

Newsletter of the Katy, TX, Chapter

MARCH 2018



Chapter Co-Leaders Newsletter Editor Treasurer Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen Annette Mennen Baldwin Terion Peloquin

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.

March Meeting

When: Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Where: Kingsland Baptist Church

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



Program: Reflections on Our Grief Journey

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 February.

Linda Becnel whose son, Jeff Anthony Roberts, died in December 2017 Patricia May whose son, Michael Patrick Esquivel, died in January 2018

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.

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	
March 1		Stephanie Amanda Pena, daughter of David & Rosie Pena	
March 2		Fernando Isaiah Macias, son of Yolanda & Fernando Macias	
March 3		Kevin John Agudelo, son of Luis Fernando & Diana Agudelo	
March 4		Laura Bear, daughter of Don Cagle	
March 5		Christine Yvette Mazyrack, daughter of Steven & Blanca Mazyrack	k
March 6		Gwendolyn Lee Danley, daughter of Bill & Carol Litton	
March 10		Steven Edward Gilmore, son of Ted & Terri Gilmore	
March 12		Donald Joseph Byers, son of George & Peg Byers	
March 12		Keondre Dillon Viser, son of Traci & David Dugas	
March 12		Eric Ray Vigil, son of Jackie Vigil	
March 13		Justin Ryan Swisher, son of Quinton & Stephanie Swisher	
March 13		Steven Nickel, son of James & Bonnie Nickel	
March 14		Stephen Michael Wall, son of Patti Wall	
March 14		Jenna Davis, daughter of Jimmy and Linda Davis	
March 15		Alyssa Guerrero, daughter of Isela & Martin Jimenez	
March 16		Sandra Irene Rubio, daughter of Carlos & Irene Swedberg	* * # . d
March 20		Kasey Samuel Kamischke, son of Mary Cook	·
March 21 March 22		Keith Alan Komorita, son of Judy & Paul Komorita	1 × 1 × 1
March 22 March 23		Stephanie Anne Favorite, daughter of Malena & Ray Lopez Brian Heck, son of Debbie & George Heck	* * *****
March 23		Matthias Leschly Bang, son of Rikke Bang	x
March 24		Mark "Bo" Bean, Jr., son of Tedri Pyle	1
March 25		Russell Knapp, son of Cathy Knapp	A Martin the state
March 25		John Isbell III (Trey), son of Virginia Isbell	Mr. Wast +
March 30		Michael Robert Harris, son of Jamie & Kathy Harris	A. S. WALLS
March 30		Alisha Aleen Gonzalez, daughter of Veronica Gonzalez	
March 31		Sean Ryan Rice, son of Tara Rice	
March 31		Dylan Thomas Rice, son of Tara Rice	
		Anniversaries	W W + X - X - X
March 2017	1 Year	William Bundy Shouse, son of Annie Thompson	A ****
March 2017 March 2017	1 Year	Bryan Richard DeMoss, son of Brett & Lynette DeMoss	+
March 2017 March 2016	2 Years	Phillip Michael Grecsek, son of Mike & Carol Grecsek	4 * *
March 2016	2 Years	David Catalan, son of Sophia Hawker	120
March 2016	2 Years	Angela Iliescu, daughter of Victor & Yan Iliescu	
March 2015	3 Years	Richard Edward Mayoski, son of Richard & Mechele May	voski
March 2014	4 Years	Alyssa Guerrero, daughter if Isela & Martin Jimenez	
March 2011	7 Years	Jared Mathew Sanchez, son of Joseph & Melinda Sanche	ez
March 2011	7 Years	Robert "Hunter" Colvin, son of Susan & Drew Colvin	
March 2010	8 Years	Sean Ryan Rice, son of Tara Rice	
March 2010	8 Years	Dylan Thomas Rice, son of Tara Rice	
March 2010	8 Years	Marijo "Colleen" Smith, daughter of Denise Smith	
March 2009	9 Years	Amy Lynn Ellis Oliver, daughter of Diane Ellis	
March 2009	9 Years	Elijah Manuel Alvardo, son of Martha Alvarado	
March 2009	9 Years	Brandon Alexander Boudoin, son of Wanda Boudoin	_
March 2007	11 Years	Brittany LeeAnn Lewis, daughter of Lisa & Mike Atkinson	
March 2006	12 Years	Teresa Alyss Johnson, daughter of Anna Apanel & Mark	Jonnson
March 2005	13 Years	Roxanne Rene Rangel, daughter of Georgina Rangel	
March 2005	13 Years	Laura Eliska Swails, daughter of Markey Swails	
March 2004	14 Years	Lisa Beth Wieder, daughter of Becky & Dan Wieder	

