

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 583 Taylors, South Carolina 29687

[www.tcfogreenvillesc.org](http://www.tcfogreenvillesc.org)

July, 2004

## July's Meeting

The Greenville Chapter of *The Compassionate Friends* will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, July 8, 2004 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm at Pelham Rd. Baptist Church, 1108 Pelham Rd., Greenville. This month's meeting will be led by Jill Schmidt and titled "Peace and Hope: Ways of Finding Hope During the Hardest of Times." Jill will share ways that have helped her find peace and hope since the death of her daughter, Rachel.

We acknowledge the following love gifts with deep appreciation in Memory of:

- **Matt House** ~ by Jack and Beverly House
- **James Cox** ~ by Michael and Kathleen Cox
- **Schuyler Raiford** ~ by Norm and Alice Raiford
- **Hannah Marie** ~ by Marion and ME Linder
- **Robert Ewing** ~ by Caroline Ewing
- **Amanda Williams** ~ by Julia Muirhead

After reading a letter received from a bereaved parent in the Greenville area, who has attended TCF meetings, reminds me that even though we have all experienced the death of our child, our journey through grief can truly be "down different paths" depending not only on the circumstances of their death, but perhaps their lives as well. If your child has died in one of society's less "acceptable" ways ~ by suicide, murder, alcoholism, from a drug overdose, AIDS or other "unacceptable" ways, please know that TCF does NOT accept society's stigmas. There is no room for blame or condemnation when all our hearts are aching for the children we no longer have. Please know that we honor your child and your grief, no matter the cause of death. Due to space limitation, I am unable to print her letter in its entirety. However, I hope I have captured the

"essence" of her feelings in the following excerpt:

### A Different Path

"You never say much about your daughter," mused another grieving mother as she patted my arm at the close of a Compassionate Friends Meeting. We all come to Compassionate Friends for the same hideous reason – death of our child. Many parents were shocked awake to meet a police officer at the door informing them of a car accident. Others watched healthy little bodies wither away from dreaded diseases – Tragic, honorable untimely deaths. My little girl was not like your child in life or in death. Now I will tell you about our "Susan." Although we hosted birthday parties for the whole class, through her elementary years, I can only recall one party to which Susan was invited. At school our precious, introverted Susan was the "goat." She was a loner. She had no friends. Even though she had a genius IQ, she never did her homework. I drove her to a series of tutors and learning specialists all through her school years. A pediatric psychiatrist describe her as having a flat affect, which means that little on this earth engaged her interest. As early as age eight she told me that she didn't want to be here; she didn't want to be alive... We tried anti-depressants, Ritalin, the Feingold diet, behavior modification, family counseling, charm school and bribery. But, when she turned fifteen, she changed. She had lots of friends and a bubbly personality. She had begun medicating herself with drugs and alcohol to make her pain go away. This began seven years of "Hell", marked by her running away, overdosing, abortions, trips to jail, more psychiatrists, Tough Love Support Groups, wilderness camp, Alcoholics Anonymous, and three costly trips to drug rehab programs. Before she died, I had grown accustomed to locking my purse in the trunk of the car and wearing the key around my neck. Otherwise, I would get to the grocery store only to discover that I had no money, again. One time Susan owed a drug pusher. While her father and I were at work, she invited this man into our house to take anything he wanted. The

TV, my grandmother's silverware, the meat in the freezer – all gone. And then she cried and told us she was so ashamed of herself, but she had been so scared. I found her on a Sunday morning. Thankfully, she did not die in a back alley. She died in her own comfortable bed with her cat asleep on the pillow. That very next day, we were to begin another round of Tough Love: You can stay with us as long as you are going to AA and are sober. I cannot lie to you. When the doctor pronounced Susan dead from a cocaine overdose, in the midst of unbearable shock and grief, my heart did a little happy flip. Susan was free and my husband and I could perhaps have a chance for some peace and a rest from constant problem solving. We could have a chance to star in our own lives. Does this seem selfish? "Be happy for Susan," said her psychiatrist when we went to him for some healing for our grief. "This is the first time in her life that she has been free from the staggering pain of depression. Untreatable depression is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in young people, after car accidents," he told us.

