



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 7, Issue 6

Tyler, Texas

June 2006

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, June 20, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

Contact

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Pat Settle, Sam Smith, Sherri Tutt
Margie Newman, Mary Lingle

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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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Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonald's, Hallmark and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes ~ TCF, Cincinnati, OH

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.

"When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight." —Kahlil Gibran

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.”

A Letter from Heaven

To my dearest family, some things I'd like to say... but first of all, to let you know, that I arrived okay. I'm writing this from heaven. Here I dwell with God above.

Here, there's no more tears of sadness; here is just eternal love.

Please do not be unhappy just because I'm out of sight.

Remember that I'm with you every morning, noon and night.

That day I had to leave you when my life on earth was through,

God picked me up and hugged me and He said, "I welcome you."

It's good to have you back again; you were missed while you were gone.

As for your dearest family, they'll be here later on.

I need you here badly; you're part of my plan.

There's so much that we have to do, to help our mortal man."

God gave me a list of things, that he wished for me to do.

And foremost on the list, was to watch and care for you.

And when you lie in bed at night, the day's chores put to flight.

God and I are closest to you....in the middle of the night.

When you think of my life on earth, and all those loving years because you are only human, they are bound to bring you tears.

But do not be afraid to cry; it does relieve the pain.

Remember there would be no flowers, unless there was some rain.

I wish that I could tell you all that God has planned.

But if I were to tell you, you wouldn't understand.

But one thing is for certain, though my life on earth is o'er.

I'm closer to you now, than I ever was before.

There are many rocky roads ahead of you and many hills to climb; but together we can do it by taking one day at a time.

It was always my philosophy and I'd like it for you too...

that as you give unto the world, the world will give to you.

If you can help somebody who's in sorrow and pain, then you can say to God at night....."My day was not in vain."

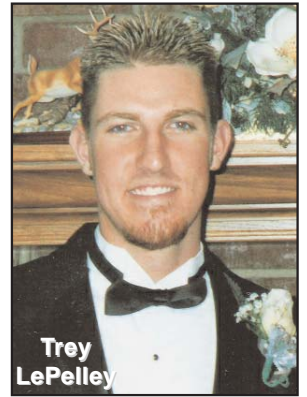
And now I am contented....that my life has been worthwhile, knowing as I passed along the way, I made somebody smile.

So if you meet somebody who is sad and feeling low, just lend a hand to pick him up, as on your way you go.

When you're walking down the street, and you've got me on your mind;

I'm walking in your footsteps only half a step behind.

And when it's time for you to go.... from that body to be free, remember you're not going.....you're coming here to me.



Trey LePelley

In loving memory of
Trey LePelley
June 10, 1982 ~
March 13, 2005
Julie & Jack LePelley





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

- Joice Bass in memory of Gena Forrest
- Jack & Julie LePelley in memory of Trey LePelley
- Dennis & Vicki Johnson in memory of Samantha Johnson
- Bonnie LePelley in memory of Trey LePelley
- Victor & Margie Newman - Jeremy Newman
- Clayton & Pat Turner in memory of Mark Turner
- Rachelle Brooks in memory of Whitney Ray
- Bob & Glenda Cochran in memory of Trey LePelley
- Sam Smith in memory of Stacey Smith
- Teri Clakley - blanket in memory of Justin Clakley
- Carolyn Kuhn - cookies in memory of Phillip Kuhn
- Mary Kay Stone - picture in memory of Amanda Stone
- Viola Conway - refreshment table in memory of Mikel Conway
- Debbie Holcomb - butterflies in memory of Allen Price
- Friends of Lisa Harvey - butterflies in memory of Lisa Harvey
- Charlie Clakley - poem in memory of Justin Clakley
- Stephen Settle - poem in memory of Stephanie Settle
- Julie LePelley - poem in memory of Trey Lepelley
- Mary Delaney - interview in memory of Ryan Delaney
- Todd & Sabrina - cake in memory of Erica Smith
- Liz Martin - Merchandise Table
- Doug & Shelly Johnson - wood in memory of Douglas Johnson

FBC

Chuck Dews at Clear Channel

Tyler Morning Telegraph

Channel 19

Channel 7

Walmart Supercenter

Northland Cable

College Bound Solutions

New Summerfield 1st Grade

Arp Elementary

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler to use their facilities as our meeting place



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

Announcements

Thanks to all who made the **Third Annual Butterfly Release** a success!



TCF #1152 Brazosport Chapter in Lake Jackson closed in May.

