



**Monthly Group Meeting**

Tuesday, October 20, 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

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 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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**Tabloids**

The line in the grocery store was long that day, leaving plenty of time to scan the magazines positioned near the checkout counter to catch the attention of restless, impatient customers. "Flatten Your Tummy," "Lose 40 Pounds in 30 Minutes with Our Amazing New Diet," "Eat Prune Pits for a Healthy Sex Life," and on and on.

I thought about parents in grief. And I know the response most of us have in the early weeks, months and years of grief: What does it matter? Why should I be concerned about health? Life takes on a different meaning after a child dies. We feel like we will never again care if our tummies are flat and our muscles are strong.

If there had been an article on the rack that day about getting up when I'm not sure if I can walk, drinking water when I cannot even swallow, breathing in and out without sighing, waking up or going to sleep without flashbacks, staying silent when my heart wants to scream—I would have bought it.

*Alice Monroe ~ TCF, Colorado*

**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*

**Circle**

How do you bear it all?  
The cry came from a mother  
Whose son had died only weeks before.  
We were in a circle, looking at her,  
Looking around, looking away,  
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.  
How do we bear it?  
I don't know, but the circle helps.

*Eva Lager ~ TCF, Western Australia*

**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 heart would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears." —*unknown*

## 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.”

## Suicide Note

The following letter was written by David John Bernreuter before he died by suicide on May 12, 1987. David, an astute 22-year-old, was unusually well-informed about his illness. By his own description of his feelings, myths and assumptions about suicide are shattered, and we are allowed an insight into his motivation to end his life. In granting permission for its use, it is the hope of David’s family that the loved ones of other victims may find comfort in David’s words.

Dear Mom, Dad, and Stephany:

First, some facts:

- 1. I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.**
- 2. I KNOW YOU LOVE ME VERY MUCH.** If love alone would have made me better, I would be the most well adjusted man on earth. Please don’t feel that you neglected to tell or show me how much you loved me.
- 3. YOU WERE NOT TO BLAME FOR MY CONDITION.** I believe my mental illness was the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. A certain percentage of people, from all types of family situations have a major mental illness. It was just the luck of the biological draw that I happened to be one of them. Whether it was Major Depressive Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, Manic Depressive Disorder, or Schizophrenia, my mental illness made my “life” unlivable. But you are not to blame for that. So please don’t let yourselves feel guilty.
- 4. I KNOW THAT YOU WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS.** It won’t be easy, but you will have a lot of support from a lot of friends and relatives. Don’t be like me, the ultimate schizoid loner. Count on the support of your friends and relatives. If you only knew what goes on inside my head. I know you will say that I “didn’t try long enough or hard enough.” I have been emotionally disturbed since late childhood. I now have a major mental illness. I tried as long and as hard as I could. I’ve had all sorts of suggestions, like: “Repeat positive phrases over and over again. Don’t eat foods with yeast. Take Haldol. Don’t take Haldol. Accept Jesus as my ‘personal Savior.’ Quit smoking. Get a girlfriend.” And the list goes on and on...I know that the above suggestions were made with the best intentions, but they lack an understanding of what mental illness is all about. That’s why I found something in common with other people who are mentally ill. When they told me how being mentally ill affects their life, I understood, because my illness affected me in the same way. If I were to tell Uncle Ray that I had bought a gun, that I felt suicidal, he would have no alternative but to call the hospital and the police. And before you know it, I’d be back in the hospital. I’d rather be dead. It’s not like I killed myself because I didn’t get an A on an exam or because I broke up with my girlfriend. Those are the kinds of depression that have a reason to happen. My depression comes without any help from the outside. Nothing bad has happened to make me depressed except my depression. It’s not like I did this “on a lark.” I’ve had over a year to think it over. But I can hardly expect you to understand about something I myself don’t understand. I don’t know why I am the way I am. ‘The man who didn’t see it through.’ That is what this is. If given a chance to choose between an eternity in heaven or another go-round as a human of earth, I’m certain I would choose the latter. And now for the business part of this suicide note: Cremate and scatter me (I don’t care where).

All my money goes to you. Everything else, too. Do with it what you will, but may I suggest sending a portion of my worldly goods to a mental health research foundation of your choice.

(As David requested, the family sent a donation to a mental health organization in hopes that someday a cure will be found.)

