



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, August 15, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

Phone: (903) 258-2547
Web Site: www.TylerTCF.org
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P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711

Chapter LeaderTina Loper
Chapter Co-LeaderPat Settle
Newsletter/Web SiteMary Lingle
Steering Committee: Tina Loper,
Pat Settle, Sam Smith, Sherri Tutt
Margie Newman, Mary Lingle

Jim & Karen Roach, Regional
Coordinators, (817) 244-0116

TCF National Organization
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with refreshments followed by announcement of birthdays and anniversaries and reading of the Credo. We will then have open discussion.
8:00 p.m.
Meeting will close by recognizing our childrens' names. Feel free to visit after the meeting or check out books from our library.

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Strange Words Welcome New Members

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: "We are so sorry you have to be here."

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to "size up" the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heart-break.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the "after death" world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

*In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX*

There is a sacredness in tears.
They are not the mark of weakness, but of power.
They speak more eloquently than 10,000 tongues.
They are the messengers of overwhelming grief,
of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.

—Washington Irving

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.



We need not walk alone.

"'Why me?' is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the 'Why me?' will answer itself." —*Polly Moore*

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting last month.

We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not-for-profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the third Tuesday of the month). The meeting is open to everyone and free of charge. You are free to talk, cry or to sit in silence; we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families (100% of funds are used for this outreach). Donations, along with the name of the person being honored, may be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any "oldies" to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, "Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer."

The Cowardly Brain

Your child dies and because of the trauma of that you need for all of your systems, without any prompting from you, to go on automatic pilot and function more perfectly than before. You find, instead, that your brain, the coward, chooses this time to say, "Excuse me, I've been traumatized here and am no longer capable of concentrating, comprehending, remembering, maintaining any kind of organized pattern or making good decisions. I really am not functioning well, so if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go on leave for a while, and when I'm better, I'll be back. And, oh, by the way, I'm leaving your emotions in charge while I'm gone."

Now, the emotions, not having had much experience in being totally in control, prove not to be good leadership material. You find yourself reacting in strange ways to old situations, and the people around you, who have not had your experience and who may already be doubting your sanity, now become thoroughly convinced that you are in desperate need of long term mental treatment. You may find yourself agreeing with their assessment of the situation, for those first months of emotion-controlled patterns are easily confused with mental illness. How many times have you said, "I think I'm losing my mind"?

I hope it is a comfort to you to know that your brain isn't gone forever. You will find that before it returns to stay, it will check in from time to time for brief visits. When you find yourself acting rationally for a change, maybe even remembering your own name, for example, just say to yourself, "It must have been my brain on a test run." If, on the other hand, you have a day when you ride around all day with your emergency brake on, or pass the exit by that you've used for the past fifteen years, just know that your gray matter isn't in touch at all that day. Your emotions don't know anything about brakes or exits, you see. Rest assured, however, that one day, when you and it have had the necessary time to recover some of your lost functions, you and your brain will again become one and go about the business of continuing on with your life. Neither of you will be totally the same again, but you will both be better. I hope that day is soon for both of you.

In the meantime, come to our meetings and let the bereaved parents there with more experience help you learn how to live with your temporary "insanity" in as sane a way as is possible.

Mary Cleckley ~ TCF, Lawrenceville, GA

Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

*Eva Lager ~ TCF/Western Australia
(Eve's daughter, Milya Claudia Lager,
died by suicide on March 4, 1990.)*



We need not walk alone.

“Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into a flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who rekindle this light.”
—Albert Schweitzer

Love Gifts



Richard & Jolyn Harris in memory of Brian Harris
Lisa & Haley Harvey in memory of Sarah Harvey
Donna Griffin in memory of Jake Higgins
David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell
Barbara Miller in memory of Amanda Stone
Mary Delaney in memory of Ryan Delaney -
refreshments for the birthday table

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell -
use of a storage building

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use
their facilities as our meeting place



Newsletter Submissions

TCF Tyler welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to:

TCF Tyler • 5401 Hollytree Drive, 1204 • Tyler, Texas 75703
Or e-mail text and photos to: info@TylerTCF.org

We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is the 3rd Tuesday of each month. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify us if any of your information is incorrect.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the second memorial quilt, please mail a \$25 donation to P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711. For more information contact us at (903) 258-2547, or email us at info@TylerTCF.org.

Thanks to Teresa and David Terrell for donating their talent and time on this beautiful quilt which will be displayed in our meeting room and at future special events.



Announcements

We are still meeting at 707 W. Houston St. in Tyler, but we're now using the facilities at the back of the property.

Our Annual Candlelighting Ceremony will be held on Dec. 10th, 6:30 p.m. at Carpenter's Cross Baptist Church, Hwy. 344 and 155 S. Please contact Tina Loper at (903) 594-2132 or Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child.

If you would like a phone friend, please call Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 or Mary Lingle at (903) 581-4566.

We will accept canned food at the meetings beginning in August through November for the Lack's Christmas tree food drive.