Our Annual Candlelighting Ceremony will be held on Dec. 10th, 6:30 p.m. at Carpenter's Cross Baptist Church, Hwy. 344 and 155 S. Please contact Tina Loper at (903) 594-2132 or Margie Newman at (903) 561-1447 for more information. The media is invited to attend. Please let us know if you would like to help this year in honor and in loving memory of your child.

We have added an online discussion list to our Web site! By subscribing to TCF of Tyler's Listserv, users can connect with other TCF of Tyler members.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

The completed TCF quilt was on display at the Butterfly Release in May.

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

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





We need not walk alone.

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

June Birthdays



Jackie Marie Heerd
6-30-46 ~ 2-22-81
Daughter of Larry Batte



Thomas “Chuck” Carroll, II
6-2-73 ~ 11-13-93
Son of Linda & Thomas Carroll



Brian Harris
6-8-72 ~ 7-29-99
Son of Jolyn & Richard Harris



Trey LePelley
6-10-82 ~ 3-13-05
Son of Jack & Julie LePelley



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



Michael Holdway
6-18-52 ~ 8-3-93
Husband of Kathy Holdway



Joshua Andrews
6-21-88 ~ 3-14-04
Son of Tawna Andrews

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.



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

Waiting for Answers

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring, air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. “How can I stop this pain?” I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. “Just do what feels right to you,” she said, “Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too.”

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

Mary Clark ~ TCF, Sugar Land-SW Houston, TX Chapter

His Room

Sun splinters through
The stained-glass unicorn Still on the sill
Splattering black walls with color
Few things are as forlorn as a vacant room
Furniture gone, awaiting definition
Bare, yet there on the carpet
Imprints of chair and waterbed
And there is the hole he
Accidentally shot through the wall
And there and there and there
Nail holes that held pictures and posters
And eight-point antlers
And there... God, how can a place
So empty, be so full?

Richard Dew
From *Rachel's Cry—A Journey Through Grief*



We need not walk alone.

When the world says, "Give up," hope whispers, "Try it one more time."
—Unknown

June Anniversaries



Roozbeh Arianpour
3-25-80 ~ 6-6-03
Son of Farideh Arianpour



Christopher John Fisher
12-18-82 ~ 6-22-03
Grandson of Grace & Tom Fisher



Randy Rounsavall
10-14-51 ~ 6-19-03
Son of Margaret Rounsavall



Michael A. Rucker
1-18-93 ~ 6-1-02
Son of Brandy Rucker Pearson
& Grandson of Shelba Putnam



Mark Turner
10-3-66 ~ 6-19-97
Son of Clayton & Pat Turner



Tami Kay Brown Roberts
5-17-72 ~ 6-10-00
Daughter of Kenn & Ann Sommerville



Christopher Pope
11-10-90 ~ 6-16-03
Son of Brenda Pope



Jodi Lynne Attaway
3-8-72 ~ 6-5-94
Daughter of Cindi Attaway-Gill



Timothy Andrew Lever
3-23-69 ~ 6-3-04
Son of Elsie Ford



Amber Glasco
1-30-91 ~ 6-16-05
Daughter of Chris & Julie Glasco

Life is a Cycle—Part of a Whole, and Death is Part of Life

Nature can be very healing for our spirits and souls. Many of us have had experiences that draw us closer to nature for healing. It seems so much easier to feel closer to God in the great outdoors. In the days after my son's death, I found myself drawn to the outdoors by digging and cleaning the flowerbeds and feeling the moist fragrant earth beneath my fingers. It seemed to ease my intense pain and shock. Others viewed my behavior as strange, but at this point I realized that my healing would come from Nature. I needed the assurance that life does renew itself even in the face of death.

That summer I found myself hiking on the Colorado Monument every chance that I had. I would lie on the rocks and feel the heat come up through my body and warm me. That winter I would cross-country ski on the top of the grand Mesa. The quietness was almost deafening and the only sound was the singing of the birds as they perched on the bare branches of the trees. The snow glistened in the sun and felt crisp beneath our skis. The stillness and openness would work its magic on my tortured soul and a peace would fill me.

When we moved from Colorado to North Carolina, my black lab and I took many enjoyable walks in the numerous rural parks. Having always lived in the West with its desert terrain and scarcity of trees and greenery, the abundance of trees and greenness was overwhelming and stifling until we became accustomed to it. While walking through a dense ceiling of branches, we came upon an area where the trees had been cleared. On one side was a fenced area and as we approached, I saw many graves. Some had headstones and many just had large rocks with writing on them. On closer inspection, I realized that this was a cemetery for the children of two families in the 1800's. The ages ranged from infants to 18 years of age and there were over a dozen. I remember that it gave me such a feeling of sadness and grief, but also of being connected, as I felt such a bond with these parents who had also suffered the loss of children. This somehow lessened my own loneliness and I realized that life was indeed a cycle and that we are all part of the whole. Life does keep renewing itself. Think of all the children who had been born since these had died.

