



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

Linked Together

Newsletter of the Atlanta Chapter

Winter 2007

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

Atlanta Area Web Site

www.tcfatlanta.org

TCF Atlanta Newsletter

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

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

Upcoming Meetings:

January 9

February 13

March 13

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

To Members of the Atlanta Chapter:



By Carol Hawley
Atlanta Chapter, TCF

This Christmas was the 3rd without our youngest son Billy. Our Christmas tree was set up and decorated with all the familiar ornaments made by our family beginning from 1979. Every ornament was created by Alan, Billy, Bill and I. Some are school projects with a photo attached and a signature carefully signed and dated. Little did we know these would be some of the most precious of all gifts to us. We had our quiet Christmas dinner and each of us reflected on "how wonderful past Christmas was and how it will never be the same again."

This is our last Christmas spent in the United States as we are moving to Indonesia where Bill will be working jointly with UNICEF and the Indonesian government to control malaria in this enormous country with the 4th largest population in the world.

I know that many of the members in the chapter and elsewhere have been receiving the cards I've designed whether for your child's birthday or angel date. I put thought, sympathy and care into each card in the hope that it will bring some comfort to your family. While I made the cards, Jayne Newton, past leader of our Tucker group, made sure that the cards reached your families by dealing with the inserts and mailing of many cards each month. I am very grateful for her kindness and generosity in helping with this task.

I take this opportunity to bid all of you goodbye, but please keep in touch through either snail mail or email. The cost of a letter will be the same as if you would mail one in the United States even though I am physically on the other side of the world. Right now it can be mailed to my present address and it will be forwarded to us at the US Embassy/Jakarta. I will provide the mailing address once I move. We are set to depart from Atlanta on Jan. 15!

I close this letter with a passage written by Marianne Williamson in memory of our son Billy Q. Hawley, a lover of nature, creatures of the woods, and a great appetite for

good food, classical music, techno, playing the flute, playing games on the X-Box with his brother Alan, the love for his German Shepherd Lucky and so on.....

*Life is like a book that never ends.
Chapters close, but not the book itself.
The end of one physical incarnation is
like the end of a chapter, on some level
setting up the beginning of another.*

Take care everyone and stay in touch,
Carol Hawley

Editor's Note: Carol will continue to make birthday and angel date cards for our chapter after she moves to Indonesia.

Carol: Please know that our thoughts and warm wishes go with you, along with our thanks for the beautiful cards you make for our chapter members. These cards mean a lot to all of us.

National TCF Web Site to List Memorials to Children in U.S.

The national Compassionate Friends web site is collecting the locations of children's memorials across the United States. These locations will be posted on the TCF National web site at <http://www.compassionatefriends.org/> as soon as enough locations are received to design a page. Bereaved families will be able to locate and visit memorials that are close to their location or include visits to the children's memorials in other locations in their travel plans.

To be considered for listing on the TCF site, a memorial must be one that has been dedicated to all children. Memorial locations that are for an individual person will not be posted.

To submit a memorial location for consideration and posting on the TCF site, please fill out and submit the form located at:

http://www.compassionatefriends.org/private_support/Children_Memorials/childrens_memorial_form.htm

Please email the TCF webmaster at webmaster@compassionatefriends.org if you have questions about a children's memorial submission.

'07 TCF National Conference to be Held July 20-22 in Oklahoma City

While the afterglow from the TCF National Conference in Dearborn, Mich., still remains, a dedicated conference committee has already been hard at work for nearly a year in preparation for the 30th TCF National Conference which will be held in Oklahoma City July 20-22. As with past conferences, there will be a pre-conference Professionals Day July 19, and the (eighth) Walk to Remember© the final day of the conference.

Oklahoma City has a rich historical background and offers year-round sunshine. With a billion dollar renovation of the city in place, Oklahoma City ranks as one of the "Best Places to Live in North America," according to *Places Rated Almanac*. The conference will be held at the Oklahoma City Convention Center in the historical downtown area.

