



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NORTHEAST LOUISIANA CHAPTER

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY / MARCH 2013

GIFTS OF THE NEW YEAR

Faith: That, in spite of the pain of today, I can and will learn to go on, one step at a time, one day at a time, learning to once again truly enjoy the little (and bigger) things that come my way.

Patience: When I'm having a bad day, when I seem to take two steps backward and only one forward in learning to cope with the death of my child.

Laughter: Which someone said is the best medicine. I believe laughter is a positive source of healing. When I feel good laughing at some silly little thing that comes along, I know another little part of me has healed.

Time: If nothing else, the new year offers the gift of time—time to heal, to learn to cope, to put some wholeness back into lives that seem hopelessly broken.

Won't you join me in opening these gifts? You see, they aren't just mine to receive; they are gifts to be shared by all. You need only reach out and accept them. Each of these gifts can help us go on with our lives.

May the new year bring you all of these gifts and many blessings, but most especially, may you receive the gift of peace.

Audry Cain
TCF Western New York

***"Hope is the feeling you have, that the feeling you have isn't permanent."
—Jean Kerr***

MARCH

A little bit of warm spring
Breaking its way out of the earth?

Today I see snowy flakes which remind me
That still again one season is passing into the next.

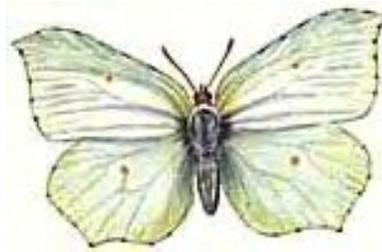
Another layer of chilling rain, ice and snow
Another layer of flowers fresh from bloom fallen to the ground
Another layer of long, dry days with too much sun
Another layer of autumn leaves fallen damp to the ground.

Seasons continue to run ahead while my
heart and spirit are slow to follow.

March is on the calendar to remind me that
it's time for still more change.

Carol Thompson
TCF Tyler, TX

*Always Remembering Sarah
Cold Wintry January 2, 2011*



Monthly Meetings

Thursday, January 3

Thursday, February 7

Thursday, March 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.

Visit the Sibling Resources Page at www.compassionatefriends.org
Email tcfsiblingrep@compassionatefriends.org for the password

MY FIRST FIVE YEARS AS AN ONLY CHILD

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career. Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass. In these past five years, I have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.

Kristin Steiner.
TCF Staten Island, NY

IF YOU WERE HERE

If you were here we could go shopping. If you were here I could take you for rides to the woods, where you could hear the birds and see the squirrels. And with luck, a deer, a raccoon, and some of the other neat animals that live in the woods. If you were here we could sing songs and play games. If you were here you and I could watch the sunset and you could ask, "But Gramma where does the sun go? Doesn't it go out when it goes in the water?" If you were here we could do all the little things that people take for granted. But most of all—if you were here I could kiss and hug on you. I love you Kayla.

Gramma for Kayla Nichole Ramsey
TCF Tampa, FL



MY BROTHER'S EYES

I search for my brother's eyes in my son and in me I see his smile.
With my offspring all around me I hold on to him for awhile.

Although He died so long ago he continues to live still.
In this one's laugh and that one's hand – I always feel a thrill.

My family laughs when I find the likeness – the features that remind.
They say I'm making it all up and that I must be blind.

But I have memorized it all and find him in little ways.
His eyes, his smile and gestures are still with me today.

Nina Danielson
Cape Cod, MA
Dedicated to my brother Moss

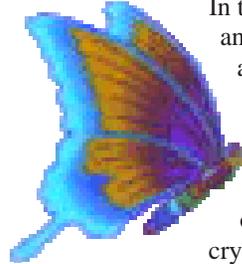
FEBRUARY

The month of February arrives with Valentines posted all over the store fronts, reminding us of the ones we love, and sometimes, of the ones we lost. As we send our wishes of love to our favorite Valentines, we want to also remember our sons, daughters, grandchildren, brothers and sisters who have died.

They are the Valentines who will remain forever in our hearts. We send our wishes of love to them every day, in our thoughts, in our hearts.

Happy Valentine's Day, February 14th to the ones we hold most dear in our minds and hearts.

Cathy H.
TCF Algona, IA



STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief, a tear would well up in my eyes, a lump would form in my throat, but you would not know—I would hide it, I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief, I would look ahead and see that wall that I had attempted to go around as an ever-present reminder of a wall yet unscaled. Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the strong will survive—and I am strong.

In the later years of my grief, I learned to climb over that wall—step by step—remembering, crying, grieving, and the tears flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over. The way was long, but I did make it.

Near the resolution of my grief, a tear will well up in my eyes, a lump will form in my throat, but I will let that tear fall—and you will see it. Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care, for I am strong.

Terry Jago
TCF Regina, Canada

THERE'S A VALENTINE WAITING FOR YOU

There's a Valentine waiting for you,
That's different from all the others.
It's there every month at our meetings.
Of heartbroken fathers and mothers.

Its envelope is made of caring.
The glue of understanding seals it tight.
This non-judgmental group who've "been there"
Help to take away your fear and fright.

So, come join with us together,
Read your living message printed clear.
In not only this month's valentine,
But all those throughout the year.

Mary Cleckley

MEMORIES

There is a place that we call Memory
A province by itself which,
though unseen, is home and haven to the heart
And there, in peace and beauty, waiting,
are those with whom we shared our yesterdays.

Nancy Cassell
TCF Holmdel, NJ

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 FALLEN GOOSE

When you see geese heading south for the winter, you might wonder, as I have, why they fly in a vee formation. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates lift for its own flight but it also creates an updraft that benefits the birds that follow it closely at an angle. When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and it quickly gets back into formation. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the formation and another, more rested goose, flies up front. By flying in vee formations the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range, than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are trying to go more quickly and easily than when they try to travel the journey alone. Very much like the vee formations of geese, people can benefit from the uplifting energy of others. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed in the same direction as ourselves.

