



## The Compassionate Friends Newsletter

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### **Marietta Chapter Meetings**

Our meetings are held on the  
**First Tuesday** of each month  
First Baptist Church of Marietta  
148 Church Street, Marietta  
Main Building on the third floor

**7:00 - 9:30 PM**

## Marietta Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Annual Candle Lighting Service



**Tuesday, December 1st at 7:00 PM**

**Marietta First Baptist Church**



Our annual Candle Lighting Service is traditionally at the beginning of December to usher in the holidays, proclaiming that our children continue to be a strong presence in our lives. They are in our hearts forever and will always be part of our holidays. This Service is a beautiful ritual that helps us celebrate a life that was important, a relationship that made a difference and a love that cannot be taken away.

We invite you to bring your family to this celebration of our children's and siblings' lives. Please bring a favorite holiday food of your child's or sibling's to share and a photo with their name to set beside the food item. We will also have a slideshow of our children's pictures during the social time. Candles will be provided. We hope to see you and your families there.

## The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting Sunday, December 13, 2009

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten. Although our chapter doesn't hold a formal service on this date because of our candle lighting ceremony the first week in December, we encourage everyone to participate in their own way by lighting candles at 7 p.m. and to encourage friends and family members to light candles wherever they live at 7 p.m. their time, to honor our children.

For more information go to the TCF website [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).





## Our Children's 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 as a **Birthdays Tribute** if your child's birthday is in the upcoming months. If you would like to submit a birthday tribute to your child for the newsletter, you may do so by emailing it to Louise at [tcfmarietta.louise@hotmail.com](mailto:tcfmarietta.louise@hotmail.com).



Andrew Pacpaco  
Ashley Nicole Plunkett  
B. Scott Langley  
Cody Austin Leath  
Dakari Kalayn Baker  
Holly Helms  
Ian Donald Renton  
Jacob Martin Drollinger  
Jaron Michael Taaffe  
Kimberly Kaye Jones Wallace  
Robert Page Culbertson, Jr.  
"Robbie"  
Ryan Logan Bonds  
Jackson Sarpy  
Stephanie Leigh Taylor  
Zack Ferguson



**Thank you** to Karl Jahn and Omni International for donating their services for printing our newsletters and thanks to Theo Furber and TBF Computing for their help with other computing needs.



Alex "Brett" Powell  
Alexander Hinton Judson  
Andrea Lynne Cardwell  
Brad Goodson  
Brian Edward Carney  
Janay Helemia Townsend  
Jason Charles Burns  
Joey Colby Thomas  
Justin Leon Kavaryants  
Julia Marie Kappers  
Kyle Alexander Heskin Eastham  
Lilly Kathryn Goss  
Martin Oldrich Holubar  
Matthew Donald Seavers  
Rachael Elizabeth Goldberg  
Rhonda Blount  
Robert James Rovin  
Steven Reid Stone  
Timothy Adam Zercher  
Timothy Desmond Jr. "TJ"



Aaron Jamal Cleveland "AJ"  
Amber Bower  
Chad Campbell  
Cheryl Joy Rojek  
Cody Gowder  
Danielle Adams  
Heather Ann Tully  
Jeremy Daniel Nieves  
Joshua Bradley McGuirt  
Joshua Jennings Crawford  
Keron Vathada  
Luke Andrew Abbate  
Ryan Gregory Alexa

If you would like a photo button made of your child, you may submit a favorite photo by email to Glen Cummins at [georgiaglen@hotmail.com](mailto:georgiaglen@hotmail.com) or bring one with you to the next meeting.

*Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief~  
Swedish Proverb*

### New Newsletter Format

We have changed the format of our newsletter to a quarterly publication, thus we will have one newsletter for each season. Winter will include December, January and February; Spring will include March, April and May; Summer will include June, July and August; Fall will include September, October and November. Please keep this in mind if you have a Birthday Tribute to submit. See past newsletters on our website [www.tcfmarietta.org](http://www.tcfmarietta.org)



**Live Forever**  
**Jeremy Daniel Nieves**  
**1981-2005**

Another September was quickly approaching. Here I was in 2009 and I had to figure out how to brace myself for another annual trip to Maple Grove Cemetery in Wichita, Kansas. There I would visit my beloved son's burial site for the fourth anniversary of his passing on September 11th. Jeremy had lived in Wichita and wanted to return there from Georgia when he passed. Still I missed him and wished his cremains were buried in Georgia near me, or at least closer, so I could visit more often.

