



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER
2018

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

ANNUAL TCF CANDLE LIGHTING

Sunday, December 9, 2018

**Registration will be at 6:00 p.m.
Program starts at 6:30 p.m.**

**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.

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Dear Chapter Members,

It is with regret we must inform you that the Sugar Land/SW Houston chapter of the Compassionate Friends will become inactive after the first of the year. We have not been able to find someone to step up into leadership roles and our current leadership can no longer do it. Our steering committee met and decided to no longer offer monthly meetings. We will, however, still have our annual TCF Candle Lighting program as well as our annual Balloon Lift Off for at least the next year or so. We will also continue to provide a newsletter to our members but have changed it to be quarterly instead of every two months. We will now offer phone support to those who need it as well as information on monthly meetings provided by other local TCF chapters. We hope to continue to offer support to bereaved parents in some small way. If you are interested in taking on a more active role in our chapter, please contact either Tricia Scherer at 832-541-4959 or Marguerite Ward at 979-533-0099.

With Compassionate Friends You Need Not Walk Alone

Telephone a Friend..... If you need someone to talk to and can't find a TCF meeting to go to, please call one of our volunteers below. They are a little further down the road in their grief journey and would be glad to talk to you.

Child Loss - (Tricia)	832-541-4959
Child Loss - (Marguerite)	979-533-0099
Child Loss - (Sandy)	281- 242-5015
Support for Fathers - (Doug)	713-664-7444
Murdered Child/Sudden Death - (Michelle)	832-603-7112

TCF—Katy Chapter meets 2nd Tuesday of each month 7:00 pm
Website: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/chapter/tcf-katy-tx-chapter/>

TCF of Houston Inner Loop Chapter meets 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm (Newly bereaved meeting at 6:30)
Website: <http://www.orgsites.com/tx/tcfhoustoninnerloop/index.html>

****To locate a TCF Chapter located in your area with monthly meetings please go to the national TCF website at <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/chapters/chapter-locator/>**

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 and can be sent to our Chapter Treasurer:

**Douglas Ledkins, 431 Old Colony Dr.
Richmond, TX 77406 (713) 515-9906
Doug_Ledkins@whitetucker.com**

Meeting Dates**

December 9, 2018– Worldwide TCF Candle Lighting

May 8, 2019—Annual TCF Balloon Liftoff

**** Our chapter no longer has monthly meetings. Please go to the National TCF website to find chapter meetings in your area.**

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/chapters/chapter-locator/?location=houston>

National Headquarters

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Chapter Webmaster

Tricia Scherer

Sugar Land-SW Chapter Website:

www.sugarlandtcf.org

Regional Coordinator

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For the New Year

Where there is pain,
Let there be softening
Where there is bitterness,
Let there be acceptance
Where there is silence,
Let there be communication
Where there is loneliness,
Let there be friendships
Where there is despair,
Let there be hope.

Ruth Eiseman
TCF Louisville, KY

AND FOR THIS I GIVE THANKS

Posted on November 8th, 2018

I am acutely aware that autumn is here. As I write this, the air coming through my window is crisper and the leaves are taking on the golden and scarlet hues of the season. The shorts and tee shirts, which were the summer mainstay of the neighborhood children, are being replaced by sweats and flannels. Pumpkins are replacing lawn ornaments. The beauty of nature is at its most spectacular. It is unmistakably here, welcome or not... This will be my fifth autumn without my daughter Nina. I find that I am far enough along in my grief to find memories to smile about now, but still close enough to remember those first few years and the piercing stab of pain in my heart that went along with them. Halloween, with memories of the costume party she threw when she was 10 years old; the major production she made out of what she would wear as a trick-or-treater, and as she got older, her enjoyment in passing out candy to neighborhood goblins. Then came Thanksgiving, one of my favorites. I liked the idea of family and friends gathering together with no other purpose other than eating until you were stuffed and being thankful for each other and the blessings of the past year. No presents required, just the joy of family togetherness – and the knowledge that my children were here...all of them. On that first Thanksgiving after my beautiful daughter died, the empty chair and place at the table seemed to scream out at me that someone precious was missing. And the message of this holiday was thankfulness? What would I ever again find to be thankful for?