Katy TCF Volunteers

Cards of Remembrance-Debbie Mercer

 Welcome Cards to new members—Ghislaine Thomsen

 Newsletter—Annette Mennen Baldwin: amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com

 E-mail to group-Annette Mennen Baldwin & Lee Schurman

 Publicity & E-Mail correspondence—Annette Mennen Baldwin

 Picture Buttons—Annette Mennen Baldwin

 Holiday & Craft Projects—Neela Sen

 Welcome Packages —Sherrie Schurman

 Library— Jan Bigbee Weesner

 Web Site— Lee Schurman

 Treasurer 2018—Terion Peloquin

 Snacks—Debbie Mercer

 Facilities Coordinator: Melinda Ginter

 Memorial Bench Maintenance—Need a volunteer

 Grewt Facilitators

 Annette Mennen Baldwin

Group Facilitators - Annette Mennen Baldwin, Jan Bigbee Weesner, Sherrie Schurman, Jo Wood, Terion Peloquin, Debbie & Bill Mercer, Ghislaine Thomas

Chapter Leaders-Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen

Join Our Chapter E-Mail List

Join our chapter e-mail list to receive timely notices, writings, articles, special information and more.

To join, send an email to: tcfkaty. messages@gmail.com. If you signed up but haven't received emails, please send an email so that we can capture your email address correctly.

National TCF Contact Information

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

Southern Texas

www.compassionatefriends.org Mark Rambis Regional Coordinator

Toll Free: (877) 969-0010

March Meeting: Reflections On Our Grief Journey

Often those of us who are newly bereaved or just a few years into our grief wonder if things will change. Will I ever feel differently? What will it be like in five years, ten years? We will be dividing up into groups of 1 year, 2 years, 3+ years. Seasoned grievers who are attending the meeting will speak a bit during the large group and will be available to answer questions in the smaller groups as well.

In April we will be holding our annual Balloon Release, a celebration of our children's lives and a message sent on the winds to our child. We hope you are able to join us for both of these meetings.

Self Help

For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends Group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process.



Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, time with friends, meditation, journaling or intense spiritual conviction. Each day we should take some time to center ourselves, to find a place of peace.

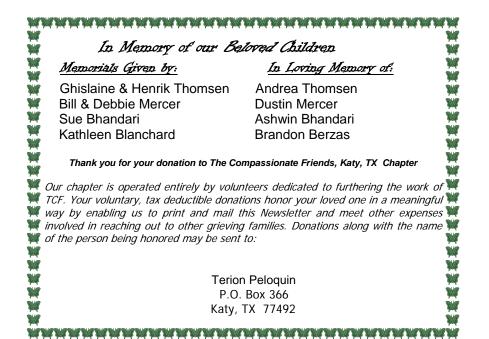
If you haven't already done so, start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even

terrible, days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

> Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen



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.



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in

March or April, please bring a picture or memento to our March meeting to share with the group. In April and De-



cember 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.

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 attend the opening of our meet-

ing 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.

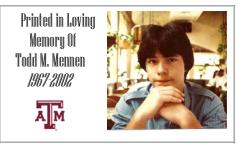
This program is offered only to parents who have lost children to suicide.

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 members.



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Happy Birthday, Keondre

A thousand words won't bring you back; I know because I've tried. Neither will a thousand tears; I know because I've cried.

Written by Kay Dunbar

Submitted by Traci Dugas Remembering my son, Keondre Viser, on his birthday TCF, Katy, TX

Journaling to Heal

Each time I look back over my grief journey, I remember the important role that journaling played in my first and second years of grief. Handwritten entries, some sentences, sometimes just a few words describing my emotions, helped me to define where I was in my daily life. As I review the tearstained pages, I am reminded of the deep, deep pain and the catharsis of the journal. Whether I was angry, in pain, deeply depressed or just too exhausted to think, I wrote a few words, maybe even a few lines each day. I saw it as my connection to my son.