I didn't just want to go see a cold monument and kiss his name, Jeremy Daniel Nieves, upon it as I did every year since his death. Instead, I wanted to run to him, hold him in my arms and kiss his beautiful face over and over again. But, that could never happen again, at least not in the natural. So, I went to demonstrate my love to him in other ways, since he is still my son, even though how I relate to him has had to change.

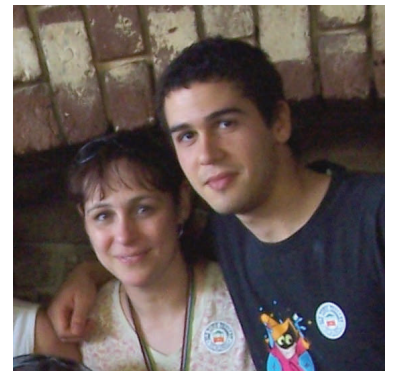
I knew what to expect and I wanted to do something special for my special son, but I needed to make it easier for myself. So, this time I planned several enjoyable activities away from the cemetery. I would do gardening around Jeremy's monument, talk to him, weep for him, sing to him, and remember him in meaningful ways, then I'd go to places I thought both Jeremy and I would appreciate. These were all healing for me and I was still able to honor Jeremy while I did them.

This child was my dear heart, my baby, the youngest of my two wonderful children, born on a cold February morning in the Bronx, almost six years after my dear daughter, Natalie. He was a lively, energetic and happy boy in spite of the difficulties of life, or at least he appeared happy most of the time. He enjoyed video games and became a computer geek, fixing anything that was computerized, while the assembling of electronics and various gadgets came natural to him. Music ran through his veins and even as a self-taught guitarist and bass player, when he moved back to New York at 18, he joined and performed in concerts with a band of young musicians.

My beautiful boy grew to be a handsome, talented young man with a great sense of humor. Listening to others and lending a shoulder to cry and lean on came easy to him. He was a gentle, warm, sensitive soul, who sought after peace and truth. Whether real or imagined, he heard and saw things few on this side ever speak of. His spirit yearned for much more than this life could give. The death certificate said that the cause of his death was suicide. Whether it was intentional or accidental, as some believe, his body died. Still, I believe we live forever. And, in that forever place Jeremy is finally able to discover the profound truths he so longed for here on earth.

Sometimes when I speak of him, I say that I've lost him, as most of us who have experienced the death of a child say. But then, I find comfort in the small and in the special things I do for him, in the sweet memories he's given me, and in the many signs and messages I've received from him since his passing. Even through these, the loving and caring person he was and still is reaches back to me and assures me by saying, "It's OK, Mama!" "You say you lost me. What are you talking about? You didn't lose me, I'm right here, Mama!" Thank you, Jeremy, for reminding me of that and for letting me know that we live forever. Te amo, JDito!

*Madeline Flores, TCF Marietta, GA*



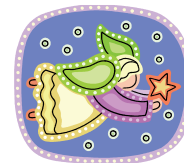
### **Lending Library**



Our chapter offers a lending library with a variety of books on grief and bereavement. We encourage you to browse our library and feel free to check out a book or CD to take home with you. We only ask that you sign out the books and return them in a timely manner so others can have the benefit of the information as well. If you have read a book that was helpful 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. Stickers are placed in these books to note whose memory they are given in.



# Our Children Loved and Remembered Angel Dates



## December

Alexander Hinton Judson  
 Brian Glenn  
 Chris Hunter  
 Cody Austin Leath  
 Holly Helms  
 Jaden Douglas Worthy  
 Jennifer Nicole Hower  
 Jeremy Michael Hitt  
 Joshua Jennings Crawford  
 Julia Marie Kappers  
 Kimberly Kaye Jones Wallace  
 Melissa Hague  
 Michael Todd Roberds  
 Michael Wayne Bertocchi Jr.  
 Robert LaVierse  
 Ronald Henry Boyd, Jr. "Hank"  
 Taylor Pratt  
 Webber Bennett Broach