Some TCF parents remember being unable to eat even a bite because they were continually trying to choke back tears that first Thanksgiving. Just wanting to curl up in a ball, pull the covers over their heads, and wake up some time in January after the last remnants of the holidays were cleared away. In all honesty, I cannot tell you even one detail of that first one: where I spent it, who was present, where I was, if I cried all day. I remember nothing.

However, I do remember three months after Nina had died, though. On a visit to my neurologist I tearfully told him of my depression over her death. His response to me was “Why don’t you count your blessings rather than your sorrows? Think happy thoughts and maybe you won’t feel so sad.” I, of course, asked him if he had ever lost a child. He had not...obviously. Only someone uneducated in the school of grief would say something so impossible to accomplish!

Almost five Thanksgiving’s later, have I found reasons to be thankful? I asked myself this question and decided to put pen to paper. I was surprised to say the list was quite lengthy, but I will only share a few of them. I am thankful for:

My loving family, and the welcome joyful additions in the last few years.

My memory, because now the painful memories are, now more often, replaced with the beautiful memories of the past, and they were such beautiful memories.

My life, for whom else will keep Nina’s memory alive? Of course, my family, but they have lives of their own, as they should. I am the self-appointed keeper of my daughter’s memory.

Nina. The joy of loving her, the privilege of being her mother. Though I wish it had been much longer, I wouldn’t trade those 15 ½ years for anything.

Smiling a genuine smile, laughing a hardy laugh, and finding my sense of humor again. I believe that Nina hears me laugh and that she wants me to find joy in life again.

My sight, because I commented (for the first time in five autumns) on the magnificent colors of the autumn foliage and the grandness of Minnesota’s most sumptuous season. I didn’t think I’d ever notice again. But I did.

The Compassionate Friends, who showed me there is life after the death of a child; who allowed me to express my emotions, listened patiently, understood my pain, and welcomed me into their hearts. They helped salvage what remained of my sanity and I will be eternally grateful.

The opportunity to give back. To bring hope to the newly bereaved with the knowledge that it won’t always hurt this bad, and that you will make it with the love and support of family and your Compassionate Friends. Helping really is healing. And, that there will come a time that you too will find things to be thankful for again.

I have found a measure of peace and see some of the light at the end of the tunnel that we are all so desperately seeking. I know that I will always love and miss my Nina and will never forget her. That when the holidays return each year, there will still be the twinge of pain in my heart that she is not there with our family. Yet, I have learned, over time, that there is joy to be found again, and the grief I feel for the loss of Nina can and does coexist with that joy. You will each find it again in your own time; maybe not this Thanksgiving or next, but it will come. It really will...

Cathy Seehuetter
TCF ST. Paul, MN
In memory of my daughter, Nina
Written October 2000
Revised October 2018

"Memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose."

~From The Wonder Years

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

Chanukah

At this season of life, we remember the light you brought into our lives:

The light of your laughter
The light of your wit and intelligence
The light of your love

May the time not be distant when the memory of these lights will illumine our hearts and minds and eradicate the darkness therein.

Stephanie Hesse
TCF Rockland County, NY
TCF North Palm Beach County, FL

A Christmas Wish

I'll miss you at Christmas
When laughter's everywhere,
When church bells chime
In merry rhyme
And warmth is in the air.
I'll think of you at Christmas
Of when you were with me,
Of simple joys and silly toys
And days that used to be.
I'll miss you at Christmas
When children's faces glow,
And gaze in childish wonderment
At Santa and presents in a row.
I wish a Christmas miracle
Could bring you back this way,
And we could be together
For one more Christmas day.

Lily deLauder



WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 9th, 2018 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

The Compassionate Friends and allied organizations are joined by local bereavement groups, churches, funeral homes, hospitals, hospices, children's gardens, schools, cemeteries, and community centers. Services have ranged in size from just a few people to nearly a thousand.



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



The Compassionate Friends

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

Honoring 21 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2018



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 9, 2018
7 PM Around the Globe**



This year we will again be lighting candles in the large room in the same building as we have refreshments and fellowship.

Please bring a picture of your child to set beside your candle.

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

Date: Sunday, December 9, 2018

Time: 6:00 p.m. registration
6:30 p.m. program begins

Place: First Presbyterian
Large Meeting Room **
502 Eldridge Road
Sugar Land, Texas

After the program, we will have refreshments and fellowship. Each family is asked to bring a snack to share with others.

**Please note change in location from years past.