



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
SUGAR LAND/SW HOUSTON CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

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

Monthly Meeting:

JANUARY 9, 2013

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7 - 9 P.M.

ALAN PEDERSEN
ANGELS ACROSS THE
U.S.A. TOUR 2013

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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ALAN PEDERSEN
ANGELS ACROSS THE U.S.A. TOUR 2013

Our TCF chapter will be hosting **Alan Pedersen's "Angels Across America" Concert** on January 9, 2013. This concert will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 502 Eldridge Road, Sugar Land, Texas. This concert will take the place our regularly scheduled TCF meeting.

Alan is a nationally recognized songwriter and singer. On August 15, 2001 his life was changed forever. Ashley Marie Pedersen, his oldest child and only daughter, died as a result of a automobile accident. He has turned his grief and the pain of loss into a collection of powerful and moving songs recorded on four highly acclaimed CD's.

His music is popular with bereaved people around the world and has been used at thousands of candle lighting services, balloon and butterfly releases and by hundreds of professionals and organizations as a healing tool for the bereaved.

His music has been played at Ground Zero in New York City, the memorial at Virginia Tech University, the memorial at Columbine High School and is featured on many memorial and tribute websites. He is planning a trip to Connecticut where he will present a concert for the parents whose children were killed December 2012, at the Sandy Hook School.

Mitch Carmody will also be a Special Guest at the concert. He is a talented writer, artist and speaker. In 1987 Mitch's 9 year old son Kelly died of cancer. Mitch's own grief journey inspired him to write the book, *Letters to My Son: a Journey through Grief*, his amazing story of loss, turned to hope and faith after seeing signs that Kelly left behind for him. Mitch is a staff writer for Living with Loss Magazine and presents workshops to standing room only crowds around the United States.

We invite each of our members to bring family and close friends and attend this beautiful musical tribute to our children. There is much healing to be found in Alan's music as we continue on our grief journeys.

**Remember.....With Compassionate Friends You
Need Not Walk Alone**

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

The Holidays Are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child’s place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb – a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

Marie Andrews
TCF Southern Maryland Chapter, MD

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Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics*

JANUARY 9, 2013—ALAN PEDERSEN CONCERT
FEBRUARY 13, 2013—Staying Healthy Mentally and Physically.

(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.)

I Know This Sounds Strange But...

Often in my counseling practice I would hear these words. Normally they were brought up in a self conscious manner by a client hesitant to mention anything at all.

The uncanny incident, which was typically brought up after a few sessions, was usually prefaced by, "I know you will think this is strange, Dr. Kearns but...." Then I might hear her say that she wondered if there was a way her loved one knew before his death that he might die.

For example, one of my clients, a young mother, became suddenly and violently ill while at work as if kicked in the stomach. She ran from her business meeting to relieve herself in the restroom. When she returned moments later, her secretary gave her an urgent message to call her son's day care. A message any of us would fear! The day care informed her that her three-year-old had been in an accident and was in route to the hospital. She flew from her office and grabbed a cab, but when she arrived she was informed her son had died. Jason had choked on a cracker after nap time, and neither the teachers nor paramedics were able to resuscitate him. He had died in the ambulance before reaching the hospital. My client, who had felt perfectly fine prior to her nausea attack, believed there was a connection. "Seems like more than a coincidence to me that I would feel violently ill at the same time my son was choking to death four miles away."

Another woman on her lunch break was excited to pick up photos that had just been developed of a Hawaiian holiday she and her husband had recently taken. While sharing the photos with her coworkers she began to cry. Puzzled by this reaction she commented, "I have no idea why I'm feeling sad. This was such a happy time for us." Approximately a half hour later, she received a call that her husband had been killed in an accident when his car was struck by a truck on the freeway.

These are only a couple examples of the many stories I have heard over my 23 years of trauma counseling. I know many of you have had your own experiences or have heard stories from other

Compassionate Friends parents. Because of this and because of my own uncanny experiences surrounding my daughter Kristen's death, I decided to address these experiences in the book I am writing. They are not unusual. More examples can be found in a sample chapter on the website listed below.

Science may disregard these occurrences as flukes and lacking scientific proof, but I have always believed that life is bigger than science. People are often hesitant to share their experiences, fearing they may be harshly judged. I'm always reminded of what Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D., the pioneer in the field of death and dying would say. I had the privilege of working with her after Kristen's death and heard her express many times that there is no such thing as a coincidence. "We must remember that "coincidence" is just a word. We need to look at the dynamic around the event."

Carol Kearns has been a member of the Marin chapter since her daughter's death 30 years ago. For more information about Carol and her book, go to her website: www.carolkearns.com

Another Year

Old year has gone away
With gift and candle-
Old year has gone away
With thought and song

Old year has given light
And dark and season
Old year has been too short
And been too long

Old year has given joy and disappointment
Old year has given grief and strength to cope.
Old year was a memory and was forgetting.
Another year is come:
give it your hope.

Sascha Wagner, from

"Sadness flies on the wings of the morning"....And out of the darkness comes the light. - Jean Giraudoux



February = Broken Heart + Mended Heart

Valentine's Day marks the first day of the second month of the death of my daughter, Cathie. Isn't it funny how, when after you have lost a child, you note the holidays?

The first year I still had not really realized that she was "dead." In fact I could not even say the word ... "dead." I was just numb. I can remember wondering if I was going crazy and then I thought I must have not been a good mother ... just because I had not - could not - cry. I was a totally empty vessel, devoid of any and all feelings.