## January

Alayjiah Harvell  
 Brian Alan Daniell  
 Frankie Wayne Stricklin  
 Jackson Sarpy  
 Jaron Michael Taaffe  
 Luke Edward Jordan  
 Makai Lerez Cheeks  
 Patrick Ellery Rice  
 Quentin Scott Smith-Sopousek  
 Robert Page Culbertson, Jr. "Robbie"  
 Scott Robert Cummins  
 Steven Reid Stone  
 Tawni Lee Mazzone  
 Wade Bennett

## February

Aaron Samuel Olitsky  
 Brian Thompson  
 Grace Clay  
 Hayden Scott Roberts  
 Karen Delia Robertson  
 Katherine Marie Wood  
 Keron Vathada  
 Kobe Tyler Newnan  
 Luke Andrew Abbate  
 Melanie Brooke Thompson  
 Roy O'Shields  
 Zachary Simon



A love gift is a donation to help carry on the work of our chapter. There are no dues to be a member of TCF but we are truly appreciative for any contributions, which help in such a wonderful way to continue the efforts of our chapter. We would like to extend our gratitude to all who donate for their generous gifts, which allow us to reach out to the newly bereaved and give needed support to the bereaved parents and siblings in our community. There are many expenses involved with our monthly meetings, newsletters, mailings, events, and outreach, none of which would be possible without your contributions.

Would you like to honor your child by making a donation to the Marietta Chapter of the Compassionate Friends in his or her memory?  
 Please fill out the information below, clip and mail with your tax deductible donation to:  
 Marietta Chapter TCF  
 P.O. Box 1892, Marietta, GA 30061  
 Please make checks payable to Marietta TCF.  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please specify if you would like your donation added to the Library account or the General account.  
 You may also use **Pay Pal** to donate through our website [www.tcfmarietta.org](http://www.tcfmarietta.org)

**VOLUNTEERS WELCOME !**  
 If you would like to give of your time to our chapter, we warmly welcome volunteers. Volunteer opportunities range from helping to set up a meeting, facilitating meetings, maintaining the library, 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 and support to new parents is another healing milestone.



## The Jennifer Gift

When I was in the fourth grade, I read a book called “The Jennifer Gift”. The story was about a dark haired, brown eyed girl at the turn of the century. She took money she had saved for herself and purchased a gift for a very ill friend. I absolutely loved that story and the name Jennifer. Fast forward to 1975 when I had my very own Jennifer. And, she was born with dark brown eyes and a head full of dark brown hair. In addition to the physical resemblance to the fictional Jennifer, my daughter also had a wonderfully compassionate spirit. What a blessing for our family.

Little did I know then that my own Jennifer gift would be with us only a short twenty nine years here on earth. Jennifer Nicole Hower was born on June 23, 1975 and died on December 27, 2004 from cardiac arrest.

During her time with us, Jennifer’s gentle nature was shown in many ways. Jennifer had an older brother and a younger sister. She was always thoughtful with her friends and family. She enjoyed giving gifts and spent much time in picking out the perfect gifts for everyone. She was always complimentary to others. She worked hard to keep her family connected. She was not a bit materialistic herself, but seemed to delight in the smallest things done for her. When my father moved in with us for several years, he and Jennifer became the best of friends. She was as busy as the rest of us, but always found time to sit and listen to him. He loved to talk and she was certainly an attentive listener.

After college graduation, Jennifer worked at a psycho-social rehabilitation center for mentally ill adults. She was absolutely loved by the people who were members there. They could sense her sincere and caring spirit for them. At their clubhouse, there is a fountain dedicated to her memory. The clubhouse where she worked is modeled after The Fountain House in New York City. ([www.fountainhouse.org](http://www.fountainhouse.org)). We have tried to honor her memory by letting people know of this worldwide organization of clubhouses.

One would be remiss by not noting her love of children and animals. She loved both so much. How she would love her nephew and nieces that have arrived since her death. We believe she continues to watch over our family from heaven and we do take comfort from that belief. As all bereaved parents know, you do want your child remembered. This is just a brief remembrance of Jennifer Nicole Hower. There is so much more to say but words will never be enough. So, all of us who knew and loved her continue to carry her in our hearts. Thank you for reading this and getting to know my Jennifer gift.

