



# The Compassionate Friends

## Santa Clarita Valley Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies

June 2017

Volume XVIII No. 6



**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.

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Toll Free (877) 969-0010 \*Fax (630) 990-0246

Email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

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

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TCFUSA](http://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA)

Regional Coordinator: Olivia Garcia 818-212-3506

#### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

Mailing Address: 27949 Park Meadow Dr.,  
Santa Clarita, CA 91387

E-mail [TCF.SCV@gmail.com](mailto:TCF.SCV@gmail.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/)

[TheCompassionateFriendsofSantaClaritaCA](http://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.

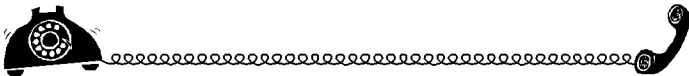
Our next meeting will be **June 1, 2017.**

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



## Hurting on Father's Day

As the day approaches  
I wonder how I will react -

Am I still a father?

I will sit quietly never  
allowing friends and family  
to see how I feel.

I miss my son  
but I can't allow myself to "break".

I must remain strong,  
And always be the "rock".

I wish I could just let  
someone know how much I  
miss my little angel.

How much I cry and how  
much I miss hearing,  
"Dad, I love you."

I am a father, but I  
wonder will I just pretend,

As usual, that

"it doesn't bother me?"

Remember me, for I hurt, too,

On this Special Day.

~TCF, Tampa, FL

*In your gathering of memories,  
invite your courage to  
remember everything.*

~Saschia Wagner





# The Roller Coaster

As a child I enjoyed the thrill of the roller coaster: gliding up the giant track, reaching the top with a momentary anticipation and the thrill of the quick dropping roll to the bottom of the track. The deep turns, first to the right and then to the left were designed to heighten the anticipation of the next climb and drop. In my childhood mind, these curves, climbs and drops were an isolated experience, temporary and fun. The ride would end!

A few months after my son's death, I dreamed of the roller coaster. But this time it wasn't fun. It was a nightmare of fear, anxiety and pain; I was so paralyzed that I couldn't breathe. That dream was the simple symbolism of life since my son died.

Now I ride a different sort of roller coaster. The climb to the top is a slow, difficult rise to normalcy. The rapid descent to the bottom is yet another terrible setback. I hang onto the bar of sanity on the curves, first one way, then another. I really want to stop this ride, but it is forever. This ride won't end.

Today I recalled that roller coaster dream, in all its vivid detail, and I compare it to the roller coaster that is my life now. Are the highs lower and the lows higher? Are the curves softening? Yes, I believe they are. It's been two years and two months since Todd died. I still weep. Tiny tears still unexpectedly. I still have anxiety. I still feel as if the earth has dropped from under me. I still miss talking with my son. I miss seeing him. I ache for that special hug, that only my child can give. Yes, I miss my only child very much. My heart has been shattered, my definition of myself has been altered and my loneliness is incomprehensible. But something has changed on the roller coaster of this life.

That something is, of course, me. I work through my grief in many, many ways. I have consciously shifted the paradigms of my life. I have learned to evaluate people from a different perspective. I have become so sensitive to the pain of other parents that I feel it as if it were my own. I have stopped anticipating how I will handle stressful events, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays. I have learned to live without being a part of my grandchildren's lives. I have learned to keep negative energy and negative people at a far distance. I have learned that a routine provides necessary structure. I have learned to live in the moment, to take joy in simple things, to talk openly about my child's life and to acknowledge the things I cannot change.

As time moves forward, I will continue to accept what is given and give what I can. I know the roller coaster will level out eventually. For as long as I live, I will keep my child with me, in my heart. That's all I can do as I ride this changing roller coaster that is now my life.

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

## Strength

In the early days of my grief,  
a tear would well up in my eyes,  
a lump would form in my eyes,  
but you would not know -  
I would hide it,  
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,  
I would look ahead and see that wall  
that I had attempted to go around  
as an ever-present reminder of a wall yet unscaled.  
Yet I did not attempt to scale it  
for the strong will survive -  
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,  
I learned to climb over that wall - step by step -  
remembering, crying grieving.  
And the tears flowed steadily as  
I painstakingly went over.  
The way was long, but I did make it,  
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,  
a tear will well up in my eyes,  
a lump will form in my throat,  
but I will let that tear fall—and you will see it.  
Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care,

For I am strong.

