

# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

May, 2017 Newsletter



A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents

## LIVING LIFE IS STILL AN EFFORT

My husband's family held a reunion in July. We planned to attend and told the family to count on us. But when the time came to buy the tickets and make a commitment, I found I couldn't do it. I simply did not want to deal with the hassles of traveling, leaving home, getting out of my daily rhythm.

I am a different person since my child died. I am a different person than I was six months after my child died. And, I will be a different person in another year. I find that I am evolving; my basic personality is still intact, most of my mind works well enough, my perception of life, love, people and events is probably heightened but fairly unchanged. Still I am a different person.

Now I work at living my life. I make myself do the things that I once took for granted, such as getting dressed each day, going to work, handling a number of responsibilities I have chosen to accept. I make myself laugh at silly jokes. Sometimes I even have to force myself to really listen to others. I am surprised when I laugh spontaneously, smile for no particular reason or say something "prophetic". What is going on here? Who am I? Why has the joy of life disappeared?

I believe I have found the answer to these questions and even to questions I haven't yet asked. It lies in the nature of losing one's child to death. Initially we work very hard to maintain sanity. Gradually we expand the boundaries of our lives. Carefully we add events, people, responsibilities and simple

enjoyment. But our progress is measured in months and years, not days and weeks.

My awakening to this new reality came at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends. It has been rekindled at each meeting since then. I learn about myself by observing others. I note the change in their voice, their body language, their perspective. I see parents whose children have been gone for many years still weep openly and later talk about a special event they are planning. Then I see parents whose loss was recent yet they appear to be normal, controlled and sociable on many levels and they suddenly and mysteriously crumble before my eyes.

That's the journey. We set our own limits as to what is acceptable for us. Over time we shift from minimalist boundaries to a good representation of the person we once were. We have major setbacks: birthdays, holidays, death anniversaries. We have minor setbacks: a picture, a forgotten scent, a baby shoe, a poignant memory. We sob, we scream, we withdraw. But we do go on. With the help of our Compassionate Friends, we move forward and are supported when we suffer a setback. We each deal with the many facets of our grief. We learn from others. We teach others. We grow from the dialogue. Our kindred spirits bring questions, answers and peace.

Who am I today? A fairly well balanced mother of one beautiful child who no longer is alive. I am where I should be. When will I stop evolving? Probably never.



Annette Mennen Baldwin in memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX



## GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations 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 your chapters. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Thanks to Carol Smith  
Sponsoring the newsletter  
in memory of her daughter  
Anna Smith Miller

"Gifts of Love" in remembering our children and siblings help to pay for Newsletters, Postage, Books for our Lending Libraries and Resources, Memorial Services, Candle Lightings, Telephone and Outreach, and Dues to the National TCF Office. Thank you.

## Meetings

**Northern Illinois Chapter TCF**  
**May 18 - 7:30 p.m.**  
Millburn Congregational Church  
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL  
Open discussion

**Waukegan meeting**  
**June 1 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**  
Holy Family Church  
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL  
Meeting in Room 4  
Open discussion  
Enter by church office then down the hall to  
Room 4 on right.

"Tenemos un cuarto nuevo para las reuniones- Salon 4. Entre por la oficina de la iglesia y sigue en el pasillo al Salon

## SECOND YEAR

*Why is my grief different in the second year?*  
*Why do I feel so much more empty in the second year?*  
*Why do I cry more, again, in the second year?*  
*Is it because I am more alone and the world has moved on?*  
*Has the world forgotten that you ever lived?*  
*Is it because I realize "with my heart" that you are not coming back?*

*That forever is a long time?  
Is it because all of the "firsts" are over and I must move on?*

*Why is my grief different in the second year?  
Because, my child, you are still gone.*

*Eleanor Oberle/TCF  
In memory of her son Dan Oberle*

## MEMORIAL DAY

*For each grave where a soldier lies at his rest  
For each prayer that is said today out of love  
For each sign of remembering someone who has died  
Let us also give thought to the mothers and fathers  
The brothers and sister the friends and lovers  
Whom death left behind*

Sasha



## Annual Gathering Conference

**Join us in Washington DC August 4th-6th for the 2017 Bereaved Parents of the USA National Gathering.**

Announcing our speakers for the 2017 National BPUSA Gathering: **Kelly Buckley, Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen, Ron Kelly, Sarah Kravits, Anna Whiston-Donaldson, Gareth Williams, Tom Zuba.**

