



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Meg Avery, Editor

WINTER 2011/2012

December, January and February

**A non-denominational self-help support group offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause.**

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

### CHAPTER MEETING AND CONTACT INFO:

Gwinnett Chapter- 7:30 PM on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month. **next meetings: Dec. 15, Jan. 19 and Feb. 16.**

**Trinity Christian Fellowship, 1985 Old Fountain Road, Lawrenceville, 30043.**

We meet in the 100 Building, the first building on your left.

For TCF Gwinnett information, contact June Cooper by phone 770-757-4927, or email [jc30044@flash.net](mailto:jc30044@flash.net) or [tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com)  
TCF Atlanta website: [www.tcfatlanta.org](http://www.tcfatlanta.org)

Georgia Regional Coordinator:

Muriel Littman, 404-603-9942 Email [muriellittman@comcast.net](mailto:muriellittman@comcast.net)

The Compassionate Friends National Office:  
1-877-969-0010

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org)

Dear Friends,

The Gwinnett Newsletter is available both in print and by e-mail. If you have received this issue in print and would prefer to receive e-mail instead, please notify us at [tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfgwinnett@yahoo.com). This will help keep our postage and printing costs down. We welcome your suggestions to improve our chapter newsletter.

We would love your input for the newsletter, Poetry, articles and comments submitted by parents, siblings and grandparents are an important part of each issue. Our next issue, Spring 2012 will cover the months of March, April and May.

We will also continue to recognize birthday and anniversary dates as times of special remembrance within our TCF family. Please communicate these important dates to us if you have not already done so.

The Compassionate Friends 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 walk the grief journey. 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.



### *Our Credo...*

*We need not walk alone.*

*We are The Compassionate Friends*

*We reach out to each other with love,  
with understanding and with hope.*

*The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many  
different causes, but our love for them unites us.*

*Your pain become 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 other 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.*

*Copyright 2007*



This year, National Children's Memorial Day is on Sunday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>. Due to the uncertainty of December weather, TCF Gwinnett will not be sponsoring an outdoor candle lighting remembrance at 7 pm. We encourage you to gather with friends and/or family and light your candle in memory of your child, children, sibling and/or grandchild as bereaved parents across the globe light candles at 7 pm in every time zone, to create a 24 hour wave of light around the world. Please be sure to leave a message on The Compassionate Friends website, [www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org) on their link to the Worldwide Candle Lighting page for the Remembrance Book. Read messages from other parents - no matter where we live, what language we speak, what circumstances or what age our child passed away, we all love, miss and remember our child and feel the ache of missing them even more so during the holidays. It can be very comforting to read the thoughts, hopes and memories of other parents. Last year, in a 24-hour span, TCF received some 5,000 messages representing 60 countries and posted in many different languages.

### TCF GWINNETT CANDLE LIGHTING REMEMBRANCE

Our December meeting will be Thursday, December 15 and TCF Gwinnett will have a special holiday candle lighting remembrance as part of our meeting. Please bring a pillar style or table top candle that can remain lit for the duration of the meeting. Also, please bring your child's, sibling's, grandchild's, favorite ornament or holiday decoration, along with his/her holiday photo, for our special Holiday Table. Of course, snacks are also appreciated! Please plan to arrive a little early since our meeting will start promptly at 7:30 pm.



### Light a Candle

*And I will light a candle for you,  
Shatter all the darkness and bless the times we knew  
Like a beacon in the night  
The flame will burn bright and guide us on our way,  
Oh today I light a candle for you.*

*The seasons come and go,  
And I'm weary from the change.  
I keep on moving on,  
you know it's not the same.  
And when I'm walking all alone  
Do you hear me call your name?  
Do you hear me sing the songs  
we used to sing?*



*You filled my life with wonder, touched me with  
surprise,  
Always saw that something special deep within your  
eyes.  
And through the good times and the bad,  
We carried on with pride,  
I hold onto the love and life we knew*

Copyright Paul Alexander  
From the book "Holiday Help: A Guide for Hope and  
Healing" by Darcie Sims and Sherry Williams

### Christmas Will Never Be Quite the Same

The Christmas tree will never be quite as straight and tall.  
The cookies always seem just the tiniest bit burnt.

