



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



*We need not walk alone.*

Volume 8, Issue 1

Tyler, Texas

January 2007

## Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, January 16, 6:30 p.m.  
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

### Contact

Phone: (903) 258-2547  
Web Site: [www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org)  
E-mail: [info@TylerTCF.org](mailto:info@TylerTCF.org)  
Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711

Chapter Leader .....Tina Loper  
Chapter Co-Leader.....Pat Settle  
Newsletter/Web Site .....Mary 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](http://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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## Live Music & Volunteer Recognition in February

**Plan to attend a special February 20 meeting, held at the Carpenter's Cross Church, Hwy 155 and FM 344, Flint, TX. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Family and friends are welcome. We will have a speaker, live music by Alan Pedersen, refreshments and volunteer recognition. Alan's music and story are at [www.everashleymusic.com](http://www.everashleymusic.com).**

### My Secret

Within days of my son's tragic death helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to do with his clothes, his video tapes—even his toothbrush—made my head swim.

Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends and family, and to "Goodwill," I kept the "special things" for myself—school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the Footlocker with a my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine.

Then I would take the unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just moment, that he wasn't really so far away. "What a perverse thing to do," I thought. "I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing—they would surely think I'd gone off the deep end." So I never told anyone about this strange behavior—and the odd comfort it gave to me.

Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose child had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all." Since this experience, I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand or the tenderness of a kiss.

There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child and there is comfort to be found in them.

*Carole Ragland ~ TCF, Houston-West 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.*

"I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness, and the willingness to remain vulnerable." —Anne Morrow Lindbergh

## 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 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 hoorahs. 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's" 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*

## Last Moments

Last moments  
Snatches of conversation  
That echo across all decades...  
Priceless words  
Indelibly etched on the heart.  
Sometimes  
Thoughts were never spoken  
But unexpected sentiment—  
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,  
Or joyous laughter—  
Reaches through the pain  
And warms the heart.  
We came too soon to understand  
The folly of harsh words  
Or neglected touch,  
For who can know which  
Taken-for-granted event  
Will become  
A last moment.

*Diane Fields ~ TCF, Westmoreland, PA*



*We need not walk alone.*

"To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness."  
—Erich Fromm

## Love Gifts



Christi Renaud McMillan in memory of Joshua Paul Renaud - donation for memorial quilt

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell

Janet St. Clair in memory of Brian St. Clair

Michael Minter in memory of Amber Drake

Joice Bass in memory of Gena Forest

Christi McMillan in memory of Joshua Renaud

Victor & Margie in memory of Jeremy Newman - love gift & refreshments for the Dec. meeting

Teri Clakely in memory of Justin Clakely

Steve & Sherri Tutt in memory of Lisa Tutt

Todd & Sabrina Thoene in memory of Erica Smith

Sam Smith in memory of Stacey Smith

Juanita Blake in memory of Donna Morales

Misty Hendrickson in memory of Jarren Moser

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

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use their facilities as our meeting place - in memory of Nathaniel Peter Bolom



## 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.

*In Loving Memory of Carolyn Love*

*A dear member of the TCF family went to be with her beloved daughter, Kathy Robertson, in December. We will miss you Carolyn.*



## Announcements

**Plan to attend a special February 20, 2007 meeting.** We will have a speaker, live music by Alan Pedersen, refreshments and volunteer recognition. Please bring a friend. Alan's music and story are at [www.everashleymusic.com](http://www.everashleymusic.com).

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

## TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the third 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](mailto:info@TylerTCF.org).

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



## TCF of Tyler Cookbook

Would you like to submit a recipe for inclusion in our first TCF of Tyler cookbook? Send your child's favorite recipe to the contact info on the front page of our newsletter.

### 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 won the \$200 first place award in the Lack's Trim a Tree for Charity. Thanks to all who donated canned items in loving memory of their child.**





*We need not walk alone.*

"We quickly realize there are no words to describe the experience after losing a child. For those who have not lost a child, no explanation will do. For those who have, no explanation is necessary." —*Mary Lingle*

## January Birthdays



**Joshua Paul Renaud**  
1-18-86 ~ 6-9-06

Son of Christi Renaud McMillan



**Jocelyn McCormick**  
1-11-04 ~ 12-7-04

Granddaughter of  
June McCormick



**Michael Rucker**  
1-18-93 ~ 6-1-02

Son of Brandy Rucker Pearson  
Grandson of Shelba Putman



**Amber Glasco**  
1-30-91 ~ 6-16-05

Daughter of Chris & Julie Glasco



**Brooke Wallace**  
1-16-81 ~ 11-24-98

Daughter of  
Charles & Tammy Wallace

## Who Dies

The death of a child is a fire in the mind. The mind burns with alternatives that never come to pass, with fantasies of remarkable recuperations, with dreams of adult accomplishment.