### 2017 Schedule

August 4-6th: Gathering

### Location Info.

Hilton Washington Dulles Airport  
13869 Park Center Road, Herndon, VA 20171  
(703) 478-2900 |

(Continued on page 5)



## OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN MAY & JUNE

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, as long as we remember them and celebrate their lives. Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered. [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) - 847-573-1055

### BIRTHDAYS

<i>Erin Dinklenburg</i>	<b>May 1</b>	Daughter of Kelli Brooks
<i>Rachel Salomonson</i>	<b>May 2</b>	Daughter of Toni Nesheim & Denny Salomonson
<i>Amy Fry-Pitzen</i>	<b>May 3</b>	Daughter of Alana Anderson
<i>John Francis Thumel</i>	<b>May 6</b>	Son of Laura & Mike Thumel
<i>Rachel Elizabeth Szech</i>	<b>May 9</b>	Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech
<i>Rob Petit</i>	<b>May 15</b>	Son of Nancy Ervin
<i>Sven Christian Reinhard</i>	<b>May 28</b>	Son of Astrid Reinhard
<i>Adam Michael Laufer</i>	<b>May 30</b>	Son of Charles & Diana Laufer
<i>Edgar O Villareal</i>	<b>June 2</b>	Son of Guadalupe Villareal
<i>Edward G Davis III</i>	<b>June 8</b>	Son of Edward G Davis Jr.
<i>James (Jim) Grazier</i>	<b>June 9</b>	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
<i>Lila Ruffolo</i>	<b>June 12</b>	Daughter of Jenny & Rick Selle
<i>Pressley Suzanne McHugh</i>	<b>June 20</b>	Daughter of Kari McHugh

### ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Donette Klawonn</i>	<b>May 1</b>	Daughter of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
<i>Josh Summers</i>	<b>May 3</b>	Son of Tina Carlson Grandson of Larry & Cheryl Armstrong
<i>Amanda Lauren Cecchi</i>	<b>May 10</b>	Daughter of Kim & Steve Cecchi
<i>Amy Fry-Pitzen</i>	<b>May 15</b>	Daughter of Alana Anderson
<i>Anthoney (Tony) Clemente</i>	<b>May 16</b>	Son of Becky Wolf
<i>Adam Michael Laufer</i>	<b>May 19</b>	Son of Charles & Diana Laufer
<i>Roman Gabriel Cano</i>	<b>May 21</b>	Son of Simona & Daniel Rhodes
<i>Rusty Anderson</i>	<b>May 30</b>	Son of Forest & Christine Anderson
<i>Robert Corbett</i>	<b>June 30</b>	Son of Mary Ellen & Robert Corbett

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered.  
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### IN THE SILENCE

In the silence you hear me,  
In the silence I am here.  
In the silence you can feel me,  
In the silence it is clear.....  
That my spirit hasn't left you,  
I am just a thought away,  
You can see me in the shadows,  
Anytime you look my way.  
Look for me in the sunshine,  
And in the stars at night.

In the wind, trees and flowers,  
Everything that is in sight.  
Talk to me, say my name,  
Know that I'm still here,  
In my death I have a new life,  
And one day it will be clear.  
So talk to me and look for me  
In everything you do,  
For I haven't gone so far away,  
I'm really right next to you

### AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Submitted by Romelle Ly-  
senko – TCF Bridgewater  
- Reprinted from  
Bridgewater, NJ  
TCF May 2006  
Newsletter

## 40<sup>th</sup> TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



**July 28 - July 30**

**HILTON ORLANDO BONNET CREEK, 14100 BONNET CREEK RESORT LANE, ORLANDO, FL 32821**

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last... **TO FIND OUT MORE**

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/40th-tcf-national-conference/>

### **WALK TO REMEMBER**

**July 30**

*Orlando, Florida*



The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember is a highlight of every TCF National Conference. It was created as a symbolic way to show the love we carry for the children we mourn. Held at 8:30 am Sunday on the final day of the National Conference it starts at the host hotel of the Conference. There is an air of anticipation and excitement as everyone gathers in preparation for the start of the Walk. Finally, the Walk begins and, hand-in-hand everyone walks, meditating on a much different time in their lives. Since its inception in 2000, the Walk to Remember has taken on many distinctive facets. There is the main Walk to Remember where those attending the conference join with local bereaved families and others who fly in from across the

country just for the Walk. As many as 1400 have participated. Some go the full distance while others only walk a short way knowing that in participating, they are remembering. Special Walk to Remember t-shirts are given to all who register, as well as walk bibs where the names of the children being remembered can be written.

