

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 25573 Greenville, South Carolina 29616

(864) 288-9820 [www.tcfogreenvillesc.org](http://www.tcfogreenvillesc.org)



## **November 2008 Meeting**

*Always the second Thursday of the month*

### **Topic:**

*Handling the Holidays*

### **Facilitated by:**

Nona Walser

### **Meeting Time & Location**

7:30 P.M.

Pelham Rd. Baptist Church,

Family Life Center

1108 Pelham Rd., Greenville, SC

### **Compassionate Friends A Safe Place to Talk**

There is a need to talk, without trying to give reasons. No reason is going to be acceptable when you hurt so much. A hug, the touch of a hand, expressions of concern, a willing listener was and still is the things that helped the most. The people who were the greatest help were not judgmental. It's most helpful when people understand that what is needed is to talk about it and that this is part of the grief process.

### **TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

### **TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"**

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK** – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

## **FIRST THANKSGIVING**

The thought of being thankful  
fills my heart with dread.  
They'll all be feigning gladness,  
not a word about her said.

These heavy shrouds of blackness  
enveloping my soul,  
pervasive, throat-catching,  
writhe in me, and coil.

I must, I must acknowledge,  
just express her name,  
so all sitting at the table,  
know I'm thankful that she came.

Though she's gone from us forever  
and we mourn to see her face,  
not one minute of her living,  
would her death ever replace.

So I stop the cheerful gathering,  
though my voice quivers, quakes,  
make a toast to all her living.  
That small tribute's all it takes.

*STARS IN THE DEEPEST NIGHT*  
*- After the Death of a Child*  
*by Genesee Bourdeau Gentry*



### **Let us give thanks...**

I can not hold your hand today,  
I can not see your smile.  
I can not hear your voices now,  
my children, who are gone.  
But I recall your faces still,  
the songs, the talks, the sighs  
And story times, and winter walks,  
and sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live

beyond your time with me. .  
You gave me clearer eyes to see,  
you gave me finer ears to hear,  
what living means, what dying  
means,  
my children, who are gone.

So here it is Thanksgiving Day,  
and you are not with me.  
And while I weep a mother's tears,  
I thank you for the gifts you were,  
and all the gifts you gave to me,  
my children, who are gone.

*By Sascha Wagner who experienced  
the death of all three of her children.  
From Wintersun*



## **WHAT IS FALL WITHOUT YOU?**

It is trees full of color  
and leaves on the ground,  
It is morning air, crisp and cool  
with frost all around.  
It is so beautiful,  
but it doesn't mean anything  
without you.  
It is beautiful skies of blue  
and talk of winter, too.  
But it is still not the same ;  
because I can't share it with you.  
It doesn't seem to matter :  
what the season we're in...  
I All I can do is wonder  
how can I enjoy the fall :  
without...  
you... .  
again...

*Jon Yeager, TCF, Pioneer, Ohio*

The November 2008 Newsletter  
is lovingly dedicated to the  
memory of all our Children . . .  
gone too soon.

**Our Children Remembered:**  
Loved, missed and forever in  
our minds and in our hearts,  
as we celebrate their life.

**November Sunrises**

Russell Lee Baldwin  
Deanna Kaye Boland  
Misty Dugan-Hunter  
Robert Joel Howell  
John R. Johnson III  
Allison Leslie  
Collin C. Lienau  
Josh Nichols  
Kristen Denise Posey

**November Sunsets**

Pamela Michelle Askew  
Clayton Bagwell  
Eric Scott Gow  
Bryan Gregory  
Matt House  
John R. Johnson III  
Terri Tamara Thomas  
Brian King  
Kenneth "Patrick" Lay  
Collin C. Lienau  
Benjamin David Morris  
Jeremy B. Owens  
Christopher Reeves  
Amy Wilkinson

**CORRECTION:** In last month's  
newsletter; Michael Anthony Allen  
was incorrectly listed as Mark  
Anthony Allen in the Children  
Remembered section. My sincere  
apology goes out to Tammy Allen  
for my mistake.

