



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, December 20, 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

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

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 birth-days 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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Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery ~ TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

**Special Notice About
the Candle Lighting
Ceremony**

Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial will be December 11, 2005 at The Carpenter's Cross Church, Hwy 155 South and FM 344, Flint, TX. The service begins at 6:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome. Candles are lit in memory of our children at 7 p.m. For 24 hours straight, candles stay lit in every time zone around the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORGOTTEN children.

Sam Smith will be interviewed on Sunday, December 4 at 7:00 a.m. by radio station 96.1 about The Compassionate Friends and our Candle Lighting Ceremony.

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.



*...that their
light may
always shine.*

*Light a candle for all children who have died.
2nd Sunday in December, 6:30 p.m.*



We need not walk alone.

"Whether we cry on the inside or cry on the outside is predetermined by society, our genetics and a host of other factors. But we do cry these beautiful tears for our deceased children. These tears somehow remind us of the connection to our children, their departure and our deep, deep loss." —Annette Mennen Baldwin

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.”

What Makes Suicide An Especially Difficult Loss?

Suicide is a reaction to overwhelming feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness and depression. It occurs when a person's pain exceeds his or her resources and ability to cope. It is the third leading cause of death for people 15-24 years of age.

The suicide of a loved one raises painful questions, doubts and fears. Cultural and religious interpretations of an earlier day are responsible for the stigma associated with suicide. The knowledge that your love was not enough to save the person you loved, and the fear that others will judge you, may raise feelings of failure, of shame and blame in addition to the sorrow of loss.

Here are things you can do when you have lost a loved one to suicide:

- For those with concerns of a spiritual nature, do try to find a gentle, non-judgmental member of your faith, and open yourself to that person.
- Rather than being concerned about the stigma surrounding suicide, concentrate on your own healing and survival.
- It is important that you confront the word suicide, difficult as it may be. Keeping the cause of death a secret will deprive you of the joy of speaking about your loved one and will isolate you from family and friends who want to support you.

If you don't allow yourself to have that experience, you are blocking your healing. Instead of trying to deny or medicate the pain, realize that the hurt is necessary in order for you to heal. Our experience of mental suffering offers us the chance to grow stronger in the process.

Author unknown; Submitted by David Terrell ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

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*



We need not walk alone.

"No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!" —Robert Gloor



Love Gifts

Brenda Pope in memory of Christopher

Charlotte Nelson in memory of Wade Goetze

Donna Griffin in memory of Jake Higgins

Joyce Stewart in memory of Stephanie

Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle in memory of Stephanie

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy

Tina Loper in memory of Christopher

Thanks to David & Teresa Terrell for donating the use of a storage building and for working at a local craft fair for TCF of Tyler.



Announcements

Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial will be December 11, 2005 at The Carpenter's Cross Church, Hwy 155 South and FM 344, Flint, TX. Service begins at 6:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome. Candles are lit in memory of our children at 7 p.m. For 24 hours straight, candles stay lit in every time zone around the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORGOTTEN children.

If you would like, you may bring a photo of your child to display at the service. We have to have a signed release before we can use your child's photo. Family and friends are invited. Candles are provided.

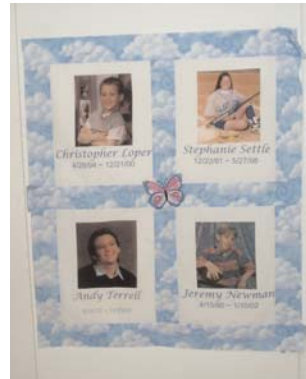
If you find that this time of year is especially tough because of the holidays, maybe your involvement in our candle lighting ceremony will bring some comfort. For more information, please call (903) 581-2831, (903) 780-7104 or visit our Web site at www.TylerTCF.org.

TCF Tyler is one of 6 non-profit organizations selected to display a tree at the Lack's Furniture Store in Tyler. Our tree has been decorated with our children's pictures.

There will be 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. The winners are determined by how many canned food products are placed under the trees. The trees with the most canned food wins. The food is donated to the East Texas Food Bank.

**PLEASE BRING YOUR CANNED FOOD ITEMS THROUGHTOUT THE HOLIDAYS IN SUPPORT OF TCF OF TYLER.
CALL: 903-780-7104 OR 903-570-8412 FOR MORE INFO.**

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt



If you would like to have your child's photo included on our 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.

The first quilt is expected to be complete in time for the Live Butterfly Release in May 2006. Progress on the quilt will be displayed at the Candle Lighting on December 11th 2005.

