



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NORTHEAST LOUISIANA CHAPTER

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APRIL / MAY / JUNE 2012

## MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day will soon be upon us and we mothers will be remembering our children who are absent but yet so much a part of us, filling our hearts and renewing memories. I wish for each of you a peaceful day. Yes, it will be very poignant and for the recently bereaved, more painful, but believe me, it does get better. We remember them with gratitude for having given us that most precious of all gifts – their love.

Helen Prokop  
TCF-Bridgeport, CT

## PRAYER FOR SPRING

Like springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and new from this cocoon of grief that has been spun around me. Help me face the harsh reality of sunshine and renewed life as my bones still creak from the winter of my grief. Life has dared to go on around me as I recover from the insult of life's continuance. I readjust my focus to include recovery and growth as a possibility in my future. Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief. But may I never forget it as the place where I grew my wings, becoming a new person because of my loss.

Janice Heil  
TCF-Vancouver, Canada

## A LIFE LOST

I have lost a life – not my own.  
But it would have been easier  
To have lost my own life  
Than to have lost  
The life I loved more than my own.

Sascha

## I AM SPRING

I am the beginning.  
I am budding promise.  
I spill cleansing tears of life  
from cloudy vessels  
creating muddy puddles  
where single cell creatures abide  
and splashing children play.  
I am new green growth.  
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.  
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.  
With compassion, we feather nests  
where winged voices sing winter-spring  
duets.  
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream  
I whisper truth – life is change.  
I am spring.  
I bless long, dark wintry days.  
I crown mankind's pain  
with starry skies  
in deepest night  
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy  
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.



Carol Clum

*(written after attending a workshop presented by  
John Fox, author of 'Finding What You Didn't Lose'  
and 'Poetic Medicine')*

## Monthly Meetings

**Thursday, April 5**

**Thursday, May 3**

**Thursday, June 7**

6:30 PM  
St. Paul's United Methodist Church  
1901 Lexington Ave.  
Enter through the back parking lot off Milton St.

# For Siblings

An outlet for siblings is the TCF Sibling Forum. It is available online and is a place where siblings from all over can share and help each other cope with the unique grief of losing a brother or sister. Siblings are able to ask questions, make a comment or leave a thought for others to respond.

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Visit the Sibling Resources Page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
Email [tcsiblingrep@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:tcsiblingrep@compassionatefriends.org) for the password

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## I SAW YOU

A Tribute to my Sister  
Lori Lee Smith

I saw you today in the morning dew  
As brilliant as a sea of shimmering diamonds

I shared the most amazing sunrise with you today  
A million shades of red so random in their perfection

I heard you today in the laugh of my children  
An enchanting melody a thousand  
angels strong

I walked with you today and we  
talked about everything  
. . . and nothing all at once

I saw you today in the changing of the  
leaves  
The colors of your life, the close of one season  
And the ushering in of another

I sat beside a stream with you today  
The peaceful flow, steady and constant

I saw you today . . . and you were perfect  
And rest assured . . . I shall see you again

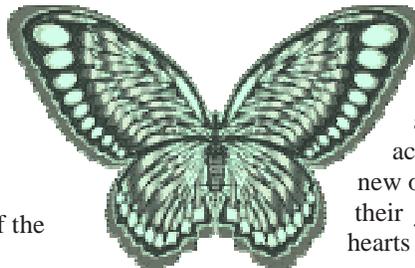
Avery Smith  
TCF-Ada Area Chapter

*An angel can illuminate the thought and mind of  
man by strengthening the power of vision.*

*St Thomas Aquinas*

## GRANDPARENTS REMEMBRANCE

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.



Susan Mackey  
TCF-Rutland, VT

*"Grief is a tidal wave that over takes you,  
smashes down upon you with unimaginable  
force, sweeps you up into its darkness,  
where you tumble and crash against  
unidentifiable surfaces, only to be thrown out on  
an unknown beach, bruised, reshaped..."*

*Stephanie Ericsson*

## FATHER'S DAY

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday. Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

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

In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from NH asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day



as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also.

