



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter*

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

## Monthly Meeting:

**NOVEMBER 12, 2014**

Always the second Wednesday

**Time: 7:30 p.m.**

Registration of new members and library opens at 7:00 p.m.

**Topic: Thanks for the Memories**

**First Presbyterian Church  
502 Eldridge Road  
Sugar Land, Texas**

*Directions:* Eldridge Rd. (FM 1876) intersects Hwy. 90A two lights west of the Sugar Land exit of Hwy 59. The church is north of 90A, just past the RR tracks, the second building on the right. Enter the double doors at the back of the building.

### Chapter Co-Leaders

**Tricia & Donald Scherer**

[donaldraysdad@yahoo.com](mailto:donaldraysdad@yahoo.com)

**Marguerite Ward**

### Chapter Contact

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### Love Gifts should be sent to:

#### Treasurer

Douglas Ledkins  
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## THANKSGIVING

You may ask, "What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?" After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 1 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I'm truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up.

There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, the Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life.

I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

Edie Kaplan  
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
In Memory of my son, Evan

## Celebrating Our Children's Birthday



A Birthday Table is set up each month so that you can display a picture and/or any other small memento in honor of your child's birthday.

If your child is not listed on our birthday/angel anniversary lists and you wish them to be, please contact Marguerite Ward at [mjward@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net) or call her at 979-335-6070

## Button Making Machine

A button making machine has been given to our chapter in loving memory of Brandi Ward. It is available for anyone who wishes to have a picture button made of their child. If you would like to have a button made, please contact Marguerite Ward at 979-335-6070 or by email at [mjward@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net).

**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 are grateful for the faithfulness of parents, grandparents and friends who remember beloved children with love gifts. 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 offer resources, such as this newsletter, books, brochures and special programs to bereaved families in our area. 100% of the funds are used for this outreach. Donations, along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to our chapter's treasurer. You may also contribute by linking to the Kroger's Share Card (enrollment letter available). If you have any questions, please contact our chapter treasurer:**

**Douglas Ledkins, 431 Old Colony Dr.**

**Richmond, TX 77406 (281) 341-5985**  
**Doug Ledkins@whitetucker.com**

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## Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting or received their first newsletter 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 second Wednesday of the month).

Meetings are open to everyone and free of charge. The purpose of our support group is not to focus on the cause of the death or the age of the child. It is instead a place to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child. You are free to talk, cry or sit in silence, we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

## 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. It may be the second or third meeting before you 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.”

Lovingly Lifted from TCF –Tyler Texas Newsletter

## LOVE SHARES

In Memory of

Given by

Personal Information has  
been deleted from  
the internet version of  
this newsletter.

Consider giving a Love Share in your child's memory. Help us continue our mission to help grieving parents. All Love Shares are tax deductible.

## THE EMPTY CHAIR

I remember the first Thanksgiving after Tony was killed. I didn't know how we could possibly get through that dinner, with his empty chair.

The solution that occurred to me was to fill his chair with someone else — several someone's.

Grandpa came to spend the week; a newly widowed friend came to dinner, and so did her delightful young nephew and his bride, who had just moved to town. They brought the salad. And we were thankful for each other, for the love among us, and for memories.

If this will be your first Thanksgiving, do something different. The pattern for your life has been broken. Break it some more! Have dinner at a different place, or with different people. Go away for the weekend. Be kind to yourself. You do not have it all, but you have something.

~ *Ronnie Peterson, Northern NY*

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### Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

Angel Day	Child's Name	Parents/Family/Friend Name

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been deleted from  
the internet version of  
this newsletter.


The life of the dead is placed in the  
memory of the living.

~Marcus Tullius Cicero

*A snowflake is Winter's  
butterfly.*



### **SPONSOR A NEWSLETTER IN MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD.**

We are now offering members an opportunity to sponsor the publishing of a newsletter in memory of their child. By offering sponsorships, not only does it help defray the costs but it is also a wonderful way to honor your child. See prices below:

Full page spread—\$200  
Half page spread—\$100  
Quarter page spread—\$50  
Small Picture with Name/Dates - \$25

If you are interested in one of the sponsorships above, please contact Marguerite Ward at [mjward@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net) or call her at 979-335-6070.

### **Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics\***

**November 12, 2014—Thanks for the Memories**

**December 14, 2014—Worldwide Candlelighting**

*(We do not always stay on the topic offered for our meetings. We are here to discuss whatever you need to discuss to help on your grief journey.)*

### **Dark Day**

On a very dark day in winter;  
when your eyes have forgotten  
the color of apple trees....  
on a very dark day in winter,  
count the days-(sixty days?) -  
until spring.

On a very dark day in winter,  
when your mind can't remember  
the color of memories.....  
on a very dark day in winter,  
reach for the healing kindness  
of time.

