



The Compassionate Friends Newsletter

Marietta TCF 2008 Candle Lighting Service



Thank you to all who attended our Candle Lighting Service in December. Your participation helped to make this special event an evening to remember. We had a wonderful turnout as parents, grandparents and siblings attended to honor our beloved children. Each person lit a candle in special memory of their loved one. Madeline Flores sang a touching song, "I Believe" (lyrics are below), with piano accompaniment by Clare Rovin. Madeline also handmade the beautiful angel ornaments on our tree, which we also got to take home as remembrance.

The program included readings by Judy Cummins, Ria Coesel and Christy Beltz. Karen Chambers was honored with a plaque for her service as Chapter Leader, and Kathy Kelcourse was welcomed as our new Chapter Leader. Afterwards, we enjoyed some of our children's favorite snacks, which everyone contributed, a touching slideshow photo tribute, music and sharing. Thanks to Erica Beltz, Lorna Kennedy and Ria Coesel for organizing the event, Karen Chambers for the beautiful decorations, Kathy Kelcourse and Dean Hunter for set-up, and to everyone who came early and stayed late to help.

I Believe

Every now and then soft as breath upon my skin
I feel you come back again
And it's like you haven't been gone a moment from my side
Like the tears were never cried
Like the hands of time are holding you and me
And with all my heart I'm sure we're closer than we ever were
I don't have to hear or see, I've got all the proof I need
There are more than angels watching over me
I believe, Oh, I believe

Now when you die your life goes on
It doesn't end here when you're gone
Every soul is filled with light
It never ends and if I'm right
Our love can even reach across eternity
I believe, Oh, I believe

Forever, you're a part of me
Forever, in the heart of me
And I'll hold you even longer if I can
Oh, The people who don't see the most
Say that I believe in ghosts
And if that makes me crazy, then I am
'Cause I believe, Oh, I believe

There are more than angels watching over me
I believe, Oh, I believe

Every now and then soft as breath upon my skin
I feel you come back again

And I believe

by Diamond Rio

Contact and Chapter Information

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Tel: (877) 969-0010
Fax: (630) 990-0246
Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

GA Regional Coordinator

Muriel Littman (404) 603-9942

Marietta Chapter

www.tcfmarietta.org

Kathy Kelcourse, Leader

(770) 579-3512

Erica Beltz, Co-Leader

(678) 891-7479

Lorna Kennedy, Treasurer

Louise Hoefler, Newsletter Editor

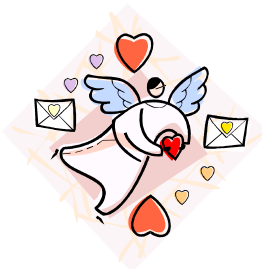
Ria Coesel, Webmaster

Marietta Chapter Meetings

Meetings are held the first
Tuesday of each month,
7:00 -9:00 PM

First Baptist Church of Marietta
148 Church Street, Marietta
Main Building on the 3rd floor

We encourage you to participate in our chapter newsletter by submitting original articles, poems, or book reviews. Please help to keep us up to date by letting us know if there is someone you know who would like to receive our newsletter, or if your address or email address has changed. Contact Louise at louiseh831@comcast.net.



Marietta TCF 2008 Candle Lighting Service

Dec 2, 2008 was a time to remember my Mark. He was 22 when he passed away and now 4 years later we are again at another candle lighting service. For me it does not get easier and I do not want it to. I feel it is another year gone and Mark is not here to share it with. When I light my candle it is my way of honoring him and his life. After 4 years it is softer but at the holidays it becomes painful again. I embrace the pain and I want to have painful reminders that he existed, I never want to forget him in any way. So I light my candle for him. My way of dealing with the pain is helping TCF as much as I can because they are the family that I need in my life to help me heal from my loss. They are the ones that truly understand my pain. The service this year was very beautiful. We had it upstairs instead of in the Chapel, and it was more relaxed and intimate. Karen did a wonderful job decorating, it couldn't have been more perfect. Erica's speech was wonderful, it was like she was talking to each of us separately, her words really hit home. Judy read her piece and listening to it helps us all appreciate our child's memories. Madeline's song was truly sung from the heart. Christy did an excellent job with the Litany, and Ria's poem was very good and meaningful, so I say **THANK YOU** to each and every one of you and also to every person that brought food or moved chairs or helped in any way. For me, this is what makes our candle lighting service so special, and honoring Mark every year helps me get through the holidays.