If we let this fire burn compassionately within us, the grief of the mind, the fantasies, the burning of the spirit, begin slowly to melt away and the child comes more into our heart.

Our anguish can be used to open more fully, to enter as completely as we can into this final sharing. And then, as Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the final lines of his poem, 'The End,' "Dear Auntie will come with presents and will ask, 'Where is our baby, Sister?' And Mother, you will tell her softly, 'He is in the pupils of my eyes. He is in my bones and in my soul.'"

*Steven Levine—*from *Who Dies*

## Why Me? — The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

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

*Polly Moore ~ TCF, Nashville, TN*

## Pictures

I set them out. I put them away—get them out and start to go through them filled with wonder that the daughter pictured there is no longer going to call or walk in the door or send a card filled with love and humor. Cards that brightened my day and me laugh and always prompted me to call her and give her a big hug when she walked in the door.

Pictures. I get them out. I run my hand over her face lingering on her lips remembering "kissy face mom." And suddenly overcome with grief pull that picture to me and I kiss her and tell her how much I love her and how very much I miss her—and then I look again, and see her eyes—eyes that sparkled and twinkled with mischief though at times filled with deep reflection. She was a sensitive intuitive young woman who possessed wisdom and insight much beyond her years. She "left us" when she was only 24.

Pictures. At times I hate them. They show me what I don't have. They bring back memories of a time when Jody was healthy and happy. A time when life with her was a joy. I am not yet to a place in my grief-healing where I can remember those times very well. I'm still filled with memories of her illness pain and death; and I'm still at the place that I want all of those horrible memories to be a bad dream, a dream that I will wake from hearing Jody's voice calling me to come outside so that we can take some... pictures.

*Patty Fallon ~ TCF, Central Oregon*



*We need not walk alone.*

"It has been said, 'time heals all wounds.' I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, (protecting its sanity), covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But, it is never gone." —Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy

## January Anniversaries



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



**Brennen Applegate**  
8-10-69 ~ 1-22-01  
Son of C.R. & Kathryn Applegate



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



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



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



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



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



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



**Michael R. Peymon**  
9-18-79 ~ 1-2-06  
Son of Tom & Sharon Peymon

## 5 Years—How Can it Be?

January 10th will be 5 years since we last saw our son Jeremy. How can it be 5 years? Wasn't it yesterday the trooper was at our door? Wasn't it yesterday we got the heart-breaking news? Wasn't it yesterday our world was shattered? Wasn't it yesterday our hearts were ripped apart? Wasn't it yesterday that life forever changed?

We have to say—the pain has changed in 5 years. We still miss Jeremy beyond words and we still have days that we ache just to hear his voice or to touch him, but we have learned to live and feel joy again.

We, in the beginning of this nightmare of grief, thought living and feeling joy would never be ours again. It has been a long, hard road on this journey of grief. We never thought we would live to see 5 months let alone 5 years because the pain was so intense and so consuming.

Grief does change. You learn day-by-day to live and love and feel joy again. Grief is hard, agonizing work and some days seem impossible, but we make a choice to live and be a part of life or not. We think our children would want us to go on and live and love and feel joy again. One glorious day we will see our children again and we can tell them we did the very best we could despite the pain.

We pray blessed peace and strength for all parents who are in this nightmare of grief. Please make the choice to live and love and feel joy again.

In loving memory of Jeremy Wayne Newman  
4-15-80 to 1-10-02

Forever loved and missed; Love always, Mom & Dad  
*Victor & Margie Newman ~ TCF, Tyler, TX*

## Helping Someone Survive

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that a person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope, can temper considerably the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by a pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words: "Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

*By Victor Passchin ~ Reprinted with permission of Bereavement Publishing, Inc.*



*We need not walk alone.*

“Although not all bereaved fathers and mothers feel anger toward God, many parents do, and these feelings need not to be stifled. Remember, God can certainly handle the anger of humans!” —*Rev. Al Miles*

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## A Message for Bereaved Families

By The Rev. Al Miles, The Queen's Medical Center for Pacific Health Ministry

I was recently asked to give a brief meditation at a memorial service. Attending this ceremony were more than one hundred individuals who had suffered the death of a loved one. Some of the attendees, I learned, had experienced the death of a daughter or son.