*Sharon Hower, Marietta TCF*

*In loving memory of Jennifer Nicole Hower*



## JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We’re well into November and it’s almost time to take the “January pill”. After Tricia died I decided I’d invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I’m still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our “traditions”. You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief. You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

*Elizabeth B. Estes TCF, Augusta, GA*



## HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE HAS DIED

The holidays are coming and I'm not ready! I'm not sure I'll ever be ready! It's dark outside and it's cold. So we turn up the heat and turn on the lights, but the lights we turn on do not seem to pierce the emptiness of this winter season. As we set the dishes and count the silverware, we are acutely aware of the empty places at the family table. We try to find the holiday spirit, but when the family circle has been broken by death, the only things that sparkle this season may be tears.

The holiday season can be a time when the past and the present collide. We try to capture what we once had or blot out bad memories. We try to ignore the empty chair. We try to ignore the pain and emptiness in our soul. While most of the world seems to be addressing holiday greeting cards and planning holiday menus, the bereaved are struggling with other concerns: how long does grief last? will the holidays always be this awful? what do we do with the empty place at the table? what is there to be thankful for this year? Maybe nothing seems quite right in your house or in your heart this season. Can you ever be happy again? Will the sights and sounds of the holiday season ever touch you again? Will there ever be light again? We hold our breath and hope the holidays go quickly. We doubt we can endure too long. We sit in the dark, because we think we have forgotten the light. We wish for some sign of hope in the season of icicles, some magical sign that will keep us going until the warmth of spring arrives. We turn on all the lights in an attempt to chase away the grief.

Maybe all you want this year is for January to quickly follow November. Too late! It's the holidays and we're stuck! Green, red, bright, shiny or blue .... the holidays are here and what can we do? We have expectations of the season, each other and ourselves. We have a mental picture of how things ought to be. But often those expectations are based more on FANTASY than REALITY. And we measure success and happiness on how close we come to those expectations. Handling the holidays is not a question of how to eliminate pain and grief from our lives, but how we can learn to live with the hurt and grief rather than be consumed by it.

It's been a long time since I endured my 1st bereaved holiday season. But even now, my heart sometimes still echoes with emptiness as I roll out the cookie dough or hang his special ornament on the tree. I think that hurt will always be with me, but now I know it only as momentary. Not like the 1st year when grief washed over me in waves, each new wave hurling me deeper and deeper into despair. And it's not like the 2nd year's hurt when I found myself both surprised and angry that IT hadn't gone away yet. I grew anxious about my sanity in the 3rd year when my hands shook as I unwrapped the precious ornaments. When was I going to be better? When was the grief going to end? Was I doomed to suffer miserably at every holiday for the rest of my life?

The year the little satin balls wouldn't stay on the tree, I gave up. One year, several years after our son had died, we found ourselves stationed in the far north regions of the United States. We were a military family and we were snowbound in deep drifts of a severe holiday blizzard. My husband was away on assignment, so my 6 year old daughter and I were alone for the holidays. I was deep in despair and decided to cancel Christmas. I just didn't have the energy or spirit to pretend any longer that everything was all right. NOTHING was all right! Our son was dead. My husband was gone and we couldn't even get home. It was well below zero and the spirit of the holidays simply hadn't penetrated my grieving soul. So, I did nothing to prepare for the holidays. My daughter was more confused than sad, but even she had little spirit. We didn't even get a tree. I didn't send cards and there were no spicy smells of cookies baking or twinkling lights at our house. But by Christmas Eve, I knew that something was terribly wrong. Instead of feeling better because there was no holiday spirit in our house, it felt even worse! So, we bundled up against the cold and went foraging in the woods for a tree. It was so cold that we only lasted a few minutes and ended up at the tree lot on the corner....late on Christmas Eve. Do you know what kind of trees are left on Christmas Eve? We had our choice of 3, and all three of them together did not make a decent tree! We adopted the best of the lot and dragged the poor thing home. We got out the lights and decorations and then I remembered why I had gotten married....men do lights! However, we struggled and eventually, we had a tree, of sorts. We sat in the dark and watched our little tree, twinkle in the cold darkness. But as we watched, one of the little satin balls fell off the tree. Another one fell and then some of the tinsel slid off a branch. And then, some needles fell to the floor and then a small branch sagged...and fell. As we watched, our tree slowly undecorated itself! "Oh Mommy!" my little girl cried. "Are we that sad that we killed the tree?" I knew we had reached the bottom of despair. Had our grief so permeated our house, our lives, that even a Christmas tree could not survive? Our son's death was more than enough....had we lost love and hope, too? I threw that tree out that night, leaving a trail of shedding needles in the carpet and all along the snow bank. We went to bed and prayed for spring.