The Walk to Remember is also used as a major fundraiser to help support the work of The Compassionate Friends. Many participants seek pledges from relatives, friends, neighbors, and business acquaintances, turning in the dollars they have raised prior to the start of the event.

Please note: Registration is required to participate in TCF National Walks to Remember. Those under 9 are not required to register but still must have a waiver of liability signed for them by a participating parent or guardian.



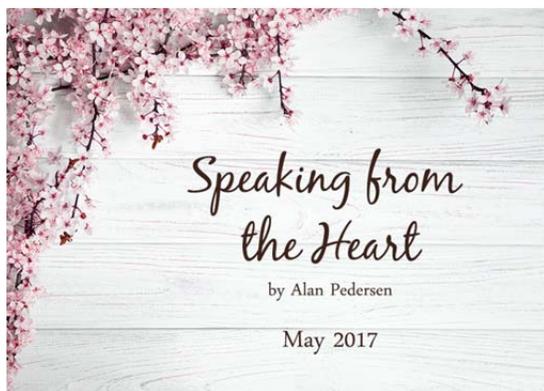
### **PAGES OF THE BOOK**

Another year passes  
Quickly  
Silently  
Like pages of a book  
Fluttering in the wind.

The chapters of your life  
Unfinished  
Unread  
We will never know  
What those pages would  
have said.

I stand close to you  
Beside a grave  
Silent tears  
Quietly flowing from my  
heart  
Broken hopes  
Broken dreams  
Unturned pages  
Unfinished chapters in the  
Book of you life.

In loving memory of  
Andrew Womack by Mom  
5/22/69—5/16/98  
by Katy Womack  
Arlington, VA Chapter TCF



## SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

*Posted on May 2nd, 2017*

As a country music fan, and a singer and songwriter who has lived in Nashville, I always loved the Hank Williams Jr. song

“All My Rowdy Friends (Have Settled Down).” For those of you who may not be familiar with the song, the title pretty much says it all. I was thinking the other day that I could easily write a parody to that song titled “All My Closest Friends (Have Lost a Child).” I am not trying to make light of the situation, but I have to tell you that nearly everyone I hang out with and who are in my inner circle are bereaved parents, grandparents or siblings.

It got me thinking; is it just me? Am I the only one who has migrated toward a preference of being in the company of those who “get it?” As I think back, this isn’t something that was premeditated or planned, it just sort of happened. The fact is, none of the people I was close to in my previous life before Ashley died had experienced this loss. And, it isn’t like one day I said to all of my old friends, “sorry but we just can’t hang out anymore.” My old friends are all good and caring people. I do not blame them, but I also don’t blame myself. My grief was like an undercurrent that swept me to a place where my priorities, needs, and wants were greatly altered.

So little by little, I began to drift and they began to drift. New people came into my life through The Compassionate Friends. My new friends didn’t seem to care where I worked, what type of car I drove, the size of my house or which team I rooted for. While my old friends were timid and shy about discussing Ashley or death, my new friends wanted to hear all about her. My old friends cared about me and didn’t know any better, so they thought the best thing was to encourage me to move on and get over it. My new friends jumped into my puddle of grief and told me they

would walk hand in hand with me, and had no yardsticks or time frames for me to do anything.

Today, I am blessed to have a group of new friends who bring great joy and comfort into my life. I still have connection to some of my old friends and I harbor no ill will toward those who are no longer in my life. I take equal responsibility for where we have come. But sometimes I wonder where I would be without TCF, how could I possibly have survived this journey without my bereaved brothers and sisters who walked with me every step of the way? This is why I love our organization. Our 700 Chapters, our online support and Facebook groups foster friendships that will last a lifetime between those who would have never met had it not been for their loss.

So, just as it is true that just like me, all my rowdy friends have settled down. It is also true that my dearest and truest friends are those who have survived and thrived after great loss in their lives. I am a blessed man.

Thanks for the honor of allowing me to serve as your Executive Director,

Alan  
Alan Pedersen  
[alan@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:alan@compassionatefriends.org)  
877-969-0010 ext. 308

### On Butterfly Wings

From earth’s caterpillars to heaven’s butterflies -  
They soar with the angels from the earth to the sky.  
Their wings seem so fragile, translucent and light -  
But they transfuse our world giving us strength in our night.

