



# The Compassionate Friends

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

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2017

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

## Candle Lighting:

Sunday, December 10, 2017

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

Topic: TCF Candle Lighting  
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**

[dkrmom@hotmail.com](mailto:dkrmom@hotmail.com)

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

### Marguerite Ward

[mjward0123@gmail.com](mailto:mjward0123@gmail.com)

### Chapter Contact

Sandy Crawford

(281) 242-5015

### Chapter Email Address

[sugarlandtcf@gmail.com](mailto:sugarlandtcf@gmail.com)

### Newsletter Editor

Marguerite Ward

P O Box 231

East Bernard, TX. 77435

Phone: (979) 335-6070

E-mail: [mjward0123@gmail.com](mailto:mjward0123@gmail.com)

Love Gifts should be sent to:

### Treasurer

Douglas Ledkins

431 Old Colony Dr.

Richmond, TX 77406

Phone 713-515-9906

E-mail:

[Doug\\_Ledkins@whitetucker.com](mailto:Doug_Ledkins@whitetucker.com)

All contents © The Compassionate Friends

This newsletter may be reproduced and given to anyone who may find comfort from it.

## 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 the 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 oh 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 can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can feel us 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/Southwest Houston Chapter



## 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

### **National Headquarters**

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
Phone: toll free (877) 969-0010  
Fax: (630) 990-0246  
E-mail:  
Nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

### **National Website:**

www.compassionatefriends.org

### **Chapter Webmaster**

Tricia Scherer

### **Sugar Land-SW Chapter Website:**

www.sugarlandtcf.org

### **\*\*Regional Coordinator**

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
19702 San Gabriel Drive  
Houston, TX 77084 281-578-9118  
Email: [amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com](mailto:amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com)

## 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.

### Empty Stocking

Each Christmas we had stocking stuffers. Our son, Tyler, died at age 17 after a riding accident. I broke down that first Christmas when I put his up and realized I didn't need to put stocking stuffers in it. I started writing a letter to him, about a page long, and sticking it in there. I just tell him in the letter how much I love him. - Vicki Blount, Enid Oklahoma

## Thanksgiving

Priscilla J. Norton,  
TCF, Pawtucket, RI

### **I remember –**

the inability to chew or swallow that first Thanksgiving after Linda died; the choke-backed tears, the sick heart, the hollowness, the painful memories of Thanksgivings past and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

### **I remember –**

the busyness of working as a volunteer that second and third Thanksgiving after Linda died; the good feeling it gave me of “running away” from it all, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

### **I remember –**

the inability to prepare any of her favorite foods that fourth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the tears that fell at the smell of turkey cooking, the parade, football games, the emptiness, the incomplete family, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

### **I remember –**

awakening with a lightness and joy in my heart that fifth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the thankfulness for having my remaining family together, the beautiful memories of past Thanksgivings, the “wholeness” of me and the blessed relief peace brought to my pain.



## HOLIDAY HOPE

I have now survived over a decade of Thanksgivings and Christmases since my daughter Nina's death in 1995. It feels surreal that it has been that long since my dark-haired angel has not been present to share her infectious enthusiasm for the holidays. Admittedly, if not for my journaling, I have little recollection of the first two. Writing allows me to see how far I have come since the bleakness of my soul those first early holidays. In the midst of a "grief storm", when I feel that I have taken one step forward and two steps back, I only need to read what I have written to see that I have made much progress, something that in early grief I did not believe was possible. When in such a dark abyss, it is almost impossible to imagine that there is even a glimmer of hope and light.

The first Thanksgiving is a blur. Whether we went out for dinner or spent it with family or nuked a frozen dinner, I haven't a clue. As no one else seems to remember, I would surmise that it was the same for everyone else as well. The first Christmas without Nina was spent trying desperately to make sure that nothing was going to change. The trees would be decorated, cards would be sent, gifts bought—I believed that my daughter would not want us to be sad and that the holiday should and would play out as usual. It almost worked. But the effort of trying to achieve such an impossible task took its toll; coming home from my parents' home Christmas Day evening, the sight from the rearview mirror of the empty spot in the back seat next to my son where Nina should have been playfully sparring with her brother, was too much to bear. I spent weeks recovering from such an exhausting charade.

I learned a lesson that first Christmas because the second Christmas "after" I gave into the emptiness and pain that I felt. The artificial tree sat forlornly unadorned right where it was assembled in the middle of the living room; it seemed to symbolize the somber mood of that second holiday season. I vocalized to my family and friends that year about what I could and could not do, would and would not do, I used what I called the "five-minute rule", which meant however I felt five minutes before a holiday happening would be the deciding factor whether I attended or not. The respect for my feelings they showed me that year was the best gift they could ever have given me.

However, Christmas #3 seemed to mark a turning point. The visible evidence involved my Christmas Village. Though an inexpensive Department 59 wannabe, it was loved by my children, especially Nina. From the time she was very young, she imaginatively played with the ceramic people for hours at a time. Even as a teenager, she wanted to know when I would be putting up the Village, as it was her favorite part of our holiday décor.

The first two Christmases, I made a decision to never put up our Christmas Village again. The memory of Nina's interactions with the Village was too painful to comprehend. However, that third Christmas, as I was unpacking the few holiday items that I would display, I came upon the boxes holding the Village. I slowly opened the containers of precious memories and one by one removed and unwrapped each piece. Visions of Christmases past raced through my mind. This year, the images of Nina's wide-eyed childlike wonder and excitement each time the Village came out of its year-long resting place brought a genuine smile to my face.