*Dick Renner - editor*

A recent memo from our National  
Headquarters has urged the local  
TCF Chapters **NOT** to publish the  
birthdates of our children. This is  
because birthdates are often used  
to commit identity theft. TCF  
Greenville will comply with this  
recommendation as identity theft

would lead to further grief for our  
bereaved families. We hope that all  
will understand this concern.

**We acknowledge the following  
love gifts with sincere gratitude  
and deep appreciation in Loving  
Memory of:**

**Russell Lee Baldwin** by *Edith Bailey*

**Josh Nichols** by *Judy and Doug  
Nichols*

**Schuylar Raiford** by *Norm and  
Alice Raiford*

**\*\* Love Gifts received after the 20<sup>th</sup> of the  
month, will be published in the following  
month's newsletter.**

**TCF NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT**

To date, only 31 people have  
signed up to support TCF and help  
us defray the costs of printing and  
postage for our newsletter. Please  
consider scanning the bar code  
below with your bonus card the  
next time you shop at Bi-Lo.

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**



You **MUST** enroll every school  
year. Your enrollment from  
previous years **DOES NOT**  
**CARRY OVER TO THE NEXT**  
**SCHOOL YEAR.**



**Each Day**

Each day you hurt a little less  
Each day you cry a little less  
One day you won't hurt  
anymore One day you won't cry  
anymore  
I don't know when that day is  
yet.

*Becky Hoffman, TCF, Atlanta GA*

**"Mommy, What is a Veteran?"**

"Mommy, what is a veteran?"  
my child asked in an innocent  
way... "and could you please  
explain to me why we have a  
Veteran's Day?"

My mind searched for the  
adjectives that might help me  
clarify  
those people, who for their country  
have looked death in the eye.

I quickly grabbed the dictionary  
to see what Webster may have  
used but "*one who served in the  
armed forces*"  
were not the words that I would  
choose

But, how do you describe a  
veteran; soldiers you have never  
met...  
those you'll never know the names  
of and yet.. .never will. forget?

How do you describe a veteran?  
How do you convey a definition for  
those who brought this country's  
dream to their ultimate fruition?

How do you describe a veteran;  
strangers who fought for you. ..  
men and women who risked their  
lives for people they never knew?

How do you describe a veteran  
and the sacrifices they made  
so that you and your children's  
children could live free...and  
unafraid?  
How do you describe a veteran for  
a child's sake?  
You say "a veteran is a person to  
whom we owe every breath we  
take."

*By Linda Ellis*



**PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND**

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS'  
WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE**

in remembrance for all our children who left too soon

**SUNDAY, December 14, 2008**

**7:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

**At the Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, Downtown Chapel**

**639 N Main Street, Greenville SC 229601**

Please join us in this community event. Everyone, including family members and friends, remembering the loss of a child or sibling is invited to attend.

Candles will be provided and light refreshments will be served.

For more information, please call 232-6733.

***If unable to attend, please light a candle wherever you are...  
"that their light may always shine".***

Please visit [www.compassionatefriends.com](http://www.compassionatefriends.com) to leave a message for your child, and/or to read other messages to children.

## The Holidays Are Coming!

"The Holidays are coming! The Holidays are coming!" Most bereaved parents make that observation with the same sense of fear and dread that Chicken Little had when he announced, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" We view Christmas or Hanukkah differently than the rest of the world. In our minds they become great trials to be endured. In my opinion, this trial is tougher than birthdays or death anniversaries. This is the time when love abounds. The family (and extended family) all gather together, coming from near and far, to share in this love. The only trouble with this happy scene is that our child is missing. He or she has traveled too far from us to come for the holidays! We can't buy gifts for a photograph or hug and kiss a memory. The emptiness that this creates in us cannot be filled, no matter how many relatives gather by our hearth. To add to the pain, most well-meaning friends and relatives feel that the best way to handle the problem is to pretend that it doesn't exist. They never mention the one person that is on the minds and in the hearts of everyone. We found out early on that it is not possible to keep the "presence" of our child out of a family gathering. Trying to do so makes everyone uncomfortable and causes us as parents to feel disloyal.