Sascha Wagner

## CANDLES IN THE NIGHT

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery  
TCF Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter, TX



## JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth B. Estes  
TCF Augusta, GA  
In Memory of Tricia

## The Holidays Are Coming!

"The Holidays are coming! The Holidays are coming!" Most bereaved parents make that observation with the same sense of fear and dread that Chicken Little had when he announced, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" We view Christmas or Hanukkah differently than the rest of the world. In our minds they become great trials to be endured. In my opinion, this trial is tougher than birthdays or death anniversaries. This is the time when love abounds. The family (and extended family) all gather together, coming from near and far, to share in this love. The only trouble with this happy scene is that our child is missing. He or she has traveled too far from us to come for the holidays! We can't buy gifts for a photograph or hug and kiss a memory. The emptiness that this creates in us cannot be filled, no matter how many relatives gather by our hearth. To add to the pain, most well-meaning friends and relatives feel that the best way to handle the problem is to pretend that it doesn't exist. They never mention the one person that is on the minds and in the hearts of everyone. We found out early on that it is not possible to keep the "presence" of our child out of a family gathering. Trying to do so makes everyone uncomfortable and causes us as parents to feel disloyal.

The first Christmas after our son died, we did it "their" way. Never again! Now we make sure that he is very much a part of our holiday. For starters, we decided once again to hang all three stockings. We don't fill them, but just seeing them all hanging together is right for us. The tree was very important to Blake. Every year he took the responsibility of stringing the lights for us. Now it is important to us to see that Blake has a tree. We have a very special one, about 3 feet tall, that we weight heavily at the bottom. We decorate it with weather-

proof ornaments and place it at his grave. We leave the tree there until spring so it can make the gravesite when the snows are deep. We also have a lovely candle that we burn on special days. This is our way of including our missing son in the family circle. But most important, we talk about him. We don't do it obsessively, but we don't hesitate to recall memories of him as often as we recall those of other children in the family. Because we talk of him in an easy and natural manner, the rest of the family has taken our cue. They now bring up his name naturally. It is all so much more comfortable than the way we tried to handle it that first year.

Another couple in our chapter had a wonderful idea for the first holiday after their daughter died. Their greatest fear was that no one would mention her, so they compiled an album of her pictures and casually left it out on the coffee table. It wasn't long before people were looking through it, recalling favorite memories of her, and the ice was broken.

There must be so many other ways that you can make your child a part of your holiday—ways that seem right and comfortable for you. You may choose to keep your thoughts private rather than share them with others. But the most important thing to remember is that the choice is yours. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. If you follow the dictates of your heart and that gives you comfort, those around you will see that it is so and follow your lead.

Marge Frankenberg  
TCF Arlington Heights, IL  
In loving memory of my son, Blake



### ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at [mjward@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net).

*Those we love don't go away.  
They walk beside us every day.  
Unseen, unheard, but always near.  
Still loved, still missed and very dear.*

*Matt Frazier*

For those that think we dwell in our grief, should stop talking about our child or attending support group meetings, because it makes us sad.....**we are sad**....talking about our child, attending a support group or visiting this TCF page does not remind us our child is gone. We are aware of this each and every waking moment but these things actually help us in our grief. Let us talk, share our memories, our tears, our laughter. We do not wish to pretend our children never existed. It takes much courage to continue on, and this is how we help our broken heart.

-Karen Cantrell, TCF Frankfort, KY.

### Only December

Feelings heavy,  
tears and tears.  
Will the darkness last?  
Or is it –  
only December?

Hadn't past months  
brought peace and hope?  
Where is the strength  
of October –  
and November?

Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,  
cards from friends,  
happy times in seasons past.  
We remember.  
We remember.

Will January bring  
light at last?  
Will we be stronger then,  
for making it through  
this December?

When people ask  
how I'm doing I say,  
Well . . . you know . . .  
it's December.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry  
from *Stars in the Deepest Night- After the  
Death of a Child*

*Bereavement is a DARKNESS  
impossible to the imagination  
of the unbereaved.*

*Iris Murdoch*

"I don't think of him every day,  
I think of him every hour of  
every day."

Gregory Peck  
(in an interview many years after his  
son's death)

Grief is like a long valley, a long  
winding valley where any bend  
may reveal a totally new  
landscape.

-C S Lewis (from "A Grief Observed")



## **The Compassionate Friends**

Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter  
P. O. Box 231, East Bernard, TX. 77435

Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship  
for Bereaved Families



**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014**

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***The Compassionate Friends***  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all  
children who have died

***Worldwide  
Candle  
Lighting®***

*... that their light  
may always shine.*

**Sunday, December 14, 2014  
7 PM Around the Globe**



**The Sugar Land Chapter of the  
Compassionate Friends invites  
families and friends to their annual  
Worldwide Candle Lighting Service.**

**Date: Sunday, December 14, 2014**

**Time: 6:00 p.m. Registration**

**6:30 p.m. Program begins**

**7:00 p.m. Candle Lighting begins**

**Place: First Presbyterian  
Church Sanctuary  
502 Eldridge Road  
Sugar Land, Texas**

After the program we will gather in the  
large meeting room next door  
for refreshments and fellowship.  
Each family is asked to bring a  
snack to share with others.