The laughter at parties just isn't quite as hearty. The crowds at the stores are annoying, and I rush through my shopping, passing up the gift that would be "just right" for one which will "just do".

The songs of chestnuts and open fires and snow and love leave me weepy, not warm.

But late at night, all by myself, I hold your blanket close to my heart, and my eyes catch glimpses of your angels on the tree, your candle, and your stocking (with a rose from Daddy's garden peeking out of the top!), and I feel your baby hand on my cheek, and smell the sweetness of your velvet-skin.

Then the sadness leaves my face, and I am filled with my love for you.

Merry Christmas Brian Christopher

By Marie Teague, from IRIS, Infants Remembered in Silence, [www.irisremembers.com](http://www.irisremembers.com)

## WE REMEMBER BIRTHDAYS



*The light of life never goes out, and so we remember their birthdays*

### December

Christina VauTrot	Dec. 1
Connor Devine	Dec. 3
Tim Walton	Dec. 6
Mark William Evans, Jr.	Dec. 6
Ross Creel	Dec. 9
Lindsey Marie Townsend	Dec. 13
Amanda Mills	Dec. 15
Jimmy West	Dec. 15
Donelle Blackwell	Dec. 17
Cristina Jane Vargas Howerton	Dec. 18
Kyle Copija	Dec. 20
Robert West	Dec. 21
Michael Faulkner	Dec. 24

### January

Ryan Pilgrim	Jan. 1
Terry O'Donnell	Jan. 2
Linda Strauss	Jan. 4
Michael Dale	Jan. 6
Brandon Harper	Jan. 7
Tiffany Maxwell	Jan. 18
Jessica Bryl	Jan. 19
Tyler Ivey Rice	Jan. 28
Christopher Boyd	Jan. 29
Christian Pach	Jan. 30

As Rabbi Schulweis says in his new book, *Conscience*, "...There is an intuitive sense that we cannot celebrate alone or mourn alone or be consoled alone. Laughter and tears call for community." In a community with others who are also grieving, we experience the power of healing, growth and fortitude so that we may move forward, reflect, grow and experience renewed energy, ... refocusing, reframing and transcending loss to laughter and transcending grief to love.

Everyone has a special light around them - an energy field that glows.

As we heal, we have to find our light. Use our light For ourselves and the world.

### February



Clayton Thomas Sechrist	Feb. 1
Kimberly Lange	Feb. 5
Matthew Turner	Feb. 5
Clayton Shadinger	Feb. 8
Ronald "Scott" Long	Feb. 9
John Andrew Sims	Feb. 12
Dee Cooper	Feb. 14
Christopher Patterson	Feb. 15
Cameron McClure	Feb. 16
Xavier PierreLouis	Feb. 17
Drew Adams	Feb. 20
Stephanie Fortner	Feb. 21
Bryant Lawrence	Feb. 24
David Whitley	Feb. 26
Julie Duncan	Feb. 27
Max Fiandt	Feb. 27
Gerard Robertson	Feb. 28

### Birthday Invitation



Every month we have a Birthday Table and you are warmly invited to please come share your child's birthday with us when his/her birthday is that month. This is your chance to tell us a favorite story, or share a poem or thoughts that either you or your child wrote, or whatever remembrance you choose in memory of your child. Our child's or grandchild's or sibling's birthday will forever be a very special day and we at TCF knows how important that day is and how helpful and healing it can be to share with others.

Please plan on attending the meeting of your child's birthday and filling our Birthday with pictures and/or mementos. You are also more than welcome to bring his/her favorite snacks.



## Holiday Season Offers a Chance to Move Forward

As we walk the path of grief, we look for a passage to help us understand how to comprehend the complexities of anguish and how to channel our emotions into a constructive solution. Logically, we know waking every morning with a constructive plan for the day will help us walk the path of grief. However, our bodies often tell us the pain is too new or too strong to actually execute the plan. The workplace offers an outlet to exercise intellect, logic and creativity, allowing our bodies to take a break from our personal grief and channel our emotions to constructive accomplishments.

The holiday season offers a time to reflect on the past year, to take the pulse of where you are physically and emotionally with your recent loss, to determine the status of the relationships you have maintained since the loss, to analyze your accomplishments in the workplace and to determine what is in store for you in the coming new year.

