



The Compassionate Friends Newsletter



Contact and Chapter Information

TCF National Office

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

GA Regional Coordinator

Muriel Littman (404) 603-9942

Marietta Chapter

(404) 539-4287
www.tcfmarietta.org

Kathy Kelcourse, Leader
(770) 579-3512
tcfmarietta.kathy@hotmail.com

Erica Beltz, Co-Leader
(678) 891-7479
erica_beltz@yahoo.com

Sharon Hower, Treasurer
(770) 475-1311
sharssh@yahoo.com

Louise Hoefler, Newsletter
(770) 529-9381
tcfmarietta.louise@hotmail.com

Antoinette Campbell, Newsletter
(770) 403-7105
tnette7935@aol.com

Lorna Kennedy, Steering Comm.
(770) 722-4688
tcfmarietta.lorna@hotmail.com

Ria Coesel, Program Director
tcfmarietta.ria@hotmail.com

Chris Kelcourse, Webmaster
tcfmarietta.chris@hotmail.com

Angels Across the USA Alan Pedersen Concert November 2, 2010



When we lose a parent, we lose part of our past. When we lose a spouse, we lose part of our present. Losing a child means we lose part of our future.

That is how Alan Pedersen felt when his 18-year-old daughter, Ashley was killed in a traffic accident in August 2001. Alan struggled with anger and grief until he decided to devote his songwriting skills and his life to healing the wound left by his daughter's death. Alan Pedersen is an award winning songwriter, successful recording artist and nationally recognized speaker on grief and loss. He travels around the country, playing music and speaking for families who have lost children. We are happy to welcome Alan again this year to perform his inspirational music at our November meeting. Alan's current tour is titled "Angels Across the USA". For information about his nationwide tour and the opportunity to support Alan's efforts by sponsoring your "angel", go to www.angelsacrosstheusa.com or to Alan's web page www.everashleymusic.com.

Darcie Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS... says: "An evening with Alan Pedersen is an experience like none other. He will make you laugh, he may make you cry, he will surely give you some things to think about, but most of all you will be gently guided to that most sacred and healing place of sweet remembrance."

As one of our members says about Alan's songs, "He just gets it".



Tuesday, November 2
First Baptist Church
148 Church Street, Marietta
7:00 PM

The Mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

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 groups. You are also welcome to bring in a birthday cake or favorite snack of your child or sibling's.

We invite you to share a special story, picture, or both in the newsletter as a **Birthday Tribute** if your child's birthday is in the upcoming months. If you would like to submit a birthday tribute for the newsletter, you may send it to Louise at tcfmarietta.louise@hotmail.com or to Antoinette at tnette7935@aol.com



Brian Hoefler
 Brian Thompson
 Daniel Mammola
 Garrett Jonah DeMarce
 Jaden Douglas Worthy
 Jeffrey Holt Garrison, Jr.
 Jimmy Mitchell
 Joshua Klug
 Lucas Robert Barrett
 Marina 'Lelu' Slama
 Mia Marie Dowling
 Olivia Marie Garcia
 Patrick Malone, Jr.
 Tawni Lee Mazzone
 Terry Lebron Cates
 Tiffany Marie Sisson
 Tim Daniel Kincaid
 Yahsen Daniel Campbell



Addison Sarah Rice
 Adhit Prathip
 Brian Arthur LaForce
 Camden Clifford Hiers
 Jivoni Alexander Quinones
 Kasey Marie Vanek
 Katherine Marie Wood
 Michael Wayne Bertocchi Jr.
 Michelle Ala Reeves
 Noelle Parr Nation
 Patrick Hu Shelby Powers
 Ross Pischike
 Steve Black
 Steven Boultinghouse
 Wyatt James Gentry



Alexander Douglas Lambert
 Barry M. Lawrence
 Cathleen Ann Lavelle
 Caniece Collins
 Christopher Wade Tyler
 Cloey L. Herring
 Connor Lenning
 Frankie Brohm
 Lauren Hammond
 Luke Deavers
 Mary Josephine Blankenship
 Shireen Kachwalla
 Steven Mark Grimm
 Sydney Brooke



In Memory of Steven Boultinghouse

Even though October is 2 months away I am beginning to be overwhelmed by the feelings and emotions that are intensifying. It makes me realize that I am dealing with my son's death better the rest of the year. Steven died on Oct 10, 2006, 6 days before his 17th birthday. His birthday is Oct. 16. He would have been 21 this year. How could he have stopped short of 17, of 18 and High School Graduation, of proms, and picnics, the last Harry Potter Book or being 21? He made a mistake that left no room for a do-over.