Lydia Burns Publishes Book in Memory of Her Son, David

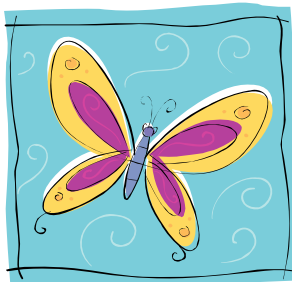
Lydia Burns, a member of our Atlanta (Tucker) chapter, has written a book in memory of her son, David. A copy of the book, "When Your Child Dies," is available as part of our chapter's library collection of books.

In addition to telling David's story, the book includes some of the poetry Lydia has written.

Among the comments Lydia has received in response to her book:

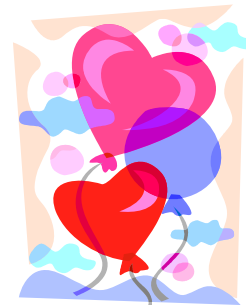
"The loss of a child is perhaps the most tragic event that can occur in a parent's life. This book provides insight to the emotional trauma and the grieving process encountered with death."

"I read your book last night and was very moved by the whole horrible experience of losing your precious son. I hope writing all of your emotions and turmoil down will be a help to others who have gone through the same trauma."



Balloons 4 Healing Project

By Natalie Blakeslee



As I was speaking by phone to Denise Platz, the bereaved mom of a precious son named Aaron, I realized that she was now living too far away to visit her son's grave. She had moved from the Fairview-Girard PA area to California.

We spoke about the upcoming sixth anniversary of her son's passing. She had just visited home a couple of months earlier and couldn't come back again this soon. I asked myself how I could help her make the day less stressful for her, as she would be missing and grieving her child even more on that day.

And so I told Denise, "You can still lay flowers, balloons, gifts, whatever you wish, at your son's grave. I would be more than happy to do it in your place."

With her imagination as her only limitation, she was free to get her feelings out, knowing that someone who truly empathized would stand in for her and present her gifts to her son.

She called a shop near my home and placed an order for the kinds and colors of flowers and balloons that she wanted, with a yellow rose accompanying her special note.

On that Saturday I picked everything up and went to her son's gravesite. With Denise on the phone, Dr. Steve Hodack and I took pictures and made a video recording, as we released the balloons and placed the flowers on his grave. Scissors and markers were left behind the tree for any members of the family that might visit. As it rained, tears flowed. We shared stories of our children and I listened as she told me about Aaron. I had lost my eldest daughter Carrie almost a year earlier. It turned out that we were not only joined in our grief, but that our children had both passed from the same illness, leukemia.

Dr. Steve ventured out in the rain one more time to grab a few photos, one of which included the gravestone of Denise's husband, which she hadn't yet seen. Her husband, Aaron's father, had passed just one year prior. We laid balloons at his grave with a note asking him to give Aaron a huge heaven hug for her. As we drove away from the cemetery, Dr. Steve said, "I think you have developed something here that could help bereaved parents all around the world."

This was the start of "Balloons 4 Healing." For more information, go to:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Balloons4Healing/>

Resolutions

By Pat Akery

The Compassionate Friends, Medford, Ore.

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year: New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself – both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs. Have a happier New Year!

Editor's Note: The next meeting of the Atlanta chapter will be on Jan. 9 at 7:30 p.m.

I've Learned

By Nancy Ludt

Huntington Beach, California

Editor's Note: When Nancy Ludt asked the families of the Huntington Beach, Calif., Bereaved Parent Support Group what they had learned since the death of their child, she reported that their comments were "moving and eye-opening," and she offered to share these pearls of wisdom with us. No two comments she received were alike, and "the names of the contributors were left out because this is a group effort, and we can all benefit from this list." While these "lessons" are from bereaved parents, they can easily apply also to almost any other kind of bereavement, as well.

I've learned:

- To take one day at a time.
- Not to say, "if only," "I should have," etc.
- To appreciate what I've got and not moan about what I "don't got."
- To appreciate life and not take it for granted.
- If today is bleak, tomorrow can be better.
- To appreciate the moments when I can laugh.
- That without my support group, I would be lost.
- How very much I need my "new" friends.
- How much I treasure and love my daughter's friends.
- Not to take my health for granted.
- What is trivial.
- That if my energy level is low, I don't push myself.
- The importance of exercise.
- That grief is not time-bound.
- That no one grieves like me; everybody grieves differently.
- That the pain never goes away, but it does get "softer."
- That no one can comfort me the way Jesus can.
- To allow the grief, pain and loss to become a part of me.
- That there is a reason to keep on living (and loving).
- That joy does return...only in a different way.
- To turn "it" over to the Lord.
- That someday we will be together again.
- Not to let Satan steal my happiness.
- To ride "the wave" of denial, anger, depression and acceptance.
- To accept that I may never know why.
- It's okay to say, "No."
- Not to blame people when they don't understand.

