



# The Compassionate Friends

## Santa Clarita Valley Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July 2017

Volume XVIII No. 7



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS** is a self-help, nonprofit organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. The butterfly signifies a new life for our lost children and a different life for ourselves. It is a symbol of hope, rebirth, and regeneration and beauty.

#### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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#### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

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TheCompassionateFriendsofSantaClaritaCA

website: [www.compassionatefriends-scv.org](http://www.compassionatefriends-scv.org)

#### MEETINGS

We have one meeting a month. They are usually held on the 1st Thursday of each month.

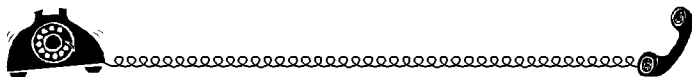
Our next meeting will be **July 6, 2017.**

TIME: **7:00 P.M.**

MEETING **Fellowship Christian Church**

PLACE: **26889 Bouquet Canyon Rd., Ste. C. Saugus, CA 91350**

(Take the side street next to the Goodwill store and make a left behind the store, the church is located in that building. Entry to the church is the double glass doors.)



#### FOR INFORMATION OR FOR A LOVING LISTENER, PLEASE CALL:

Diane Briones (Leader) 661-252-4654

Alice Renolds (Co-Leader) 661-252-4374

Carol Costin (Treasurer) 661-670-0395

Linda Stout (Remembrance Secretary) 661-202-8638

## The Locket



I opened it;  
The locket was empty.

I don't know why; for I know I filled it.

I filled with my pain, my sorrow, my anger.

But, it still remained hollow and empty...just like me.

When it's contents were sad and hurtful,

It was those feelings that reduced me to a shell of bitterness.

That empty heart was a living hell.

So I stopped.

I filled it again.

I filled it with love, understanding, and acceptance,  
...with that came peace.

It began to beat again,

It pulsed with the rhythm of life.

May you also discover that treasured locket  
and share it with many.

For an open heart is **NEVER** empty.

~Unknown

*The journey from grief to hope does  
not happen swiftly.  
But it happens if you will let your  
heart ride along.*

~Sascha Wagner





## Rekindling The Spark

Don't let the chain of love end with you. Clay Walker.

Carl believed in the Big Bang Theory...the bigger the bang, the better the 4th of July celebration. He would orchestrate the whole event...from how to get the biggest bang for the buck, to how to arrange them on the street for the most fantastic show on the block. He had this intuitive knowledge of how to run the whole event. Even his sister Carrie would agree that Carl knew what to buy to make the day special...although she always added her special order to the event! So, as the day approached, the family would hit all the fireworks stands in Visalia. You name them - we bought them! When it came to putting the sparks in a 4th of July celebration, Carl was in his element. For the finale, Carl would grab our ladder and have fireworks on each wrung for one spectacular wrap up. At the end, when all the fireworks were lit and the cleanup was done, the family carried this glow inside our hearts. Oh, how I wish those good times would return.

When Carl died, my spark for life was gone also. He gave sparkle to my life. He put fireworks in the fun activities we did as father and son. After his passing, I had no desire to reinvest in life. It was so easy, so painless, at least I thought, to plop myself down in front of the television and vegetate. Zone out!! Way out where pain couldn't reach me. I could numb myself and not think. But like all solutions of this kind, the hurt would not be denied in such a simple fashion. The hurt was not properly dealt with, only pushed down. When it came back, it always came back with a vengeance.

My wounded spirit needed something to make it come back to life again. Or, if not quite that yet, at least to feel the stirring of life in me. As my wife, daughter, and I shared the early deep struggles of living without Carl, ideas began to form. Our conversations took us to a very unforgettable aspect of Carl's life, that being how he made an indelible impact on our lives. Carl gave us new dimensions in love as he shared his triumphs and trials after his brain injury. He fleshed out the meaning of charity when he so often gave his own belongings to others, yet he was so needy. His examples sparked some ideas, which will be shared later.