As a bereaved person, the reflection is one of delight and sadness as you adjust to your new life without your loved one. The delight is felt as you calculate your progress; the sadness is overwhelming due to the reality of your loss.

Since grief has no calendar, as we approach the new year, we continue to count the days, weeks and months since the loss. We reflect on each new milestone that comes along (birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, graduations, first steps, promotions, new jobs, etc.) as we try to adjust to our new life style, schedules and commitments.

We often find ourselves pondering goals for the new year – whether it is to become more productive, exercise more, organize aspects of your life, find a new job, or become more involved in the community, the objective is to “jump start” the new year with excitement, purpose and a plan.

As a bereaved person, we set “resolutions” and “goals” for the new year, we want to continue to understand the complexities of grief and how it effects our daily existence at home and at the workplace. Rather than creating goals that are measured by a start and end date, why not try to find continuity between your pre-bereavement and post-bereavement lives, make a commitment to your growth and reach out to your community. While they are still measurable accomplishments, the true goal is to weave the loss into your daily life and channel your energy down a positive path while trying to lessen the overwhelming feeling of “where should I start “ as I enter the new year.

- Continuity – Grief is often defined by life before and after the loss. We don't like to think about where we have been as we no longer have that part of our lives. We don't like to think about where we are now as it is heartbreaking. We don't like to think about where we are going as it

is truly the unknown. So as the new year approaches, try to find permanence and stability in your home and work life by continuing to work through your grief while intertwining the loss with your daily life. This can be accomplished by finding the balance between maintaining the connection to your deceased loved one while building strength in both work and home. The end result is the uniting of yesterday, today and tomorrow into a new future where there is a place for the bereaved and your new found emotions.

- Commitment – Remain committed to yourself and personal growth. While the loss is a setback emotionally and physically, your growth through the experience will blossom. Make a list of several areas of your life that you will dedicate your time and energy. It may be in relationships with family members, a project at work, new interests or cleaning out a closet. Find the necessary enthusiasm and vow to complete the task. The feeling of accomplishment will provide a new-found desire to tackle the next task and continue your personal growth.
- Community – Often when we experience grief, we have a tendency to want to enter a cocoon. It is hard to express the ever-changing emotions surrounding grief and the feeling that no one could possibly understand what you are experience. While both of those thoughts are true, reaching out to your community for support will allow you to connect with others who are walking or have walked similar paths. Being a part of a community or group of people provides a connection offering strength. Whether it is a support group to help you with your personal grief, an organization that you can connect to by volunteering your time and expertise or a religious group the feeling of being alone will diminish. Being able to share your thoughts provides an opportunity to open yourself and release anxiety relating to your sorrow which ultimately will help you to work through your grief.

We are all in the mind-set that continuity, commitment and community are a part of our daily life, but we often lose sight of what our surroundings offer when we are overwhelmed with emotions resulting from a loss. The workplace continues to provide a platform for you to find continuity in your life, forge ahead with commitments and allowing you to be part of a community. Each new year presents challenges that we will all endure but also an opportunity to reflect, grow and reach further than the previous year. Best wishes for your next year.

By Rachael Kodanaz, from Open to Hope,  
[www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com), Finding Hope After Loss

## Dec., Jan. & Feb. Anniversaries

So that their lives may always shine, our children are remembered. As long as we live, they too shall live for they are part of us in our memories

Jonathan Hesfeld	Dec. 2
Arnessa Royster	Dec. 3
Jessica Rose Riley	Dec. 3
Bryant Lawrence	Dec. 5
Johnia Berry	Dec. 6
Rachael Fouquet	Dec. 7
Frankie Ortiz	Dec. 13
Tim Walton	Dec. 15
Don Walton	Dec. 15
Connor Devine	Dec. 16
Terry O'Donnell	Dec. 21
Christopher Patterson	Dec. 22
Julie Lyn Donaldson	Dec. 23
Adyson Claire Smith	Dec. 23
Norma Mucha	Dec. 25
Samantha Mucha	Dec. 25
Matthew Turner	Dec. 26
Michael LeVierge	Dec. 27
Brannon Springer	Dec. 28
Michael Rivero	Dec. 28
Jason Pettus	Dec. 30