A new TCF chapter has been chartered as of June 21, 2006. TCF of Robertson County, #2239, at 2801 E 29th St., Suite 101, Bryan, TX 77802. Contact number is 979-324-9322 for Doris or 979-279-3690 for Joann. Chapter leader is Doris Gomez.

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read:

For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—
as is \$450. Call.

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away—all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead, I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things—even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring ~ TCF, PA-MD Line Chapter, MD



We need not walk alone.

"Each of us lives in the 'after death' world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way." —Annette Mennen Baldwin

August Birthdays



Brennen Applegate

8-10-69 ~ 1-22-01

Son of C.R. & Kathryn Applegate



Gena Forest

8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98

Daughter of Joice Bass



Crystal Greene

8-6-82 ~ 11-13-01

Niece of Audrey & Claude Mapps



Tosha Nichole Minatrea

8-11-82 ~ 12-30-99

Daughter of Tim Minatrea



Ron Mitchum

8-3-70 ~ 4-15-00

Son of Glenda Mitchum



Christal Murphy

8-14-72 ~ 4-22-03

Daughter of Debbie Johnson



Scottie Baker

8-3-86 ~ 11-29-04

Son of Steve Baker



Quinn Martin Muirhead

8-1-82 ~ 4-30-05

Son of Alice Fiedler

TCF Library Hours

Mon, Tue, Thur: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Wed: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Fri: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Library is located in our meeting location, the College-Bound Solutions offices, at 707 W. Houston Street, Tyler.



Thank you for your generous donations to TCF of Tyler. These 'love gifts' allow us to provide our local chapter with special events, the TCF Newsletter, our Web site and more!

"Forever Young"

Today as I was working I had one of my favorite CDs playing: Rod Stewart. Yes, I know he is an oldie but I have always enjoyed his music and his energy.

"Forever Young" is one of my favorite songs of his, always has been, but even more so since burying our son Jeremy. I also think of my surviving son Troy when I hear this song. We as parents have such great hopes and dreams for our children and those hopes and dreams do not die when our child dies. I think of Jeremy in listening to the words of this song and I still hope all these things for him. I might not be able to see what happens to those hopes and dreams for him but I wish for them just the same. I think of Troy my surviving son and I want all those things for him and hope I can see them fulfilled for him one day.

No matter what age we lose our child, they will be forever young to us. Our children are supposed to bury us, and that's why losing a child is so difficult and the grief is so hard. We would have given our own lives for them if we could have but life just does not work that way. We grieve and ache and miss them so much, there are no words to describe the pain or the long, hard road of grieving a child.

In the early part of grief we hurt so much that we cannot think of the sweet memories and good times, we are consumed with pain and heartache and want our child back. We have to do our work in the grief process and it's not easy, every day and every breath is so hard in the beginning. I can now think of Jeremy after four years since his death and think of the good times and the joy he brought to my life and he will be forever young to me.

In loving memory of Jeremy Newman

4-15-80 ~ 01-10-02

Love always, Mom & Dad

Victor & Marjorie Newman ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

Lyrics to "Forever Young" by Rod Stewart

May the good Lord be with you down every road you roam
and may sunshine and happiness surround you when you're
far from home.

And may you grow to be proud, dignified, and true and do unto
others as you'd have done to you. Be courageous and be
brave and in my heart you'll always stay forever young.

May good fortune be with you, may your guiding light be
strong, build. Build a stairway to Heaven with prince or a
vagabond and may you never love in vain, and in my heart
you will remain forever young.

And when you finally fly away I'll be hoping that I served you
well. For all the wisdom of a lifetime no one can ever tell. But
whatever road you choose, I'm right behind you win or lose,
forever young.





We need not walk alone.

"How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It's as close to a near death experience as I can imagine." —Annette Mennen Baldwin

August Anniversaries



Michael Holdway
6-18-52 ~ 8-3-93

Spouse of Kathy Dowdy Holdway



Justin Dover
9-14-89 ~ 8-15-02
Son of Stacey Dover



Jill Marie Rozell
3-14-84 ~ 8-2-02

Daughter of Peggy & Terry Rozell



Shannon Scheffler
12-21-70 ~ 8-22-03
Daughter of Dolly Mobley



Joe Maland
4-2-83 ~ 8-17-05
Son of MaryAnn Girard



Cathy Key
3-26 ~ 8-19-05
Daughter of Cindy Murray



Tiffany LeAnn Tanner
12-2-94 ~ 8-24-05
Daughter of Kathy LeAnn Tanner



Visit us online at www.TylerTCF.org

As I Remember Him

Whenever I answer an email from a newly bereaved sibling I say "My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25th 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him."

The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40. As the ninth anniversary approached last year I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August, our birthday month, but last year was worse.

As my birthday neared I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me it would be easier than being with all of the family, all except Alan. I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan for nine years I now realized that I couldn't continue without help. Twice a week for the two weeks before my birthday I received counseling. I had decided I would have a birthday party if I could make the guest list. It turns out everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan but they could see his picture button while speaking to me. Thoughts of Alan were never far and as I walked the last friend to his car I realized that it was an enjoyable day but each milestone would be an adjustment.