- The ability to face adversity (courage).
- To be strong and resolute.
- The importance of support and encouragement.
- That there is friendship and family, OR, family and friendship!
- That to lose a child is the "ultimate tragedy."
- That I need others who have been there to help me through this journey.
- That love never dies.
- That time is an ally.
- That every moment really matters.
- That eventually you do want to go on and live again.
- That I must create a "new normal" for myself.
- That my daughter's love of life continues to give me the strength to go on.
- That I must re-invest the energy I gave to my child into something/someone else.
- That over time, I have more control over my grief.
- That I will always have tears on my heart.
- That it is so important to keep my daughter's name and memory.
- That only in the articulation of grief does it diminish.
- That making new traditions helps.
- How the soft glow of a candle helps to warm my heart again and bring my daughter near.
- That it doesn't matter how our children died, just that they have.
- That over time, the cemetery brings peace and solitude...not just tears.
- How the pain and grief I feel one day isn't necessarily the way I will feel the next day.
- That some of the things I thought I'd never do again since my daughter died – I have.
- That I can laugh again and not feel guilty.
- That along with all the pain and despair, joy and happiness have found a place in my life again.
- People who have not lost a child can't possibly understand what I went through.
- That not only does one lose a child, but they can also lose their belief system, some family members and some friends in the process.
- Our society is deficient in death education and really doesn't know how to respond to the grieving person.
- Some people want to see and be around "happy" people and only have so much to give for those who are grieving.
- Everyone grieves differently, and there is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve.
- There is no time frame for "getting on with your life" after the death of your child.
- Strangers can give more than some relatives.
- You don't always have until tomorrow.
- The world does not stop when your child dies.
- Being among nature helps to bring some softness to my heart and brings my daughter closer to me.
- That as unbelievable as it is to me, I have come to reconcile my daughter's death. A "settling" has taken place within myself.
- You don't have to have money to be rich.
- A broken heart will mend...almost.
- We are all connected and need each other in such a special way.
- Many times we are touching lives and helping each other in time and space that we don't even realize.
- The support of family and friends is invaluable.
- The phone becomes an object of anxiety sometimes. (Child's death notified by phone.)
- That "normalizing" the sense of being totally insane is helpful.
- There may be difficulty when people say we are "coping so well."
- After three years, I don't want to talk about the loss of my son a lot, although he is rarely absent from my consciousness.
- It may help to focus on the very small things, because you will not be able to make sense of the larger picture.
- To attempt to feel comfort in the warmth or scent of a cup of hot tea in my hands, the smell of a flower, the proximity of someone who cared.
- The daily searing pain gets less raw, and sometimes I can have moments of joy.
- To watch the sunset every day.
- My son will always be alive as long as I am also alive.
- I can smile when I remember him.
- I had to go with my feelings and trust in our love.
- It takes years of baby-stepping and falling.
- To be humble, grateful and a little more selfish, aware, honest and looking forward to my life, rather than living my son's death.
- What I would give for just ONE more day!
- It feels awfully good typing this into the computer

Bereavement Magazine (March/April 2000). Reprinted with permission from Bereavement Publications, Inc. and Living With Loss Magazine 888-604-4673.