The second year I think I made up for all the crying I did not do that first Valentine's Day as I bought only one set of those cute little Valentine's Day cards for my only living daughter, Carie, to give to her little schoolmates. I knew I was not going crazy. I knew I had been as good a mother as I could have been. I knew I had loved them both very much. I knew I STILL loved BOTH of them.

The tenth year I found TCF. I found a name for all the feelings I had been going through in these past years. I found out that I was a BEREAVED PARENT. I discovered that I was not alone on this the roller coaster ride of emotions ... I was not alone anymore. I learned to smile with warm memories as I watched other small children buy their packs of Valentine Day cards.

This is my seventeenth year as a Bereaved Parent. I don't cry much anymore ... just once in awhile ... and not for Cathie; I cry for me and the loneliness for her. Instead, I smile a lot with all the happy memories I have of the Valentine Days I was able to have with her.

Now, when I cry on Valentine's Day, it is for the newly bereaved parents who must suffer this day, this month without their children. Yet I also find comfort in knowing that they NEED NOT WALK ALONE either, for TCF and I are here for them. In fact, I think I will go out and buy a pack of those small Valentine Day cards and send them to all my Compassionate Friends. Cathie would like that...yes she would.

Cherie Gordon
TCF, North Dade/South Broward. FL



It Is Time for Love

February has fewer days than most months, and that may be of special significance to us, as our children had fewer days than most. When we think of this month, the most outstanding day, perhaps, is St. Valentine's Day. It is a time for love.

When we were school age we had a special chance to give and receive cards in those decorated boxes in our primary classrooms. Perhaps it is the one holiday when children can really do something for everyone. Addressing a card to each and every classmate made you think of how you felt about each one and wonder about how they felt about you.

Love is found in every day of every year, but February and Valentine's day are very special. I wish I could remember just how it felt to get a "nicer" Valentine from someone I sent a "nicer" one to. It is so long ago, and there have been so many, much more significant happening in my life. But sometimes, I'd like to remember just how it felt. **I am sending along this Valentine Love Note to each of you right now and hope that you know it is one of the "nicer" ones**, because each of you is very special to me. Somehow I don't wonder how you feel - I know.

As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's, we begin to find a different kind of love than we ever expected to experience.

Rosalie Baker
TCF, Rochester, NY

"For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief." —Dory Rooker

A Solitary Journey
 By Helen Steiner Rice

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

When we are no longer able to change a situation,
 we are challenged to change ourselves."
 -Victor Frankl

“Well, I’ve got pictures and videos
 And I see them all the time
 But my favorite memories, well they’re right here in my mind.”

Alan Pedersen
 From his original song, *I Remember You*

Friendship doubles our joy and divides our
 grief. ~Swedish Proverb

There’s a Valentine Waiting for You
 By Mary Cleckley, Lawrenceville, GA.,
 Bereaved Parents USA.

There’s a valentine waiting for you,
 That’s different from all the others.
 It’s there every month at our meetings
 Of heartbroken fathers and mothers.
 It’s envelope is made of caring
 The glue of understanding seals it tight.
 This non-judgmental group who’ve “been there”
 Help to take away your fear and fright.
 So, come join with us together,
 Read your loving message printed clear.
 In not only this month’s valentine,
 But all those throughout the year.


*We substantiate our loved ones life,
 by the way we live ours.”*
 - Mitch Carmody

Treasure the love that you receive above all.
 It will survive long after your gold and good
 health have vanished.

-Og Mandino

The death of a child is the single most traumatic
 event in medicine. To lose a child is to lose a piece
 of yourself. - Dr. Burton Grevin, MD

Reading Corner



**Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My
 Daughter's Death Taught Me
 the Meaning of Life**
 by Carol Kearns

Review from Amazon.com

This is a beautiful, heartbreaking, and re-affirming book written by a mother and psychologist who experienced what most would consider their worst nightmare. Carol Kearns lost her beautiful little girl to a rogue wave during a family vacation on the Oregon coast.

Carol's struggles with her subsequent grief, fury, and deep despair are told with touching honesty and vulnerability. Her determination to "survive," for the sake of her young son is something with which any parent can relate. Her decision to live and grieve honestly, and to face her pain and anger head on are both gut wrenching and admirable.

Carol's story is beautifully told and hard to put down. Her experience as a psychotherapist and grieving mother bring a fresh perspective to the topic of grief. The fact that Carol not only survived this tragedy, but went on to help thousands of others is a tribute to the strength of her spirit, and a hopeful beacon for anyone who has suffered a devastating loss.



The Compassionate Friends
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Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013



ALAN PEDERSEN
ANGELS ACROSS THE U.S.A. TOUR 2013



The Sugar Land Chapter of The Compassionate Friends
First Presbyterian Church
502 Eldridge Parkway
Sugar Land, TX 77478
January 9, 2013
7p.m - 9p.m.

Alan is an inspirational speaker on grief and loss, award winning songwriter and successful recording artist. In August 2001, Alan's only daughter Ashley died in a car accident. Since that tragic event Alan has turned his journey through the valley of grief and the pain of loss into a collection of powerful and moving songs recorded on to 4 highly acclaimed CD's. Alan speaks and plays his original music at more than 100 events every year throughout the United States. His gentle mix of humor and straight-from-the-heart talk wrapped around powerful songs about love, loss and healing make for a unique experience.

For more information about Alan and the Angels Tour visit www.AngelsAcrossTheUSA.com



Special Guest
Mitch Carmody
www.heartlightstudios.net