I wish you could have met him - you would have liked him. He liked people and he never met a stranger. He wasn't going to be the valedictorian of his class or a star athlete; he had abilities and talents that I never could get to develop to their potential, which always made me sad. Let me tell you a Steven story that will make you laugh. He had a lot of body hair. It was blond and looked like gold in the summer against his tanned skin. His girlfriend didn't like it, so Steven bought some hair removal wax and with the help of a couple of friends he was going to wax his chest. Needless to say they didn't get very far, but he did end up shaving his chest. The things we do for love. His girlfriend from then is getting married this fall, in October, so she will have something happy about October. If Steven were still here I think they would be getting married. Life rolls on.

Linda Eroh, TCF Marietta, GA

The Present

It's been as if the hour glass measuring the passage of the time I was to live was shattered when Jeremy died, and it was replaced with a ticking time clock I wind up each morning and stare at each day. I keep thinking, "How can it be that I have to live another day with the agony and sorrow that has come from his death and the memories surrounding it?" Suffering became my constant companion. When I recalled the past, the guilt and the 'what ifs' consumed me. When I looked ahead at the future, I saw myself without him, and living in the present was the worst of it all because it was real. Jeremy was gone! In my head it felt like I had been sentenced to life in prison without parole!

Somehow, I've made it through almost five years since September 11, 2005 when Jeremy died by suicide. I can't say it's been easy, when it's been the hardest thing I've had to endure. The reinventing of life for a mother grieving for her deceased son is a huge challenge, though many who've not experienced anything like it would tell me to stop being sad and get over it. To them I say, "Easier said than done and I hope you never have to go through this."

To go on living day after day these last five years, I have had to consciously make the choice to go on living without my son, and I had to figure out how I was going to do that when I was such a mess inside. I had to find meaning in life and a purpose for living again. I had to figure out how to stay in the present and work the pain and sorrow out of it by working it out of me. I had to find my identity again. Having been a mother since the age of 20, this role has been on the top of the list of who I am for most of my life. My life has revolved around my daughter and my son since their births, so that Jeremy's death meant part of me had died, too.

Jeremy was a gift and a joy to me. There were problems in his health from the time he was born, but nothing anyone thought was life threatening. Among these were respiratory problems, allergies, a diagnosis of ADD, then at age 21, schizophrenia. This last diagnosis is what led to his suicide because, in a nut shell, his brain got sick and his thinking became impaired. Also family and financial problems, and a host of other issues that make the happy memories surrounding Jeremy fade into the background. This, besides his death, pushes me to find ways to live in the moment.

When Jeremy passed, I told him that I'd live for the two of us and for that I have to each day, consciously alter my thinking and the way I live in the present. Since Jeremy was a seeker of peace and truth who studied and practiced Buddhist principles, I've learned that living in the present is necessary for peace of mind. I feel that Jeremy is glad about some of the changes I've made to live in the present and to be happy. As best as I can, I work on letting go of the past, accepting what I can't change, holding lightly what I have, loving others, demonstrating kindness, and being grateful as I live in the moment.

Oh, I still have my ups and downs. I still miss Jeremy so much and I cry for him, but to honor him and to be at peace and as happy as possible, I work at living in the moment. I make myself live on purpose. To help me accomplish this I:

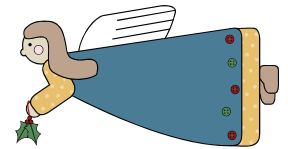
- Keep myself as organized as possible by writing down what I need/want to do.
- Plan and accomplish short and long term goals.
- Practice Qi Gong and meditation.
- Eat healthy, exercise, sleep enough, and rest.
- Allow myself time to communicate with my son in various ways.
- Keep a journal.
- Regularly get some social and fun activities into my schedule.
- Visit with family and friends via phone, e-mail, and in person.
- Never miss an opportunity to tell those I love that I love them.
- Feel and show gratitude.
- Go out and enjoy nature.
- Create and grow a memorial garden in my back yard.
- Write poetry, articles, and plan to eventually write a book.
- Listen to music and enjoy the arts.
- Simplify my life.
- Laugh more.
- Have hope



He didn't know it, but my son has been one of my greatest teachers. I am so proud of him and hope that how I live my life each day and by living in the present I will bring honor to him, since after all, I am living for the two of us.

