

Katy, Texas Chapter Newsletter January 2017

The Compassionate Friends Katy Chapter Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Chapter Co-Leaders Newsletter Editor Treasurer Jan Bigbee Weesner and Jo Wood Annette Mennen Baldwin Lisa Leanard

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, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

January Meeting

When: Tuesday, January 10, 2017

6:30 PM – Doors Open *If this is your first meeting, please arrive by 6:30 pm* 7:00 PM—Meeting Begins 20555 Kingsland Blvd, Katy, TX 77450 John Burns Building, East side of church

Where: Kingsland Baptist Church

Program: New Beginnings

Directions:

From East of Fry Road (coming from Houston): Go west on I-10 to Fry Road. Turn left (south) on Fry Road. Turn right (west) on Kingsland Blvd and travel 0.5 miles to Kingsland Baptist Church.

From West of Mason Road (coming from San Antonio): Go east on I-10 to Westgreen Blvd. Turn right (south) on Westgreen Blvd and travel 0.6 miles to Kingsland Blvd. Turn left (east) on Kingsland Blvd and travel 0.5 miles to Kingsland Baptist Church.



Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to all who attended their first meeting in December

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the poace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends. ~*TCF Credo*

The death of your child is probably the most traumatic, life-changing event that you will ever experience. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of parents who have also lost a child to death. Each of us has experienced the deep, searing pain that you are feeling now. Each of us has turned to other parents who were farther into their grief journey for guidance, support and understanding. This is done through our monthly meetings, our newsletter, our website, our phone-a-friend program, our library, our e-mail program and our referral program. Each month parents find our meeting to be a safe place where they can talk about their pain and problems with others who are uniquely qualified to understand; bereaved parents offer gentle suggestions or often simply listen. We invite you to bring a friend to your first few meetings until you feel a level of comfort with the group. Do not be surprised if we talk about the happy times with our children, the wonderful memories and the various methods we have created to keep our children close to us. It is here that many bereaved parents find hope as those who are more seasoned in their grief shine the light of experience to help illuminate each grief path. We have no dues. We are self-sustaining through donations and the generosity of so many in our community. You Need Not Walk Alone.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~				
<b>\</b>		0	ur Children Remembered 🤅 🧟	
			Birthdays	
<u>د</u> ا	anuary 1	Sean	Kevin Mendoza, son of Mary Mendoza	
	anuary 5		r Herbst, son of Steve & Kathy Herbst	
	anuary 6	-	y Aren Chesson, son of Phillip and Patty Chesson	
	anuary 7		n Caley Nick, son of Karen Nick-Dobbs	
	anuary 9	-	James Snyder, son of Lori Snyder	
	anuary 9	-	d Matthew Sanchez, son of Joseph & Melinda Sanchez	$\checkmark$
A	anuary 11		ard Edward Mayoski, son of Richard & Mechele Mayoski	
	anuary 12		n Reding, daughter of Laura & Henry Reding	
	anuary 13		Moellendorf, son of Don Cagle	
— <u> </u>	anuary 14		ald Howard McCall, son of Jeri McCall	
🔰 1a	anuary 14		n Richard Clinton, son of Robin Clinton	
🔶 Ja	anuary 14		Ray Richard, son of Veronica Malhiot	
🔸 Ja	anuary 16		Krieg, daughter of Sandra & Tom Krieg	$\checkmark$
	anuary 16		am (Hunter) Huntington, son of David& Nada Wood	
🗼 Ja	anuary 18	Juda	h Lyon Sanjur, son of Tiffany & Emiliano Sanjur	
Ja	anuary 19	Jenn	ife Hollis, daughter of Scott and Betsie Hollis	
🔰 🚬 Ja	anuary 20	Kalel	o Yerasillov, son of Rose Salazar	<b>V</b>
🛛 🎽 Ja	anuary 24	Britta	any LeeAnn Lewis, daughter of Lisa & Mike Atkinson	
🚽 🕹 Ja	January 25 Anthony Joseph Leanard, son of Larry & Lisa Leanard			
-	January 26 Garrett Davis Lawson, son of Beverly & Tom Lawson			$\checkmark$
	January 28 Brandi Leigh Rushing, daughter of Tracy & Kim McCarty			
	anuary 30		stophor Green, son of Rodney & Ryver Green	
Ja	January 30 Johnny "Bryan" Hoover, Jr., son of Bonnie Guillot			
A	January 31 Jason Kyle Reph, son of Kristin Kennedy			
Ja Ja	anuary 31	Carly	Beaman Smith, daughter of Karen Smith	
$\checkmark$			Anniversaries	
🔸 Ja	anuary 2016	1 Year	Joseph Brandon Daniels, son of Ken & Malinda Fucheck	
	anuary 2016	1 Year	John Michael Moore, son of Jeff Moore & Sue Reich	$\checkmark$
	anuary 2015	2 Year	Christopher (Mikey) Michael Johnson, son of Chris & Kelly Johnson	
	anuary 2015	2 Year	Billy Bryant, Jr., son of Billy & Gloria Bryant	
	anuary 2015	2 Year	Christopher John Hudson, son of Michelle Marquart	
	anuary 2014 anuary 2013	3 Years 4 Years	Chelsey Lee Jones, daughter of Dennis & Deanna Jones Jerad Matthew Whitten, son of Ethel McTigue	<b>V</b>
<b>1</b> -	anuary 2013	4 Years	Tristan Luis Bartlett, son of Karen Lopez-Bartlett	
	anuary 2013	6 Years	Elliot Locke, son of Christina Bisha	
	anuary 2010	7 Years	Luis E. Molina, son of Dahlia Salinas-Molina	$\checkmark$
A	anuary 2010	7 Years	Christopher Wayne Smith, son of Pamela Smith	
-	anuary 2009	8 Years	Dustin Christopher Krause, son of Susan & Tony Krause	
	anuary 2008	9 Years	Shannon Faye Hooker, daughter of Janis Hooker	
	anuary 2007	10 Years	Sarah Eileen Magri, daughter of Neal & Virginia Magri	<b>V</b>