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*We need not walk alone.*

"Hope is the feeling that the feeling you have isn't permanent." —Jean Kerr



### Love Gifts

Joyce Neely in memory of Marshall Charles Donahue  
Bobby & Virginia Knott in memory of  
Adam Knott & Bobby Knott Jr.  
Dee & Linda Carroll in memory of Chuck Carroll  
Clayton & Pat Turner in memory of Mark Turner  
David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell

Hurricane relief donations will go to assist the 19 families  
that First Baptist Church of Gresham have adopted:

Jack & Julie LePelley in memory of Trey  
Steve Baker in memory of Scottie  
Dolly Mobley in memory of Shannon Scheffler  
Danny, Pat & Stephen Settle in memory of Stephanie



### Announcements

Hospice of East Texas will be offering **WINGS CHILDREN'S GRIEF WORKSHOP** on Saturday, November 12, from 10:00 a.m.-1:30 pm; A **WINGS CHILDREN'S GRIEF WORKSHOP** will also be held Tuesday evenings from 6:30-7:30 p.m., October 4-November 8. Please call (903) 266-3447 or (800) 777-9860 for more information.

**We are collecting non-perishables to donate to the hurricane victims.** Please bring items to the meeting or contact us at (903) 258-2547 or (903) 780-7104 if you would like to help.

**The Compassionate Friends of Tyler has a new meeting location!** We will be meeting at 707 W. Houston St., see map below. The new TCF phone number is (903) 258-2547.

**Other dates to remember: October 8:** Green Acres Craft Fair-Volunteers are needed to work the fair and any craft items donated are appreciated; **November:** Lacks Furniture Christmas Tree and Canned Food Drive; **December 11:** World Wide Candle Lighting

### A Picture Out of Nowhere

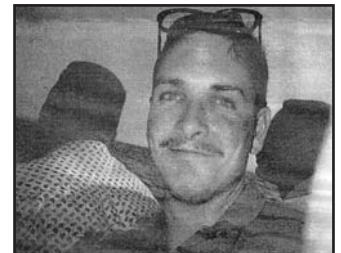
*Joyce Neely ~ TCF, Tyler, TX*

I came upon one day—  
The smile in your eyes showed  
the happiness you conveyed.

The two that stood behind you,  
Were they Angels in disguise?  
Knowing what would happen,  
So they put this pose aside.

It looks like you're in heaven,  
It must have seemed that way—  
That day, because the story in your  
Eyes, showed all you had to say!

I miss you so much Baby, but I know  
All is well—because only GOD can put  
A smile in your eyes for "Show & Tell."



### 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 Live Butterfly Release in May 2006.

Progress on the quilt will be displayed at the Candle Lighting on December 11th 2005.

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.

### 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.

"Feelings are like walking a seashore. The waves go back and forth. As the waves near high tide, they come in just a little bit farther and go out just a little bit less. From wave to wave you notice little difference. But if you step back and view the whole seashore, you can see some change. Your feelings may not seem to change by the hour or by the day. But step back and look. You may see you've made real progress."

—Mark Scrivani





*We need not walk alone.*

"Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to proceed in its presence." —Unknown

### October Birthdays



**Marshall Charles Donahue**  
10-18-65 ~ 5-18-00  
Son of Joyce Neely



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



**Jeremy Lawler**  
10/25/73 ~ 4/19/97  
Son of Sue Lawler



**Allison Carson**  
10/29/92 ~ 7/5/93  
Granddaughter of Phil & Ann Brown

### October Anniversaries



**James Brady Langston**  
10-13-96 ~ 2-15-01  
Son of Jamie Langston Dacus



**Richard Heerd**  
10-31-76 ~ 2-22-81  
Grandson of Lawrence Batte



**Stacey Smith**  
9-8-72 ~ 10-4-88  
Daughter of Sam Smith



**John Patrick Carnahan**  
4-17-65 ~ 10-13-03  
Son of Rod & Shirley Carnahan



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



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



**Joey Moore**  
10-30-79 ~ 10-4-98  
Son of Sarah Dolan



**Kathy Robertson**  
4-23-57 ~ 10-23-01  
Daughter of Carolyn Love



**Neil Defenbaugh**  
10-20-81 ~ 3-27-04  
Son of James & Dina Defenbaugh



**Joey Moore**  
10-30-79 ~ 10-4-98  
Son of Sarah Dolan



**Wade Goetze**  
11-29-76 ~ 10-28-01  
Son of Charlotte Nelson



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



**Cindy Dingler**  
10-18-57 ~ 9-6-99  
Daughter of Lynda Hanna  
Sister of Kay Browne



**Erica Smith**  
12-21-88 ~ 10-25-03  
Daughter of  
Todd & Sabrina Thoene



**Mikel Conway**  
11-17-57 ~ 10-11-01  
Son of Viola Conway  
Brother of Margie Newman

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



*We need not walk alone.*

"Feel the fear—and do it anyway." —Susan Jeffers

## Embracing the Invisible Kinship of Compassionate Friends

Every morning following the death of my son I awoke and thought, "my child is dead." The enormity of that realization each morning was crushing, the momentary shock was like a knife in my heart. I would drag myself out of bed and shed silent tears. My life was forever changed: my only child's life had ended. The unfairness would rock me into hyper-consciousness as I began my day. Living was a major effort.