January, February and March Birthdays

Child's Name	Birthday	Angel Date	Relationship	Family
Rahim Smith	1/1/1977	3/3/2001	son	Susan Wilson
Timothy E. Dixon	1/7/1980	11/9/1999	son	Georgia Ware-Dixon
Stephen Chappel II	1/10/1985	2/24/2000	son	Stephen and Joyce Chappel
Jason Gibson	1/10/1971	6/18/1997	son	Tricia Garrett
Tre' Shawn C. Barnwell	1/11/2001	3/12/2002	grandson	Ms. E. B. Barnes
Sharon Elizabeth Zick	1/12/1987	9/25/2005	daughter	Paul and Rebecca Zick
Leanna Piver	1/16/1978	11/7/1998	daughter	David and Janet Piver
Jessica Lyn Bryl	1/19/1977	4/3/2000	daughter	Betty and Daniel Bryl
Charlie Wellman	1/20/1988	4/27/2005	son	Mary Wellman
Steven Curtis	1/22/1974	6/26/1990	son	Janet Curtis
Jamarr Jordan	1/27/1981	2/14/2000	brother	Nina Florence
Jamarr Jordan	1/27/1981	2/14/2000	son	Janet Mitchell
Terry Tedford	1/27/1949	4/1/2005	brother	Cheryl Tedford
J.C. 'Chip' Woodward III	1/29/1953	8/22/2005	son	Woody and Marion Woodward
Clayton Thomas Sechrist	2/1/1980	2/20/1996	son	Ann and Nelson Sechrist
Ashley Butler	2/9/1990	9/10/2001	daughter	Mishell Butler
Carlo R. Williams	2/11/1979	12/21/2003	son	Deborah Denise Williams
Arthur Burt Jordan	2/16/1973	5/6/2006	brother	Emily Jordan
Aleea Corine Blokland	2/19/1999	2/23/1999	daughter	Amy Olseth
Melvin Shannon	2/23/1956	6/30/2000	son	Lillian Smith
Melvin Shannon	2/23/1956	6/30/2000	brother	Juanita White
Kathleen Dirr	2/24/1965	10/28/1984	daughter	Jim Dirr
Dijon Plummer, Jr.	2/24/1998	12/22/2005	son	Dijon Plummer
Matthew Meehan	2/26/1983	9/30/2003	son	Michael Meehan
Matthew Meehan	2/26/1983	9/30/2003	son	Vicki Webb
Joel Robert Grey	2/28/1967	6/19/2004	son	Diane Grey
Allen Palmer Shugart	3/4/2002	7/23/2005	son	Kelli and Henry Shugart
Yolandra Erin Dixon	3/5/1976	5/3/1999	daughter	Georgia Ware-Dixon
Darren Avery	3/6/1967	8/7/2000	stepson	Lillie Austin
Shana Rosenwald	3/7/1971	2/23/2001	daughter	Ellie Rosenwald
Christian Nicole Ricketts	3/11/2003	3/11/2003	daughter	Nicole Ricketts
Norman Wayne Walton, Jr.	3/11/1983	1/18/2006	son	Rhonda R. Smarr
Billy Hawley	3/15/1983	9/27/2004	son	Bill and Carol Hawley
Billy Hawley	3/15/1983	9/27/2004	brother	Alan Hawley
Annie Hope Shlevin	3/15/1980	8/21/2004	daughter	Barbara Shlevin
Reezin N. 'Chip' Swilley, Jr.	3/18/1969	8/9/1985	son	Reezin and Elsie Swilley
Kim Gelly	3/24/1966	5/24/2002	daughter	Wanda and Bobby Boylston
Kim Gelly	3/24/1966	5/25/2002	sister	Laurie Rogers
Corey Adam Price	3/24/1983	1/31/2004	grandson	Angie Williams
Jamie Dalziel	3/25/1985	12/24/2003	son	Martin and Donna Dalziel
Shemariah Tafari Downer	3/26/1980	7/25/2001	son	Barbara H. Forbes
Matthew Mayfield	3/27/1978	11/30/1990	son	Lynn Mayfield
Hallbrook 'Trey' Polite, III	3/28/2006	4/9/2006	son	Linda and Hallbrook Polite, Jr.
Winn Jordan	3/31/1984	3/23/2004	son	Bill and Jan Jordan