# Katy TCF Volunteers

Cards of Remembrance-Robin Conner Welcome Cards to new members-Brenda Schmitt Newsletter—Annette Mennen Baldwin amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com *E-mail to group*-Annette Mennen Baldwin-tcfkaty.messages@gmail.com Publicity & E-Mail correspondence-Annette Mennen Baldwin Picture Buttons-Annette Mennen Baldwin Holiday & Craft Projects-Neela Sen Welcome Packages-Sherrie Schurman Library— Jan Bigbee Web Site—Lee Schurman!! Treasurer 2016—Lisa Leanard—lisaleanard@sbcglobal.net Snacks-Laura Reding Facilities Coordinator: Melinda Ginter Memorial Bench Maintenance—Need a volunteer Group Facilitators - Albert Tapia, Robin Conner, Lisa Leanard, Annette Mennen Baldwin, Jan Bigbee, Sherrie Schurman, Jo Wood, Viola Escareno, Sherry Contreras & Brenda Schmitt Chapter Leaders-Jan Bigbee Weesner & Jo Wood

#### Join Our Chapter E-Mail List

Join our chapter e-mail list to receive timely notices, writings, articles, special information and more. This is an important communication tool throughout the month for our members.

To join, send an email to: tcfkaty. messages@gmail.com

#### National TCF Contact Information

TCF National Office P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522

Toll Free: (877) 969-0010 www.compassionatefriends.org

Mark & Deborah Rambis Regional Coordinators Southern Texas

# January Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in December or January, please bring a picture or memento to our January meeting to share with the group. In April and December we ask that yo



and December we ask that you bring your child's picture for the birthday table in the month preceding or following the actual event.

#### Special Small Group Meetings For Parents Whose Child Was Lost to Suicide

The Katy Chapter of TCF has a unique program for parents whose children died from suicide. All parents at-

tend the opening of our meeting each month and then adjourn to their own private meeting for the remainder of the meeting. Death from



suicide usually requires additional and unique group dynamics.

This program is offered only to parents who have lost children to suicide.

## Tailored Small Group Meeting For Parents Whose Child Died From Addiction or Related Cause

**!!!!!**By request we have established a group meeting for parents whose child died from addiction disorders, overdose or a cause of death related to the years of struggle with addiction.

