



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



*We need not walk alone.*

Volume 10, Issue 12

Tyler, Texas

December 2009

## Monthly Group Meeting

### Tyler Area Meeting

Monday, December 21, 6:30 p.m.  
Bridging The Gap, 12872 Hwy. 155 S.

### Jacksonville Meeting

Tuesday, December 1, 6:30 p.m.  
Sam Smith's office, 1401 E. Rusk

### Lufkin Meeting

Thursday, December 17, 6:30 p.m.  
Southside Baptist Church, 1615  
Tulane Drive

## Contact

Phone: (903) 258-2547

www.TylerTCF.org • info@TylerTCF.org  
P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711

Chapter Leader .....Tina Loper  
Chapter Leader.....Pat Settle  
Newsletter/Web Site .....Mary Lingle  
Steering Committee: Sam Smith,  
Carol Johnson, Carol Thompson,  
Patricia Miller, Charisse Smith, Mary  
Ann Girard, Cheri Zucca, Mary Lingle,  
David & Teresa Terrell

Joan & Bill Campbell, Regional  
Coordinators, (972) 935-0673  
TCF National: (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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## Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony

Our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony will be December 13, 2009 at Crossroads Community Church, 13730 Hwy 155 South, Tyler. The service begins at 6:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome. (See flier on page 7.)



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

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

## 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*

**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.*

“Your laughter and joy, your living and compassionate spirit will always be with me, in my memories and in my heart. And though our time together feels so painfully short, I thank God for the time He gave to me, to treasure and cherish.”  
—Selma Calaman

## 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 (held the third Monday 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.”

This month's printing of our newsletter sponsored by Tina Loper

**In honor & loving memory of  
Christopher Loper  
4-28 ~ 12-21  
Son of  
Tina Loper**



This month's printing of our newsletter sponsored by Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle

**In honor & loving memory of  
Stephanie Settle, #22  
12-22 ~ 5-27  
Daughter & Sister of  
Danny, Pat & Stephen  
Settle**



This month's printing of our newsletter sponsored by Charles & Chanda McLean

**In honor & loving memory of  
Dex Bailey McLean  
12-18 ~ 7-4  
Son of  
Charles & Chanda McLean**

A reward is being offered for information on the murder of Dex. Please visit [www.dexmclean.com](http://www.dexmclean.com) for more info.



Call (903) 258-2547 to sponsor a monthly newsletter.





*We need not walk alone.*

“We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again—or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.” —Renee L.

## Love Gifts



Mary Ann Girard in memory of Joe Maland

Fran McGilvray in memory of Russell

Sam Smith in memory of Stacey

Jim & Linda Crawford in memory of Jared Sheets

Joyce Stewart in memory of Stephanie Settle

Ronnie & Pat Bickley in memory of Matt -  
Book donation for our library

Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle in memory of Stephanie -  
Sponsoring the December newsletter

Tina Loper in memory of Christopher -  
Sponsoring the December newsletter

Charles & Chanda McLean in memory of Dex -  
Sponsoring the December newsletter



## Special Thanks!

**Thanks to Fender Exploration for posting our Candle Lighting notice (3rd year they have done this) on The Forum sign at Front and Broadway. TCF really appreciates community involvement!**

**Thanks to Carol Thompson for hosting the November Steering Committee meeting at her home.**

**Thanks to Cheri Zucca, Carol Thompson, Patricia Miller, and Teresa Terrell for helping with the assembly of the November newsletter.**

**Thanks to the following people who make a monthly contribution to TCF of Tyler:**

Claudette Brown in memory of Terry Wayne

Dale & Phyllis Cavazos in memory of Chad

Sam Smith in memory of Stacey -  
use of his office for the Jacksonville meeting

Bridging The Gap Ministries -  
Tyler meeting location

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

## Announcements

**Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony Dec. 13:** The Ceremony will be held at Crossroads Church on Hwy. 155 South at 6:30 p.m. For 24 hours straight, candles stay lit in every time zone around the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORTOTTEN children. Please consider volunteering to help read a poem, set up the stage, coordinate volunteers, etc.