Please remember us on Father's Day, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort and love.

Doug Hughes  
TCF-Cincinnati, OH

### CIRCLE

How do you bear it all?  
The cry came from a mother  
Whose son had died only weeks before.  
We were in a circle, looking at her,  
Looking around, looking away,  
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.  
How do we bear it?  
I don't know,  
But the circle helps.

*Eva Lager,  
TCF/Western Australia  
(Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide  
on 4 March 1990.)*

#### [Chapter co-leaders](#)

Marilyn & French Smith

#### [Steering Committee](#)

Henry Cole, Facilitator

Johnny James, Treasurer

Dianne & Frank Bruscato, Library

Frances & Jim Gregory, Outreach

Maggy & John Dobbs, Outreach

Ann Cole, Outreach

Betty Jean James, Outreach & Hospitality

Julie & Danny Petty, Newsletter

Betty Jean & Johnny James, Memorial Park

## THE PATHS TO PEACE

As bereaved parents, we look to others for answers about our grief journey. For eight years I have listened as so many parents spoke about the combination of factors which brought peace to their hearts and allowed them to move forward into a different, less painful, life. I have read books, watched movies, attended seminars and retreats. I have gone to 93 Compassionate Friends meetings. And I have discovered one key factor in finding peace and resolution on this terrible grief journey: there is no single element or singular combination of elements that answers the needs of more than one parent. Each parent must patiently seek those elements that will enhance the individual and a unique personal journey: there is no magic map to finding the path to peace.

There is one common denominator in this quest for the peace on our long journey, and that is patience. Patience with ourselves is mandatory, because the grief journey after the death of our precious child is so horrible, so painful, and so isolating that our psyches and our bodies take so very much time to begin the healing process. There are setbacks. There is progress. Each of these comes in spurts. Each is partially reversed and the process begins anew.

Friends and family do not thoroughly understand our perspective on our unique journey. We must make allowances for them. But we must ask that allowances be made for us. We are finding ourselves while on a path that we did not choose. We are lost. We are weakened. We are heartbroken. Each of us in our own way is seeking the formula that is uniquely our own.

Some parents find a kind of peace in their religion. Some parents are angry with their God. Many parents seek private counseling. Other parents read prolifically about the grief journey, seeking some element which resonates with them. Many parents come to Compassionate Friends meetings and actively participate. Others attend meetings and say little. Some parents slip into denial and proceed on the old path of their lives. We each make choices. We are different people with different experiences, backgrounds, cultures, genetic hard wiring, education and combination of abilities.

The path to peace is found by searching, by reaching out to every resource available. We will reject much of what we find; but if we search, we will find what we need.

For many of us, finding other bereaved parents presents an opportunity to listen to the stories of their child and their journey and, within those stories, we find many threads that fit our unique journey. Many stories, many journeys, many new threads are shared in group discussion and in private discussions. We find "seasoned" griever who provide perspective on our feelings, and listen to our story. We find newly bereaved parents who touch our hearts and remind us how we have built our path to peace brick by brick. Their pain brings reflection and new revelations about our own grief journey.

I found kindred souls at Compassionate Friends. These kindred souls have allowed me to explore the various aspects of my being and gradually create a path of peace for myself. But the journey does not suddenly end. We walk this path for the rest of our lives. And if we do the hard work and face our demons early on, we accept the unacceptable and face life on our own terms. And that is as it should be.

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



Everyone is encouraged to contribute to the newsletter to keep our chapter going strong. Please contact Julie Petty with your ideas.



Also, remember you can bring your child's favorite snack for refreshments to our monthly meeting or do a flower arrangement for the table. Please contact Marilyn Smith one month prior to the meeting.