In our TCF meetings we say, grief won't be denied. Well, grief also needs a place to go. It needs to be dealt with appropriately. Building on Carl's legacy allows me to deal with my wounded spirit constructively. Part of the healing of my wounds has come in finding meaning in his short life and tragic, unexpected death. If I can find a way to extract the meaning of his life and share it properly, then I can deal more effectively with my wounded spirit. Maybe start kindling a tiny spark. Getting back into the rigors and routines of life has been slow. Achingly slow at times. I am now seeing my recovery from Carl's passing as a lifelong recovery. Someone once said, "The journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step." Yep, that's my journey-one step at a time. I wish I could be all better again and back to my jolly old self. It is not to be off course. A new me is here. Little acts of kindness have created tiny sparks of life. After Carl's initial

accident, I learned to take "someday" out of the family vocabulary. Special family trips, vacations, and celebrations were planned and done. Carl's last spoken words are etched in my memory forever. They are simple words. "I love you too, Dad." So conversations with my forever friend Debby and my lovely daughter, Carrie, end with those words.

I would like to now share some ideas for kindling a spark in life. Reinvest in life on your timetable. In the first year after a son or daughter's passing, much time is needed for dealing with the loss and the overwhelming feelings that come with it. I said the first year. It could be longer than that. At least it was for me. I used to marvel at other who, when their children passed away, accomplished great deeds like starting foundations for missing and murdered children, or MADD groups. My timetable was different. I started with little projects.

Learn to listen to that still small voice. Call it the gut feeling. Grieving family members move on at different times. On the third anniversary of Carl's death, I heard that still, small voice whisper, "Now." I vowed to God, and to Carl, that I would start a TCF chapter in Visalia. That still, small voice let me know I was ready to take on the task of forming a TCF chapter.

In TCF circles, the term stuck is used. It refers to grieving parents who remain stuck at a certain point in grief recovery. They are no longer growing through the grief recovery process, but have stagnated.

Here are suggestions to get unstuck and feel a bit of spark for life again. Find a simple project that is significant of your child. Plant a tree. Give a donation to a charity or church. Work in a soup kitchen or rescue mission.

Find a way to tell your son or daughter's story. This is so important. This is a very cathartic experience. My healing occurs for me when I write my columns. Debby echoes this sentiment as editor of our newsletters. Don't leave out the siblings of your child. They enjoy writing memories of their brother/sister. Write that story and submit it. It could even be a poem or a song. Recently, an older member of our chapter wrote about his son, who died at 57. This father worked a fulltime job and then came home to the fulltime job of caring for his disabled son. That story touched several readers. They said, "Wow! That's our story. That's how we felt. Tell the writer he has helped us so much!"

Dedicate a newsletter to your child. Our newsletter reaches a wide audience of readers across the country. The feedback is wonderful. People read of our beloved daughters and sons and they are helped in their own recovery. Each time hurting people reach out, they get helped within. Finding that spark in life will not be easy, trust me. It will even be necessary to re-ignite that spark. That's pretty normal. Each time the spark of life gets re-ignited, recovery is a little easier. Be good to yourselves.

~Aaron.

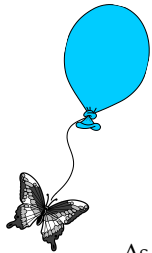
*Reprinted from TCF Atlanta  
July/August 2002 Newsletter*

# Chapter News

## Meeting Topics & Info

July 6 - "What's In A Name"

August 3- "Meaningful Memories"



## Butterfly Messages to Our Children

As balloons fill the northern sky, floating up and away on the wind and love, I am astonished by the sense of peace which sweeps over me. I have sent my child a message written on a butterfly shaped note attached to a purple balloon. In my mind's eye, I know that my child will read that message and understand that his mother's love for him is eternal and unconditional. The void left in his absence is often overwhelming, and the pain frequently escalates from a quiet sadness to a screaming ache which shatters me. My child knows the pain I have felt and will always feel without him in my life. I express it every year on a little butterfly note. He knows he is loved.

This butterfly message is an important ceremonial part of my life now. Instead of an email or letter, I send my child a note once a year. This ceremony is moving, the readings are reflective and touching. I stand with other parents and notice that they, too, are watching the balloons until they disappear into the heavens. I am imagining my son plucking his balloon from the heavens and reading my message. Other parents are imagining this, too. Our communication to our child will be understood.