In silence they appear like messengers of love,  
Bringing hope and comfort from heaven above.  
These beautiful butterflies so graceful in flight,  
Transport us from darkness to color and light.

So when choosing a symbol to help grieving parents cope,  
What more than a butterfly could best symbolize hope.  
Our hearts stand in awe and hope from within us springs.  
As our hearts take flight - On Butterfly Wings.

By Faye McCord, (TCF Chapter Leader / Jackson, MS)  
In loving memory of my son, Lane McCord  
(1/26/65 - 9/13/98)

## A SACRED PLACE

By Chaplain George Burn, State College, PA  
From the Newsletter of the Western NY BP Chapter

There is a dent in the plaster wall of our family support room in the ER. It's just a little spot, hardly noticeable with the wallpaper over it. Others pass by, oblivious to the small impression in the wall. It seems strangely out of place in an otherwise warm setting of comfortable couches and chairs. I have become friends with that spot, noting its presence each time I enter the room with a family.

It is a sacred place, as sacred as a Chapel. I have spent many hours in this room over the years with families as they await the outcome of a code or the treatment of a loved one following a trauma. The room is familiar to me but alien to the people I meet there. In this place, people begin the journey of altered life. *We did everything we could, but we were unable to save \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sorry. We watch carefully as people absorb the message. It can't be true...Oh, my God!* We offer support, feeling terribly helpless under the weight of so great a burden. Our tools are hugs and tissues, touches of the hand, prayer and caring, but seemingly inadequate words. We watch as the news becomes real and creeps slowly from head to heart, from denial to awareness. We only get to probe the perimeter of the cavern death creates and the pain it causes. We escort the bereaved to their cars, wondering how people will go on, trusting only that God will, with time, heal the hearts and renew their shattered lives.

One man, several years ago, punched that wall after he was told his baby died from SIDS. It was a spontaneous act of anger and frustration, a true reflection of the moment we all felt. The pain in his hand was of little consequence compared to the agony of his heart. He left an imprint I have come to revere. It became a symbolic intersection of the vertical and the horizontal, the central point at which eternal crossed the temporal, the locus where hope and dreams were crushed by reality and innocence was overwhelmed by experience. It was a place where easy answers compressed under the weight of complex questions disintegrated. It became an icon along the side of life's highway. For awhile that was all it meant. But, as time has passed, it has evolved to mean something else—the barren ground into which seeds for hope in the future were sown. People whom I once met in crisis have returned to say, *You were with me in that little room in the ER when \_\_\_\_\_ died. I never thought I'd make it but I'm doing better now. Thank you for being with me through the worst day of my life.*

In a hospital, devoid of most sacred symbols, I have found a most inclusive symbol; one that should have a plaque beneath it which says *This spot is dedicated to all*

*people who met their tomorrows in this room.*

## Missing and Valuing on Mother's Day

Mother's Day is a special day, and special days are hard after the death of a child. It is a normal and natural thing for either parent for the first few years after the death to zero in on who is missing, rather than who is left...and I want no different.

Fortunately, for me, not long after Atlanta Chapter formed, a local psychiatrist, Dr. Victor Gonzales, spoke one evening shortly before Mother's Day. He told of his parents' loss of their first two children. His story of how his life has been influenced and molded by his mother's reaction touched me. He spoke of how he and his siblings who came later were forever denied his mother's happiness and joy. She was unable to value what she had left as much as what she had lost.

Dr. Gonzales said he spent a great deal of his childhood trying to make his mother happy, always failing and always feeling there must be something lacking in him that caused him to fail. The picture in my mind him and his siblings always trying and always failing, though no fault of their own, made a great impact on me. I determined from that day forward that my daughter would not have to lament later in life that she had been denied my happiness and joy because my brother had died.

On Mother's Day now I make room for both missing and valuing, for they are not, I have discovered, mutually exclusive. Now when I go to the cemetery with my rosebud on my day, my daughter has no part in my needs while I am there. When I come home, my son doesn't interfere with my acceptance and appreciation of my daughter's expression of love. She gives me a gift on my day, and I give her one in return. It's probably the best gift I could possibly give her - my happiness and joy for life. She is as important as what I have lost, and I know her worth. If you are fortunate enough to have surviving children, hope you, too, are able to value as well as miss.



