



## Katy, Texas Chapter Newsletter July 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 Leonard**

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.

### \*\*\* July Meeting \*\*\*

When: Tuesday, July 11, 2017

**6:30 PM – Doors Open at The John Burns Building  
7:00 PM—Meeting Begins**

Where: **Kingsland Baptist Church**

20555 Kingsland Blvd,  
Katy, TX 77450  
**John Burns Building, east side of Church complex**



#### **Program: Am I Making Progress?**

#### 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 June.***

Medik Nazari whose son, Ivan Nazari, died in May 2017

#### ***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 joy, share the anger as well as the peace, 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.

## Our Children Remembered

### Birthdays

July 3	Tosha Danae Reese, daughter of Jason & Sherry Pierce
July 4	Clayton Brooks Prine, son of Mary & Bruce Prine
July 5	Mario (Mijo) Escareno, Jr., son of Viola Escareno
July 6	Whitney Ann Grissom, daughter of Janet Johnson
July 7	Elizabeth Anne Chamberlain daughter of David & Colleen Chamberlain
July 9	Laura Joanna Lopez, daughter of Fred & Lily Gaytan
July 9	Angel Batrez, daughter of Tony & Stephanie Batrez
July 10	Blair Giles Benson, son of Fred & Sherry Benson
July 10	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer, daughter of Robin Conner
July 10	Zachary Taylor Devane, son of Ben & Chantel Devane
July 11	Christopher Charles Dunlap, son of Cindy & Lloyd Dunlap
July 11	Austin Michael Minks, son of Leonard & Suzanne Minks
July 11	Michelle Rene Redinbo, daughter of Carole Etzel
July 11	Lauren Wiese, daughter of Sheryl & David Wiese
July 12	Juliete Eileen Ortega, daughter of Jennifer Ortega
July 14	Angela Iliescu, daughter of Victor & Yan Iliescu
July 15	Ryan Evan Fissell, son of Mark & Nanette Fissell
July 17	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit, daughter of Re & E.J. Gilbert
July 19	Randy Krieg, son of Sandra & Tom Krieg
July 20	Paul LaVigne, son of Dena Bonner
July 25	Carson Cade Broussard, son of Desiree Broussard
July 25	Ashley Elizabeth Sutton, daughter of Patty Sutton
July 27	Evan Thomas Miles, son of Christie & Matt Miles
July 30	Zachary Wilson Morris, son of Michael & Lisa Morris
July 31	John Michael Moore, son of Jeff & Sue Reichl Moore



### Anniversaries

July 2016	1 Year	Austin Michael Minks, son of Leonard & Suzanne Minks
July 2015	2 Years	Andrea Mary Stotfrap Thomsen, daughter of Henrik & Ghislaine Thomsen and sister of Stephanie & Elizabeth Thomsen
July 2015	2 Years	Jaden Christine-Sue Ayotte, daughter of Bonnie Damstra
July 2015	2 Years	Colby Patrick Brennan, son of Patrick & Mary Brennan
July 2014	3 Years	Keith Alan Komorita, son of Judy & Paul Komorita
July 2014	3 Years	Keven Lewis, son of Mary & Richard Lewis
July 2013	4 Years	John Edward Nemeth, son of Betty Ann Davis
July 2013	4 Years	Alicia Ann Norman, daughter of Bill & Vicki Norman
July 2012	5 Years	Mark Moellendorf, son of Don Cagle
July 2012	5 Years	Benjamin Craig Bradford, son of Bruce & Carol Bradford
July 2010	7 Years	Fernando Isaiah Macias, son of Yolanda & Fernando Macias
July 2010	7 Years	Juliete Eileen Oretaga, daughter of Jennifer Oretaga
July 2009	8 Years	Harley Johannes Hammack, grandson of Susan Hammack
July 2008	9 Years	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer, daughter of Robin Conner
July 2007	10 Years	Dustin Elliot Schmidt, son of Erick & Linda Schmidt
July 2005	12 Years	Christopher Frederick Wilson, son of Robin Conner
July 2002	15 Years	Michael Robert Harris, son of Jamie & Kathy Harris
July 1994	23 Years	Steven Edward Gilmore, son of Ted & Terri Gilmore
July 1992	25 Years	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit, daughter of Re & E.J. Gilbert