Life is constantly renewing itself. The tender new leaves on the barren trees, the crocus, tulips and daffodils poking up through the earth represent new life and Springtime. My son died in the Spring, but it is still my favorite time of year and in the succeeding years I have learned that Life does indeed renew itself each Spring regardless of how dead and lifeless I may be feeling.



We need not walk alone.

“When I come to the end of my journey and I travel my last weary mile, just forget, if you can, that I ever frowned, and remember only the smile.”
—Author unknown

A Father’s Day Like No Other

In June, 2000 it was my third Fathers day without my son Christopher. He died in an industrial accident on September 28, 1997. This was such a lonely day for me as my only surviving child had been out of the country for over a year. I had no one to celebrate being a father with. It started as a very dark and dismal day indeed.

After trying to avoid the trip to the cemetery for most of the day, there was nothing left to keep me away. So my wife Robyn and I went to the cemetery to visit Chris' grave. While deep in emotion and feeling like I had nothing to look forward to, we were sitting by Chris' headstone remembering how much fun he was and how terribly sad it was not to have him to hold and tell him that I loved him. I was wishing so badly that he could be here to spend the day with me.

I had put my head down to let the tears run off my face. I felt a small breeze come up; it was an unusual breeze in that it came from the northeast, which in June is not a common occurrence. I looked up and noticed this balloon with a lead weight dragging behind it, dancing ever so slowly towards me. We watched it dance across the grass and then the balloon bounced directly into my chest. The balloon had a message that I know was from my son Chris. It said “Worlds Greatest Dad”. I was so surprised and happy to have received this "Father's Day Gift". I thanked him for the wonderful gift and for cheering me up. There was no one else around or near us; we were not sure where the balloon had come from. I did not notice it at the time but a woman and her 2-year-old son had come to visit her father’s grave, which was about 150 yards away from Chris. Robyn and I sat around for another fifteen minutes or so and then decided to leave.

When we left to go to our car Robyn noticed that the lady visiting her Father was frantic and screaming that her son had locked himself in the car. We went over to see if we could help. The son had locked the doors to the vehicle, the windows were rolled all the way up and the mom had left the keys inside. The outside temperature was very warm and the little boy was starting to sweat. The police had been called to come and open the door but they were not sure that they could get there very soon. I was just about to break out the back window when Robyn said let’s try to get him to open the door. She took the balloon and tried to coax the little boy to open the door. She told him through the glass that she would give him the balloon if he would just push the button. She kept pointing to the button that would release the door lock. Suddenly the lock popped open, we didn’t notice it at the second the lock popped up, but later we realized that the boy’s hand was no-where near the lock when it opened. We got the boy out and Robyn gave the little boy my Fathers day gift from Chris. The boy’s mother looked at the balloon and asked where we had gotten that balloon because she had left a balloon just like it on her dads grave the day before. We looked for his balloon and it was gone. It turned out to be the same balloon that had bounced across the grass and bumped into my chest earlier. The balloon was now in the hands of his grandson.

The events of that day have been with me ever since. First of all, I know that my son sent that balloon to me to help me through my sad and lonely Father's Day, and that he also helped to save that boys life.

Mark Kingery ~ TCF, Salt Lake City, UT

One Foot in Yesterday

Yesterday my child was here, on this planet, alive. Yesterday life looked promising. Yesterday morning I woke up looking forward to the day. Today I awake peacefully and then I remember my child is dead, and I cannot breathe. I am jolted from head to toe. My child has been dead for a day. I wonder what my child was thinking in the last moments. I remember all the wonderful times. I remember the joy. I think of my child’s life and how his life changed me forever. I remember the last time I saw my child. I remember the last goodbye. I sob and breathe.

I am lost for days. Final arrangements are made. The platitudes float past me.....these words have no meaning. A memorial service for my child. People with sad faces. Hugs, words, tears, head shaking. I can see it in their eyes.....they are thankful it isn’t their child. They are uncomfortable. Time heals, they say. There’s a plan, there’s a reason. I cannot respond. They understand. No, they don’t. My child is dead. This is not my parent, my husband, my sibling. This is my child. My child was supposed to outlive me. I thank them for their good intentions. I have no interest in their words. A few friends say nothing. This is the better choice, the wiser action. Be there, be there for me. Understand my unspoken words. See my broken heart. Understand. Listen to my story, a story of my child. Remember his life, remember his death.

Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ In memory of my son, Todd Mennen ~ TCF, Katy, TX
From “Goodbye, My Child,” copyright 2005
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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



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