The first Christmas after our son died, we did it "their" way. Never again! Now we make sure that he is very much a part of our holiday. For starters, we decided once again to hang all three stockings. We don't fill them, but just seeing them all hanging together is right for us. The tree was very important to Blake. Every year he took the responsibility of stringing the lights for us. Now it is important to us to see that Blake has a tree. We have a very special one, about 3 feet tall, that we weight heavily at the bottom. We decorate it with weather-proof ornaments and place it at his grave. We leave the tree there until spring so it can make the gravesite when the snows are deep. We also have a lovely candle that we burn on special days. This is our way of including our missing son in the family circle. But most important, we talk about him. We don't do it obsessively, but we don't hesitate to recall memories of him as often as we recall those of other children in the family. Because we talk of him in an easy and natural manner, the rest of the family has taken our cue. They now bring up his name naturally. It is all so much more comfortable than the way we tried to handle it that first year.

Another couple in our chapter had a wonderful idea for the first holiday after their daughter died. Their greatest fear was that no one would mention her, so they compiled an album of her pictures and casually left it out on the coffee table. It wasn't long before people were looking through it, recalling favorite memories of her, and the ice was broken.

There must be so many other ways that you can make your child a part of your holiday - ways that seem right and comfortable for you. You may choose to keep your thoughts private rather than share them with others. But the most important thing to remember is that the choice is yours. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. If you follow the dictates of your heart and that gives you comfort, those around you will see that it is so and follow your lead.

*Marge Frankenberg  
TCF, Arlington Heights IL*



## HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

*The following guidelines are shared in the hope that they will be helpful to you in thinking about and planning for the holidays ahead and other special family times throughout the year. They were prepared by Shirley Melin of The Compassionate Friends, Fox Valley Chapter, Aurora IL with some additions from the Montgomery, AL Chapter, and from the booklet, Handling the Holidays, edited by Bruce Conley, a funeral director in Elburn IL and a member of the Advisory Board of the Fox Valley Chapter. We are most grateful to all of these people for sharing with us.*

Holidays, birthdays, and other special days are usually times for family gatherings and celebrations. When we come together for the first time after the death of our child, it can be really difficult. Our families try to protect us in the best way they can, but it can still hurt. How can we cope? How can we as grieving parents handle these times in a realistic and effective way?

First, acknowledge and accept your feelings. Tears, depression, and loneliness are all natural reactions to a loss, months, even a year or more after the loss. At the same time, do not feel as though you are betraying your child if you are able to enjoy some of the festivities.

If the thought of preparing for these special days seems overwhelming, one helpful first step may be to make a list of things to be done in planning for the holiday. Have a family conference and together decide what is really important: what traditions do you want to carry on? What would some members find meaningful, or what things might be too painful? What changes, if any, would you want to make? Consider whether a task can be shared, whether someone else can take it on, or whether it should be eliminated. Whatever decisions are reached, this sharing can demonstrate recognition and respect for each person's values.

In setting priorities, good guidelines to use are: Would the holiday or special day be the same without it? What gave meaning to our holidays in the past? If you have family traditions, decide together whether you want to carry them on this year or if this is a good time to begin new ones. Consider and discuss ways of keeping traditions while trying to lessen the pain of loss, perhaps by making some changes in the usual way of doing things. Remember that although we may decide to do some things differently this year, we can decide to return to earlier customs another year if we wish.

It is important to realize that while holidays and special days are traditionally a time of festivity, they can also be a time of frantic busyness and resultant fatigue. Don't set unrealistic expectations for yourself to be joyful. As grieving persons we must recognize that we may simply be unable to function at our usual pace. We may need to break things down into smaller, more manageable chunks, goals we can achieve. Fatigue can be deadly and lead to feelings of depression under the best of circumstances. Don't overextend, don't over commit. Eliminate the unnecessary and reduce the pressure on yourself and others. By talking over what is really important with family members, priorities can be set, tasks shared, and plans made to accomplish those things considered essential. Decide what you can handle comfortably and let your needs be known to friends and relatives.