You will still meet at the opening of our evening together with the entire group. Following opening remarks and special topical discussions, we will break into our small groups. If you would like to meet with this tailored group, you simply need to accompany the leader to the small group meeting room.

This is a unique group that was requested by our existing members. You are welcome to join this group and share your grief journey with others who have experienced a similar tragedy.



Printed in Loving Memory Of Todd M. Mennen *1967-2002* 



#### January's Meeting: New Beginnings

New beginnings...new year...new opportunities. Each year we assess our lives on several levels. For bereaved parents, the choices made are defined by the length of our journey in this grief and by how far we've personally come on our own journey.

January is the perfect time to slow down, size up our progress and focus on achievable goals for our grief journey and all that goes into that journey.

What do we reasonably want to achieve this year? How can we achieve these goals? How do we measure our progress? What are the options that we want to use from the sizeable tool box we have at our disposal?

These and many other elements of our new beginnings will be discussed at the January meeting. Whether you have been on your grief journey for 5 weeks, 5 months, 5 years or 15 years, this is one meeting you should attend each year.

We hope to visit with each one of our members at the January meeting. This meeting helps to close the book on the holidays and open the book on a time of renewal and new beginnings.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 10, 2017, at the Kingsland Baptist Church in the John Burns Building on the east side of the church complex. Use the east side parking lot.

## A New Year of Hope

The New Year's Resolution has faded in popularity, but it once meant an opportunity for a "clean slate" where we each could redefine ourselves: throwing out the bad, bringing in the good. We would strive to learn more, do more, reach out, reach in, shed bad habits, add good habits. Many people still practice this.....witness the upswing in health club memberships after the holiday season. The new year is the blank slate: tablula rasa.

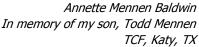
As bereaved parents, we know there is no "blank slate." We know, also, that we travel slowly, hesitantly and with much care on our grief journey. The new year presents an opportunity to continue our search for that most ethereal longing: the need for hope. Hope for bereaved parents can be something as simple as a "normal" day. Hope could be an afternoon filled with productivity, grace and gratitude. Hope might be a feeling of a fog lifting, a soft light shining. Hope is a positive emotion that can give parents a refreshed perspective, a sense of optimism for this day and the next.

Finding hope in the midst of grief, while difficult, is certainly not impossible. Most of us who have been without our children for a period of four years or more know that hope, eventually, will find us if we are in the right place. The grief work we do, the seminars we attend, the counselors we call upon, the Compassionate Friends meetings we attend, the books and other readings we select, the entertainment choices we make: all equal the intentional reframing of our lives to find hope after our child has died. Through these activities we shape the person we will become. We are different now, you and I. We have suffered the most traumatic loss a human being ever faces: the death of our precious children. We must acknowledge the differences in ourselves. We must shape our lives around those differences. We must share our lives with gentle people now....maybe for a year or two, maybe until death takes us, too. But at least for now, gentleness lessens the percussive assault on our psyche.

Grief work, though hard work, is something we must do. We must structure our lives, our thoughts and our dreams as we each move along this uncharted pathway that is now our lives. Yes, we ache for our children. But our subconscious mind eventually accepts that we will take our children into the future in our minds, our hearts and souls. We define our new reality loosely because it changes with each sunrise. Like the caterpillar who labors to develop its wings and become a butterfly, we are constantly laboring to accept our new reality and make changes in our perspective while simultaneously coping with the tremendous pain of unchangeable loss. As we engage and embrace this process of acceptance and change, and do the hard work of reaching out for help, refining our lifestyles, speaking clearly and honestly of our feelings and what we can and cannot tolerate at each stage in our grief, we begin to develop strength. Like the butterfly whose wings develop after much labor, our new reality gradually becomes more natural to us. And just as the butter-

fly's fragile w hope blosson

fly's fragile wings gently lift it from flower to flower, the seed of hope blossoms and grows in our hearts.



## Page 4

## Parents of Younger Children Meet in Private Group

If your child was still a minor and living at home...whether your child was two years old or 17 years old, the experience of your child's death at this young age is unique. Many parents of younger children have requested their own group to discuss their loss and establishing a new normal without their younger child.