There's room for both, you know.

Mary Cleckley  
Member of Bereaved Parents USA

## The Courage to Let Life Go On

"Courage is not the absence of fear and pain but the affirmation of life despite fear and pain."

-Earl Grollman

"Life goes on." I have often heard this sentence, said perhaps to console me, or perhaps as a way to put an end to conversation about loss and death. Of course life goes on, no matter how shattered our lives are by the loss of someone we love so dearly. Life doesn't ask whether we want to go along. We want the world to stop turning because of our loss. Days turn into nights, again and again, and this is how we arrived at this day. Suddenly another month, another year has gone by, although we all probably asked ourselves how we would be able to go on living. It just happens. We do not die because of the pain. We keep on living and I still wonder how this can be.

I do not want life to go on, but to stop it right here, or better yet, to turn back to the day when I lost my sister and baby niece. I do not want the changes life brings. Each change seems to increase the distance between the life I knew with them and the life I live today. I cannot ask my sister's opinion about the new things that happen. I cannot share then with her, tell her about them, laugh or cry with her about them, Changes make me aware that in fact life does go on, without her. My birthdays make me sad because they change the difference in age...my sister was always four years older than I was, and now we are down to three years.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I live on. I smell, breathe, touch, feel, see and experience life, while my sister and her daughter were ripped away from it.

My sister and I never talked about death or losing each other, but if we had, I am sure that we both would have said that we could not imagine life without one another.

If it had been me, my sister would have been forced to do exactly the same; go on living despite the agony, just because there is no choice.

Before I lost them, I trusted life to be good. I believed in fairness; if we are good, life will spare us tragedies and besides, these tragedies only happen to other people, those I do not know, those I read about in the papers, distant, easy to forget about. I lost this sense of security and trust in life. I now find that living takes courage. Life becomes meaningful through love and friendship, but loving someone is what makes us vulnerable. Daring to invite love into our lives means to increase our vulnerability to the threats that seem to be around every corner. Instead of asking "why us?" I often find myself asking "why not us?" Tragedy hits good and bad people for no reason. It seems the world is just random

and unpredictable. Just because I am a good person and I already lost so much does not mean that I will be spared from more pain.

Life goes on and because it does, with all the good and bad things that happen to us, it scares me to live and particularly to love. What if more happens? The fear IS paralyzing. I pray to God, to my sister and my niece to protect us, although I know they don't have the power to prevent other bad things from happening. What then can I ask them for? Courage, I guess.

Courage to let life go on, to give myself a chance that new and good things will happen to me that will add JOY to my life.

Britta Nielsen TCF, Manhattan, NY  
~lovingly lifted from No. Oklahoma City TCF Newsletter

i carry your heart with me

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart) i am never without it (anywhere i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling)

i fear  
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want  
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

E.E. Cummings

In Loving Memory of April Leshay Nesmith...from  
Mommy – Carla Adamar (birthday – April 5, 1985)

**LOVE GIFTS**

Enclosed in a check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor the newsletter for \_\_\_\_\_ (month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library \_\_\_\_\_

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be included in the "special days" list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are making a donation please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends**. Return to Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048 or call 847-573-1055 or send an email to [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net).

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Vicki Szech at [vszech@comcast.net](mailto:vszech@comcast.net) or 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Libertyville, IL 60048.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its' mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive

TCF National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 3696 - PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246

The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

There are seven TCF Internet chat sessions weekly. To participate, visit the TCF home page and select the "Chat" button.

**CHAPTER LEADERSHIP** Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 [tnesheim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tnesheim@sbcglobal.net) Rachel Salomonson Age 19 – Auto accident

**TREASURER** Tammie Barrera 847-872-9684 [Julyson2@gmail.com](mailto:Julyson2@gmail.com) Aaron Barrera Age 29 – Auto accident due to Diabetes

**SECRETARY** Bambi Nichols 262-220-9323 [lcbtsec@aol.com](mailto:lcbtsec@aol.com) Levi Nichols Age 19 - Accidental death

**REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY** Thelma Perkins 262-279-6178 Andrew C Perkins Age 17 – Auto Accident

**LIBRARIAN** Kathleen Rettinger 847-922-7456 Alexander Rettinger Age 18 – Of suicide

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Raphael, age 17, suicide