### Katy TCF Volunteers

*Cards of Remembrance*—Robin Conner  
*Welcome Cards to new members*—Brenda Schmitt  
*Newsletter*—Annette Mennen Baldwin  
*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 2015*—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, Ghislaine Thomsen, Jo Wood, Viola Escanaro, Sherry Contreras & Brenda Schmitt  
*Chapter Leaders*—Jan Bigbee Weesner & Jo Wood



### National TCF Contact Information

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

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

Mark Rambis  
Regional Coordinator, Southern Texas



### 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

### July Meeting Topic: Progress in Our Grief

The July meeting topic will be one that is in the back of many bereaved parents' minds. Measuring progress through our grief is difficult and unique among all the losses that humans endure. Because we are not saying goodbye to someone who simply shared our memories but instead to someone whose death forever changes the future and how we perceive it, progress on our grief journey must be measured on a different scale.

The death of one's child is singularly the factor that will determine our future perceptions, attitudes and our life path. That soul-sting will always be there...one year, ten years, forty years into the future. Suddenly we will tear up, our voice will choke, and we will freeze and try to breathe. It will be less frequent, but it will happen throughout our lives.

But the other factors of our grief will be moderated and softened, becoming less edgy as we move forward. Acknowledging the things we can change and partnering with those we cannot change is also part of our grief journey.

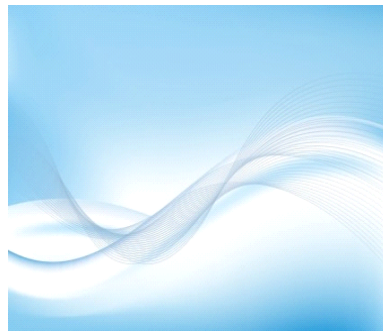
If this is your first meeting, please arrive by 6:30 pm. Let's talk.

### Bereaved Parents

Different ages  
 Different stages  
 Different issues

Same pain  
 Daily strain  
 Occasional tissues

Our children have died  
 Often is all we know  
 A fact we fear to hide



Despite our ever-present woe  
 We live with pride  
 Though broken-hearted  
 To love, remember, and grow

Victor Montemurro  
 TC,F, Medford, NY

### Summer Soon....

Sunlight dancing in the branches  
 of the birch tree at my door.  
 meadow stretching smug and lazy,  
 darker, greener than before.

Wind as warm as hugging children,  
 clouds so round and very close-  
 and on one small grave there trembles  
 lovingly an early rose.

Sascha Wagner, from *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

### Loving Listeners.....Phone-A-Friend

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.

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) 795-3235
- Accidental Death of Adult Child*.....Annette (281) 578-9118
- Death from long term illness*.....Karen (832) 746-0279
- Special Needs Child*....Neela (281) 579 1262
- Suicide*.....Sherrie (281) 579-7741
- Support for Fathers*.....Albert (832) 885-4741

### Special Small Group Meeting 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 attend 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.

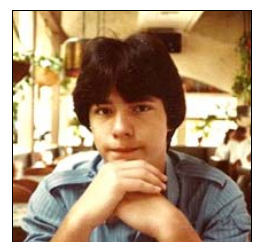
This is a unique group that was requested by our existing members. You are welcome to join this group and share your grief journey with others who have experienced a similar tragedy.

### 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.

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



## From the Cradle to the Cross

by Debbie Wagoner

10/21/12

From the time of conception to the time of redemption, we are born from mama's belly covered in the Blessed and Holy jelly. Like Jesus we are swaddled in blankets and placed at our Mothers breast and this nourishment feeds the baby and brings immediacy to the newborn mood. From the cradle to the cross Jesus' mother, Mary, was prepared for his cost; looking in his eyes she saw the loss.

Nothing prepares a mother for her pain when she is racked from heart to brain. Mary was much stronger than me. When my son passed over, all I could do was cry. Mary shed her tears, but she knew her son was due for Beyond this worlds' Greatness. Jesus was born great from the cradle to His grave, where three days later, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus was gone. He had been saved.

We all love our children deeply. Some of us visibly demonstrate this love, others are a more reserved. But we hold on to the story of the cradle to the grave. And in the very end we know our children will one day be with us.



To my beloved son "Dave" David Catalán until we meet again, my loving son. I will love you beyond my last breath ~mom

## Are You Receiving Your Messages?

Special email messages are sent to our chapter's members throughout each month. If you are not receiving ANY emails from our chapter email address, tcfkaty.messages@gmail.com, please send an email to this address and request to be added to the email list. Some of our newly bereaved are not on this email list.