**Canned Food Drive:** We will be collecting canned food for the Lack's Christmas Tree Food Drive to benefit the East Texas Food Bank. The tree will be decorated with TCF pictures, and the tree with the most food donated receives a donation from Lack's. Please donate through Dec. 13.

**A Blue Christmas:** Often the holidays are less than joyous for many of us. Especially following losses, deaths, separations and illness, the festivities of the season are difficult. A Blue Christmas worship service—a service of caring, compassion and comfort—is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 21 at 6 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville.

**Bell Ringing:** If you would like to ring a Salvation Army Bell on December 21 or 22, please contact Tina at 903-780-7104. She still has some time slots available.

**Jacksonville TCF Meeting:** The meeting in Jacksonville is held on the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m., at Sam Smith's office, 1401 E. Rusk, Jacksonville. For more information, please email pdsettle@wmconnect.com or butterfly6@nctv.com, or call 903-258-2547.

**Lufkin TCF Meeting:** Join us at the Lufkin meeting held at 6:30 p.m. every 3rd Thursday of the month at Southside Baptist Church, 1615 Tulane Drive, Lufkin, TX 75901. For more information, contact Lauri Maner at 936-854-2002 or Sherri Tutt at 936-404-9517.

**The Touched by Suicide** meeting is held the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. The meeting is held at the East Texas Center for Independent Living, located at 4713 Troup Hwy, Tyler, in the Highland shopping center. Anyone who has lost someone they love to suicide is welcome to attend this peer support group. Note that it is not the proper forum for those who have attempted suicide and survived. For more information please call 903-574-3127.

**Steering Committee:** If you are interested in participating in our chapter by serving on the steering committee, please plan to attend a steering committee meeting in 2010. For more information, call 903-258-2547.

**General Assembly:** Join us in December to assemble the newsletter and mail out cards. This is a nice time for fellowship while we help ourselves and others who have lost a child. Call 903-258-2547 for information.

**New Chapter:** #2343 - TCF of Johnson County - Lisa Jo Adkison, Pamela Clapp, 7201 CR 406, Grandview, TX 76050, 817-866-2922. tcf.johnsoncounty@yahoo.com. They meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Westhill Church of Christ (parlor), 1100 Westhill Dr., Cleburne, TX 76033.





*We need not walk alone.*

"Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today." —from *We Need Not Walk Alone*

### December Birthdays



**Jonathan Reynolds**  
12-14 ~ 11-16  
Son of Addison & Debra Reynolds



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



**Zackery Browne**  
12-14 ~ 4-13  
Son of Timothy & Kay Browne



**Heath Hopson**  
12-8 ~ 4-23  
Son of Karen Hopson



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



**Dex Bailey McLean**  
12-18 ~ 7-4  
Son of  
Charles & Chanda McLean



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



**Christopher John Fisher**  
12-18 ~ 6-22  
Grandson of  
Grace & Tom Fisher



**Adam Knott**  
12-29 ~ 3-20  
Son of  
Bobby & Virginia Knott



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



**Salvador Estrada**  
12-11 ~ 11-3  
Son of  
Charlotte Estrada



**Phillip Kuhn**  
12-28 ~ 3-27  
Son of  
Carolyn Kuhn



**Jessica Noelle Kirkpatrick**  
12-30 ~ 12-30  
Daughter of  
Barry & Christel Kirkpatrick



**Jeremy Simpson Brown**  
12-27 ~ 12-12  
Son of  
Shari Brown



**Tiffany Johnston**  
12-29 ~ 2-20  
Daughter of  
Sherrel & Greg Smith



**Ryszard Spakovsky**  
12-2 ~ 2-20  
Son of  
Sherrel & Greg Smith



**Alexander Fleming**  
12-4 ~ 5-8  
Son of Amy Fleming



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



**Brandon Weatherly**  
12-14 ~ 5-20  
Son of  
Ike & Diane Weatherly



**Sarah Harvey**  
12-12 ~ 4-26  
Daughter of  
Brian Harvey & Lisa Kirley



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



**Ashley McCaa**  
12-22 ~ 1-2  
Daughter of  
Pat McCaa



**Taylor Davis**  
12-31 ~ 1-21  
Son of  
Diane Ecker



**Cory Blackmon**  
12-31 ~ 3-13  
Grandson of  
Charles & Billie Bridges





*We need not walk alone.*

"Walk the grief journey slowly and carefully but bring some of your child's joy for life with you." —Meg Avery