As time progressed, my journaling became writing and eventually I returned to the computer and began forming coherent thoughts and sentences, with subjects and messages to my child, myself and to others. But the process started with the healing of the journal. I learned to be very honest with myself in my journal because I never shared it with anyone. I didn't put on a mask or rationalize in my journal, as no one else would be reading it. I was completely candid, and I soon recognized my weaknesses, regrets, strengths and successes. Pure honesty and great insight were achieved in my journal's conversation with myself.

Grief therapists recommend journaling to bereaved parents quite frequently. Some people are able to find an outlet for their daily roller coaster of emotions through journaling. Some seek answers and others seek questions. Many parents feel they are connecting with their child through their journal. There are as many reasons to journal as there are types of journals.

While journaling may not be for everyone, we encourage each of you to at least attempt it for a week. Give it your best effort. If, as some have found, it offers you nothing and is a chore, not a treasured time, then stop and seek other forms of outlet. But if, as many have found, it offers you a place for your thoughts, your messages, your self-revelation and selfevaluation as well as a refuge from the world, then by all means, continue to journal.

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

As Long As I Can

Sascha Wagner, from the Poems of Sascha Wagner

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us. As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us. As long as I can, I will remember how many things on this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you would want me to live, as long as I can.



"The worst type of crying wasn't the kind everyone could see--the wailing on street corners, the tearing at clothes. No, the worst kind happened when your soul wept and no matter what you did, there was no way to comfort it. A sec-

tion withered and became a scar on the part of your soul that survived. For people like me and Echo, our souls contained more scar tissue than life." ~ Katie McGarry, Pushing the Limits

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.

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.

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 We are here for you.....the newly well. 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.

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 with us.

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

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

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.

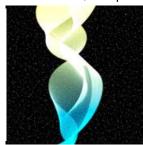


When Will The Pain End?

When I look back over my grief journey, I marvel at how far I have come and yet at how poignant and permanent the loss of my son will always be for me. How can this dichotomy exist within one person's mind?

The horror of the news of my son's death, the shock that slammed my mind into numbness, the unremembered conversations, the plati-

tudes that followed the memorial service and the first two months of living in a complete fog of disbelief are very vivid in my mind. The horror is too real to forget. The next six months of melancholy, miserable mourning are forever locked in my mind. The pure physical pain, the piercing jolts when I momentarily thought of something beyond my child's death and was mercilessly slammed back into the finality of death's amputation



of my son's smile, laughter and physical presence on this earth are etched for eternity in my soul. My mind simply couldn't accept that Todd was gone from this plane. The first anniversary of his death was a horrifying day worsened by a very bleak and foreshadowing conversation with my son's widow. Life would be much different for my husband and me from this point forward. There were no bridges to the past. She made that clear. I was inconsolable from the impact of her wicked words.

But I made it through the first and second years with help from my Compassionate Friends Chapter. I could cry and scream about the injustice of my loss and all that followed, and each parent understood. Eventually I had told my story enough times to enough people that I subconsciously accepted Todd's death and all the changes in my life that followed.

At some point in my second year of grief I began reaching out to others. Helping others, seeing their pain, hearing their tearful words, had become cathartic for me. The more I helped, the more I was helped.

Yes, my son is still with me in my heart and in my memories. The movies of his life play in my mind almost daily. I have made new friends. I have walked away from old acquaintances. I have learned to separate the meaningful from the meaningless. And I have learned that I will always feel the ever-changing pain of my son's death, yet I must always move forward into hope. Each day brings more hope as I accomplish another piece of my lifelong grief work.

So the dichotomy exists within me. In my heart, mind and soul my child will live forever. The memories of the full measure of each day of his life are there to give me peace and solace. Yet, the brutal pain of my son's death is there, too. Unlike any other love in life, a parent's love is unconditional and transcends all. There is a peace in knowing that. The pain doesn't end. It simply reshapes itself into a quiet, soft ache that gives us a gentle, often tearful, reminder that our child will always be with us. And perhaps that is as it should be.

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

The Path To Peace

The path to peace is found by searching, by reaching out to every resource available. We will reject much of what we find; but if we search, we will find what we need.

For many of us, finding other bereaved parents presents an opportunity to listen to the stories of their child and their journey and, within those stories, we find many threads that fit our unique journey. Many stories, many journeys, many new threads are shared in group discussion and in private discussions. We find "seasoned" grievers who provide perspective on our feelings, and listen to our story. We find newly bereaved parents who touch our hearts and remind us how we have built our path to peace brick by brick. Their pain brings reflection and new revelations about our own grief journey.

