



Katy, Texas Chapter Newsletter June 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.

*** June Meeting ***



When: Tuesday, June 13, 2017

6:30 PM – Doors Open

Where: **Kingsland Baptist Church**

7:00 PM—Meeting Begins

20555 Kingsland Blvd,

Katy, TX 77450

John Burns Building, East side of church

Program: Coping with the Void

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.

(Across from Nottingham Country Elementary School)



Welcome

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

Allyson & Mikel Edwards, whose son, Dylan Mikel Edwards died in November 2016

*Amber Kaluza & Jonathan Ross whose daughter, Kairi Ann Kaluza, died in November, 2016
and whose son, Austin Louis Thomas, died in November, 2011*

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.

Birthdays

June 2	Carlos Enrique Villarreal, son of Linda Hilliard
June 4	Savannah Sue Norton, daughter of Sheree & Paul Norton
June 5	Teresa Alyss Johnson, daughter of Anna Apanel & Mark Johnson
June 6	Terrill Swafford, son of Trent & Margie Wittmayer
June 10	John Loh, son of Amy Kan
June 15	Brian Keith Randall, son of Margie Randall
June 15	Billy Bryant, Jr., son of Billy & Gloria Bryant
June 15	Justin James Owens, son of Tom & Carol Owens
June 16	Tomarra Zenette Hopkins, daughter of Tabatha Hopkins
June 16	Matthew Evan Larabee, son of Cathy Larabee
June 18	Gage Daniel Geddes, son of Terrie Dagley
June 22	Colby Patrick Brennan, son of Patrick & Mary Brennan
June 25	Jonathan Majed Alshamari, son of Sandy & Jeff Gorman
June 26	Emma Key, daughter of Sherry & Steven Key
June 28	Kolin Eric Lionberger, son of John Lionberger
June 28	Daniel Garcia, son of Juan & Ana Garcia
June 29	Phillip Michael Greczek, son of Mike & Carol Greczek
June 30	Shannon Faye Hooker, daughter of Janis Hooker

Anniversaries

June 2016	1 Year	Keondre Dillon Viser, son of Traci & David Dugas
June 2016	1 Year	Whitney Michelle Koonce, daughter of Bob & Cathy Koonce
June 2016	1 Year	Donald Joseph Byers, son of George & Peg Byers
June 2013	2 Years	Alexis Theresa Rinicella, daughter of Randy & Lisa Rinicella
June 2012	5 Years	Ryan Makanani Noriega, son of Carlos & Wendy Noriega
June 2012	5 Years	Ryan Bennett Elliott, son of Terry & Susan Elliott
June 2012	5 Years	Michael Patrick Siebenthal, son of Cindy & Jim Siebenthal
June 2011	6 Years	Jorge Alberto Contreras, brother of Maria Amparo Castillo
June 2011	6 Years	Bryan Andrew Lewis, son of Rusty & Carolyn Porter
June 2010	7 Years	Ashley Elizabeth Sutton, daughter of Patty Sutton
June 2010	7 Years	Angelica Rae "Angel" Cartwright, daughter of Stephanie & Michael Cartwright
June 2010	7 Years	Aaron Carter Steffens, son of Lynn Nickel
June 2010	7 Years	Jerod Adam Nixon, son of Mark & Sharon Conti
June 2009	8 Years	Charles "Chad" Preston Jones, son of Michael & Sheree Jones
June 2007	10 Years	Christine Yvette Mazyrack, daughter of Steve & Blanca Mazyrack
June 2007	10 Years	Myron "Spencer" Kinley, son of Karl & Melinda Kinley
June 2005	12 Years	Mark Vincent Korenek, son of James & Nancy Korenek
June 2004	13 Years	Gabriel Alejandro Granado, son of Sal & Delia Granado
June 1996	21 Years	Jessica Erin Loverich, daughter of Joyce Margarce

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—
Web Site—Lee Schurman
Treasurer 2017—Lisa Leanard—lisaleanard@sbcglobal.net
Snacks—Need Volunteer
Facilities Coordinator: Melinda Ginter
Group Facilitators - Albert Tapia, Lisa Leanard, Annette Mennen Baldwin, Jan Bigbee, Sherrie Schurman, Jo Wood, Viola Escanaro, Brenda Schmitt, Ghislaine Thomsen, Debbie & Bill Mercer

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 Rambis, Regional Coordinator
Southern Texas



Perpetual Presence of the Absence

The June meeting of the Katy Chapter of Compassionate Friends will focus on filling the immense void left following the death of our child.