Lorna Kennedy, Mark Lee's Mom



Erica Beltz, Lorna Kennedy, and Madeline Flores



Kathy Kelcourse and Karen Chambers

A Message from our New Chapter Leader

My name is Kathy Zastrow Kelcourse and I am the new leader of the Marietta Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. My daughter, Laura was a brilliant and beautiful child who made more and more bad choices as she got older. By the time she was 25 years old she was fighting a losing battle as a drug addict and she chose to end her own life on March 17, 2000. My husband and I focused our attention on the child she left behind, Skye, who was almost 5 years old. This kept us so busy we were able to avoid our pain as much as possible. Our other children were 17 and 21 and we pretty much let them fend for themselves. Luckily they had good friends who kept them afloat because we did try to ignore our grief and theirs. I started going to a grief support group at a church and met a group of bereaved parents who encouraged me to talk about the loss of my daughter. That started my healing, because the more you tell your story, the more you recognize your grief and start feeling stronger in dealing with it. Then I found the Compassionate Friends. At first I would try to focus on everyone else's grief and would "take their grief home with me". We do warn you about that at meetings, but I think it is actually a self-defense mechanism because crying about someone else's grief is still less painful than facing your own. But each time I told my own story, I had to face my grief. Then I slowly began to grow stronger and the pain of losing my child grew softer. My late daughter, Laura, is responsible for the spiritual journey and growth I have experienced since her death. Once we lose a child everything is "before or after" because our lives are changed so completely. But getting involved in The Compassionate Friends has been the most healing experience for me. I am taking the grief of losing my child and trying to fill that hole in my heart by using that experience to help other bereaved parents. I am hoping that the growth, and mistakes, that I make will help the other members of TCF. We all want to help each other, and sometimes we help and sometimes we are helped, but we grow together in the most lasting bonding experience ever. We all have lost a child, the most devastating thing that could happen to a parent, but we are trying to survive and grow, and we can - if we do it together.

I met Karen Chambers a few months after I started a grief support group, following the death of my daughter. Hearing the tragic details of the freak accident which killed her young daughter just tore into my heart and made me feel that her loss was so much "worse" than mine. Her child was so young, mine was 25 and chose to end her life. So I felt I somehow *had* to help Karen (now I know that is a way to avoid one's own grief) so I would nag and literally push her to come to our weekly group when Karen wanted to just stay home and cry. Well eventually, Karen grew stronger than me because she faced her grief and started using it to help others by working with "The Compassionate Friends" and she eventually pushed me into coming to TCF. It seemed ironic that I started out trying to "help" Karen and she ended up helping me even more. Karen, her husband, Lamar and son, John personified the mission of TCF, which is the positive resolution of the grief of losing a child. They took the unbearable grief of losing a beautiful and promising child and used it to help so many others. The life of Anna Chambers, as young as she was, sends ripples through so many other lives now. That lovely child will live on in all the lives Karen and Lamar and John touch and help because of losing her. I have grown so much because of knowing Karen and hope that I can do justice to the legacy of Karen Chambers.....



February - March Birthdays



Birthdays are given special recognition at our monthly meetings. We have a birthday table set up where parents and siblings are invited to bring in photos and other memorabilia to share with the group. There is also an opportunity to share a short story or memory of your child with the group before breaking up into our smaller sessions. Many also like to bring in a cake or other favorite snack to celebrate the birthday of their child or sibling.

We also invite you to share a special story, picture, or both for the Birthday Tribute section below if your child's birthday is in the upcoming months. If you would like to place a birthday tribute to your child in the newsletter, you may do so by emailing it to Louise Hoefler at louiseh831@comcast.net.

February Birthdays

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Danielle Adams | Cheryl Joy Rojek |
| Jeremy Daniel Nieves | Steven Reid Stone |
| Joshua Bradley McGuirt | Joshua Jennings Crawford |
| Keron Vathada | William Michael Inman |
| Luke Andrew Abbate | Amber Bower |
| Heather Ann Tully | Aaron Jamal Cleveland |
| Ryan Gregory Alexa | Chad Campbell |



March Birthdays

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Timmy de St. Aubin | Michael Kaiser |
| Katie Kirk | John Robert Hosfeld |
| Aundrea Alexis Humphrey | Lauren Valentine |
| Ryan Lynn Talkington | Morgan Keith Farris |
| Suzanne Marie Burgoyne | Anthony James Leingang |
| Christian Nicole Ricketts | Heather Lynn Eckstein |
| Maria McElreath | |



Lending Library

Our chapter offers a lending library with a variety of books on grief and bereavement. If you have read a book that was comforting to you and would like to share it with others, donating that book in your child's name is a wonderful way to honor them. Bookplates/stickers are placed in these books to note whose memory they are given in.



Looking for a particular grief book? Go to www.centering.org. When ordering, mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and shipping charges will be waived.