If your faith has been an important part of your life, allow time for its expression during these holidays and special days. If it has not, this may be a fitting time to approach the clergyman or church of your choice. In either case, you may find that by enriching and deepening your religious experience, you have added a new dimension to your life.

Our lives have changed. Our holidays will be different. It's not a choice of pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel. The important thing to remember is to do what is comfortable for you and your family. It may help to know what those of us who have been through these holidays and special days before have found: Anticipation is frequently worse than the day itself.

### **SOME SUGGESTIONS:**

#### **Know when your holidays are**

- Holidays are not just at Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, or New Year's.
- Holidays are those times when family and friends get together for fun. It may or may not be associated with one of the traditional days of celebration.
- Mark on your calendar the months during which your family's holidays occur. . Begin early to plan your coping strategies.

## TCF National Office

The Compassionate Friends  
P.O. Box 3696  
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696  
Toll Free: 877-969-0010  
Fax: 630-990-0246  
E-mail:  
[nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

Website:  
[www.compassionatefriends.com](http://www.compassionatefriends.com)

## TCF National Memory Book

If you would like to have your child's name put in the TCF National Memory Book, please send the following information concerning your child to our National Office. **Child's Full Name, Date of Birth, Date of Death, Relationship to child, Your Name, Address, and Zip Code. Also include Your Phone Number and E-mail Address.**

## Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). *A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child who has died from their family members or as a memorial from friends. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.*



## Birthday Table

Every month at our Chapter Meeting we provide a Birthday Table. In the month of your child's birthday, please bring pictures and small mementos of your child to place on the table. You may also bring a favorite cake, cookies, or other snack in memory of your child. We do this to celebrate and honor our children and to share their special day with others who understand.

## Useful Web Sites

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) - TCF National web site. Be sure to visit the **Other Grief Resources** section and the **Sibling Resources**, and the **Community Online Support** Section, as well as the chat room sections of the National web site.

[www.tcfogreenvillesc.org](http://www.tcfogreenvillesc.org) - Greenville, SC Chapter web site.

[www.SpiritLyric.com](http://www.SpiritLyric.com) - great grief website with several links to many grief resources including other grief web sites, books, music, etc.

[www.suicidreferencelibrary.com](http://www.suicidreferencelibrary.com) - contains very good grief information about suicide and general grief.

[www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org) - Alive Alone for bereaved parents whose only child or all children have died.

[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org) - information for bereaved families and newsletters.

[www.agast.org](http://www.agast.org) – Alliance of Grandparents A Support in Tragedy

[www.climb.org](http://www.climb.org) - Center for Loss in Multiple Birth

[www.teengrief@newhope-grief.org](mailto:teengrief@newhope-grief.org) - teenage grief web site

[www.misschildren.org](http://www.misschildren.org) – mothers in sympathy and support. Provides support to parents enduring the tragedy of stillbirth, neonatal death and infant death from any cause.

[www.pomc.com](http://www.pomc.com) – a web site for parents of murdered children providing on-going emotional support and education, prevention advocacy, and awareness.



## TCF Library

We invite you to check out books from our library. We are pleased that you might find a book that may help you or your family. If you have any books you would like to donate to our library that will be great. On the inside front cover of the book please put "Donated in Memory of (Your Child's Name)", and your child's birth and death dates. Also include your name and the date donated.

## Newsletter Submissions

If you would like to submit an original poem or a poem of special meaning for you; you can send it to our editor, Dick Renner at the following address:

The Compassionate Friends  
P.O. Box 25573  
Greenville, SC 29616



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Greenville, SC Chapter  
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We Need Not Walk Alone

November 2008



**To those of you who are newly bereaved** and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly invite you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, and support materials.

Please do not be apprehensive about coming to a meeting. Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special chemistry at meetings of The Compassionate Friends.

**Worldwide Candle Lighting** Held annually the second Sunday in December, this year's December 14th, TCF's Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe. As candles are lit at 7 P.M. local time, 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 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.

Our chapter's observance of the Worldwide Candle Lighting will take place on Dec. 14th, at 7:00P.M. at Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, 639 Main Street, Greenville, SC