Christian Pach	Feb. 3
Olivia Rodriguez	Feb. 4
Jamie Ann Quillen	Feb. 9
Jimmy West	Feb. 11
Dee Cooper	Feb. 11
Michael Faulkner	Feb. 11
Fara "Nicole" Choate	Feb. 13
Clayton Sechrist	Feb. 20
Kathryn Collier	Feb. 24
Chris Moise	Feb. 24
Kathryn Collier	Feb. 24
Kapri Bradley	Feb. 27
Chanda Leigh Wooden	Feb. 29



## Frost

On a cold winter's day  
Frost etches a beautiful artistry  
On everything it touches -every  
blade of grass

It glitters and sparkles and for  
moments

Before the sun comes out  
and the master piece evaporates  
before our eyes

we stand mesmerized  
cherishing the wondrous sight

Like frost our children were only here for a brief moment

But while they were here

Whether it was moments in the womb

Days, months or many years

They etched their beautiful artistry of love

On our hearts and lives and all of those

They touched.

Unlike frost what they etched is forever

It is something that we can cherish and hold onto always

We stand here tonight

lighting a candle to remember children

we will never forget.

Their light - their spirits - their artistry lives on.

And like the flame of the candle

gives warmth on a cold winter's night

And light in the darkness

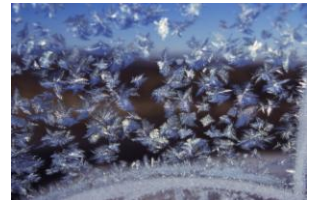
The love our children gave us still remains

It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow

It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness

That we feel

And it gives us hope



Gary Pruitt	Jan. 1
Gabrielle, Malachi & Xavier PierreLouis	Jan. 1
Clayton Shadinger	Jan. 2
Jeff Bradley	Jan. 4
Karissa Palmer	Jan. 7
Kimberly Lange	Jan. 11
Justin Todd Stephens	Jan. 11
Jayla Cook	Jan. 11
Clayton Olvey	Jan. 12
Brandon Harper	Jan. 16
David Whitley	Jan. 17
Michael Dale	Jan. 19
Christina VauTrot	Jan. 20
Amanda & Logan Mills	Jan. 20
Natalie Sparks	Jan. 22
Ryan Gilbride	Jan. 28
Kimberly Dawn Marshall	Jan. 30
Amy Hannigan	Jan. 30

Julie Short  
2007 Southeastern TCF  
Candle Lighting Ceremony In Memory of Kyrá

## To Turn Back Time

Christopher Paul Cattaneo

You're not only my brother, you're my inspiration,  
My hope, and my best friend,  
You're my hero, buddy, and pal  
with your love that will never end.  
I remember when we were little, repeating our ABC's,  
Reading a short story, and counting our 123's.  
We began to grow up, but our bond stayed tight,  
We agreed on everything, had maybe one or two fights.  
Finally your dream came true,  
and you were in a successful band,  
I went to all of your shows. I was your biggest fan.  
Your lyrics were amazing, and your voice was better  
than ever, you were magnificent on the mic;  
a vision I'll always remember.  
Suddenly it was time for vacation  
and we were anxious to get away,  
Everything was perfect, until the traumatic day.  
You were on one jet ski, while I was on the other,  
We were having so much fun,  
trying to splash one another.  
You were coming way too close,  
with a smile on your face,  
And once our jet skis collided,  
it became a memory unable to replace.  
As I saw you floating in the water, head and legs down,  
My whole body became weak,  
and my head was spinning all around.  
I would do anything so see you just for one more day,  
There are so many things I want to tell you,  
So many things left to say.  
You were truly a great friend, brother and son  
Wherever you may be, please look down on everyone.

Dedicated to my brother Chris, my hero and role model. I feel honored having such an amazing angel on my shoulder every day. I would also like to dedicate this poem to my mother, a strong woman who has made it through the toughest times of life and whom I look up to in every way possible. I love you both very much.