This group meets together after the opening group meeting. If you would like to participate with this group, you will be told by the leader which room is in use for this special meeting after the opening meeting.

#### A Note to Our New Members

Attending your first Compassionate Friends meeting can be a frightening experience. Bereaved parents are vulnerable, lost, heartbroken and fearful of the unknown. Please remember, each of us was in this same place not so long ago. Bring a friend or your spouse for support to your first few meetings. Someone from our group will talk with you and sit with you as well. We are here for you.....the newly bereaved parent. We suggest that you attend at least three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will help you on your grief journey. You need not walk alone.

## A Request of Our Longer-Term Members

Take a moment of your time today to think back to the beginning of your grief journey. It's difficult even to recall the events surrounding your child's death, let alone remember your first Compassionate Friends meeting. Yet you came, and when you arrived a sweet voice soothed your shattered nerves, talked with you, welcoming you and explaining the chapter meetings so you would know what to expect.

Someone was there for you. Many "established bereaved parents" were ready to give you a hug, dry your tears, hold your hand and support you as you said your child's name for the first time in an open group setting. There was a gentleness and kinship in this room that you would find no where else in the world.

Your unique perspective is needed by the many newly bereaved parents who enter our meetings each month for the first time. Each of these parents deserves a gentle welcome, a kindred soul upon whom they can rely. Trust is a sacred bond that gets us through the first meeting and perhaps the second and third meeting as well.

Remember who you were and all that you have become since coming to Compassionate Friends. If you can find it in your heart to give back to those who need the security of our group now, please return for them. The gift of hope is such a precious treasure.

National TCF Contact Information

TCF National Office P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522

Toll Free: (877) 969-0010 www.compassionatefriends.org

#### For Karen's Birthday 1/12/2017

Dearest Lord,

Lord Jesus, January 12th is Karen's birthday, as you know, You gave me this precious child on a rare Houston Sunday when it snowed. The greatest pain I have ever suffered in My life is in losing her. What I would give to have my family back Just as we were. There is an ache within my heart That will never go away, Because remembering her is easy, I do it every day. Those years I had her, I was truly blessed So Lord Jesus, on her special day, I am making this request:

> If roses grow in Heaven, Lord please pick a bunch for me Place them in my daughter's arms And tell her they're from me. Tell her I love her and miss her, And when she turns to smile, Place a kiss upon her cheek And hold her for a while.

Happy Birthday my precious angel!! Loving You until the 12th of Never *Laura Reding Karen's Mom* 



### Grief Share Offered In Katy this Month

Grief Share, a Bible based grief program offered by many Christian churches in the Katy and Houston area, will begin again in January. To gain information on a Grief Share program near you, go to the website: www.griefshare.org.

Kingsland Baptist church, where our TCF chapter meets, will be offering Grief Share program after New Year's. Call 281 492 0785 for information. The address is 20555 Kingsland Blvd, Katy, TX

Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church will be offering Grief Share again after the New Year. Call 281 646 1903 ext 177 for more information. This church is located at 2655 South Mason Road, Katy, TX.

# Loving Listeners

TCF Katy has established a phone-a-friend list for parents who want to talk with someone who shares a similar loss. If you would like to volunteer to be a phone-a-friend, please contact Annette Baldwin.

Accidental Death of Child Living at Home ......Jo (281) 347-1027 Loss of an Adult Child.....Annette (281) 578-9118 Only Child.....Annette (281) 578-9118 Murdered Child..... Robin (281) 851-5425 Neonatal Loss......HAND (832) 752-1919 Death of Teenage Child...... Brenda (281) 804-7087 Jo (281) 347 1027 Accidental Death of Adult Child......Annette (281) 578-9118 Death from long term illness.....Karen (832) 746-0279 Suicide.......Sherrie (281) 579-7741

Support for Fathers......Albert (832) 885-4741

#### The New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help our selves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of



epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An oftenexpressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

#### **The Prodigal Daughter** For My Beautiful Child, Diana Lioliou **Dean Lioliou**

Where have you gone my child? Why have you left me? Redemption is now yours And here pain is to be

Why have you done this my child? What caused you to leave? Your demons and pain now gone And all I do is grieve

These were your friends Marijuana, Heroin and Cocaine Destruction from addiction And I am in a hurricane