The emptiness we feel when our child has left this plane can overwhelm us with its totality and finality. But there are ways to cope, to adjust, to move forward into hope. The road is different for each of us on our grief journey, yet we share the same emotions, heartbreak and deep pain within our psyche as each of us has stood helplessly by as death claimed our child.

We encourage our new members, particularly, to try to attend this meeting which will offer some insight into the first year, second year and third year of our grief. While the void eventually clears for us, the first three years can be very difficult.

Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in June, please bring a picture or memento to our June 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 before or after the actual event. We hold our balloon release in April and our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony in December.



A Father's Heartache

The measure of a man is taken in many ways. The courage I have seen demonstrated by broken hearted fathers who push forward through their mourning and grief to earn a living and take care of their families is nothing short of astounding. Yet most say very little about their loss.

Although these fathers go through the motions of making a living and making a life, their hearts are broken. Their effort is made for their wives, for surviving children. They speak infrequently about their own emotions. Some simply can't put their thoughts into words. Others choose not to talk about themselves, but instead, to take care of their family. We know the pain is there. We see it, we sense it, we feel it.

As bereaved fathers approach this holiday, there is a sense of melancholy mixed with an effort at nonchalance. This day is yet another reminder of what is never to be again. These dads are the unacknowledged heroes in a tragedy that defies measurement and description. Their hearts ache. No words are necessary. Yet they carry on, looking for hope, waiting for a peace that will one day find them.

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



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.

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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.

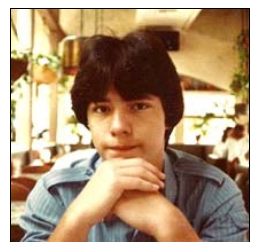
This is a unique group that was requested by our existing members. You are welcome to join this group and share your grief journey with others who have experienced a similar tragedy.

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



11:11

At night before I fall asleep
I lay in bed and pray.
Thankful to have made it through another day
But there's an ache that will not go away.

It's a feeling of both loss and pain
There are still times when I sit and stare.
My happiness seems to have been misplaced,
I can't find it anywhere.

For most of your life, those numbers were there
What was the meaning of those elevens?
Since you're gone, I've found the answer.
It's your way of saying "hello" from heaven.

It continues to be sad and incredibly unfair
To have buried a son of twenty seven.
But what more could we want as parents
Than to know our child has gone to heaven.

For some time after you died, those numbers brought pain.
Now I can't wait to see them again.
When I'm lucky enough to see those elevens
I place a hand to my heart, my eyes to the heavens.

Tom Murphy
Greater Cincinnati TCF - East Chapter, OH
In Memory of my son, Brennan Murphy



Subscribe to TCF Magazine

We Need Not Walk Alone, the Magazine of The Compassionate Friends is published quarterly for bereaved parents and professional grief counselors. This is a beautiful publication which has a full color picture of a different butterfly on the cover each quarter. The writings and information in the magazine are tailored specifically for bereaved parents and siblings. The cost is \$20 per year.

To subscribe, write or fax our national TCF office:

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook IL 60522-3696
Phone: (630) 990-0010
Fax: (630) 990-0246

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. We encourage our members to share their memories and thoughts with all of 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.

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) and click on "Register for E-Newsletter" link.

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.



Annual Conference for Bereaved Parents

The Compassionate Friends Conference is scheduled for July 28-30 in Orlando. Check page 6 for details on this most important resource for your unique grief journey. This event is very helpful to newly bereaved parents.