January, February and March Angel Dates

Child's_Name	Angel Date	Birthday	Relationship	Family
Latoya Peart	1/1/2005	11/1/1978	daughter	Alvin and Patsy Dorman
Duane Clinton Byrd	1/2/2002	8/19/1986	son	Linda Byrd
Damien White	1/6/2003	5/17/1978	son	Robin White
Nicholas Ryan Gardner	1/9/2005	7/25/2002	grandson	Pilar Turk
Nicholas Ryan Gardner	1/9/2005	7/25/2002	son	Dewey and Michelle Gardner
Lauren Zauche	1/10/2001	12/10/1982	daughter	David and Claudette Zauche
Sherry Engel	1/12/2004	9/25/1967	sister	Andrea Huskey
Sherry Engel	1/12/2004	9/25/1967	daughter	Lou Ellen Huskey
Jessica Dodge	1/14/2004	9/25/1987	daughter	Dan and Tamie Dodge
Richard Alan Cartin	1/16/2005	10/2/1963	son	Nancy Murphy
Norman Wayne Walton, Jr.	1/18/2006	3/11/1983	son	Rhonda R. Smarr
Mark East	1/25/2004	9/22/1971	son	Jeff East
Amelia Sutterthwaite Ward	1/29/2006	10/29/2005	daughter	Lisa and Greg Ward
Corey Adam Price	1/31/2004	3/24/1983	grandson	Angie Williams
Scott Wiseman	2/3/2002	10/19/1977	son	Lynn Wiseman
Stephen Ledford	2/8/1997	10/4/1975	son	Luella and Mike Ledford
Jamarr Jordan	2/14/2000	1/27/1981	brother	Nina Florence
Jamarr Jordan	2/14/2000	1/27/1981	son	Janet Mitchell
Wytosha Foster	2/19/1999	7/28/1981	daughter	Bonita Foster
Clayton Thomas Sechrist	2/20/1996	2/1/1980	son	Ann and Nelson Sechrist
Aleea Corine Blokland	2/23/1999	2/19/1999	daughter	Amy Olseth
Shana Rosenwald	2/23/2001	3/7/1971	daughter	Ellie Rosenwald
Stephen Chappel II	2/24/2000	1/10/1985	son	Stephen and Joyce Chappel
Billy Snapp	2/25/1996	6/23/1981	son	Teal and Bill Snapp
Joshua Anavitarte	3/3/2002	6/13/1979	son	Jean Marie Anavitarte
John Allen Askins	3/3/1995	6/24/1971	son	Elaine Askins
Chamica Hardaway	3/3/2000	12/21/1972	daughter	Albert and Florence Daniels
D'Keesiyah Hardaway	3/3/2000	6/16/1996	granddaughter	Albert and Florence Daniels
Rahim Smith	3/3/2001	1/1/1977	son	Susan Wilson
Jason Curtis	3/6/1999	7/8/1976	son	Sharon Curtis
Jacob Miller	3/7/2003	10/26/1985	son	Sandra and Richard Miller
Matt Halloran	3/11/1997	7/2/1980	son	Marti Goldring
Christian Nicole Ricketts	3/11/2003	3/11/2003	daughter	Nicole Ricketts
Tre' Shawn C. Barnwell	3/12/2002	1/11/2001	grandson	Ms. E. B. Barnes
Jennifer Marie Dailey	3/12/1997	11/9/1982	daughter	Joanne and Bob Dailey
Rachel Diane Trotti	3/15/1994	8/27/1991	daughter	Joy-Lyn and James Trotti
Candi Gaye Marshall	3/16/1984	10/16/1965	daughter	Gena and John Ivester
Joey Capron	3/17/1984	5/26/1963	son	Carmen Capron
David James Teddlie	3/22/1999	12/5/1979	son	Anne and Don Teddlie
Winn Jordan	3/23/2004	3/31/1984	son	Bill and Jan Jordan
Jamaal Addison	3/23/2003	10/7/1980	son	Patricia Roberts
Dianne Martha Shlevin	3/26/1979	12/27/1978	daughter	Barbara Shlevin
Daniel Prescott	3/31/2004	5/19/1967	son	Marcia Prescott
Daniel Prescott	3/31/2004	5/19/1967	brother	Pam Prescott

Another Year Without My Child

By Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of her son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, Texas
January 2007

It's a new year and I am marking it, for the fifth time, without my child. Last month was the fourth anniversary of his death. This is one more milestone in the journey of a bereaved parent. The new year brings the promise of new adventures, happiness and prosperity to others. To bereaved parents it adds another dimension to our loss. It also brings the opportunity to look at where we are and how far we have come.

I remember the first New Year's Day without my son. What an empty, hollow feeling I had on January 1, 2003. My world had ended, the shock was still systemic in my mind and body, and I counted the days since he last walked, talked and laughed on this earthly plane, dwelling on the passing of days, hours and minutes since the moment of his death. I was frozen.