Initially I could only cling to my sanity. After the shock passed, the depression and anger had me in a vise grip. My moods would swing every morning, afternoon and night. I would retreat into myself, irrationally lash out at others and then retreat back into myself. My mind would wander, I made silly mistakes in my work, I couldn't recall names of people who had been in my life for years and my word retrieval was at the bottom.

After two and half months of this grim routine, I attended my first Compassionate Friends' meeting. A friend drove me and guided me along into the meeting. I was in a haze. The only contribution I could make was to tearfully say my son's name. But I continued to attend.

As the newly bereaved, I was given the gift of wisdom from those who had been on this journey much longer than I had been. After several meetings I began contributing little bits. I still wept each time I talked, but I was talking. This was a major breakthrough for me.

Despite the negativity that enveloped me as I let go of my life before the death of my son, I continued to attend Compassionate Friends' meetings. I missed my son's ability to soften the vitriolic attitude of others who were in his life. Now I was on the firing line. I began sharing my experiences, the horrors of being sued for the wrongful death of my own child and the ache I felt for a once normal relationship with my son's children. Life was forever altered—for my grandchildren and for me.

The "wise ones" guided me along this path of grief. I learned to live in the moment. I learned to place no expectations on others. I learned that once burned is twice warned in human relationships. I learned that I could survive if I chose to do so. I also learned that to extend my compassion to others was to participate in my healing.

Eventually I wrote an article for our Compassionate Friends newsletter and gave it to the editor. Then I wrote another, and another, and another. Then I began printing the newsletter. Each step, each little contribution brought me closer to sanity. I was participating in the effort to help others in their journey of grief, and in doing this I was helping myself on the journey. I was working with those who had made this journey and survived. Perhaps I, too, would survive. Then I was asked to be the editor of the newsletter. At first I was fearful of this responsibility, but then I realized that I could, in some small way, help others whose children had died. And in offering that help, I could further my personal healing.

It's been 2 years, 8 months and 10 days since my son, Todd, was killed in a car accident. My husband, who was driving, has worked very hard to retain his sanity. I have learned to help him in that struggle. I have learned to accept that my relationship with my granddaughters was forever relegated to pure insignificance after my son died. I have learned that money is the alpha and the omega for some people and the pain they inflict to get money is justified in their minds. I have learned to accept life as it comes. I am the director of my life and no others.

How am I traversing that road from pure shock to accepting new normalcy? How do I keep my child with me and let go of the horrifying, life altering changes associated with his death? How do I deal with the stupefying actions of others that followed my son's death? The answer is as simple and as complex as the grief and compassion that lives within each parent whose child has died.

Through the efforts of the "wise ones," I found comfort and hope. The comfort offered by those who have lost a child is unlike any other we will experience. Their loss is the same as ours: the unspeakable, the worst nightmare, the darkest fear of every parent has now transformed into their reality. Their compassion is real. Their suggestions are gentle. Their wisdom comes over time and is the culmination of experiences which bring the realization that each of us progresses at a different rate, grieves in a different way and deals with life from a different perspective.

Those who have been here and choose to return, to relive the pain of their child's death in order to help others are the nucleus of our organization. And so, as each day goes by, I learn from others that I must learn for myself. My truth is unique. Each truth is unique. Each parent is unique. Each child is uniquely remembered by bereaved parents and every member of our Compassionate Friends' group.

I realized this week that my first thought of the day doesn't overwhelm me like it once did. My child lives in my heart. I have learned to live that reality. It is my hope to help other parents find this tiny vestige of peace.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX ~ In memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

**Please detach and return completed donation form to:  
The Compassionate Friends of Tyler • P.O. Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711**

We rely entirely on voluntary donations to support our group. With your help we can continue to provide our valuable services to everyone affected by the loss of a child.

Yes, I would like to make a donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ . (Please make check payable to TCF)

My donation is made in honor and in memory of \_\_\_\_\_ .

Tyler TCF greatly appreciates your support. These 'love gifts' are used to provide our monthly newsletter, printed materials, website, special events, our library and more.



I don't think you ever stop giving. I really don't. I think it's an on-going process. And it's not just about being able to write a check. It's being able to touch somebody's life. —Oprah Winfrey





# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P.O. Box 9714  
Tyler, Texas 75711



*We need not walk alone.*



[www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org)