A cry for help, a cry of pain Your last wish for someone there Such desperation you cried And now, we have to bare

Your dreams were shattered My want for you to change My prayers unanswered And now, you're out of range

I would've walk through the valley of the shadow of death for you But that valley was your walk Instead away you left And now, to God I talk

My pain is here forever My heart is gone with you My prayer to God continues That one day I will be there too

I have prayed as the father of the prodigal son did That you too returned To me you did not take that road But to God as He yearned

The Father rejoices for his child alive And I cry for my child gone The Father prepares the feast And I live forgone

I now wait for one day to come Where I'll see you again Kiss you, hug you, and smile And no longer live in vain

Where have you gone my child? Why have you left me? You are in the arms of an Angel now My beautiful daughter is now carefree

In Memory of our Beloved Children In Loving Memory of: Robin Conner

Memorials Given by:

Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen Laura & Henry Reding Carolyn & Rusty Porter Rosie & Eddie Cabellero Rhonda Frank Salcevski David & Naeda Wood Phyllis Vargas William & Wilma Pullen

Christopher Wilson Dawn Wilson Andrea Thomsen Karen Reding Brvan Lewis Joe Michael Cabellero Matthew Salcevski Hunter Wood Matthew Salcevski Frank Pullen

Thank you for your donation to The Compassionate Friends, Katy, TX Chapter

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this Newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families. Donations along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to:



Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Lisa Leanard 13814 Wheatbridge Drive Houston, TX 77041

#### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR BEREAVED PARENTS

#### IResolve:

That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

I will keep the truth in my heart--the truth that my child is always with me in spirit.

That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

To remind myself that the grief process is circuitousthat is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the mourning process, and that these moods, too, will pass.

~From the Brooksville/Spring Hill FL. TCFNewsletter

#### Changes in US Mail List for Chapter Newsletter

In the month of January, we will begin changing our list of people who receive their newsletter by US Mail. When you join our chapter, you automatically receive our newsletter by US Mail.

After two years, we begin sending the newsletter to our members by email. There are a few exceptions to this, but not very many.

The cost of printing and postage is high, as we all know. We need to save our resources to better aid all the members of our chapter throughout the year.

If you would like your name removed entirely from our chapter list, please email Lisa Leanard @ lisaleanard@sbcglobal.net.



#### Letter to my daughter

My beautiful Angel,

Here we are! It is Christmas time, and we can't bear to be at home. Your sisters, Papo and I are in the most beautiful place on earth to us, your final resting place, in Nice. As I suspected, being close to you, and visiting this magical site has brought comfort to us. Your sisters will be going there soon, and they are apprehensive. I know that while the tears will flow, as they have for us, they will also find great comfort in being close to you. Some tears are good.

The clear blue water, the sun reflecting on the water, the boats, the view of Baie des Anges, or Bay of Angels, the few swimmers, all of this makes this site incredibly special to us, and we could stare at it for hours.

We feel you with us, and we love that. We know that you are happy that we are all together, and your little signs are felt daily!! How sweet of you to come visit .. Just about every day, 2 birds visit us on our balcony. I know it is you and your Pika. In the past, when we would visit Nice, only one bird would come by on the balcony. It never failed!! Now we have TWO.. and these two birds are not scared at all!! We are on the 5th floor, and they only come to us! Coincidence?? I don't think so!

It makes us happy, and we talk to these two birdies as if it was you and Pika stopping by!

My beautiful Angel, you see, we are carrying on, but you are always with us, and we like that so much! Your sisters, Papo and I are ok, just as you would want us to be. We miss you, and will always miss you, but the power of love is an incredible power! We love you so much that we are setting you free, and by doing that, we have reached the acceptance of your promotion as an Angel. Acceptance is important in the grieving process. Thank you for helping us through this, and please.. keep giving us signs!!

#owlalwaysloveyou #merrychristmasinheaven By Ghislaine Thomsen, *Andrea's mom* 





Topic: New Beginnings

Tuesday, January 10, 2017 7.00 PM in Burns Building 7.00 PM in Burns Church

**January Meeting:** 



The Compassionate Friends Katy Chapter 13814 Wheatbridge Drive Houston, TX 77041