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

Christmas Thoughts

Beyond the twinkling lights, the red and green candles, the poignant aroma of evergreen...Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels and stars and beloved carols...Beyond the presents, the shopping, the baking and cooking...Beyond all of these sights and sounds of Christmas...Beyond all of these...there is hope.

Hope...It is hope that sustains us through the days of grief and anger and frustration and loneliness. The hope is that someday the pain of the deaths of our children will be eased.

The hope is that someday our smiles will be real. The hope is that once again we will laugh and love and cry completely without fear and hollowness.

It is the hope that someday we can remember our children with a tenderness merely tinged with sorrow and not overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you I would wish hope, peace, compassion, love, sympathy, understanding, sharing, and listening.

In the sharing of our grief with one another and in the emotional support we give to one another, we receive and learn all of these gifts.

©TCF, Wabash Valley Chapter



TCF of Tyler has "Forever in My Heart" wristbands.

You can get your wristbands at the monthly meetings or at the Candlelighting in December.





We need not walk alone.

"You loved; therefore, you grieve. You may succeed in postponing your grief for a time, but it will resurface some day in some way. You are encouraged to deal with it now so that it won't be waiting ten or fifteen years down the road for you." —*Mary Cleckley*

December Birthdays



Jonathan Reynolds
12-14-98 ~ 11-16-02

Son of Addison & Debra Reynolds



Salvador Estrada
12-11-79 ~ 11-3-01

Son of Charlotte Estrada



Tiffany Johnston
12-29-81 ~ 2-20-98

Daughter of Sherrel & Greg Smith



Ryszard Spakovsky
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98

Son of Sherrel & Greg Smith



Sarah Harvey
12-12-89 ~ 4-26-04

Daughter of Brian & Lisa Harvey



Zackery Browne
12-14-89 ~ 4-13-02

Son of Timothy & Kay Browne



Christopher Fisher
12-18-82 ~ 6-22-03

Grandson of Grace & Tom Fisher



Phillip Kuhn
12-28-73 ~ 3-27-03

Son of Carolyn Kuhn



Jeremy Simpson Brown
12-27-77 ~ 12-12-04

Son of Shari Brown

December Birthdays



Renee Seale
12-21-63 ~ 7-13-90
Daughter of Lana Kay Taylor



Erica Smith
12-21-88 ~ 10-25-03
Daughter of Todd & Sabrina Thoene



Daniel Anderson
12-27-79 ~ 5-15-95
Son of Kerry & Cheryl Anderson



Stephanie Settle
12-22-81 ~ 5-27-98
Daughter of Danny & Pat Settle

December Anniversaries



Jake Higgins
6-29-77 ~ 12-4-03
Son of Donna & Joel Griffin



Gena Forest
8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98
Daughter of Joice Bass



Tosha Minatrea
8-11-82 ~ 12-30-99
Daughter of Tim Minatrea



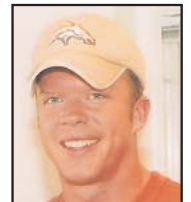
Christopher Loper
4-28-94 ~ 12-21-00
Son of Tina Loper



Cheryl Cook
4-25-73 ~ 12-10-02
Daughter of
Connie Graebner



Jocelyn McCormick
1-11-04 ~ 12-7-04
Granddaughter of
June McCormick



Matt Crooks
4-17-78 ~ 12-24-03
Son of Sylvia Crooks

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



We need not walk alone.

"In time, we learn there is no loss without gain and no sorrow without joy. As death closes doors behind us, new doors open before us." —*Joanetta Hendel*

Christmas Without My Child

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.

In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue—a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent's tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it. The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heartbreaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings.

We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable. We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions. Perhaps not.

Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible. We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations. By "dropping out" we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer.

The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures. A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to "go with the flow" of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else.

One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality. We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
November 9, 2005*



**Please detach and return completed donation form to:
The Compassionate Friends of Tyler • P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711**

We rely entirely on voluntary donations to support our group. With your help we can continue to provide our valuable services to everyone affected by the loss of a child.

Yes, I would like to make a donation in the amount of \$ _____ . (Please make check payable to TCF)

My donation is made in honor and in memory of _____ .

Tyler TCF greatly appreciates your support. These 'love gifts' are used to provide our monthly newsletter, printed materials, website, special events, our library and more.



I don't think you ever stop giving. I really don't. I think it's an on-going process. And it's not just about being able to write a check. It's being able to touch somebody's life. —*Oprah Winfrey*





**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711



We need not walk alone.



www.TylerTCF.org