At this time we have about 20 email addresses that have not been deliverable. So, there are 20 other members who are not receiving the notices and email messages with unique information about resources and the grief journey of bereaved parents that are sent throughout each month.

Take a few minutes and add your name to this email list....send a request and be sure to add tcfkaty.messages@gmail.com to your list of contacts.

## Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in July, please bring a picture or memento to our July meeting to share with the group. In April and December we ask that you bring your child's picture for the birthday table in the month preceding or following the actual event.



## TCF E-Newsletter

An E-Newsletter is available through the National TCF Organization. To subscribe, go to TCF's National Web site home page ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)) and click on "Register for E-Newsletter" link.

## Articles & Poems For Our Newsletter

If you would like to submit a poem, a writing or a brief article (no more than 800-825 words) about your child or your grief journey for publication in our Katy Compassionate Friends newsletter, e-mail your work to Annette Mennen Baldwin at [amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com](mailto:amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com). We encourage our members to share with us.

## Resources Available to Our Members

Resources of all types are available to our members. We include these in the monthly newsletter and strongly recommend that, in addition to Compassionate Friends, newly bereaved parents avail themselves of one or more of the many retreats, programs, etc., that are available in the Houston area.

If you know of a special resource, please let Annette Baldwin know about it so that it can be included in our monthly newsletter.



## In Memory of Our Beloved Children

### Memorials Given by:

Robin Conner  
Brenda Schmitt  
Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen  
Terion Peloquin

### In Loving Memory of:

Christopher Frederick Wilson  
Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer  
Matt Schmitt  
Andrea Mary Stotfrap Thomsen  
Colton Peloquin

## 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. We hold no fundraising events, and we rely on our members to sustain our chapter.

Donations along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to:

Lisa Leanard  
13814 Wheatbridge Drive  
Houston, TX 77041



Photo credit: "The void you leave"  
By Daniel Angeles

# HOPE

By Andrea Thomsen's mom

Here we are .. July 4 will be your second Angelversary, or your new birthday, as I usually say.. I have been thinking for a while about something that I would want to write to celebrate you, tell the world how your re-birth has impacted us, and explain why the bond that we had never broke, why

in my heart you have never died.

I was looking for a sign, for a quote, for an image that would inspire me, and I found it! An artist friend, who recently lost someone from a tragic death, was struggling to express his sorrow, so instead, he painted the image above, and it touched me deep in my heart.

What I saw was the excruciating pain, represented by this **bleeding flower**. You loved sunflowers, and it is as if this sunflower was bleeding from a broken heart. Losing you has changed our lives forever, and neither your dad, your sisters or myself will ever be the same. The scar left by your departure is so deep, so painful, so large, yet invisible to the rest of the world.

The **dragonfly** symbolizes change. When I looked it up, it said that it "symbolizes the kind of change that has its source in mental and emotional maturity and the understanding of the deeper meaning of life."

Your departure, as painful as it is, should not stop us from living. To the contrary, because YOU are the vehicle that guides us, and shows us that change is ok, that once we can figure out that we are emotionally ready to live, carry on, let the world know about you, we can be happy again. **The deeper meaning of life** is just that, to find happiness again because we must cherish what we have. Some may say that we don't have you, and therefore we are not whole anymore. That's true in a way, but the thing is, **we still have you**, we just can't see you, and were lucky to have you grace our lives for 24 years. We do not choose our destiny and we must live for the moment, and continue making memories. You have taught me that.

In this image, some may see the heart as a broken heart, but I see it as a sign of hope. Grief=Love, and with love **I see hope**. The **sky portrayed inside the heart** shows that healing is possible, we can get comfort from the love and memories of you, we can rejoice knowing that YOU are the Angel, you knew you would be, soaring in Heaven. I truly believe this.

So, my beautiful daughter, this July 4<sup>th</sup>, your Papo, your sisters and I will celebrate you, we will laugh, we will continue to tell funny stories, and you will be, as always, with us. We may even make a cookie cake to celebrate your re-birth!

We thank you for your incredible wisdom, your life lessons, and for always giving us signs that you are happy. We will miss you until we see you again, but we will continue your work, we will always try to use good energy, and we will always try to see the good and not the bad.