By Rebecca Harris, From The Compassionate Friends "We Need Not Walk Alone" Autumn 2011

## To My Sister

You touched us all, you loved us all,  
Forever giving, forever caring,  
Forever forgiving.  
Never wanting in return.  
Blessed are those who shared your life,  
Rich are those who carry your memories,  
Please rest now; your chores we will finish,  
Till we meet again...

By Cindy Keltz, TCF Arlington Heights, IL



## Grief Support For Siblings

When a child has died, siblings are often referred to as "the forgotten mourners." While parents usually receive much support, siblings usually receive little—often being asked "How are your parents doing?" The Compassionate Friends is an organization that is not just for bereaved parents. It's also for bereaved siblings (and grandparents). Some chapters have sibling subgroups while many welcome adult siblings to their meetings. Contact your local chapter to find out their policies on siblings and their meetings. On The Compassionate Friends national website, you will find support in a number of different ways.

[Online Support Community](#) (live chats) allows you to talk with other bereaved siblings from across the country during the Online Support Community sessions held every week. These sessions are limited in number of participants and have trained monitors who are also siblings. Check out [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and go to Resources/Siblings.

## Normal

Bereaved grandparents frequently report frustration with the expectation that they should return to normal quickly after the death of a grandchild.

What friends, co-workers, and even extended family don't seem to understand is that normal will never be the same. We are profoundly changed when a grandchild dies. We approach life differently than before. Many of us find our religious faith challenged, and comments regarding God's plan or our grandchild being in a better place anger rather than comfort us.

Friendships dissolve when people can't accept that our grief is debilitating. The intensity of our grief, which is a reflection of the depth of our love, alarms people.

Friends might avoid us because of their own discomfort with our grief. Family members may even make critical comments about getting over the loss. Our fast-paced society permits no time for mourning. Look at company policies on bereavement leave. Most companies offer one day for the death of a grandchild. One day off, and then we are supposed to function as though nothing happened.

Unfortunately, we also start to doubt ourselves. We worry that we are doing something wrong when we can't bounce back and return to normal, to life as it was before our grandchild died. Burying a grandchild is not normal. Seeing our bereaved child in pain that we cannot alleviate is not normal. Normal has to be redefined, and the process is gradual. A new normal will evolve, one that takes into account our changed family and our desire that our grandchild not be forgotten.

So the next time somebody questions when you are going to get back to normal, look them straight in the eye and tell them normal is a setting on a washing machine.

*Nina Bennett (AGAST: Alliance of Grandparents, A Support in Tragedy) From the TCF Tyler, TX Newsletter*

## THANK YOU!

Many parents give back to TCF through volunteer opportunities as a means of honoring their child. Without volunteers our group would not exist. We are grateful to these volunteers: **June Cooper**, Chapter Co-Leader, in memory of her daughter, **Wendy McMMain** & in memory of her sister, **Noreen Keenan**; **Meg Avery**, Chapter Co-Leader & Newsletter Editor in memory of her son **James Avery**; **Barbara Dwyer**, Chapter Treasurer and group facilitator and **Leo Dwyer**, group facilitator and community outreach, in memory of their son **Matthew Dwyer**; **Terry Sparks**, provides newly bereaved packet info & as group facilitator, in memory of his daughter, **Natalie Sparks**; **Terri Ghioalda**, creating & mailing Birthday Remembrance Cards in memory of her son, **Michael Dale**; **Gary Fox**, facilitator, in memory of his son, **G.W. Fox**; and **Sandy Lavender**, organizing & setting up the library in memory of her daughter **Ashley Lauren Hull**.

**A very special thank you goes out to Nancy Long, who created Birthday & Angel Anniversary Remembrance Cards for the past five years in memory of her son Joe. We greatly appreciate all the time & dedication Nancy gave toward the creation of these cards.**



### Small Sharing Groups

Monthly support group meetings are the heart of The Compassionate Friends. These gatherings provide a safe and caring environment in which bereaved parents and siblings can talk freely about the emotions and experiences they are enduring. Parents receive the understanding and support of others who have "been there." *Our small sharing groups would like to focus more on the issues and topics that bereaved parents face each day, from what to do on a birthday, how to handle tough questions, how to find the will to go on, what works and what doesn't work during the grieving journey & why or why not, to ideas on how to reinvest in living, how to rediscover joy & how to carry our child's memory and legacy through our daily lives.*