# Our Children Always Loved and Remembered



A special table is set up at our meetings to honor children whose special days are in that month. We invite you to bring a picture or memento of your child to share during that significant month.

## OUR CHILDREN'S APRIL BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Jason Farrell	04/02/67	Sandra Garrett
Thomas Stephens	04/12/95	Susan & Grey Stephens
Lee Deal	04/13/83	Melanie Deal
Ashley Loflin	04/22/74	Katie Loflin
Eddie Hoy, Jr.	04/24/67	Martha Fontenot

## OUR CHILDREN'S APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Aaron Akers	04/01/06	Allison Woods
Lauren Hemphill	04/04/06	Kitty McDougal & Tommy Hemphill
Krista Corrent	04/08/00	Anna Ruth Hill
Pamela Ford	04/10/04	Leona Upton
Martha Mickel	04/13/84	Ruth Mickel
Michael Johns	04/19/06	Nell Book

## OUR CHILDREN'S MAY BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Bo Best	05/02/84	Charlene Best & Charles West
Justin Petty	05/07/82	Julie & Danny Petty
Melissa Blankenship	05/08/65	Peaches Cathey
Kelly Boies	05/08/85	Paula Gilliam
Jason Hutts	05/12/81	Carol & Greg Hutts
Derrick Sadberry	05/15/65	Belinda Sadberry
Kelly O'Neal	05/28/70	Nancy Oliver
Brian Gregory	05/28/73	Frances & Jim Gregory

## OUR CHILDREN'S MAY ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Clifton Scarborough	05/04/99	Tina Scarborough
Patrick Loflin	05/10/05	Katie Loflin
Ashley Loflin	05/10/05	Katie Loflin
Lee Deal	05/16/06	Melanie Deal
Carrie Peters	05/17/05	Florence Peters
Lance Thomas	05/18/08	Connie & Danny Thomas
John Dobbs	05/21/08	Maggy & John Dobbs
Dwain Whitehead	05/22/07	Mary & Ralph Whitehead
Justin Petty	05/26/01	Julie & Danny Petty

## OUR CHILDREN'S JUNE BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Travis Lowery	06/07/78	Joyce & Dale Lowery
Sean Hanemann	06/09/67	Susan Tingle
Shellie Faith Young	06/09/77	LeJeune & Leslie Brock
Caroline Cole	06/11/70	Ann & Henry Cole
Colby Wixson	06/15/86	Laura Scriber
Alice Rains	06/18/70	Marie Rains
Jackson Kennedy	06/18/00	JonAnn Layton & Jeff Kennedy
Codye Mardis	06/19/90	Julie Beckley
Mike Hayes	06/20/63	Margaret & George Hayes
Kelly Chapman	06/23/78	Judy & Bennie Chapman
Walker Dayton	06/23/81	Vickie & Edward Dayton
Carrie Peters	06/24/64	Florence Peters

## OUR CHILDREN'S JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Joyce Ann Powell	06/07/10	Cynde Dubois
Dawn Rose	06/10/05	Debbie & Danny Upshaw
Melissa Blankenship	06/14/04	Peaches Cathey
Kody Spann	06/14/07	Cindy & Larry Spann
Wesley Canterberry	06/15/07	Dewanna Canterberry
Michael Prichard	06/23/07	Jo Lynn & Paul Prichard
Shellie Faith Young	06/24/09	LeJeune & Leslie Brock

## **TO OUR LONG TIME MEMBERS:**

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting when new parents arrive with a fresh hurt and frightened eyes, I remember how we felt at our first meeting. Think back ... what would it have been like for you if there had not been any "oldies" to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, "your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer." They were the ones who wanted to really listen when you talked about your child. Can you be an "oldie" for someone else? By helping someone else, you help yourself and share your child with someone who never got to know them. Come out and share with newly bereaved parents to help them heal. Our own healing happens when we are reaching out to others.

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE;  
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

## 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 a 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.

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