*~Terry Jago  
TCF Regina, Canada*

# Chapter News

## Meeting Topics & Info

June 1 - "Still Their Fathers"

July 6 - "What's In A Name"



## Welcome New Members

Attending your first meeting takes courage and it is always hard to say "welcome" because we are so very sorry for the reason which made you eligible for our membership in TCF. However, we are glad you found us! We cannot take away your pain but we can offer our friendship and support, Do try and to attend at least 3 meetings so you have a chance to meet others who are bereaved and discover that special acceptance that occurs with new friends who truly understand.

New to our chapter are:

Jeff & Liz Komen, parents of Elizabeth

Kathy Kusler, mother of Johnathan

Pahola Mascorro, mother of Eli



## Birthday Table

Your child, grandchild, or sibling's birthdays are given special recognition at our monthly meetings. During their birthday month, you are invited to bring photos and memorabilia to share and display on our Birthday Table. If you would like to bring a favorite snack or treat (even birthday cake or cupcakes) to celebrate, just let Carol or Alice know ahead of time!



## Missing Graduate

Parents' faces all around me,  
with a glow from within  
Pomp and Circumstance is playing,  
Now the program will begin.  
The graduates are lined up,  
They are coming down the aisle,  
Some have serious faces, Some have a little smile.  
I look down the aisle,  
Hoping for your face to come into sight.  
This is your class, It was to be your graduation night.  
All the graduates pass by, But none of them are you.  
A tug of my heart tells me,  
You are not here—your death is true.  
God called you home...I wanted you here in such a  
bad way  
Looking into your classmates faces,  
Do they recall you, missing this day?  
Memories, sweet memories, Now fill my heart and mind.  
The calls is Oh! So happy, this isn't the time to be blue  
Now I must go shake a hand, And get a hug or two.

Emma Valanteen,  
TCF, Valley Forge



## 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 should 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 the 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, SugarLand/SW Houston Chapter  
~reprinted from TCF Atlanta, January/February 2000  
Newsletter

# Dear Bereaved Father



I am very sorry about the death of your child. When my son died, I remember thinking there are no words to describe the myriad of powerful feelings. I have also learned that there are no words I can share to take the pain away or give meaning to your sense of loss. The truth is, the future will be forever different and your grief...well...will be with you forever, though I believe eventually you'll learn to live with it. And you will go on living.

What advice to I have? First attend to your grief. Someone wrote, "The pain that is unbearable cannot be healed." After my initial outpouring of grief, I felt that I needed to be strong for my wife. I buried by son in the ground and buried by myself in busyness. I discovered much later that my wife concluded I didn't really care about my son. I did not listen to the chaplain's advice. He said, "Who said you have to be strong to be supportive? Go have a good cry on each other's shoulder."

I discovered that grief is one of those "pay me now or pay me later" realities. Let the tears flow. Seek a healthy outlet for your anger. Share your feelings of guilt. Give your sense of helplessness and depression time and space.

Mothers and fathers grieve differently. Her grief is not better or worse, just different. Her coping style is different. Be patient with her and yourself. Grief is a roller coaster of emotions. You will not ride the ups and downs at the same time. You cannot take her grief away, but you can share it. You cannot prevent her from suffering, but you can prevent her from suffering for the wrong reasons. Be a loving listener. Share your feelings. Hold each other tenderly and often.

Men often have trouble reaching out for support. Certainly many have trouble offering support to men. I got so tired of hearing, "How's your wife doing?" I rarely hear, "How are you doing?" I cannot stress how important I believe it is for you to find and use one or more support persons. No one can do your grieving for you; no one grieves well alone! I urge both of you to join a bereaved parent support group. Consider reading - together - a book about grief.

Your child has died. Your dreams and memories will never die. Death demands that you let go, though that is no easy process. Letting go is not

forgetting. Letting go is ultimately forgiving this tragedy, experiencing acceptance along with sadness and having the courage to risk living and loving again. I wish you a healthy journey through your grief - from another bereaved father.