We are here to provide hope and encouragement, understanding & friendship as we all travel the grief journey. Our lives have been turned inside out & upside down and we are the walking wounded who must now figure out where to go from here, how to put our lives back together to some degree, and share coping skills and survival techniques. Together we can share our ideas and emotions, the questions and trials and tribulations that we have found ourselves in the very unwelcome world of bereaved parents. The death of a child of any age, from any cause, is a shattering experience for a family. When a child dies, to whom does a family turn for the emotional support it will need during the grief journey that lies ahead? The Compassionate Friends understands that grief for a child

lasts longer and is more intense than society commonly recognizes. Other grieving parents can offer empathy and understanding of this loss, while also recognizing that each person's grief is unique. There are opportunities to give back and to help out with the "behind the scenes" efforts for our local chapter. We need new volunteers to successfully continue the efforts begun when the Gwinnett Chapter was created in 1994. Volunteer opportunities range from helping to set up a meeting, becoming a facilitator, and making phone calls. Most especially, we need a new co-leader to help out with the organization, details and paperwork involved with our chapter. This is a great way to give back in memory of your child after you have found hope, encouragement and strength from TCF to survive & thrive in spite of life's worst tragedy. Making the change from needing help & finding help to giving help & support to new parents is another healing milestone. **Please call or e-mail June Cooper, 770- 757-4927, [jc30044@flash.net](mailto:jc30044@flash.net), or Meg Avery, 770-932-5862 if you have questions or if you'd like to volunteer.**

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### Gifts of Love

A love gift is a financial donation to The Compassionate Friends Gwinnett Chapter. 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, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. Love gifts are acknowledged in each quarterly issue.

Stamps were donated by Marvin Choate, for Remembrance Cards, in loving memory of his daughter, Fara Nicole

Cards were donated by Nancy Long in loving memory of her son, Joe Beatty

.If you make a monetary donation to TCF Gwinnett, (which is tax-deductible) you may specify whether you would like your contribution to go toward the memorial garden account, newsletter account or general account. Funds from the general account pay for remembrance cards, postage, labels, the annual picnic, expenses associated with monthly meetings and for information packets for newly bereaved parents. We do not receive funds from The Compassionate Friends National Office and we are always extremely appreciative for any contributions. Please be assured, however, that there are no financial dues to be a member of TCF.

*Please fill out the information below, clip and mail with your tax deductible donation to: **Gwinnett TCF, Barbara Dwyer, 4905 Pond Ridge Lane, Cumming, GA 30041.***  
(Please make checks payable to TCF Gwinnett.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please specify if you would like your donation added to the Children's Memorial Account, Newsletter Account, or General Account.

## What is Christmas?

*"It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace."*



By Agnes M. Pharo

### Wishes for Bereaved Parents for the New Year

By Joe Rosseau, TCF Marin County, California

*To the newly bereaved:* We wish you patience-- Patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

*To the bereaved siblings:* We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each others' needs and the beginnings of good communication.

*To those of you who are single parents:* We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone with your loss.

*To those experiencing marital difficulties:* After the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

*To those of you who have suffered the death of more than one child:* We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

*To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or all of your children:* We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

*To those of you who are plagued with guilt:* We wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that.

*To those of you who are deeply depressed:* We wish you the first steps of the "Valley of the shadow."

*To all fathers and those of you unable to cry:* We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

*To those of you who are exhausted from grieving:* We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

*To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned:* We wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

From the Jan/Feb 2010 Marin County TCF Newsletter

## Resolutions

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 else, 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 our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. 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!

Pat Akery ~ TCF, Medford, OR

## Hear the Children

We whose children died before us, Do we share a greater wisdom? True, beyond all earthly symbols? Do we heed the heart's instruction? Do we hear the children's voices? Christmas is but one reminder of the legacy they left us. Our dead, remembered children sing the same eternal song, send the same eternal message.

Peace is the question,  
love is the answer.



David star or haunted cross, crescent moon or sacred drum, holy stream, ancestral shrine, hymn or chant or temple dancer, all of us in Grieving Country, all of us share grievers' wisdom.

Peace is the question, Love is the answer.