But spring didn't come the next morning and I knew we could not let everything die. So, in the middle of that Christmas Day, now so many years past, we returned to that bare, stick of a tree now frozen in the snow bank. And carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and tinsel. I'm sure we were a strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began to let the hurt out and make room for healing to begin. With each kernel strung, we found ourselves remembering...some memories came with pain. Others began to grow within us, warming heart-places we thought had frozen long ago. But by the time we finished, we were exhausted. Memories take a lot of work! We had a tree, although it was not the one we were expecting (but then, who expects a loved one to die?) But we had one, decorated with tears and memories, sadness and remembered laughter. We kept a tiny twig from that frozen tree, to remind us of what we almost lost. I tried to cancel Christmas! I tried to toss out love because it sometimes hurts. That was the year we chose to let Christmas come back And that was the year we learned that life can become good and whole and complete once again. Not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

When we learned to let the hurt out, there was room for hope and love to return. Now we don't have to wait for joy to return for we know it lives within us, where Christmas is **EVERY DAY**. Let this collection of thoughts guide you as you navigate the twists and turns of your grief journey through the holidays. May you find hope and peace within its pages and ways to remember the life of your loved one, not just the death. Whatever holiday this is for you, **MAY LOVE BE WHAT YOU REMEMBER THE MOST!**

- Darcie D. Sims



### ~MY TREASURE BOX~

When life is overwhelming, my blessings hard to see,  
I blow the dust from my treasure box, and open carefully.  
For held inside this special box, are gems beyond compare,  
Things I have treasured, stored away with loving care.

Photos of my angel, a lock of baby hair,  
His first pair of shoes, and baptismal wear.  
Favorite blanket as a child, books read and worn,  
Notes of well wishes for the day he was born.

Toys and stuffed animals, cars of every kind,  
Some well worn from the hands of time  
All are now priceless, treasures of my heart,  
Never with any could I ever part.

Scrapbooks filled with Mother's Day cards,  
All of them he made, he worked so hard.  
Stories he had written, medals that he won,  
I hold his whole life story, the story of my son.

My hand reaches for the letters, written when confused,  
Life as a teen-ager, which life path should he choose?  
Mom I've met a girl, as pretty as can be,  
Think I'm going to ask her, if she will marry me.

Gazing through the album, his wedding filled with joy,  
Then two years later, expecting a baby boy.  
His dreams were my dreams; I still miss him so,  
It's been two long years now that we had to let him go.

The memories in my treasure box leave me with no doubt,  
I was very blessed for a time, in what love is all about.  
When life is overwhelming, my blessings hard to see,  
I lift the lid to my treasure box; he's waiting there for me.

*Jody Seilheimer, Illinois  
In Memory of her son Cory Michael Griffin*



**ANOTHER YEAR**

This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page. Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain. We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

*Alice Weening, TCF, Cincinnati, Ohio*

### First Christmas

It can't possibly be Christmas  
without her being here.  
Yet the world is singing round me,  
joyful tidings and good cheer.  
Though I try to put on armor  
and brave the sights and sounds,  
a few moments worth of shopping,  
and the tears are spilling down.  
I pray for strength to do it,  
find a path through holidays,  
look for shortcuts, good ideas,  
some directions through the maze.  
Then I find at last the answer:  
I'll include her symbolically.  
And the giving becomes perfect;  
her love's flowing down, through me.

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
From Stars in the Deepest Night –  
After the Death of a Child*

*A new year brings time to reflect  
on the children we love,  
those who remain with us  
and those for whom we grieve ~  
Wayne Loder*



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

### **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 © 2009



**The Compassionate Friends  
Marietta Chapter Newsletter**

*c/o*

**Marietta TCF**

**P. O. Box 1892**

**Marietta, GA 30061**

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