During my 10-minute talk, I encouraged those assembled to freely express their grief. I also advised the group to remember their deceased loved ones in ways which bring them comfort, joy and peace. Grief is healthy and necessary I said, it is normal to experience various aspects of this natural process over the course of a lifetime.

"From the very day my son died and on numerous occasions since—I've been told by others that grieving is morbid and wrong," declared a man named Michael. Three years ago his 12-year-old son, Daniel, accidentally fell from a ladder while helping his father paint their home. The boy sustained massive head injuries and died a few hours later in a nearby hospital.

Already racked with guilt for not "saving" his son from this fatal tragedy (even though he was on the other side of the house at time), Michael said the advice some people offered him made matters worse.

"My sister, Ellen, is a real sweetheart," Michael acknowledged sincerely. "She's 15 months older than I and we've always been very close. Danny just loved her, she was a wonderful auntie. Maybe that's why she said all the things she did in an attempt to ease my pain."

Michael said as soon as his sister arrived at the emergency department of the hospital where Danny would eventually die, she began to provide what he termed "empty ruminations."

"I was standing all alone in a distant corner of this busy trauma room," Michael recalled. "I watched all these strangers desperately trying to save my son's life. It was an awful nightmare like viewing in slow motion the most frightening horror movie one could ever imagine."

Ellen arrived at the hospital shortly thereafter. Initially, Michael said, her actions were very comforting. "My sister gave me her usual warm embrace, told me she would remain by my side, and said her prayers would be nonstop," Michael remembered. "Given the grave circumstances, these responses were especially helpful. But, as Ellen continued to speak, her words became more cold and hurtful."

According to Michael, his sister began suggesting that Danny's death was condoned by God. "Ellen advised me to immediately 'let go' of my son. 'Don't be selfish,' she instructed. 'Danny's death is God's will. It's simply his time to go.'"

Michael said Ellen also implied that God had "spared" him from witnessing his son's death. My sister told me, "God won't give you any more than you can handle. God knew you wouldn't be able to bear watching Danny fall from that ladder, so God placed you on the other side of the house. Therefore, you need to praise God for sparing you this terrible sight."

Even though he realizes the genuine effort Ellen put forth in her attempt to comfort him, Michael said his sister's words have added to the devastation he feels.

Michael said the responses he received from his spiritual leader following Danny's death were equally troubling. "Reverend Turner is a very kind and gentle soul," the grieving father admitted. "When I was a teenager, he helped to keep me on the right path. But, ever since my son died, the pastor's support has been lacking."

Three weeks after Danny's funeral, Michael said his pastor invited him out to breakfast. "I assumed Reverend Turner had suggested this meeting in order for him to see how I was coping, spiritually and emotionally, with my son's death," Michael said. "I really looked forward to being with my pastor. He had always been a very compassionate counselor. I felt depressed and grief stricken, and desperately needed the support of this fine man of God."

But, what Michael received instead of sensitive support was more "empty ruminations."

Reverend Turner said, "Some people are unable to even conceive children. Others have to live with a constant reminder that their daughters and sons are dying before their eyes from AIDS, cancer, poverty and other ills."

According to Michael, his pastor suggested he did not have a good reason to grieve. "Since Danny didn't have AIDS, cancer, or some other terrible illness, I should be thankful," Michael said. Reverend Turner told me, "You should thank God daily for all the years of happiness and health God allowed you to have with Danny. And, be thankful also that when it was your son's time to die, God took him quickly." Michael told me he felt 'demeaned' by his pastor's advice.

Because of the conversation I recently had with Michael, and due to the number of stories other fathers and mothers have shared with me the past 20 years, I want to offer three recommendations to all parents who have experienced the death of a daughter or son.

**Let no one tell you grief is morbid, selfish, wrong, or a sign of mental illness.** Grief is a healthy and natural response to death and other losses. It is a necessary process. (If however, you yourself find that you're having a difficult time coping with day-to-day life resulting from any loss, seek the help of a counselor trained specifically to deal with grief issues.)

**Let no one tell you it's wrong to feel angry at God.** Anger is a normal feeling experienced by parents who suffer the death of a child. Although not all bereaved fathers and mothers feel anger toward God, many parents do, and these feelings need not to be stifled. Remember, God can certainly handle the anger of humans!

**Let no one put a time limit on your grief process.** Following the death of a child, it is normal (and healthy) for parents to experience various aspects of grief for the rest of their lives. Therefore, remember your sons and daughters in all the ways that bring you comfort, joy and peace!

# 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](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 \_\_\_\_\_

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



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