As parents who have lost children to death, we face new ceremonies and new traditions. As the years roll by, many of us will cling to those ceremonies and traditions. We are forced to replace the traditions of the past, before our child died, with new, fitting tributes that acknowledge our child's life and the meaning of that life to us. The Compassionate Friends provides us this opportunity to share our feelings and our need to honor our child in the company of others who understand us and encourage us to speak openly about our child and our sorrow. This tribute to our child has deep meaning and touches our souls with its simplicity and grace.

Our ceremony is brief by most standards, but meaningful beyond words. No speaker could reach us as this ceremony does. For a small window in time, we are reaching out to our children, honoring them, remembering them, remembering them openly and communicating with them. Tears are shed. Hugs are shared. Memories form a

kaleidoscope in each parent's mind as we watch our balloon join with the others on its journey to our children.

This tribute and message to our children is one of two ceremonial gatherings that we, as Compassionate Friends, share each year. Remember, always we remember our children. Others may wish to forget, put the unpleasantness behind them, but we, the parents of children whose lives were too short, will never forget. We have established our traditions and we look to each other for hope and support as we walk this lonely road.

And so, as our balloons completely disappear into the heavens, we are immersed in peace and serenity.

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

## Family Picnic/Balloon Release

On May 21 we had our 12th annual Family Picnic/Balloon Release at the Bouquet Canyon Park. Our gathering was even greater than last year! It is so amazing to see the love and friendship that comes together to honor our children, grandchildren and siblings!



The weather this year was rather hot for a May Sunday afternoon, but it didn't stop us from enjoying our pot luck of pizza, fried chicken and all of the delicious side dishes bought by all the attendees.

When lunch was done, we formed a circle to start our brief program in an open area of the park. The poems and songs tugged at our hearts and brought some tears but we knew how important it was to be there. As the balloons were released we listened to one final song as they faded beyond our sight into the beautiful blue heavens.

We finished the day with a delicious slice of cake and a raffle drawing. It was truly a day of honoring and remembering and tears. But we were with Compassionate Friends and the tears eventually turned to smiles with the help of hugs!

Thank you to all those who brought extra tables, chairs, and easy ups. They were greatly needed and appreciated!! We couldn't have done it without you!

*~Alice Reynolds  
Editor & Co-Leader*

## Summertime and the Living is Easy...



The lazy, hazy days of summer...

What does summertime bring to your mind? I think of the beach with the waves softly washing ashore. Walking along with the sand between my toes. Finding “treasure” along the shoreline. The sound of the ocean is calming. The sun is warm on my face.

Life seems good.

And then I realize that being at the beach is forever changed for me. The memories of times past at the beach with my family come flooding back. Lots of good memories.

I stare at the ocean and think...the ocean is like my grief. Sometimes it seems wild and black with rage and almost impossible to manage. Riptides, currents and storm surges.

Sometimes it's like rough waves hitting the shore, continually pounding. And sometimes the waves are smaller and are enjoyable to play in. Then sometimes it is unusually calm and I can wade in and let the cool water surround me.

So now I go to the beach to remember. And let the sun warm my heart. Let the sound of the waves calm my soul. And get sand between my toes.

*~Carol Tomaszewski, Annapolis Chapter, BP/USA  
~reprinted from July 2011 DC/Northern Virginia  
Chapters Newsletter  
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

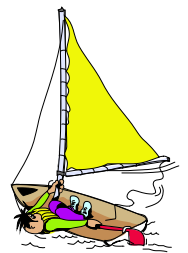
*The best way to honor the dead is to love  
the living.  
For if our lives stop when their life stops,  
death has killed twice.*

*~Reverend William A. Ritter*

*When one door closes,  
another one opens,  
but we so often  
look so long and so regretfully  
upon the closed door,  
that we do not see the ones  
which open for us.*

**~Alexander Graham Bell**

**“You Can’t Direct the  
Wind,  
but You Can Adjust the  
Sails”**



I saw the above quote on a poster in our church, and it occurred to me that “grief work” is just that—adjusting the sails. When a child dies, our lives are changed forever. The wind changes direction.

When the direction of our life is so tragically changed, we have two choices. We can deal with our grief and adjust our sails, or we can deny our grief and drift helplessly and hopelessly out to sea.