*~Chaplain James Cunningham*

*TCF Victoria, Inc.*

*Lovingly lifted from BP/USA Newsletter, A Journey Together  
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

## MY DAD IS A SURVIVOR



My dad is a survivor too...  
which is no surprise to me.  
He's always been like a lighthouse  
that helps you cross a stormy sea.  
But, I walk with my dad each day  
to lift him when he's down.  
I wipe the tears he hides from others.  
He cries when no one's around.  
I watch him sit up late at night  
with my picture in his hand.  
He cries as he tries to grieve alone,  
and wishes he could understand.  
My dad is like a tower of strength.  
He's the greatest of them all!  
But there are times when he needs to cry...  
Please be there when he falls.  
Hold his hand or pat his shoulder...  
and tell him it's okay.  
Be his strength when he's sad  
Help him mourn in his own way.  
Now, as I watch over my precious dad  
from the Heavens up above...  
I'm so proud that he's a survivor...  
and, I can still feel his love!

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(reprinted with permission)*

*Lovingly lifted from  
the Atlanta Online Newsletter*

*Dedicated to all dads  
who have lost a child & was forced to survive.*

# A Love Gift



Was Received From:



*Barbara Rawson*

In Loving Memory of her Son:

**Christopher Rodriguez**

**9/22 - 6/13**



Love you then...  
Love you now...  
Always in my heart...

*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 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!

## The Garden of Peace



The Garden of Peace is a quiet place  
Where the boy on the hill now sleeps;  
Our memories of him give comfort still,  
As we struggle in our moments of grief.

The Garden of Peace is a solemn place  
Where the boy on the hill can be found;  
His life is cherished by his family each day  
That we stand on this sacred ground.

The Garden of Peace is a beautiful place  
Where the boy on the hill now dwells;  
Trees tower heavenly toward clouds above;  
Flowers of color cast a magical spell.

The Garden of Peace is a place in time  
Where the boy on the hill now abides;  
The courage he revealed in life lives on,  
Like the sun and the ocean tides.

The Garden of Peace is a place of love  
Where the boy on the hill lives still;  
The hope and promise of his life so fresh,  
All his needs we still yearn to fulfill.

The Garden of Peace is a place of tears,  
Where the boy on the hill lies nearby;  
What God has given, He has taken away,  
And no one can tell us why.

The Garden of Peace is a place in the heart  
Where our beautiful boy shall be;  
We remember him and know somehow  
Eternal love is our destiny.

*To my son Erik on his birthday  
4/80 - 6/05*

*~Larry Leonard Fleischer  
TCF Santa Clarita, CA*

*Sadly Larry left this earth this past April and now is  
in peace with his son. He wrote this poem and  
numerous other beautiful ones that will be  
treasured always!*



# "Forever In Our Hearts"

Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings Remembered



## June 2017

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u> <u>Date</u>	<u>Angel</u> <u>Date</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
Daniel Richard Renolds	6/22	2/17	Son of Tom & Alice Renolds Brother of Scott
Erik Alan Fleischer	4/26	6/28	Son of Larry & Rita Fleischer Brother of Barbie, Holli, Heidi
Wallace James Potter	6/6	4/24	Son of Shirley Potter Brother of Christine, Monica, John, David
Brian Keith Berry	9/16	6/30	Son of Steve Berry Brother of Shannon
Darren Bullock	6/15	11/19	Son of Carol Lock Brother of David, Rick, & Rob
Christopher Rodriguez	9/22	6/13	Son of Barbara Rawson Nephew of Debbie DiCornado
Cyrena Darlene Becerra	6/11	9/5	Daughter of Mona & Marco Gonzalez
Daniel Roderick McAlpine	6/27	8/29	Son of Elaine Bottoms Brother of Ryan
Nicki Lynn Kent	6/15	8/31	Daughter of John & Beth Kent
Steven Douglas Sprague	8/4	6/18	Son of Doug & Marie Sprague Brother of Troy
Michael Thomas Kelly	11/17	6/10	Son of Kathy Kelly Brother of Joseph
Caitlin Beth Gulley	6/11	9/10	Daughter of Dale & Holly Gulley Sister of Derik
Maxwell Griffin Flancer	6/99	8/14	Son of Harriet Flancer

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.