By Sascha Wagner, from "The Poems of Sascha Wagner"

## Costa Mesa, California Site of 35th TCF/USA National Conference; 5th International Gathering!

The Compassionate Friends/USA is pleased to announce that, in conjunction with the 35th National Conference, it will also be hosting The Compassionate Friends 5th International Gathering. The combined conference will be held July 20-22, 2012 in beautiful Costa Mesa, California. "We welcome to this conference all who are grieving the death of a child, for grief is a universal language and one that TCF'ers around the world know all too well," says TCF/USA Executive Director Patricia Loder.

The International Gathering will include a Spanish workshop and sharing session for our Hispanic/Latino families and bilingual families. More than 100 workshops will be held on most topics related to grief after the death of a child. Because many of those attending will be traveling long distances from countries around the world, special excursions are being planned for before and after the conference, so everyone is invited to combine their stay with visits to some of California's great attractions. Special events related to the conference will be held from Wednesday, July 18 through Monday, July 23. We will provide more details as they become available! [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## GAINESVILLE SUPPORT GROUP

The Northeast Georgia Medical Center has started a grief support group for parents. Meetings are held the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month from 3 – 4 pm. Meeting will be held at 2150 Limestone Parkway, Suite 222, Gainesville. Contact Jennifer Sorrells at 770-219-8528 or [jennifer.sorrells@nghs.com](mailto:jennifer.sorrells@nghs.com) for more information.

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## CAMP SOS For Survivors of Suicide Helping Families Rebuilding Lives One Camper at a Time

A loss by suicide forever changes lives, but having access to tools that support the journey can help. Camp SOS gives survivors support to help them travel this journey in a safe environment. This program has been developed with fun, family-oriented activities, as well as helping and healing activities to support the grief of all members of the families. Camp SOS is a partnership with Camp Twin Lakes and SPAN-GA (Suicide Prevention Action Network (Georgia). Camp will be held at Fort Yargo State Park in Winder, Friday, March 30, 2012 starting at 5 pm and ending Sunday, April 1 at noon. Each family has its own area in a shared/partitioned cabin. Attendance is limited to 30 families. For details, [www.span-ga.org](http://www.span-ga.org) 770-354-7616

## SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP

Meets the first Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm at The Warehouse at Family Festival, 5095 Post Rd, Cumming, 30040. The Meeting Room is located past The Land of 1000 Hills Coffee Bar, down the hall, first door on the right. For info contact Sherry 404-660-0907, [sherryunwala@yahoo.com](mailto:sherryunwala@yahoo.com) or Karen, 770-355-1024, [Karen\\_copija@att.net](mailto:Karen_copija@att.net)

## Rock Goodbye Angel Support Group

(Recognizing, Gifting and Affirming Families of Pregnancy & Early Infancy Loss)

We are a family of bereaved parents who have come together to provide an organization serving and assisting those who have experienced a loss due to miscarriage, stillbirth, perinatal loss or neonatal loss. We provide Hope, Compassion, Understanding and Love for families to honor our little angels who have been 'Rocked Goodbye' to our Heavenly Father. There are many struggles associated with a premature loss. If you or someone you know needs support during this time, please contact us.

The group meets every Monday at 7 pm at Lanier Park Campus, 675 White Sulphur Road, Gainesville. For information, contact Angela at [angela@rockgoodbyeangel.com](mailto:angela@rockgoodbyeangel.com). [www.rockgoodbyeangel.org](http://www.rockgoodbyeangel.org)

## Mourning Dove Counseling with Gary & Elvira Delaplane *Grief Counseling for Individuals and Families*



The loss of our son Nathan to suicide on May 4, 2000 forever changed the course of our lives. If you or members of your family need help navigating through the roller coaster journey of grief, please call us to schedule an appointment.

There is hope...and healing after loss. However, time alone doesn't bring that healing. You must process your grief to heal the hole in your heart. We are passionate about helping others in that healing journey...and we do understand your pain.

Locations: 870 Doe Hill Lane, Roswell, 30075 and 4080 McGinnis Ferry Rd, Building 300, Suite 303 in Alpharetta, phone 770-649-1949 or 678-596-9594, [www.Mourning-Dove.org](http://www.Mourning-Dove.org)

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