As I approach my 41st birthday, the tenth without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car's license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal; each new state I visit I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, created an AIDS quilt, web page and a backyard garden. I devoted a room, "Alan's room", with posters and articles by and about him. I donate items for AIDS & TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan's memory. As long as I live I will continue to find ways to honor his memory as I remember him.

Daniel Yoffee, August 4, 2002

"When your mind cannot find an answer,
open your heart and ask for peace."
—sascha

Please share your stories,
poems or love messages for
inclusion in our newsletter.



We need not walk alone.

“Laughter is not a sign of ‘less’ grief. Laughter is not a sign of ‘less’ love. It’s a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It’s a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It’s okay to laugh.”
—Marianne Waite

A Personal Evolution Through Grief

I have been a bereaved parent now for three and half years. I have learned a few things during that time, and I have much to learn in the future. I am evolving. Evolving from what I once was—a person who had reasonable expectations of a life that included my son, his children, graduations, holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Now I have become a person who has virtually no expectations that are similar to the ones I had before my son died.

I have evolved into a more sensitive person. I know what some people are thinking before they even say the words. I feel others’ joy as if it were my own. I cheer for the success of others. I feel their sorrow, their failures, their missteps. I watch children play and remember my childhood, my son’s childhood and I think of the joy that is childhood. I sit for hours watching birds at our feeders, marveling at the beauty of the natural world.

I have slowed down the pace. I no longer feel the pressure to be here or there, to do this or that, to call this one or that one, to wear certain clothes, to “put on the best face” for strangers. I have liberated myself from the mundane and the materialistic. Instead, I simply feel deeply about others. I have become extremely sensitive to all that surrounds me.

I believe the loss of my child has changed me in many different ways. I see this in the attitudes of those who are in the Compassionate Friends as well. While few of us will broach no nonsense in our lives because it is meaningless compared with our experiences, we will listen intently for long periods to the weeping, hysterical cries of a newly bereaved mother. Or we will nod quietly as a parent who is far into grief has a sudden flash of sorrow that is overwhelming. We have a heightened sensitivity to others through no choice of our own. It came with the loss of our beautiful children.

I wonder about what my son would think of events that have unfolded since his death. I have come to conclusions about others that aren’t, quite frankly, flattering. Yet, he had come to these conclusions before he died. While I tried to mollify his perception of the dysfunctional people with whom he was burdened, he just said, “that’s how it is, mom.” And he was right. That’s how it is. I have learned to accept people for what they are. If I can help, I will certainly do so. If I can’t help, I accept that some things can’t be changed, and some people won’t change. There is no magic here. It’s a simple fact of life. “That’s how it is, mom.”

I volunteer more these days. I give of myself, my knowledge, any wisdom I may have acquired on life’s path to others who are in need. I give of my time, my talents and my labors to those who don’t ask as well as those who do. I am comfortable with this.

I have less appreciation for money than I once had. Perhaps that is the best thing to come out of this. What was I chasing? What was my son chasing? What was the point? Bigger, better, faster, farther, more, more, more. It’s a shallow existence when one is so focused on the material things that one is defined by materialism. I have learned to let go of preconceptions, and in that letting go, I have been pleasantly surprised by many people.

How did I get to this place? One minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month at a time. It is a slow journey from crawling through the pits of hell in deep grief to coming back to the reality of here and now. It’s as close to a near death experience as I can imagine. Instead of great epiphanies, there are moments of clarity. Instead of instant gratification, there is much work to achieve tiny steps forward. But the effort is well worth making. When I came out from the pits of hell, I realized that my reality was changed; I realized that I was a different person. I discovered that the world doesn’t run on the dollar. I found that all people have a capacity for goodness, but that many will never use this capacity.

But most importantly, I discovered that after leaving the pits of hell, there is a road toward hope that is traveled by each of us. Some walk more quickly, some more slowly. But we each walk that road to hope. Hope represents a life that is tolerable once again. Hope represents the acceptance of our child’s death and the acknowledgement that we will keep our children alive in our hearts for all eternity as we continue into our tomorrows. Hope is reconciling those two elements: yesterday and tomorrow.

I have learned to adjust to change, because change is inevitable. I have learned to stand up for what is right because that is our duty as human beings. I have learned much about the fears of others and even more about my own fears. I have conquered my phobias as a result of my son’s death. Nothing my imagination could conjure would equal that gripping pain, the ache that hangs in my heart forever because my child has died.

But most of all, I have learned that my son was right. “That’s the way it is, mom.” Shortly before he died, he said he wanted to give me a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* He never had the opportunity. But I will read it. I have a feeling I know what it will say. Perhaps Todd gave me the plot line when he died. I’d like to think that he was subconsciously preparing me.

*In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX*



The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If we did not hear from you in the last year please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving the newsletter.

Please include my child's name and picture in the slide presentation at the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF-Tyler Web site. (www.TylerTCF.org)

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____
Please make check payable to TCF

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents.

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter, Web site, Candle Lighting Ceremony or any other TCF event. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

(Signature) _____ Date: _____

Please return completed form to:
The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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We need not walk alone.



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