2008 Festival of Trees

The Atlanta TCF Festival of Trees was held in December at the Cobb County Civic Center. The Compassionate Friends Memory Tree theme was "A Time to Remember". The tree was decorated with ornaments which represented clocks, and our children and sibling's photos and names were displayed in an album next to the tree. The online photos of our children can be viewed on the TCF Atlanta website <http://www.tcfatlanta.org>

If your child's death was drug related (overdose, suicide, drugs given by someone), a good informative website is www.friendsdontletfriendsdie.com set up by bereaved parents who have lost a child in this way. I, as the mom of Anke Furber, am involved with the "friends team" as we call ourselves. More and more stories are coming in from all over the US. Some people choose to have their story on the site, others don't or are not ready to do that yet. The site has a wealth of information about laws in each state, DEA penalties, Crime Victims Bill of Rights and Compensation, books to read about grief - just to name a few. You can find TCF on the site too. For more information, feel free to talk to me (Ria Coesel - 770-973-4921) or simply visit the site.

If you would like to give of your time to our chapter, we warmly welcome volunteers. This is your chance to give back and to help out with the efforts of our chapter. Volunteer opportunities range from helping to set up a meeting, facilitating meetings, making phone calls and helping with special events. This is a great way to give back in memory of your child after you have found hope, encouragement and strength from TCF. Making the change from needing and finding help to giving help & support to new parents is another healing milestone.

New Years Resolutions for Bereaved Parents



I resolve...

That I will grieve as much, and for as long, as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a timetable on my grief.

That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

That I will not blame myself for my child's death, and that I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done.

But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it, too, will pass.

That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel compelled to explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body the strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

To know that I am not losing my mind, and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process to know that I will heal, even though it may take a long time.

To let myself heal and not to feel guilty about feeling better.

To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous - that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that 'slipping backward' is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts, so eventually they may become a habit.

That I will reach out at times, and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.

That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

Nancy A. Mower, TCF - Honolulu, HI





Mrs. Butterworth

Every supermarket decision has a family memory connected to it.

You'd never expect a package of spaghetti or a can of creamed corn to leave you crying in the aisle at the store.

Excerpt from Charlie Walton's book, *When There Are No Words*.

Every parent who has lost a child knows these words to be true. Whether it is baby food or a toddler's newly discovered favorite, junk food for teenagers or an adult child's old time favorite, the grocery store can be a tough trip. I lost my son, Stephen, when he was eighteen, so it was the junk food - potato chips, Funyuns, French bread for pizzas, Ragu sauce, pepperoni, Cheetos, cheesebread, cereal of all kinds, Chex mix and so on that haunted me and made me not want to grocery shop. But – it was the golden face of Mrs. Butterworth that brought me to my knees. As I stared in horror at her face, I remembered sticky little handprints on the wall when the highchair had been just a little too close, I remembered a chubby little toddler sitting next to me at the table, talking seriously, his green eyes wide. "I sink I saw her wink at me," he said of Mrs. Butterworth, sounding a little like Tweety Bird. "Really?" I asked. Mrs. Butterworth always winked on the commercial – she seemed quite lifelike.

I took Mrs. Butterworth and made her walk toward his plate. She tripped when she was just the right distance from his plate and syrup spilled from her head right onto his pancakes. He looked at me and I saw it coming in his eyes – laughter. There is something so precious about a toddler's laughter. It seems to start deep within and rolls from their chest until they lose their breath. He cackled, he gasped, his body shook with laughter as Mrs. Butterworth regained her footing and said, "Oh, my – silly me!" He laughed even more. Therefore, Mrs. Butterworth made a ritual of tripping and spilling syrup onto his pancakes. Sometimes she let out a shriek as she fell, other times she would say something about how clumsy she was or how she had tripped over her apron. Whatever she did, he rolled. When Stephen was 15, the two of us often shared a quick breakfast before rushing out the door. He usually ate pancakes that he cooked for himself now and I joined him for a granola bar and a diet coke. I was lost in thought one morning, a particularly stressful day ahead of me, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mrs. Butterworth come walking toward me. She was helped by a hand as big as mine with slender fingers wrapped around her base. "So – how you been?" she asked in a voice that tried to sound feminine but came out a little like a drag queen. She tripped suddenly and screamed in apparent horror. "Oh, crap!" she said as she stood back up. It may be the only time that Mrs. Butterworth has ever said crap – I'm not sure. I laughed until I was sick and left for work with a smile in my heart.