Looking back at that time, I recall just how the pain felt; unlike other pain, the pain of losing a child is never forgotten. I feel the familiar jolt that rocked my mind and body each time I awoke to remember that my son had died. I remember the misery of slogging through endless, meaningless days. I remember the tears, the second guessing, the anger, the guilt...I remember it all. I still bounce in and out of those emotions; this will never end. It has moderated greatly, but it never ends.

Now I am more focused on my son's life. Details about his life spring into my mind...happy times, maturing times, good times and funny times. I remember it all with the clarity that only a mother can possess. And so, that is how I will begin this new year...remembering the life of my child but never forgetting the loss.

I am a different person than I was before my son died. I feel as though a lightning bolt struck me on the day of his death, and now I perceive the world from a different vantage point. I have simplified my life from what it once was.

I have many new friends who share the experience of losing a child; I have permanently removed old friends from my life who simply couldn't accept my grief and were fearful of talking about my child. I have a new understanding of the problems that other parents face... problems that a mother of one never has to address. I have become more solidly spiritual. I have gone through Dante's seven circles, walls and gates of hell and emerged as the

unique person I should have been all along. People change. Bereaved parents change a great deal.



I no longer dread each new day. I no longer weep silently every night. I no longer ache from head to foot with the pain of losing my child. I read, I write, I stay active in the community. I work in my small business, doing what I want to do and what I must do. I go to museums, to movies, to stage plays. I listen to music, watch television and work in my home and yard.

Amazingly, my word recall and memory are returning. Forgetting names, events, people, destinations and other critical factors of daily life was something I dealt with for over three and half years. I thought I had lost my mind until I started talking to other parents. I have begun doing memorization exercises...something I probably should have done three years ago. I am learning that the journey through grief lasts for a lifetime. Each stage is different, each sudden, poignant memory is paralyzing and each new day brings an opportunity to evaluate progress.

Much has changed during the past four years. Much will change throughout my life. Each of us experiences the loss of our child at the deepest level of our psyches. Yet each of us comes to this place with a different set of experiences and a unique genetic composition. I cannot compare myself to others. I can only mark my tiny steps forward with a sense of wonder at the resiliency of the human mind and spirit while simultaneously accepting that I am not in control...at any moment a flash of the past might bring me to my knees. I have learned to go with it.

I have found hope for the future. It certainly isn't the future I had envisioned. There will be no late night talks with my son, no holidays or birthdays shared, no participation in my son's children's lives, no cards, no handmade gifts. That door was closed by lawsuit happy former in-laws who have no standing in my life today. I have crawled through the minefields and dodged the bullets of some pretty mentally unbalanced people and survived. I have faced the abyss of losing my only child while enduring the cruelest of sniping, the worst of intentionally inflicted pain. I did none of this with grace and finesse...I merely got through it. I survived. I became stronger by letting go of my anger. I found hope by remembering the goodness that is my son and by leaning on friends who had lost their children. These friends were there for me when I so desperately needed the comfort of kindred souls: Compassionate Friends who reached out to me gave me the glimmer of hope when all seemed forever lost and living was almost intolerable.

Now the healing process has completed its circle. I am here for those parents who need me. Strangely this helps me to heal as well. I reach out to others who are new to the process of grief, and I tell them that there is hope.

One day the sunrise will again be beautiful and you will find peace within yourself. You will remember your child's life, you will honor your child's life and you will forever be changed by your child's death. But always, always, your child will remain in your heart. This is my truth to all who wish to know. Lean on us, for we have been where you are today. We will walk with you on your journey toward hope, peace and resolution. It is in this place that the healing will begin.

This is a new year.

January Chapter Meeting

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

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 9, at the First Christian Church of Atlanta, 4532 LaVista Road, Tucker, Ga. The meeting time is 7:30-9:30 p.m. Our sibling group (ages 12 and up) meets at the same time and place.

Lending Library and Book Reviews

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

We also welcome "book reviews". If you have read a book which you felt was helpful on your grief journey, please let us know. Send book reviews and other articles, poems, pictures and remembrances to Cindy Durham for inclusion in our monthly newsletter. E-mail cindy_durham@bellsouth.net or mail to The Compassionate Friends, 1364 Sanden Ferry Drive, Decatur, GA 30033.