### December Anniversaries



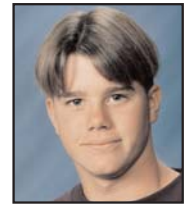
**Jake Higgins**  
6-29 ~ 12-4  
Son of Donna & Joel Griffin



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



**Mike Loughmiller**  
11-14 ~ 12-6  
Son of Suzanne Loughmiller



**James Fincke**  
7-15 ~ 12-25  
Son of Sara Fincke



**Tosha Nichole Minatrea**  
8-11 ~ 12-30  
Daughter of Tim Minatrea



**Christopher Loper**  
4-28 ~ 12-21  
Son of Tina Loper



**Margie Starkey**  
4-30 ~ 12-3  
Daughter of Bettie Abbie



**Jessica Noelle Kirkpatrick**  
12-30 ~ 12-30  
Daughter of  
Barry & Christel Kirkpatrick



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



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



**Jeremy England**  
6-7 ~ 12-25  
Son of Sandra &  
Roger Perry



**Matt Thomas Crooks**  
4-17 ~ 12-24  
Son of Sylvia Crooks



**Theresa Kay Talley**  
9-16 ~ 12-20  
Daughter of W.A. & Ruby Talley



**Jeremy Simpson Brown**  
12-27 ~ 12-12  
Son of Shari Brown



**Whitni Danielle Ray**  
11-16 ~ 12-22  
Daughter of  
Rachelle Threadgill Brooks

### Miracle

I have had my own inner battles over Wendy, and whether or not I could have changed things, or stopped her, or saved her, or was responsible for her death. The moment had come for me finally when I knew that there was nothing I could have done. For me, the truth had come in a thousand tiny moments, like shards that formed a window I could finally look through. It came in moments of prayer and nights of bitter tears, but in the end what I had seen, as I looked into myself, had brought peace to me. I couldn't have saved her. I couldn't have changed it. All I could do was accept the fact that she was gone now and had chosen to be. It was about acceptance and surrender, and loving someone enough to let them go forever.

*In Loving Memory of Wendy, 1967-2001  
I'll love you forever and miss you forever, Mom*



*We need not walk alone.*

“We don’t have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of “real but not real.” We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.” —*Doug Manning*

## As the Holidays Approach

When the holidays are fast approaching, we who are bereaved always have mixed emotions about having a nice holiday when our child or loved one is no longer with us. We wonder if we will ever be as happy and if we can ever again celebrate the holidays or any meaningful family occasion, especially the first birthday, first Thanksgiving, for first Christmas since our loss. We try to look ahead to how we are going to feel when the time arrives, but it is usually not as hard as we had anticipated. Still, the occasion may not be as enjoyable as we’d like it to be or as we remember it from the past.

I would like to offer a few ideas for what we can do to make our holidays a little better. Consider buying gifts for less fortunate children, adopting a child / family at Christmas time, or inviting a lonely person to share your holiday meal. Make your child's favorite foods and discuss your loved one as you share the meal. Some people like to volunteer to serve holiday dinners for the homeless. Some bereaved parents want to visit familiar places their child loved to go, while others want to travel where their child had never been.

Several of our Compassionate Friends members put a small Christmas tree at the cemetery and decorate the graves with Christmas flowers and / or a grave blanket. Making a grave blanket is very fulfilling; we did that for 10 years after our daughter Teresa died. Attending a Candle light program is a wonderful way to honor your child or loved one.

These suggestions are things we feel we can still do for our child, but they are not reserved for bereaved parents only. All of them can be done for any member of a family or a friend who has died. After someone dies we must keep going and doing things that lift us up. We can't always try to please any people who feel we should act in a certain manner.

*Jackie W. ~ TCF, East Central IN/Miami, Whitewater Chapters*

## Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out—because crawl out we must...on our bellies...