But now, I did not laugh when I saw her face. I cried. Other shoppers probably thought I was insane. I walked away. I couldn't look at her. Cheetos and Funyuns and potato chips had already stabbed at me over on aisle four, Captain Crunch had almost tripped me, the Tombstone Pizzas had made me as cold as they were in the freezer just to look at them, but the little golden faced lady broke my heart. For the next four years, I had a peculiar interest in shortening and oil – you see, they were across the aisle from Mrs. Butterworth and I had to keep my back to her. She was an old friend, but I couldn't face her. She was an unintentional emotional grenade. It was a sad situation and such a shame for two who had been so close not to acknowledge each other's presence, but I just couldn't look at her. I always knew she was there, kindly smiling and understanding that I couldn't face her.

But just last week, I felt the golden stare strongly on my back as I once again feigned interest in the Wesson and the Crisco. For the first time in four years, I dared turn and peek at her. She boasted of ½ the calories - so, she, too understood being mid forties, huh? I dared turn a little more to fully face the little lady who had meant so much to Stephen and me – the fully golden one, with all the calories. The tears came, but a smile came with them. The memories that the golden face evoked were gentle, worth remembering forever. Older grief is, indeed, kinder. I put her in my shopping cart and took her home with me. She stands on one of the top shelves in my kitchen pantry, guarding my granola bars and my memorieshandprints on a wall, a toddler's laughter, a teenager making his stressed mom laugh. And, Stephen – you know, buddy, this morning when I reached for a granola bar, I sink I saw her wink at me.

Written in memory of Stephen Beam by his mom, Marcia Carter

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Let's Get Physical!

Our February social will be **Bowling** at Marietta Lanes

565 Cobb Pkwy, Marietta, GA Phone (770) 427-4696

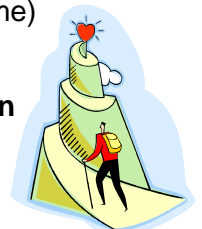
Sunday, February 15 at 12:30 PM

(Get there early - If you purchase your games before 1:00, they are only \$1 per game)

On Saturday, March 21, we'll take a hike on one of the trails at **Red Top Mountain**

Meet at the Visitor Center at 1:00 PM

More information and directions will be provided at our March meeting



Whispers of love - that keep me keeping on



I see you when I open the closet door
empty hangers where your life once hung
empty shoes that litter the floor
so many songs still left unsung.

Dreams are crushed like light bulb glass
and the implosion floods our mind,
is nothing sacred? Our child dies
and we are left behind.

Part of my spirit left that day
to guide my son to the light
part of my spirit left that day
when life grabbed my heart and took a bite.

The heart is slow to heal
its a muscle severely bruised
but for a muscle to recover
it needs only to be used

So allow your heart to shine
wherever you may go
let your heart beat rule the day
and allow the love to grow

Live love, be love, look for love
imbue it in what you say
and even though our child died
the love does not go away.

It is then that our soul shall I recover
and we can sigh without a cry
knowing our child is right beside us
their spirit didn't die.

They seek from us
what we seek in them
just a moment
to be as one again

They have the need just as we
to feel that love that tingles the soul,
a connection made, a circuit complete
in our togetherness we are the whole.

Whispers of love are everywhere
my lost child now is found
and although his body is forever gone
My soul can hear his song

Music to my ears
when he leaves a penny on the floor,
an orchestra in my heart
when he whispers through the door.

Turn the light on, turn it off
he speak to me in metaphor
using what ever that he can
to let me know that there is more

There is more to life than life
death is not an end
and I find comfort
in the messages; whatever he can send.

Spirit lives on as pure energy
its in our hearts we find the switch
to turn on that connection
and receive that special gift.

Knowing that love is eternal
and that life is just a dance
will not provide answers to the whys
but can give us a second chance

To chance to say what's in our hearts
and to listen with our soul
finding solace in a dialogue
no one else could know

Whispers of love are just that,
gentle murmurs we hear in our despair
and we know deep in our soul that love
never dies
- our child is always there.

For our kids in spirit Fall 2006
~Mitch Carmody

www.heartlightstudios.net

Valentine Message

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.
My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.
Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.
Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Knowing
By Sandy Goodman
Author of Love Never Dies

in times like these
when terror looms
i realize
that you are safe
and beyond
the fear
that we
mere mortals
must contend with
and i need not
worry
about where you are
or what can happen
in the dark
of night.
all is as it should be
when all is said and done
and i only wish
i had remembered...
this...
then...



The Promise

Cold winds blow across the frozen pond.
Snow lies deep upon the fields.
But the change has begun.
Daylight hours increase slowly,
With each passing day later sunsets are
More apparent...winter is ending.
For bereaved parents, the change is
Awfully slow.
The progress in not always apparent,
But the promise is the same.
Winter will end.
Spring will return.
Betty Stevens -
TCF, Baltimore, MD





TCF 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 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, creeds, and relationships.

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 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 a 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©2008



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c/o

Marietta TCF

P. O. Box 1892

Marietta, GA 30061

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