In Memory of Our Beloved Children

Memorials Given by:

Robin Conner

Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen

Sophia Hawker

Terion Peloquin

Suzanne Minks

In Loving Memory of:

Christopher Frederick Wilson

Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer

Andrea Mary Stotfrap Thomsen

David Catalan

Colton Peloquin

Austin Minks

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:

Lisa Leanard
13814 Wheatbridge Drive
Houston, TX 77041

How Dad Copes

It was 14 years on May 31, this year, since our son Nicholas passed away. Wow. I never imagined in a million years this would happen to us. It is difficult to deal with the aching pain I still feel in my heart. Nicholas's friends are getting married and having children. Though we are happy for them, our sadness deepens with the thought of how different it could be if he were still here.

The anxiety that begins to build in the latter part of April in preparation for the anniversary of Nicholas's passing gets stronger and stronger as the day comes near.

Past years were shock years. I couldn't figure out how to deal with it all. I would listen to other parents that are further along in their grief for coping strategies, but it did not seem to help. How could anyone help me heal my heart after it was broken into a trillion pieces?

I have found that speaking about Nicholas to friends, family, and new acquaintances helps me tremendously. At first it was difficult to do because it does make some people uncomfortable. The more I do it, the easier it gets, and the better I feel. Talking about my son has been like a pressure relief valve for me.

I also make time to think about Nicholas and release my emotions. This time alone to reflect and weep brings overwhelming, though temporary, relief. Dads tend to hold back tears and feelings. We like to think we can maintain control. My advice is don't try. Instead, let your feelings go in private at a time and place of your choosing.

Thinking back to the beginning of this tragic event in our lives, I should have sought counseling from a grief therapist. My wife and I both should have done this. I truly believe this would have helped us develop better coping skills. At that time I did not think private counseling would help. I was wrong.

Finally, The Compassionate Friends (TCF) volunteers are available to us all. TCF volunteers understand your loss and the dual problem of "maintaining control" for the sake of our family. Our chapter newsletter lists names and telephone numbers of other fathers and mothers ready and willing to assist us. I am one of the parents who volunteers to talk with grieving fathers. I have even become active in the administrative aspects of our chapter. Now, I tell parents, "we sincerely regret the circumstance that has brought you to this group." This is a club none of us dreamed we would ever join. I thank TCF for helping my family and me, and for allowing me to help others.

*Albert Tapia
In Memory of my son, Nicholas Albert Tapia
TCF, Katy, TX*



A Father's Love Is Priceless

This will be my husband's 15th Father's Day without my son, Todd. My husband and I married when Todd was eight years old. Todd's biological father had little in common with him; my son desperately needed a role model who also provided guidance and structure. One of the reasons I decided to marry John was his real concern and love for my son.

As Todd grew, he and John took many trips together...fishing in Canada and meeting Jimmy Doolittle, skiing in Colorado together, going to car shows, car parts swap meets, always attending Autorama in Houston. Todd confided in John that his dream was to rebuild a GTO and enter it in Autorama. John took Todd to the "Pac Man" Tournament in Houston where Todd placed in the top 10 in the city. These were excursions that Todd and John shared.

John taught Todd how to change the oil and other fluids in a car, rebuild an engine, handle a hammer, measure twice and cut once, use a Shopsmith and other electric tools, lay a solid ceramic tile floor, read a blueprint and so much more that every boy should know.

But most of all, John showed Todd how to love a woman and children with his heart and soul. He never actively gave instructions...his example of gentleness, small gifts, sweet compliments, thoughtfulness, cheerful attitude and perpetual optimism helped to shape the man that my son became.

At Todd's wedding rehearsal dinner, my dad asked each family member what they would like to say to the bride or groom. John tried to express his feelings to Todd but his tendency to wear his emotions on his sleeve overcame him. He ended up in tears. After the speeches, Todd came over and hugged John; I snapped a picture of that moment. It will always be a treasure to John and to me.

After he married, Todd and John continued to do things together. They went to car shows, worked together on projects in Todd's home and our home. At family gatherings they would sit and talk about the world, business activities, career goals and their optimistic dreams for hours at a time.