The discussions and the sharing at TCF meetings have helped us deal with the unbearable grief of losing our only daughter. As other parents recount precious moments with their departed children, we have to think long and hard to recall times that were not fraught with stress and disappointment. If we don't join in discussions of our children's great accomplishments and the touching show of sympathy and support offered to us by a grieving peer group, know that ours was a different path. It does not mean that our pain is any less. Ironically, in her death, our funny-faced hyperactive little girl finally fits in with the others. Death does not discern between the beautiful and popular children and the "goats". And for her father and me, it feels good to be one of you, at last. We will not set ourselves apart at meetings by chronicling our failures and the failure of the mental health system.

*"A Compassionate Friend"*

*A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents*

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## OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED

### Our Children Remembered:

Nicholas Camerato – 7/1/87 ~ 1/12/96  
Bryan Denny – 7/23/55 ~ 3/28/98  
Jacqueline Evans – 9/2/80 ~ 7/5/03  
Justin Hix – 1/9/81 ~ 7/19/03  
Deborah Jolley – 12/27/61 ~ 7/24/99  
Jeremy Knoke – 6/4/79 ~ 7/5/91  
Victor Lawson – 5/13/91 ~ 7/21/02  
Damon Leonard – 10/27/74 ~ 7/27/84  
Tim McKelder – 10/18/76 ~ 7/18/98  
Melissa Rowland – 7/11/81 ~ 2/10/99  
Quinn Hall – 7/7/82 ~ 6/22/03  
Matt House – 7/20/74 ~ 11/6/92  
Donnie McCall – 7/22/73 ~ 1/18/04  
Jeremy McIntyre – 7/20/72 ~ 1/13/99  
David Pyle, Jr. – 7/23/73 ~ 11/9/99  
Amanda Williams – 12/4/79 ~ 7/25/99

“As I travel this journey through grief, I am so thankful for my compassionate friends. You are a source of strength and comfort without which I would not have survived this horrific loss. Thank you for walking with me and beside me, my compassionate friends.”

*Julia Muirhead  
TCF – Greenville Chapter*

The following poem is submitted by Julia Muirhead in memory of her daughter Amanda.

### I Don't Know Why

I don't know why, I will never know why.  
I don't have to know why, I don't like it.  
I don't have to like it. What I do have to  
do is make a choice

about my living. The choice is mine. I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before, or I can be destroyed by it and, in turn, destroy others. I thought I was immortal. That my family and my children were also. That tragedy happened only to others. But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable. So I am choosing to go on living, making the most of the time I have, valuing my family and friends, in a way I never thought possible before.

*~Iris Bolton*

### Missing Her

Where has she gone? To a better place, they say. A place where there is no pain, no suffering, no fear. Does this give me comfort? Yes, but only a little.  
I miss her. I miss her.

She died before my very eyes. There was nothing I could do to keep her alive. The hardest thing I've ever done was to watch her die. She was here one minute and gone the next. Gone in a whisper. I miss her. I miss her.

How cruel life – and death – can be. I'm sure she is content in Heaven. But I miss her. I miss her beyond anything words can convey.  
I miss her. I miss her.

I want to hold her, to tell her once more “I love you, Schuyler.” But she has gone, gone to return no more. Yes, she lives in my heart and in my memories. But I miss her. I miss her. I miss her.  
I miss you, Schuyler. . . . .  
I love you Schuyler. . . . .

I miss her. I miss her. . . . .

*Norm Raiford  
Schuyler's Grandbuddy  
June 15, 2004*

*On what would have been Schuyler's seventh birthday*



### Someday Soon

*In Memory of Kim Callahan Patterson*

*Written by her mother, Kathryn Bailey  
TCF – Greenville, SC*

Someday soon I'll just be grateful, that I had you for the time I did.  
And someday soon, I won't feel guilty and finally myself forgive.  
For someday soon, a day will pass, that I didn't really dread to see.  
A glimpse of someday is all I'm asking, for it's a good possibility.

Then again as time is healing, I have something to look forward to.  
And then again there are those who tell me, someday I will get over you.  
I know these things are really looming, just beyond the days and years.  
Yet for now I must be dreaming, cause all I see are tears and tears.

So just in case I'll be expecting, to awaken from this saddened state.  
And just in case it doesn't happen, a broken heart surely can't re-break.  
But either way I know for certain, as long as I'm allowed to breathe.

That you will NEVER be forgotten and live on because of me.