Birthday and Angel Date Cards

Cards are created by
Carol Hawley
In Memory of her son, Billy Hawley
3/15/83 – 9/27/04
Norcross, GA

Special Birthday Table

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

For more information, please call Tamie Dodge, our birthday table coordinator, at 770-982-2251 or Dodgecat2001@yahoo.com

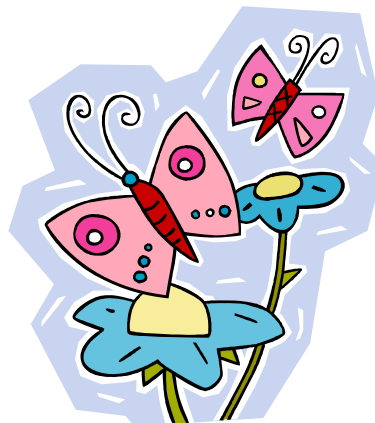


®Sibling Credo

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.



Gifts of Love

A love gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends of Atlanta. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but it can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapters. The following donations are in support of the Atlanta Chapter newsletter, candlelight service, web site and other outreach.



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

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

In Loving Memory of Jessica Dodge, from her parents Dan and Tamie Dodge, Lilburn, GA
In Loving Memory of Matthew McMichael Taylor, from his parents Mr. and Mrs. James Taylor, Stone Mountain, GA
In Loving Memory of Marc Waidner, from his step sister Danielle Dunbar and her family, Birmingham, AL

In Loving Memory of Kay Cee Herring, from her parents David and Ginny Herring, Buford, GA
In Loving Memory of Ryan R. Baker, from his mother Sheila Baker, Conyers, GA
In Loving Memory of Meseret Debru, from his mother Kila Gebru, Decatur, GA

In Loving Memory of Christopher Hobbs, from his father Joseph Hobbs, Stone Mountain, GA
In Loving Memory of Bobbi Buffington, from Timothy and Adrienne Boyer, Atlanta, GA
In Loving Memory of Robert and Margie Lind, from their parents Robert and Bette Lind, Lilburn, GA

In Loving Memory of Stephanie Weber, from her parents John and Cecilia Weber, Roswell, GA
In Loving Memory of Jeffery Armstrong Patterson, from his parents David and Ann Patterson, Marietta, GA
In Loving Memory of Corey Adam Price, from his grandmother Angie Williams, Norcross, GA

Centerpiece Donations in Memory of:

Azariah Anderson
Ryan R. Baker
Michael Btembke
Jason Daniel Cirafisi
Jessica Erin Davidson

Jessica Dodge
James Anthony Durham
Billy Foulke
Meseret Debru
Kay Cee Herring

Christopher Hobbs
Jason Maham
Nicholas Rosales
Evan Sheffield
Allen Palmer Shugart

Special Thanks to:

Alan Pedersen for singing at our 2006 Candlelight Service. Alan donated copies of his two CDs to our chapter – for use in our lending library. He also graciously gave chapter members permission to "burn" their own copy of the CDs from the ones he loaned us. Copies of the CDs will be available to chapter members at our monthly meetings.

Special thanks also goes to the Courtyard by Marriott (at Northlake) for providing two free nights lodging for Alan during his stay in Atlanta for the Candlelight Service.

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: _____

Do you prefer to receive the newsletter by (check one): _____ Mail _____ Email (provide email address above)

Child's Full Name: _____ Male _____ Female _____

Child's Birth Date: _____ Child's Death Date: _____

Cause of Child's Death (optional): _____

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

Names and ages of all surviving siblings living with you:

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

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

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

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

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

I would like to apply my donation toward the following outreach: (1) _____ newsletter (2) _____ birthday/angel date cards
(3) _____ newly-bereaved packets (4) _____ annual candlelight remembrance service (5) _____ 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 Make Donations Online by Pay Pal

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



®Our Credo...

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.
Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh

and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.

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

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,

but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and

share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace,

share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends



The Compassionate Friends Atlanta Chapter

1364 Sanden Ferry Drive

Decatur, GA 30033

Honoring 27 Years of Support and Friendship for
Bereaved Families

Winter 2007 Newsletter