In the beginning stages of grief, we merely “reef our sail” and go with the tide. That is not a bad idea. At that time we are in a state of shock and not capable of sound decisions. We need quite a bit of time to ride out the storm. But when the initial storm of intense pain begins to subside, we need to adjust our sails for our own survival.

You, and, only you, can make the decisions regarding the rest of your life. You may find fulfillment in reaching out to help others or becoming more active in your church or temple. Maybe you'll want to take as big a step as getting a job or returning to school. Perhaps you will make only subtle changes in your priorities. But if you have made the decision to have a direction instead of drifting, get started now! You may have several false starts before you are really on course again. That's O.K. Don't give up! The healing is in the trying. If you don't give up eventually you'll once again have “smooth sailing”.

*Marge Frankenberg TCF– Arlington Heights, IL*



# Love Gifts

Were Received From:

*Carol Lock*

In Loving Memory of her Son:

**Darren Bullock**  
**6/15 - 11/19**



*Thomas & Donna Rogers*

In Loving Memory of their  
Granddaughter:

**Whitney Moore**  
**7/1 - 12/12**



*Love Gifts*



A Love Gift is a wonderful way to remember your child, grandchild, or sibling's birthday or angel dates or just to say I love you. What better way than to have their photo included in our newsletter along with a special memory, thought or message, article or poem from you.

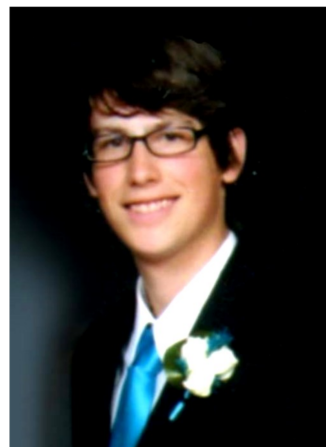
If anyone would like to make a donation in memory of their child, grandchild, or sibling you may give it to Alice or Diane at our meeting or mail it to Alice at 27949 Park Meadow Dr., Canyon Country, 91387. You can also email the info to [TCF.SCV@gmail.com](mailto:TCF.SCV@gmail.com) Love gifts should be received by the 10th of the month to be placed in the following month's newsletter. What a special way to share and remember your loved one!

Our chapter exists solely on voluntary, tax deductible donations. We thank you in advance for any donations you may be able to give or send. Your donations help to pay the expenses of our newsletter, purchase books & brochures, coffee & refreshments, new member's packets, our rental space and other miscellaneous supplies. They also fund our annual Balloon Release and Candle Lighting programs. We sincerely appreciate your support!

*Elaine Bottoms*

In Loving Memory of her son:

**Daniel McAlpine**  
**6/27 - 8/29**





# "Forever In Our Hearts"

Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings Remembered



## July 2017



Name

Birth

Angel

Relationship

Date

Date

*Olivia Lane Kares*

7/14

1/12

*Daughter of Mike & Laurie Kares  
Sister of Keenan, Niece of Julie Tate*

*Bradley Ryan McBurney*

4/22

7/18

*Son of Michael & Tammy Gauld  
Brother of Tara*

*Whitney Rebecca Moore*

7/1

12/12

*Daughter of Steve & Beth Moore  
Sister of Colin, Nick  
Granddaughter of Tom & Donna Rogers*

*Vanessa Durazo Ontiveros*

7/27

10/30

*Daughter of David & Laura Gamboa  
Sister of Ricky, Krista*

*Greg Hilton*

7/11

10/2

*Son of Kathy & Gary Hilton  
Brother of Matt*

*Bailey Lyn Haney*

3/28

7/11

*Granddaughter of Myra Kulick  
Daughter of Matthew & Julia, Sister of Jackson*

*Summer Day Pauldine*

7/12

8/24

*Daughter of Darlyn &  
Step-Daughter of Jim Boyle*

*Melissa Christine Lind*

4/23

7/6

*Daughter of Marcy Torrey  
Sister of Stephanie*

*Amanda Marie Perez*

7/19

7/17

*Daughter of Jim Perez & Carrie Hall*

If, in remembering our children, there are any errors or omissions, we are truly sorry! Please let us know of any corrections or additions as soon as possible so they may be incorporated into the database.