Madeline Flores, TCF Marietta, GA in memory of Jeremy Daniel Nieves

Our Children Loved and Remembered Angel Dates



September

Adam William Hess
Anke Marjon Furber
Ashley Nelson
Aundrea Alexis Humphrey
Brittany Ann Hopkins
Brody James Cole
Cathleen Ann Lavelle
Corey Andre McKenzie
Garrett Jonah DeMarce
Jarrod Mitchell Norman
Jeremy Daniel Nieves
Kayla Quinnisha Ward
Michelle Ala Reeves
Michelle Massey
Moore Hallmark III
Robert Tufts
Rhonda Blount
Sadie Ruth Barrett
Shireen Kachwalla
Steven Mark Grimm
Tiffany Marie Sisson

October

Amy Michelle Chalmers
Heather Ann Tully
Jonathan E. Holliday
Mark Lee
Mary Josephine Blankenship
Matthew David Redd
Michael Keith Copeland
Noelle Parr Nation
Olivia Marie Garcia
Patrick Hu Shelby Powers
Rachel Jenece Glaser
Ryan Logan Bonds
Steven Boultinghouse
Timothy Desmond Jr. "TJ"
Thomas John Freeman
Vicki Lynn Oxford

*Everyone can master a grief but
he that has it.*

William Shakespeare

November

Addison Sarah Rice
Adhit Prathip
Caniece Collins
Christopher Ray Kolohe Lumpkin
DyKeith Ennis-Williams
Jason Woodall
John Robert Michael Hosfeld
Joshua Klug
Lauren Hammond
Luther Griffith Mills III
Nicolas Lee Werhofnik
Zack Ferguson

If you would like a **photo button** made of your child, you may submit a favorite photo by email to Glen Cummins at cummins_glen@yahoo.com or bring one with you to the next meeting.



Love Gifts

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.

Cliff Hower in memory of Jennifer Nicole Hower
Donna Davis in memory of Nathan White
Jane King in memory of Laurie Jane King

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Online Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.



My First Conference

My precious son, Robbie, was killed in a car wreck on January 7th 2008 by a careless driver who was playing with his new Apple I-phone that he had gotten for Christmas. Robbie was 1 year and 12 days old.

The subsequent two and half years after his death have been a struggle to say the least. It is the type of situation that only someone who has had the same experience can understand. And even within the elite group that no one wants to join, there are so many variations of loss of a child, that sometimes the only point of common empathy is the indescribable heartache. This is where the Compassionate Friends saved my life. I really can't say that I have learned anything from regularly attending the meetings since Robbie's death, but I can say that for two and a half hours every 30 days, I have the opportunity to be around people who actually "get it".

And "get it", for me, means that I am broken and can't be fixed. It means that even though I'm broken and can't be fixed, I must persevere. It means that I have to continue, to the best of my current ability, to do everything that I need to do on a daily basis. And one thing that I must do is to try to help others.

That's why I went to the TCF Conference this year in Virginia, and in usual "self help" group fashion, while doing something for greater good, I benefitted enormously. I "had" to go because I wanted to attend the leadership training which is strongly suggested (required) for members of the group to be involved on the steering committee. What I experienced there is truly beyond my ability to express. It was a feeling; an experience; the beginning of a conversion. There were so many families, probably two thousand, and for three days, I was certain that each and every one of them knew how I felt. They too were "broken and can't be fixed". Yet they were there, honoring and remembering their lost children, every one an angel. On the final morning we had the "Walk to Remember" where my TCF Chapter members who were in attendance and I carried our Banner for the Two Mile Walk through downtown Arlington, VA with all the other TCF Chapters.

I am sure it is a combination of time passed and the Conference effect, but I don't feel so "broken and can't be fixed" anymore. For me, it's sort of like I'm "broken and don't need to be fixed." I am being reconstructed from the shattered person that came out of that horrible event on January 7, 2008. Granted, the reconstruction has different aspects of the previous person, but I am more comfortable with the person that is in the reconstruction process than the person I was previously.

This is only one of the countless lessons that my dear Boy has taught me. And that's the funny thing, I was 49 when Robbie was born, less than a month from 50, and my main concern with him was that I was not going to have enough time to teach him everything he was going to need to know to survive this place called earth. Yet in his short time here, he taught me everything that is important to me today. Thank you God for the 1 year and 12 days that you gave me to be with my son.

Robbie's Daddy, Page ~ Page Culbertson, TCF Marietta, GA



Pictured at the National Conference 2010 in Virginia (clockwise from left): Ria Coesel, Tanya Pearce, Cliff Hower, Sharon Hower, Page Culbertson



After October

and if there be a perfect month,
for me, it is October...
with days and nights like laughing fauns,
with mornings bright and sober.
when wind will dance in sudden glee
to do the autumn-sweeping
or cloud and fog and wistful rain
can move a heart to weeping.
and in October You were born,
four days before November...
and four years later you were gone,
my little son, my only son,
I love you. and remember. . .
sascha

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS HELP GRIEVING FAMILIES COPE

By Rachel Childs

The Compassionate Friends (TCF), is a support group run by and for parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the loss of a child at any age. The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self help support organization that offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The story of The Compassionate Friends is one of loss, but also of the love, caring, and sharing that have emerged from those committed to the idea that We Need Not Walk Alone. Over its four decades of existence, TCF has supported hundreds of thousands of families in dealing with the natural grieving process following the death of a child. Today, with more than 600 chapters in the United States and a presence in at least 30 countries, TCF has emerged as the world's largest self-help bereavement organization.