The last project that Todd and John did together was put up signage for a company that I had inherited from my Dad a few years earlier. They drove 1,000 miles to get there. Those five days were great for them both. Todd worked hard helping John get the signs mounted and winterizing the company's building. He picked out memorabilia that was my dad's to bring home and keep. It was a sentimental journey.

On the trip home, the unthinkable happened. The cruise control was set at 70 mph; a vehicle in the right lane suddenly swerved into John's lane, tapping the Dodge Durango's right front quarter panel. John's automatic reaction was to swerve away from the drifting vehicle. For reasons yet unknown, the airbag deployed, the Durango launched across the median at 70 mph, skidded into the oncoming traffic, slammed into a semi trailer, rolled over and landed on its wheels. Todd suffered massive head injuries and injuries to the right side of his body. John was bruised from the airbag but refused medical treatment.

And so after heroic efforts on the part of an angel nurse who witnessed the accident, Todd was transported to a hospital. The doctors worked feverishly to bring him back. He was stabilized and loaded on a life flight helicopter, but he died a minute later. John was still standing at the heliport when the helicopter landed. "He's gone", they told him. John screamed and cried as he walked alongside the gurney into the hospital. John stayed with Todd for a long time after he died. He talked to him. He called me. He talked to Todd some more. He continued to ask Todd "Why? Why did you die? Why wasn't it me?" This question still haunts him.

So this Father's Day I will remind John how much he did for Todd, how much he contributed to shaping the man that Todd became and how much Todd loved him. There is little else that I can say to this gentle man who wears his emotions on his sleeve, contributed so much to the formation of a very special man and loved my son with all his heart.

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

***National Conference Scheduled
For July 28-30th, 2017***

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. The 2017 Conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Oceans of Hope Photo Frame

This year's Conference Committee will offer a "Oceans of Hope" photo frame. Your loved one's picture will be printed on your choice of six backgrounds and inserted into a curved wooden frame. The frame measures 5-5/8 inches x 7-1/8 inches.

Each photo frame is \$15.00. If you are not attending the National Conference, a \$5.00 additional charge will be added for shipping and handling. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks after the Conference for your "Oceans of Hope" photo frame to reach you. Orders must be placed by June 9, 2017.

Hotel Reservations & Registration

Hotel reservations online or by calling 888.353.2013 at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek.

Go to the Compassionate Friends website (www.compassionatefriends.org) to register for the conference and reserve a hotel room.



Precious Derek

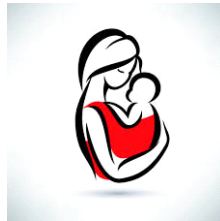
Why did you have to go?
You were so loved, so precious and so young.
You had so much more to give the world,
So much more to experience,
And so many more to love as they did love you.
You taught us so very much, how to live,
How to laugh and how to forgive.

What will we do without you now?
We shall miss you every minute of every day—
Our long talks, our laughs, our togetherness.
We shall never forget your beautiful smile,
Your dark mysterious eyes,
Your handsome face, your sweetness,
Your amusing and charming ways,
Your cautious and sensitive view of life.

A gentleman, a scholar, a philosopher and counselor.
You are an angel now, our spirit of life and truth.
Our son, our brother, our dearest friend.
Yes, we weep for our loss and will miss everything about you,
But we know that you are in God's embrace.
We will meet again.

Rest in eternal peace, Precious Derek

*Written by Diane Elko
In loving Memory of Derek Daniel Elko
TCF, Katy, TX*



For My Son

My Dearest Son,

This year marks seven since you left. Sometimes it seems unbelievable that these many years have separated us. I find myself peering out at some unexpected moments...your birthday and departure date are still challenging. I miss your incredible hugs and your tender, thoughtful ways.

One day we will be reunited.
That will be a day of celebration.

With my heartfelt love,

Mom

*Written by Lynn Nickels
In memory of my son, Aaron Steffens
TCF, Katy, TX*



Coping with the Void

**Meeting; Tuesday, June 13, 2017
Doors Open at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm**

Return Service Requested

13814 Wheatbridge
Houston, TX 77041



The Compassionate Friends