IV

April 8

Son of Lillie Brown

Rodney 'Booney' Love Jr.

April 8

Son of Teri and Rodney Love Sr.

Kennon Lamar Jernigan

April 9

Son of Pam and Ken Jernigan

Bo Tuggle

April 12

Son of Connie and Johnny Tuggle

Bradford Gordan Lamkie

April 16

Son of Laura Lea Lamkie

Padraic Dirr

April 20

Son of Jim Dirr

David Ferguson

April 20

Son of Christina and David Ferguson

Mark Joseph Gore

April 22

Son of Luis and Barbara Rodriguez

William Fielding Foulke, Jr.

April 28

Son of Holly Foulke

Jason Maham

April 28

Son of Trish Maham

Jennifer Lea Evans

May 6

Daughter of Delores Evans

Elijah Samuel Marcus

May 9

Son of Eric and LaPrecious Marcus

Damien White

May 17

Son of Robin White

Aaron Marion

May 18

Son of Denise Marion

Thomas Michael Runfola

May 19

*Son of Pat Runfola
Brother of Karen Davis*

Marc William Waidner

May 19

Son of Mary Alice Wood

Chad Gordon

May 21

Son of Jayne and Wayne Newton

Mathew Scott Marshall

May 22

Son of Gena and John Ivester

David Arnold Barrett

May 25

Son of Jacqueline Barrett

Joey Capron

May 26

Son of Carmen Capron

Henry Robinson Cart

May 27

Son of Roberta and Rob Cart

Richmond Matthew Petzel

May 27

Son of Cindy Garner

Ronald Taus

May 28

Son of Dena Hubbard

Derek L. Brown

May 29

Son of Denice and Gerald Brown

Jonathan Aaron Blumenfeld

May 30

Son of Harriet Blumenfeld

Kameron Michael Dunmore

May 31

Son of Karen A. Dunmore

Michael Moskowitz

June 2

Brother of Arnie Moskowitz

Katherine Jane Wentz Williams

June 3

Daughter of Jane and Clyde Wentz

Donald Wesley Carithers

June 10

Son of Susan and John Carithers

Spencer McCrea Oedel

June 10

Son of Amy Lighthill

Evan Sheffield

June 12

Son of Cathy Spraetz

Jennifer Hower

June 23

Sister of Julie Fischer

Billy Snapp

June 23

Son of Teal Snapp

John Allen Askins

June 24

Son of Elaine Askins

Christopher Allen Williams

June 25

Son of Cynthia Williams

Brian Patrick Devine

June 26

Son of Eileen and Patrick Devine

Vanishia Shantee Jinks

June 26

Daughter of Yvonne Jinks

Anika Alford

June 29

Daughter of Selma Calaman

Mandi Lynn Mast

June 29

Daughter of Diane and Daniel Mast

Aaron Woodruff

June 30

Brother of Rachel Woodruff

Our Children's & Siblings' Angel Dates Remembered



April, May, and June



Todd Kirk Stien

April 1

Son of Lorann Stien

Derek L. Brown

April 2

Son of Denice and Gerald Brown

Jessica Lyn Bryl

April 3

Daughter of Betty and Daniel Bryl

Hallbrook 'Trey' Polite, III

April 9

Son of Linda and Hallbrook Polite, Jr.

