



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



*We need not walk alone.*

**Volume 6, Issue 1**

**Tyler, Texas**

**January 2005**

## Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, January 18, 6:30 p.m.  
Clinical Associates of East Texas  
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

### Topic

Another Year

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## National Organization Information

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## The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.....Fellowship  
7:00 p.m. ....Welcome; Announcements;  
Introductions; Topic  
7:15 p.m.....Open Forum  
9:00 p.m. ....Additional Fellowship &  
Refreshments

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## Pain

I am not a young man, and I thought I knew the meaning of pain. I have experienced pain from a toothache, arthritis, and even the loss of relatives and friends. But nothing in my fifty-four years had prepared me for the pain I experienced when we lost our son. I had no clue to real pain.

I think only a bereaved parent knows the true meaning. Not to belittle the loss of a parent or spouse, but those who have lost both tell me that it is not the same. My mother said to me at my brother's funeral, "Now I know how you feel." Even though she had lost a grandson, it was not the same.

It has been almost five years now, and there hasn't been a day go by that I don't see his picture or think of him and feel that pain. Pain for what we lost—and for what he lost. That pain is not as intense now. I have learned to tolerate it and still lead a normal life. The Compassionate Friends helped me to realize that I was not alone and that there were many others who felt that same pain. They helped me learn how to deal with it. Now it is my turn to try to help someone else.

*Harold F. Underwood ~ TCF, Southern Maryland*

## Chapter Chat

With the holidays behind us, I wanted to let everyone know how grateful and appreciative Pat, Mary and I are for all the help and participation over the last month. The holidays are not easy for any of us, and knowing that we don't have to go through this alone is one of the things that keep the three of us going.

As I tried to express, maybe not so eloquently, at the Candle Lighting Ceremony, operating this group is not an easy task. It is physically and emotionally tiring. And not for the reasons you might think. Pat and I have started off the past 3 years planning the ceremony in December hoping and praying that no one is hurt by anything that we do or may forget to do.

We, just like many of you, find ourselves overwhelmed and heartsick this time of year. We all have the deaths of our children in common but our situations and circumstances are very different. What works for us may not be what someone else in the group needs. We do not lead this organization because we have all the answers. We lead this group with the hope of finding peace, helping others find that same peace, and a way to cope with the fact that answers will not come in the remainder of our time here on earth.

This is a journey that we choose to walk holding the hands of other bereaved parents. We make this choice knowing that you do not move on from your future, our children, but towards the promise that we will see them again. We can tell you that this is not a smooth journey, even years later, as the three of us are at different stages and still find ourselves back at day one on a really tough day. We can also tell you that being there for you is one of the things that keeps us going and when we are ready to give up the next hand reaches out and we start all over again...

*Sweet memories—Tina, Pat and Mary*

**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.*

"Suppressed grief suffocates, it rages within the breast, and is forced to multiply its strength." —Ovid

## Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting in December.

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.”

## Please Let Me Mourn

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling. Will you try to understand and help me?

**Please let me mourn.** I may act and appear together, but I am not. Oftentimes it hurts so much I can hardly bear it.

**Please let me mourn.** Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle. Sometimes I am not always sure.

**Please let me mourn.** Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are all I have now. They are very precious to me.

**Please let me mourn.** Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it is all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't fear my tears.

**Please let me mourn.** What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and your understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

**Please let me mourn.** God gives me strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

**Please let me mourn.** Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

*Lonnie Forland ~ TCF, Northwood, IA*

## As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.

As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.

As long as I can, I will remember how many things on this earth were your joy.

And I will live as well as you would want me to live, as long as I can.

*Sascha ~ (Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3; years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide at age 21.)*

Our new 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.