I brought the Village upstairs and arranged it on the ledge of the bay window, where it always had been. I sat in the dark next to the lit village houses and watched the mechanical skaters on the make-believe pond twirl and glide on the mirrored "ice". Even through my tears, I felt the warm glow of beautiful one-of-a-kind memories resurface. I realized at that moment that a corner had been turned. Whereas the first two Christmases I was unable to setup the Christmas Village because of the memories, I was now setting it up for the same reason—the memories! But with a twist this year—what I had once perceived as a painful memory, with time had become a precious memory as I remembered the delight and joy the Village brought to Nina each Christmas of her life.

Each holiday season following the third one has been gentler. We have gradually brought back some of our old traditions intermingled with the new. Though we are sadly aware that someone so loved is missing from our family gatherings, the beauty of the season can now overshadow some of the sorrow. We will never forget Nina and she will forever be included in our holiday celebrations. I put up a special little tree to exclusively hold the ornaments I bought each of the 15 years of her life; mixed in with the angel and butterfly ornaments I have since bought symbolizing her "eternal life". We light a candle and set her picture beside it, and we speak freely of our memories of her. The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program our chapter has each year is an especially important time for us to step away from the hubbub of the season, to reflect, remember, and bring Nina's spirit with us into the holidays.

Though the holidays can never be as they were, we who are further along in our grief journey can offer the gift of hope with the knowledge that with time, patience, support and compassionate friendship, you will find new ways (when you are ready) to bring a measure of joy and light back into the holiday season again. Wishing you peace, hope, solace and understanding...

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter  
TCF St. Paul, MN  
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

## Eternal Flames

This is a night like no other  
In the days now all too the same  
When we stand with one another  
And share our Eternal Flames

For in this gentle expression  
Of the light from each candle's glow  
Shines hope amidst our depression  
And the truths we've all come to know

That death steals more than theirs only  
These unfinished lives we bemoan  
But though we are sad and lonely  
Trust that 'We need not walk alone'

The love and loss that we all feel  
Are joined, but each tries to 'win out'  
Minds struggling to know what's real  
And what this grief is all about

How do we make them 'alive' again?  
Who here has not wondered 'to die'?  
Where do we pose our question?  
When the only question is 'why'?

If love truly burns eternal  
Much like Mother Earth's molten core  
With each turn grief grows less infernal  
While love still grows all the more

That's not to say pain only subsides  
For the bereaved know better still  
But love which was before.....abides  
As their memory becomes thy will

So tell me 'dear friend' your story  
And I will regale you with mine  
We'll bask in that glow and glory  
So that their light may always shine

Patrick Thibault for TCF WWCL 2010  
TCF Redlands, CA



## It's Okay to Grieve

### It's Okay to Grieve.

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

### It's Okay to Cry.

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to level off and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

### It's Okay to Heal.

We do not need to prove we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel guilty, for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

### It's Okay to Laugh.

Laughter is not a sign of less grief. Laughter is not a sign of less love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Patricia Lufty Nevitt, TCF Austin, TX

"The Compassionate Friends meeting won't make the pain go away, but it is a place where you can honestly and truly believe when someone says, "I know how you feel." They mean it and their eyes prove it." —Janice Lopez

**Thanksgiving**

I remember – the inability to chew or swallow that first Thanksgiving after Linda died; the choke- backed tears, the sick heart, the hollowness, the painful memories of Thanksgivings past and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

I remember – the busyness of working as a volunteer that second and third Thanksgiving after Linda died; the good feeling it gave me of “running away” from it all, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

I remember – the inability to prepare any of her favorite foods that fourth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the tears that fell at the smell of turkey cooking, the parade, football games, the emptiness, the incomplete family, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.

I remember – awakening with a lightness and joy in my heart that fifth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the thankfulness for having my remaining family together, the beautiful memories of past Thanksgivings, the “wholeness” of me and the blessed relief peace brought to my pain.

By Priscilla J. Norton, TCF, Pawtucket, RI  
In Memory of Linda

**ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER**

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at [mjward0123@gmail.com](mailto:mjward0123@gmail.com)

**Remember**

Light a quiet candle  
Send a quiet kiss  
Say a quiet fare-thee-well  
To the one you miss.  
Light a quiet candle  
Shed a quiet tear  
Sing a quiet lullaby . . .  
And the quiet  
Christmas Star will hear.

Sascha Wagner  
TCF Des Moines

**First Thanksgiving**

The thought of being thankful  
fills my heart with dread.  
They'll all be feigning gladness,  
not a word about her said.  
These heavy shrouds of blackness  
enveloping my soul,  
pervasive, throat-catching,  
writhe in me, and coil.

I must, I must acknowledge,  
just express her name,  
so all sitting at the table,  
know I'm thankful that she came.

Though she's gone from us forever  
and we mourn to see her face,  
not one minute of her living,  
would her death ever replace.

So I stop the cheerful gathering,  
though my voice quivers, quakes,  
make a toast to all her living.  
That small tribute's all it takes.

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

**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



## 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 2017



**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 10, 2017  
7 PM Around the Globe**



This year we will 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 10, 2017

**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**