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives—including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended".

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again—and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again—or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

*Renee L. ~ TCF, Fort Collins, CO*

The seasons change and people change but the heart knows that love stays the same. What we wouldn't give to hear "Hey Mom and Dad, guess what?" We parents all have special moments. They stop our world. And for that moment we're with our child. We cherish the memories and whisper...

**WE LOVE YOU...FOREVER!**  
*TCF, Seacoast, NH*





## The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting

Come be part of the Candle Lighting Service.  
For 24 hours straight candles stay lit in every time zone around  
the globe for one hour to remember our **NOT FORGOTTEN**  
children. Please mark this day on your calendars.  
All family members and friends are welcome.

Light a candle in memory of all children who have died.

Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Community Church, 13730 Hwy. 155 S., Tyler, TX

Call The Compassionate Friends at 903-258-2547 or email  
info@TylerTCF.org for information or to have your child's picture  
added to the slide presentation. Visit our website for additional  
information at [www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org). Candles are provided.



...that their  
light may  
always shine.

Light a candle for all children who have died.  
2nd Sunday in December, 6:30 p.m.  
[www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org) • 903-258-2547



*We need not walk alone.*

"I have found it to be true that most of the time the anticipation of a holiday is worse than the actual holiday. The best advice is to continue to take this journey one day at a time and to honor the memory of your child in your own way."  
—Debra Reagan

## **We Are the Childless Parents**

by Sascha (Alive Alone Newsletter)

I am the childless mother  
Lost between loving and pain  
Lot to the promise of children  
Searching for answers in vain.

I am the childless mother  
Caught between courage and fears  
Left without bridge to the future  
Finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father  
Caught between courage and fears  
Left without bridge to the future  
Finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father  
Lost between loving and pain  
Lost to the promise of children  
Searching for answers in vain.

We are the Childless Parents  
Sharing the grief and the night  
Sharing the darkness together  
Waiting to walk in the light.

## **Angela's Christmas Tree**

The sight of it filled her eyes  
My oh my! What a big surprise  
She stared and stared with her eyes so bright  
While her Christmas tree glowed with shimmering lights

She touched and she felt and her face showed joy  
And she pointed to ornaments which to her were toys  
I won't ever forget the look on her face  
For the Christmas spirit glowed in every place

Her reflection in the Christmas bulbs was just like a mirror  
She saw Santa and angels and a tiny reindeer  
The star at the top made her laugh with glee Standing so  
proud was her Christmas tree

She jingled the bells that hung on the door Then turned and  
stared at the tree some more  
Christmas lights glowing for the world to see  
Sitting there proudly on Angela's Christmas tree

Merry Christmas Angela. I miss you so much.  
Love, Mom

*Sue P., Angela's Mom ~ TCF, Manchester, NH*

## **Merry Christmas from Heaven**

I still hear the songs  
I still see the lights  
I still feel your love  
On cold wintery nights

I still share your hopes  
And all of your cares  
I'll even remind you  
To please say your prayers

I just want to tell you  
You still make me proud  
You still stand head and shoulders  
Above all the crowd

Keep trying each moment  
To stay in His grace  
I came here before you  
To help set your place

You don't have to be  
Perfect all of the time  
He forgives you the slip  
If you continue to climb

To my family and friends  
Please be thankful today  
I'm still close beside you  
In a new special way

© 1989 by John Mooney

## **While We Are Apart I Will Hold You in My Heart and Never Let You Go**

Distance may separate us,  
But my heart will never let you go,  
For I carry a part of you  
With me always  
It keeps me going through the day  
It brings a smile to my face  
And tears to my eyes  
It is a part of my dreams  
That I live for and cherish  
That part is my wish, my only one,  
To see you again soon  
I know that wish will someday come true,  
But for now I will hold in my heart  
The memory of you  
And never let you go

*Author Unknown*



# 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: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

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. (Newsletters are posted monthly on our Web site.)

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](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

## Please use this gift for:

TCF Newsletter  Butterfly Release  Candle Lighting  TCF Events  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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



**"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**



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