*We need not walk alone.*

“The world loves closure, loves a thing that can, as they say, be gotten through. This is why it comes as a great surprise to find that loss is forever, that two decades after the event there are those occasions when something in you cries out at the continual presence of an absence.” —Anna Quindlen

### Announcements

**Special thanks!** The Compassionate Friends of Tyler would like to thank the following for their continued support at the Candle Lighting Ceremony and throughout the year:

- First Baptist Church of Gresham
- Clinical Associates of East Texas
- Lack's Furniture
- Clear Channel Communications, Inc.
- NBC56
- Sam Smith
- Central High School, Lufkin
- East Texas Medical Center
- First Baptist Church of Tyler, South Campus
- Trader's Guide of Texas
- CBS 19

**Lack's Furniture canned food drive update:** Thanks to all who participated in the food drive which benefitted East Texans through the East Texas Food Bank. Your donations of canned food was incredible! A Food Bank representative reported that there was enough food to share with more than 1,000 families! Special thanks to Central High School of Lufkin who generously donated canned food in memory of Steve and Sherri Tutt's daughter, Lisa, and ETMC employees who donated in memory of Tina Loper's son, Christopher. The Compassionate Friend's of Tyler was awarded a check for \$200 which will help with operating expenses.

**Martin Luther King Day Volunteer Fair** will be held January 17 from 1-4 p.m. at Broadway Square Mall. We are planning to have a booth to continue to 'spread the word' about The Compassionate Friends of Tyler. We will post information on our Web site as it becomes available.



### Love Gifts

- David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell
- Janet St. Clair in memory of Brian St. Clair
- Toni Portwood in memory of Erica Smith
- Joyce Stewart in memory of Stephanie Settle
- Tawna Andrews in memory of Joshua Andrews
- Joyce Neely in memory of Marshall Donahue
- Steven & Debbie Cowart in memory of Jaden Chester
- Laura Mattheis of Hospice



### 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](mailto: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.

### What is New About the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now.

Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

*Dory Rooker ~ TCF, Upper Valley, VT*

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



*We need not walk alone.*

"If you suppress grief too much it can well redouble." —*Moliere*

### January Birthdays



**Michael Rucker**  
1-18-93 ~ 6-10-02  
Son of Shelba Putnam



**Brooke Wallace**  
1-16-81 ~ 11-24-98  
Daughter of  
Charles & Tammy Wallace

### January Anniversaries



**Brennan Applegate**  
8-10-69 ~ 1-22-01  
Son of Kathryn Applegate



**Brittany Butler**  
10-4-84 ~ 1-21-01  
Daughter of Shelly Butler

### In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled a dreadful distance. You have come, seeking solace, understanding, hope, threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.

In this place you can relax and breathe . . . the coats of others' expectations taken off. Walk into these few hours as into an oasis where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.

In this place all names can be spoken; in this place each one's story may be told. We will not be discouraged by your sorrow; in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting; we do not count how many tears are shed. Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage, for the long and winding road we see ahead.

And those we love are pleased we are together, smile down on us, and bless this day, glad for every tiny step we are taking as they send their light to guide us on our way.

Traveling with us as we journey onward, sending strength for what the miles may bring, they are a part of everything we do that matters—in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry ~ written 30 July 2004 for those attending their first meeting of The Compassionate Friends*



Visit us online at [www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org)



**Jeremy Newman**  
4-15-80 ~ 1-10-02  
Son of Victor & Margie Newman



**Rusty Welch**  
11-29-57 ~ 1-1-67  
Son of Travis & Martha Welch



**Charles "Bryan" Meadows**  
3-18-80 ~ 1-19-03  
Son of Charles & Lynda Meadows



**Christopher Baggett**  
4-23-69 ~ 1-8-89  
Son of Anita Demby



**Michelle "Missy" Green**  
2-09-69 ~ 1-30-93  
Daughter of Elena Glasscock

**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!

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



*We need not walk alone.*

"There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief." —Aeschylus

## Butterfly in the Snow

I knew that the further away we got from Minnesota I should have felt the weight of the world lift off of my shoulders. Normally someone who was going on an 18-day vacation, away from the stresses and strains of work and everyday life, on their way to the beautiful West Coast should feel that way. But the events of the past few years made it difficult to relax and I felt the muscles in my neck and back become tenser as we journeyed on. I could sense that my son Dan picked up on my anxieties, as I was sure he had his own. He was seated next to me and I tried to flash a smile of reassurance to him that really belied my fears and the growing knot that I felt in the pit of my stomach.