**WE ELSKER TOI – TELLEMENT J'AI D'AMOUR POUR TOI.  
OWL ALWAYS LOVE YOU - FOR EVER 24**



"There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love. "

~Washington Irving

## Remember Our Loving Listeners List

If your pain and anxiety overwhelm you, and you feel you need to talk with someone, please check our Phone-A-Friend list on page three of this newsletter.

You will find a member of our support team who will talk with you and help you discover things you can do to help you and your family. The list is on Page 3 of this newsletter.

## Check Out Our Library

Our TCF library has many books, tapes, CDs and DVDs for our members. Each one has been carefully selected by a member of our TCF Chapter. The library is available for browsing before, during and after our monthly meeting. Check-out is a snap. We encourage our members to use this wonderful resource. There is much from which to choose; check it out at the next meeting. We have relocated our library table to the hall next to our snacks for your comfort.

## Webinar Archives–A Great Resource

The Compassionate Friends national website offers resources that are available whenever you need them. One such resource is the archives of the webinars that have been recorded over the past two years. Here is a list of what is available now. Simply go to [compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org) and click on the webinar archives under resources.

## The Five Stages

The five stages—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live without the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on linear timeline in grief.

~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

## Findings

The greatest comfort  
At time of grieving  
Comes, quietly,  
From the love that lives  
Within ourselves.

Sascha Wagner,  
from *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

## July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven  
 Brilliant colors in the sky.  
 Their splendor ends in seconds  
 On this evening in July.  
 "Her birthday is this Saturday,"  
 I whisper with a sigh.  
 She was born this month,  
 She loved this month  
 And she chose this month to die.  
 Like the bright and beautiful fireworks  
 Glowing briefly in the dark  
 They are gone too soon, and so was she  
 Having been, and left her mark.  
 A glorious incandescent life,  
 A catalyst, a spark...  
 Her being gently lit my path  
 And softened all things stark.  
 The July birth, the July death of  
 my happy summer child  
 Marked a life too brief that ended  
 Without rancor, without guile.  
 Like the fireworks that leave images  
 On unprotected eyes...  
 Her lustrous life engraved my heart..  
 With love that never dies.

*Sally Migliaccio  
 TCF Babylon, Long Island, NY*



## THE GRIEF JOURNEY

The journey of grief is a long and difficult one, full of ups and downs that are often strenuous to endure. Men and women grieve differently because the former usually do not share their feelings openly with others, whereas the latter reveal what is in their hearts naturally with the rest of the world.

At The Compassionate Friends no one judges us for how we handle our loss of our children and we try to help each other maneuver our way through the labyrinth of the deepest sorrow we will ever experience. It is recommended for us to channel our grief positively by maintaining a journal where we can register our thoughts on paper and thereby this acts as a catharsis to our pain.

Another avenue to assuage our grief is to attend our monthly meetings and assist others who are newer to this journey. Others may seek professional help from therapists or counselors to help us with the feelings of loneliness and helplessness. For my husband and I it was very hard because Robin was our only child and he had Special Needs. His absence in our lives left a terrible void that could not be filled and left us both feeling empty for a long time. If we had not found The Compassionate Friends to give us comfort and solace, we would have been very isolated. It was good to know that we were not going crazy and that one day we would be able to laugh again.



We have discovered that we have weathered the storms together through the last almost eleven years since Robin's departure from this earthly plane, continue to celebrate every birthday and other milestones in our lives with equanimity. We were fortunate enough to share twenty-five years with Robin and know that we did our very best for him. His disease did not allow him to achieve all that he was capable of but we know he did great things with his God-given talents. We still have a long way to go in our tortuous grief journey but we know that God and The Compassionate Friends will be with us all the way.

*Neela Sen  
 In memory of my son, Robin Sen  
 TCF, Katy, TX*

## Circle

How do you bear it all?  
 The cry came from a mother  
 Whose son had died only weeks before.  
 We were in a circle, looking at her,  
 Looking around, looking away,  
 Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.  
 How do we bear it?  
 I don't know,  
 But the circle helps.



*Eva Lager  
 TCF/Western Australia  
 (Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide on 4 March 1990.)*



*"Am I Making Progress?"  
 Meeting Topic:*

**Meeting; Tuesday July 11, 2017  
 Doors Open at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm**

Return Service Requested

13814 Wheatbridge  
 Houston, TX 77041



**The Compassionate Friends**