



Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, February 21, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

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

Chapter LeaderTina Loper
Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat 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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A Dream Deferred

Christine died on November 6, 1992. She was six years old and in kindergarten, but at 35 pounds and in size 4 clothes, she looked much younger. Brain-damaged before birth by hydrocephalus, she needed hours of occupational and physical therapy to learn to crawl, brush her teeth, ride her tricycle, zip her coat. I massaged her, coaxed her, pleaded with her, praised her—and watched her grow.

I never knew what skill might confuse Christine. She walked at thirteen months but did not crawl until fifteen months. She fed herself at eighteen months but could not hug herself until she was four. When she was two and a half, she was given a complete battery of tests. Her motor skills ranged from less than one year to average.

But Christine passed the speech test at a six-year-old level. At four she composed music and created lyrics to go with her melodies. She was a natural in math and, in true brat fashion, lorded it over her older brother who was not. "It's OK that you're not good in math," she would tell Bobby. "Boys can't do math." Or she would walk up to him as he struggled over multiplication, point at a problem with her tiny hand, say, "That's wrong. You'll just have to do it again," and run before he gave her a well-deserved slap.

Christine had so much potential. Her therapists, her teachers, her pediatrician, her neurosurgeon marveled at what she could do. She was humming nursery rhymes at thirteen months, humming Tchaikovsky at three. There were days when I had visions of Christine as an adult, leading an orchestra as they played her Seventh Symphony or on stage singing her latest Country and Western hit.

And then at six it was all over. Her music—her songs—turned off. My dreams muted.

And I found myself asking a question another poet in very different circumstances asked himself. "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it merely fester? Or does it explode?" (Langston Hughes, "Harlem," 1953)

Two seasons later I have a partial and paradoxical answer. It does both. It does neither.

These have been moments of intense anguish, when I marveled that my body could hold my mood and live. There have been times when sadness has softly sifted through my daily routines, shadowing my cooking and my speaking. But under both, deeper than the explosion of Christine's unexpected death or the long sadness of her empty room, lies a certainty that Christine still exists, that we will one day be reunited.

A part of me crossed with her into death, still walks in love with her. Yet it is not a budding musician I walk with—or a brat—or a handicapped child. She was all of these. She is none of these. I walk with her. Her soul's whole now, bathed in light.

Relationships fade and change. Love lasts.

Sandra Ball ~ TCF, Salem NJ

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.

"The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life." —*Helen Godwin*

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.”

But You’re Absolutely Normal!

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect. If you've...

- been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough,
- been sleeping too much or not enough,
- noticed a change in appetite,
- felt no one understands what you're going through,
- felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often,
- bought things you didn't need,
- considered selling everything and moving,
- had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains,
- been unbearable, lonely, and depressed,
- been crabby,
- cried for no apparent reason,
- found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased,
- been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded,
- panicked over little things,
- felt guilty about things you have or haven't done,
- gone to the store every day,
- forgotten why you went somewhere,
- called friends and talked for a long time,
- called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation,
- not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed,
- found yourself unable to concentrate on written material,
- been unable to remember what you just read,

...you're normal.

These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same.

Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.

Joanne Bonelli ~ TCF, Greater Boise Area, Idaho



Visit us online at www.TylerTCF.org





We need not walk alone.

“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work—you don’t give up.” —Anne Lamott



Love Gifts

Sheree Martin in memory of Trey Lepelley

Dolly Mobley in memory of
Shannon Scheffler & Shane Crim

Misty Morales in memory of Donna Morales

Margie Newman in memory of Jeremy Newman

Dale, Phyllis & Cara Cavazos in memory of Chad Cavazos

Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice Lingle

**Thanks to David & Teresa Terrell for donating
the use of a storage building.**



Announcements

We will be holding our Third Annual Butterfly Release on May 20th, 2006, at 1:00 p.m. at the First Baptist Church south campus. Please contact Tina Loper at (903) 594-2132 or Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Let us know of any promotional opportunities available to help spread the word about this event. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child.

Brian and Lisa Harvey, in memory of Sarah Harvey, will host a Lasagna Dinner in Arp on April 22nd at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and all proceeds will benefit TCF of Tyler. Directions will be provided soon.