Our uneasiness was justified. This was the first time we were on vacation in a little over four years. That family vacation had ended in unspeakable tragedy. Having spent the day of my 45th birthday at Daytona Beach, my husband, daughter Kristina (her nickname was Nina), son Dan and myself were on our way to my celebratory birthday supper. Only three-quarters of a mile from our destination, a drunk driver fell asleep at the wheel, crossed the median, hit the side of the car where my precious and beloved 15 ½ year old daughter, Nina, was sitting and she was killed instantly. From that moment, life as we knew it was irrevocably changed. It was the initiation into unfamiliar territory and the beginning of the roller coaster ride of emotions we were to experience. We were about to be educated in the school of grief; a place we never wanted to enter. From that day forward I swore that I would never, ever attempt to go on another family vacation. The memory of that one was painfully and eternally burned into my mind. I was fearful that if it could happen once, it could happen again. In my experiences along the grief pathway and those I had become acquainted with while on that journey, I came to learn that no one was immune to tragedy repeating itself.

Shortly after Nina died, I became involved in "The Club" that no one wants to be a member of. I became a part of The Compassionate Friends, a self-help support group for bereaved parents. Membership is a parent's worst nightmare to someone who has never lost a child, but to those of us who have it is a lifesaver. With their support and friendship, I could uncurl myself from the fetal position and begin to think, feel and cope with life again. There I met people that I know will be my lifelong friends; people who had somehow even survived the loss of more than one child, and some that had lost their only child. Each of their stories were incredibly heartbreaking: children "gone too soon" from cancer, congenital defects, accidents, house fires, suicide, AIDS, homicide—a never-ending list of sorrow. But somehow they carried on and gave back what they had received tenfold to the newly bereaved. They were such an inspiration and I knew that in time I would want to give back as well.

A few years after my precious daughter's death, I became co-leader and newsletter editor to our TCF Chapter in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Compassionate Friend's National Conference was being held in Portland, Oregon in June of 1999. I had always heard how lovely Oregon was and for the first time considered even attempting another family vacation. Though I was apprehensive, I wondered how I could allow my feelings to dictate that my son Dan would never experience with his family the beauty that this bountiful country of ours has to offer. I also justified it by rationalizing that it was more a "business trip", to receive ideas to help my other Compassionate Friends, than a pleasure trip.

My parents generously offered to take Dan and I through some of the most gorgeous country in America. We traveled to Glacier, Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons National Parks, with their "purple mountains majesty." We saw the rugged and rocky, lighthouse-studded spectacular Oregon coastline and the breathtakingly gargantuan redwood trees in Jedidiah Smith Redwood Forest in California. Though I was awestruck and taken in by all the beauty, inwardly I still harbored doubts. In my prayers at night I would speak to Nina and ask for her approval. "Is this all right with you, Nina, after what happened on our last family vacation? Please somehow let me know that I am doing the right thing."

The day before we were to arrive in Portland, we made a stop at another National Park. I don't think I was at all prepared for my surroundings at Crater Lake National Park. To say the crystalline sapphire-blue waters of the lake skirted by rolling mountains, volcanic peaks, and evergreen forests left me breathless would have been a gross understatement. As we were not properly dressed for the cold weather and snow, my parents, Dan and I shivered as we stood above the snow line overlooking this awe-inspiring sight. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a tiny unique butterfly appeared. With the snowy backdrop, it looked out of place. It fluttered near us and circled the four of us several times, but stayed close by. I watched its flight until it disappeared as quickly as it arrived.

I felt a smile cross my lips. A warm glow overtook my entire being and the tenseness in my body diminished. I had already drawn my own conclusion as to whom this unlikely visitor was, but did not share my thoughts with anyone else. The four of us stood quietly for a few minutes until my father broke the silence. "You know who that was, don't you?" he quietly remarked. I stated that I knew who I thought it was. "Butterflies can't fly up here in the cold air at this elevation," he continued. "That little butterfly was Nina. She came to remind us that she is with us always and wherever we are—and that this is the kind of exquisite beauty and so much more that she experiences in heaven everyday."

The highlight of my trip—a sign from my precious daughter, who came with the answer to my question. And to remind us all that the best is yet to come.

Cathy L. Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN





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