Since 1986, the Marietta chapter of The Compassionate Friends has been providing an environment in which bereaved family members can gain hope and understanding. "The turning point comes when you stop viewing your child as dead and begin to take joy in your child's life," says Kathy Kelcourse, leader of the Marietta chapter. Kathy says that after her daughter's suicide, what kept her going was knowing that she could use her pain to help others.

Meetings open with a circle of chairs allowing each person to introduce themselves and share their story. The large group, with attendance averaging 50, is then broken up into smaller, more specified groups (i.e. for loss of an infant, loss by vehicular homicide, etc.) led by facilitators like Kelcourse and program director, Ria Coesel.

It is always hard to "welcome" newcomers contacting Compassionate Friends or coming to the meetings for the first time. However, they are glad when first time visitors find the courage to reach out for help. The Compassionate Friends of Cobb County meet the first Tuesday of every month at First Baptist Church of Marietta, 148 Church Street in Marietta, from 7 to 9:30 PM. Other groups meet in Sandy Springs and Douglasville. For more information on The Compassionate Friends, call 404-538-4287, or visit their website at www.tcfmarietta.org.

Rachel Childs is a writer for the East Cobber, a local publication. She interviewed Ria Coesel and Kathy Kelcourse about TCF and the article above appeared in the August 2010 edition. You can see the online version at www.eastcobber.com

When Words Become Gifts

By Nita Aasen, St. Peter, Minnesota



On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag - are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

Reprinted with permission from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. For subscription information contact The Compassionate Friends, P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook IL 60522-3696; toll-free: 877-969-0010.

Bits and Pieces of Grief



*"I can only bite off chunks of grief in bits and pieces.
How else would I manage to get out of bed?"*

~Desire' Aguirre

As with a four-course dinner, we must take our grief in small bites. The totality of our loss, the shattering of our psyche and the horrific blow to our brains is just too much to absorb at one time. Shock is nature's cushion. When shock subsides, our reality is a physical pain, an ache from deep inside that radiates throughout our bodies. Once this subsides, we endure the emotional agony and the kick in the gut that comes unannounced.

This quotation is very profound for both the newly bereaved and those of us who are much farther down the road of grief. The loss of our child will be the single most defining factor in our lives. However, if we do our grief work and all that this entails, we will eventually arrive at something akin to a new normal. Life will never be the same. We will never be the same. But we carry our children forward with us in our hearts and minds, imagining all that could have been and accepting that these things are no longer meant to be.

I have managed to find a serenity and a purpose in my life, yet the thrill of living is not the peaks, the sadness is not the valleys. Life now is "steady as you go." My compassion for others is almost automatic now, my understanding of the macro perspective of life is deeper and wider than ever before. I acknowledge that there is much to be learned on this journey. But it is a painful education.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting

December 12, 2010

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting is held annually on the second Sunday in December. This year it will be on December 12. Remind your family and friends around the world to light a candle at 7 PM in memory of our children.



RELEASE MY HEART

*by Antoinette Campbell
TCF Marietta, GA*

Anxiety Takes Over
I'm Afraid To Move
Close My Eyes, A Deep Breath
What Am I Afraid To Lose

A Great Distance Between Me
And The Comforts Of This Life
Angst, Anguish
My World Full Of Strife

I've Given Into Fear
Of A Happy Existence
Scared, Scarred
Surrounded by Fences

My Prison, My Own Making
I Yearn To Escape
My Freedom, My Dream
Time To Remove The Drape

That's Standing Between Me
And My Reason To Smile
Now Craving Delirium
On A Journey Of Miles

Release My Heart
Renew My Soul
Bless My New Start
Make Me Whole!

In Memory of

~YAHSEN DANIEL CAMPBELL~



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, newsletter editing, 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
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. © 2007 The Compassionate Friends

**The Compassionate Friends
Marietta Chapter Newsletter
c/o Marietta TCF
P. O. Box 1892
Marietta, GA 30061
Fall 2010 Vol. 6, No. 3**



**Marietta Chapter 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**