If you would like an email friend, please email Pat Settle at pdsettle@wmconnect.com, Tina Loper at butterfly6@nctv.com, or Mary Lingle at mcartwrite@aol.com.

We will be adding a Listserv to the Web site soon! By subscribing to TCF of Tyler’s Listserv, users can access our email list to connect with other TCF members.

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

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.



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 Butterfly Release in May 2006.

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.



I brake for butterflies!
www.TylerTCF.org

Our bumper stickers are available for a \$2 donation. You may get them at our monthly meetings or by sending a request to: TCF of Tyler, P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711.

Butterfly Ornaments

TCF of Tyler has butterfly ornaments available for \$15 plus \$3 for postage.

Send your check for \$18 to:

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



TCF of Tyler has “Forever in My Heart” wristbands.

You can get your wristbands at the monthly meetings, or send your check for \$3 to:

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





We need not walk alone.

“We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.” —Kenji Miyazawa

February Birthdays



Justin Clakley
2-25-83 ~ 5-15-03
Son of Teri Clakley



Michelle “Missy” Green
2-09-69 ~ 1-30-93
Daughter of Elena Glasscock



Caleb Scott Jones
2-27-86 ~ 7-24-03
Son of Lee Ann Colwell



Shane McDade
2-17-85 ~ 4-12-03
Son of Lajeania Culligan



Sean Smith
2-2-87 ~ 10-27-01
Son of Randy & Judy Smith



Mary Jennifer Stone
2-22-81 ~ 9-21-96
Daughter of Dick & Denise Stone



John Andy Terrell
2-11-72 ~ 11-25-03
Son of
David & Teresa Terrell



Colleen Herriage
2-23-67 ~ 5-14-83
Daughter of
Ruth Herriage



Cheryl Heerd
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81
Granddaughter of
Larry Batte



Dylan Corey
2-21-97 ~ 1-24-01
Son of
Christy Corey



Ijuan Deshaun Simms
2-20-79 ~ 11-7-01
Son of
Sharon Simms



Candice Lingle
2-21-91 ~ 11-8-93
Daughter of
Mary Lingle



Cheryl Heerd
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81
Granddaughter of Larry Batte



Jackie Heerd
6/30/1946 ~ 2/22/1981
Daughter of Larry Batte



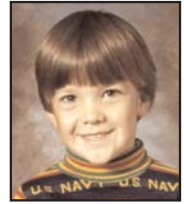
Ryszard Spakovsky
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98
Son of Sherrell & Greg Smith



Michael Schmidt
3-11-83 ~ 2-10-03
Son of
Patricia Jeffery



John Wallace
7-1-80 ~ 2-2-99
Son of
Barbara Wallace



Richard Heerd
10/31/76 ~ 2-22-81
Grandson of Larry Batte



Darell Bolton
7-21-61 ~ 2-22-2003
Brother of Kathey Bolton-Polk



Tiffany Johnston
12-29-81 ~ 2-20-98
Daughter of Sherrell & Greg Smith



James Brady Langston
10-13-96 ~ 2-15-01
Son of
Jaime Langston Davis



Adam Thomas Pritchard
9-21-82 ~ 2-21-04
Son of
Thomas & Ginger Pritchard

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



We need not walk alone.

“Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.” —*Charles Dickens*

Adjusted

“It’s been several years since your son died,” They say,
“Surely, you must have adjusted by now.”

Yes, I am adjusted—

Adjusted to feeling pain
And sadness and grief and guilt and loss.
Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.
Adjusted to seeing people made
uncomfortable upon
Hearing me say “My son died.”
Adjusted to losing my best friend because
I’m not always “up.”
Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious.
And TCF meetings are “morbid.”
Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.
Knowing I won’t hear his voice, but listening for it still.
Knowing I won’t see him drive his Toronado,
But staring at every one I see.
Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday
And wishing for just one more time with him.
Adjusted: As life goes on—
To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet
To wear a bandage—just because I am still bleeding.

Shirley Blakely Curle ~ TCF, Central AR

New ways to donate to TCF of Tyler in honor and loving memory of your child:

- \$25 for a quilt square (More info on page 3)
- \$25 to sponsor one year with the Bullard Chamber of Commerce
- \$25 to sponsor one year with the Tyler Chamber of Commerce
- \$20 to sponsor one month of advertising on Northland Cable
- \$150 for artwork for a billboard
- Postage for mailing the newsletter one month
- Refreshments for monthly meeting
- Paper, print cartridges, etc.
- Library books
- Articles or poems for the newsletter
- Monthly phone bill - \$45
- P. O. Box rental - \$26 annual

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.