Anthony Chad Willis

April 11

Son of Mark and Ginger Willis

Matthew McMichael Taylor

April 12

Son of Jim and Elaine Taylor

Jameka Deshon Holmes

April 14

Daughter of Charlotte Hamm

John Sistrunk

April 16

Son of Sarah Smith Sistrunk

Bradford Gordan Lamkie

April 19

Son of Laura Lea Lamkie

Anita Marepally

April 20

Sister of Archana Vemulapalli-Marepally

Joshua Benjamin Goforth

April 21

Son of John and Sue Goforth

Xavier Khamani Ray

April 24

Son of Stephanie Ray

Rose Ann Thompson

April 25

Daughter of Kevin Thompson

Raymond Ira Buckner

April 27

Son of Vera R. Morrison

Charlie Wellman

April 27

Son of Mary Wellman

Charisma Tyar Inez Sanders

April 29

Daughter of Marva J. Peters

Arthur Burt Jordan

May 6

*Son of Ann Asbell
Brother of Emily Jordan*

Amanda Christine Warnock

May 6

Daughter of Amy Osier

Julian Oliver Carter

May 7

Son of Bryan and Julie Carter

Christopher Lee Simpson

May 9

*Son of Tricia and Kenny Simpson
Grandson of Elizabeth Luke*

Elijah Samuel Marcus

May 9

Son of Eric and LaPrecious Marcus

Brandon Burke

May 10

*Son of Charlene and Johnny Burke
Grandson of Shirley A. Kendrick*

Taylor Arianna Mills

May 11

Daughter of Zeporice Mills

Kameron Rutherford

May 11

Son of Judy and Khristopher Rutherford

Tyreek Seivwright

May 12

Son of Donna Derricho

Maeve Elizabeth Fintak

May 13

Daughter of Steve and Brigid Fintak

Cherida Kinlaw

May 14

Daughter of Cherie Kinlaw

Jenny Collver

May 15

*Daughter of Meredith and
Michael Collver*

Bradley James Peerson

May 15

*Son of Pam and Jon Peerson
Grandson of Jackie Fuller
Brother of Blake Peerson*

Michael Rice Lee

May 17

Son of Anthony and Amber Lee

Matthew Thomas Crowell

May 24

Son of Barry and Doris Crowell

Kim Gelly

May 24

Sister of Laurie Rogers

Matthew Marcus Long

May 28

Son of Timothy Long

Amanda Irene Smith

May 29

*Daughter of Earl and
Paulette Cagle*

Bayonne Phyleese Wilson

May 31

Daughter of Phyllis A. Grier

Kenneth David Kemp

May 31

Son of Kimberly McCain

Sallie Scanlon

May 31

Daughter of Jane R. Scanlon

Christopher Shim

May 31

Son of Jean and Deon Shim

Richmond Matthew Petzel

June 1

Son of Cindy Garner

Joshua Polain

June 1

Son of Kimberly Polain

Christopher James Downs

June 3

Son of Jim and Joan Downs

Paul Abraham

June 5

Son of Alan and Deborah Abraham

April Leshay Nesmith

June 5

Daughter of Carla Adamar

Hayden Vann

June 6

Sister of Whitney Horne

William Fielding Foulke, Jr.
June 8
Son of Holly Foulke

Kaxon Harris
June 10
Son of Karen Harris

Margie Ann Lind
June 10
Daughter of Bette and Bob Lind

Robert A. Lind, Jr.
June 10
Son of Bette and Bob Lind

Keith Perry
June 11
Son of Oveta Perry

Rodney 'Booney' Love Jr.
June 13
Son of Teri and Rodney Love Sr.

Averil Brown
June 15
Son of Carolyn Brown

Michael D. Hamilton
June 15
Son of Helena Hamilton

Jenny Moriarty
June 16
Daughter of Larry Moriarty

Brandon Jack Phillips
June 16
Son of Susan and Jack Phillips

Jason Gibson
June 18
Son of Tricia Garrett

Jennifer Lea Evans
June 19
Daughter of Delores Evans

Debra Joy Littman
June 19
Daughter of Muriel Littman

Kawasiki S. Ricks
June 19
Son of Beverly Ricks

Kennon Lamar Jernigan
June 20
Son of Pam and Ken Jernigan

Thomas Michael Runfola
June 21
Son of Pat Runfola
Brother of Karen Davis

Hadiyah Rasheedah Evans
June 21
Daughter of Patricia Evans

Imani Thompson Twine
June 21
Daughter of Stephanie Thompson Harris

Aaron Woodruff
June 22
Brother of Rachel Woodruff

Evan Sheffield
June 23
Son of Cathy Spratz

Thomas Watson
June 26
Son of Linda Watson

Jacob Martin Drollinger
June 29
Son of John and Virginia Drollinger

Georgia Wimberly Pierce
June 30
Daughter of Michael and Anna Pierce

Melvin Shannon
June 30
Son of Lillian Smith
Brother of Juanita White





TCF National Organization is on Facebook

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's 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 Jennifer Dailey, from her parents Robert and Joanne Dailey, Lilburn, GA
In Loving Memory of Michael Btembke, from his father, Ghakarhi Btembke, Norcross, GA
In Loving Memory of Bill and Billy Snapp, from Kirby and Ronnie Knutson, Loves Park, IL
In Loving Memory of Reezin "Chip" Swilley, Jr., from his parents, Elsie and Reezin Swilley, Atlanta, GA

Remembrance Cards Donations

In Loving Memory of Charles Pilgreen, from his mother Brenda Shiplet, Birmingham, AL

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) _____ Email: _____

Our chapter publishes a quarterly newsletter that is available electronically – at no cost. Please clearly print your e-mail address so we can send it to you:

E-Mail: _____

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? Enter # here _____ (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:

- Do you want your child's name to appear in the newsletter's "**We Remember You**" section of birth and death dates?
Yes ☐ No ☐
- Do you want to receive the daily e-newsletter from TCF Atlanta? If so, please include your email

- Do you wish to have your child's name included on the Wall of Memory on our TCF Atlanta Web Site? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 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) ☐ Library (6) ☐ 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, return by e-mail to: jayne@tcfatlanta.org

Or Make Donations Online by Pay Pal at <http://www.tcfatlanta.org/donationdataform.html>