We can learn even more by studying flying geese. Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Also, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies, and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group. Support and encouragement is a principle upon which the Compassionate Friends stands. If we have the sense of a goose, we can more easily recognize the potential benefits of collaboration and integrated efforts.

Over the last year, I have felt much like the fallen goose. It is because of you, TCF members who were willing to break formation and come down with me and offer me encouragement and support that I was able to deal with the difficult ordeal I have been through. I am proud that you are all my friends. I would never have been able to make it without you. Thanks is such a small word, but I don't know what else I can say. Thanks for being there and for caring.

Connie Buchanan
TCF Medford, OR



The time does come when we feel that most of our tears have been shed and our whys asked. Our longing for all that will not be is now seeded by fresh dreams. Out of our despair, we have found a sense of hope. For some, this hope lies in God. Others find it in a renewed appreciation of nature, or a thankfulness for life.

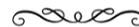
Moving on is a challenge. Hope can come from letting go of much of our intense pain, from accepting reality, and from new dreams. While our tears may still come and the "whys" still find their way to our lips, our faith and hope for the future can be the firm footing we need to go forward.

Remembering With Love

By Elizabeth Levang, P.D. & Sherokee Ilse



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 JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Eddie Foreman	01/03/60	Jimmie Sue Reeves
Brandi Spradlin	01/05/78	Rita & Terry Colegate
David Dayton	01/06/81	Pat Dayton
Paul Johnston	01/06/06	Gloria & Paul Johnston
Tricia Smith	01/08/74	Brenda & Randy Smith
Stephen Smith	01/08/76	Marilyn & French Smith
Bryan Gibbens	01/12/75	Dianne & Mike Gibbens
Mario Lambert	01/15/10	Helma Lambert
Amanda Maxwell	01/17/86	Angie Maxwell
Mickey Loflin	01/18/71	Katy Loflin
Hope Johnson	01/18/94	Fran Johnson
Kimball James	01/24/71	Betty Jean & Johnny James
Stephen Sivils	01/25/77	Veda Sivils
Norman Craig	01/28/64	Pat Craig

OUR CHILDREN'S JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
David Dayton	01/02/02	Pat Dayton
Kelly O'Neal	01/03/09	Nancy Oliver
David Moore	01/06/84	Barbara Moore
Scottie McLarrin	01/09/99	Mary McLarrin
Jackson Kennedy	01/11/02	Jonann Layton
Benjamin Box	01/13/06	Erlene & Jack Box
Janey Kight	01/20/83	Sandra Casteel
Bryan Gibbens	01/21/75	Dianne & Mike Gibbens
Richard Bryan	01/25/02	Linda & James Bryan
Teresa Gentry	01/25/06	Lynn Walters
Fred Page	01/26/98	Charlotte Colquette
Carl Alexander	01/26/04	Valerie & Billy Matejowsky
Dominique Bruscatto	01/26/88	Gen Bruscatto
Caroline Cole	01/30/88	Ann & Henry Cole

OUR CHILDREN'S FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Leigh Ann White	02/02/82	Janet & Ken White
Cecilia Mouser	02/04/59	Kathryn Hutchinson
Matt Mouser	02/05/53	Kathryn Hutchinson
Corey Washington	02/14/69	Gracie Washington
Courtney Cole	02/25/65	Ann & Henry Cole

OUR CHILDREN'S FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Deborah Smith	02/01/11	Mary & Buddy Smith
Ryan Clark	02/04/04	Linda Clark
Walker Dayton	02/04/09	Vickie & Ed Dayton
Cecilia Mouser	02/04/59	Kathryn Hutchinson
Tricia Smith	02/05/06	Brenda & Randy Smith
Thomas Stephens	02/05/11	Susan & Gray Stephens
Greg Dennis	02/06/05	Camille Dennis
Glenn Snider	02/10/12	Glenn Snider
Eddie Foreman	02/15/99	Jimmie Sue Reeves
Curtis Thigpen	02/26/04	Mary Jo & Art Thigpen
Cedrick Hotard	02/28/07	Sharon & Stephen Hotard
Adam McKenzie	02/28/03	Cheryl & Jerome McKenzie

OUR CHILDREN'S MARCH BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Allison Butler	03/03/88	LuAnn & James Butler
Kaye Shields	03/04/62	Lila & R.L. Hargrove
Tyrone Edwards	03/10/81	Sheila Edwards
Greg Gilstrap	03/12/70	Jean Gilstrap
Hope Bruscatto	03/24/72	Gene Bruscatto
Ryan Clark	03/24/74	Linda Clark
Ben Caldwell	03/26/83	Emily & Douglas Caldwell
Jon Bowman	03/27/85	Jill Puckett
Danny Washington	03/27/92	Dorothy Washington
Michael Johns	03/28/75	Nell Book

OUR CHILDREN'S MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Mickey Chambers	03/04/11	Merrell & Mike Chambers
Jeremy Barnhill	03/08/02	Kathi & Terry Barnhill
Donald Acree	03/10/10	Fran Acree
Brian Gregory	03/10/98	Frances & Jim Gregory
Duston Albritton	03/14/98	Linda & Ronnie Albritton
Brandi Spradlin	03/22/98	Rita & Terry Colegate
Danny Washington	03/26/12	Dorothy Washington
Michele Perry	03/29/72	Clara & Don Perry
Tyrone Edwards	03/30/02	Sheila Edwards
Kimball James	03/31/01	Betty Jean & Johnny James

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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