The Sign

As a little boy Jody loved to pick Black-eyed Susans. He’d pick those wild flowers and bring them to me with such love and pride in presentation. The last bunch he picked for me was on my birthday before his death, August 4, 1976.

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son’s death, in the center of Jody’s grave, was a single perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.

I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. “Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I’m okay and at peace.”

Whether it was a sign from Jody or from God, perhaps a bird dropped a Black-eyed Susan seed on the fresh grave, it brought me relief. I felt that my son wasn’t so far away, and that his spirit would always be with me.

If nothing more, it helped me to begin to think of Jody there at the gravesite. He was dead, and I began to accept that. I started to realize that I would never again see his form as I had known it. But his spirit would be close and would guide me. I would not forget him and what we shared. He would always be special. What we gave to one another, what we had meant to each other, would not die or diminish with the passage of years, and it has not.

Each year since Jody’s death, a single Black-eyed Swan has grown on his grave. It is a comfort and a joy. It is a remarkable phenomenon that now makes me smile rather than cry. Joey was a kid who never forgot my birthday, and never outgrew giving his mom flowers. I choose to believe he still hasn’t. There are many mysteries in life and death that can’t be explained, and I think shouldn’t be, just accepted.

Susan White-Bowden ~ “From a Healing Heart”

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



We need not walk alone.

“When the world says, ‘Give up,’ hope whispers, ‘Try it one more time.’”
—Unknown

Escape

It is not the intent of The Compassionate Friends to impose rules upon you, nor do we assume the right to determine your moral values or life styles. What we do try to do is point out potential problem areas during the most painful part of your grief so that you can, hopefully, recognize and avoid some of these pitfalls. When a child dies, the pain of the loss is so deep and ever present that the people who are grieving for the child sometimes seek ways to escape that pain. If you have been to our meetings, read our newsletter, or talked to our telephone friends, you know that we encourage you to face the fact that there is no real way for you to escape permanently from the pain of losing a child. 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.

One of the most obvious ways for some to attempt to postpone or escape the pain is to turn to drugs, such as excessive amounts of alcohol, tranquilizers, mood elevators, and sleeping pills. You may even find that your physician will prescribe some of these things for you in an effort to make you “better.” We do not speak, of course, about those who have medical or emotional problems that are separate and apart from the normal pain of grief. We speak, instead, of the process that normally follows the death of a child, and in this instance, these drugs do not cure or make you better; they simply postpone the grieving process. They may even make it worse. Alcohol, for instance, is a depressant, as are tranquilizers for some people. What can happen then is you go from the normal depression of grief to an even more depressed state. The mood elevators give you the false impression that you have things under control. When you finish with all these things, guess what is waiting for you? Your unresolved grief, and it may then be complicated by a drug dependency or disguised as mental or physical ailments.

I am simply suggesting here that you recognize that grief is normal and necessary when you have lost something or somebody important to you. The pain, depression, hopelessness, inability to sleep, frustration, anger, guilt, loss of your goals and aims, loss of the ability to maintain an organized pattern in your life, and confusion are all a part of the symptoms of grief. You can't have softening of these symptoms until you have allowed yourself to feel whatever is necessary and normal for you under these circumstances. When you do allow yourself to hurt and feel these things, it hastens the day when you can emerge on the other side of the most painful part of grief, having survived in an emotionally healthy way. There no shortcuts, only postponements, and you will do yourself and your doctor a favor if you resist asking for prescriptions to relieve these normal symptoms.

The hurt you are feeling is a sign that your are dealing with your grief, and that means you are making progress. It takes time and patience. If you have already tried to escape and found that it doesn't work, please seek help from organizations that work with drug dependencies.

IT WILL BE BETTER! But you have to hurt before you reach that place. Truly this is a time when the kindest thing you can do for yourself is allow yourself to feel the normal symptoms of grief. Running and hiding doesn't work, but patience does.

Mary Cleckley ~ TCF, Stone Mountain, GA

Thought from a Parent Who Lost an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the “acceptable” diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin ~ TCF, Orange Park, Jacksonville, FL



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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