I found kindred souls at Compassionate Friends. These kindred souls have allowed me to explore the various aspects of my being and gradually create a path of peace for myself. But the journey does not suddenly end. We walk this path for the rest of our lives. And if we do the hard work and face our demons early on, we accept the unacceptable and face life on our own terms. And that is as it should be.

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

The Family Tree

About 10 years ago I decided to take advantage of the fantastic data available on the internet and start researching my family tree again. I entered some of the information I had found in my travels over the past 35 years, continued to get "hints", and followed the family tree back to the 1600's on some lines. I began thinking of bringing the ancestors to life, writing stories about their lives and the events in Europe that convinced them to leave.

Then I entered my son's name: first his birth date, then his death date. It felt strange to enter this into my family tree. He had shared my joy in researching the family tree for so many years. Now his life looked incomplete. Like so many others in our family tree, Todd did not live to see his children grow into adulthood. He missed so much. I vowed to continue my research and expand the tree as much as possible.

As emails came from the on-line provider, I anticipated opening each to see what new information awaited me. And then an e-mail came that stopped me cold in my tracks: My son's name had a "hint." Did I want to look at this? For a few days I ignored it. Finally, I opened it.

As I linked into the record, tears filled my eyes. The social security death index showed my son's name. The finality of that was nearly as painful as his death certificate. He is gone; the world can see that he is gone. He will be remembered on the family tree and in the social security death index. The muted light of my new reality floated into my mind: I understood that while I live, my child will be unconditionally loved, and his life's details will be my treasure. And that, too, is as it should be.

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

"What we have once enjoyed deeply we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us." ~Helen Keller

Bo's Place Is Open In Katy

The Katy Bo's Place program currently meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month near Highland Knolls and S. Fry. The group consists of families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 who have experienced the death of a child or parent. However, the Katy program is currently full. We have space available at the Houston location for immediate needs. We are building a waiting list of families interested in the Katy group and are looking into finding a larger space so that we can accommodate more families.

If you know of a family who is interested in joining the group, here is more information about the process. The first step for families to join is to call our main number (713-942-8339) and talk to a member of our program staff for a phone interview. This phone interview usually takes 20 to 30 minutes.



Memories

The certain special memories That follow me each day, Cast your shadow in my life In a certain way.



Sometimes the blowing wind Or the lyrics of a song Make me stop and think of you Sometimes all day long

Memories are good to have To share and keep in my heart, Just knowing that you're still inside Makes sure we'll never part.

> Collette Covington TCF Lake Charles, LA

"There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go." \sim Nancy Stephan



Chapter Leaders' Contact Information Ghislaine Thomsen, Andrea's mom 713-557-6637 Thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com Bill and Debbie Mercer, Dustin's parents. Bill Mercer 070, 700, 7429

Bill Mercer 979-709-7438 Debbie Mercer 979-709-2557 billdebbiemercertcf@gmail.com

Updates for Newsletter Delivery

Each year in March, we remove names from our US Mail list and add these to our email list. This occurs at least two years after you have attended your first meeting. The reason we do this is the cost of postage and printing for our rapidly growing chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

If you have an extenuating circumstance (no computer access, vision problems, inability to read on a computer), please let us know and we will retain you on our US Postal mailing list. Please call or send an email to Annette Baldwin at 281 578 9118, tcfkaty. messages@gmail.com if you do NOT want to removed from the US mail list.

This change began a year ago (March 2017). In two months time, we will be making the changes on our Children Remembered list for parents who have moved away or moved forward in their lives and no longer want their child included in our listings.

Small Bits of Grief

"I can only bite off chunks of grief in bits and pieces. How else would I manage to get out of bed?" Desire' Aguirre

As with a four-course dinner, we must take our grief in small bits. The totality of our loss, the shattering of psyche and the horrific blow to our brains is just too much to absorb at one time. Shock is nature's cushion. When shock subsides, our reality is a

physical pain, an ache from deep inside that radiates throughout bodies. The grief fever is real. Once this subsides, we endure the emotional agony and the kick in the gut that comes unannounced.

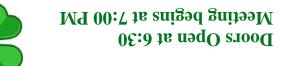
This quotation is very profound for both the newly bereaved and those of us who are much further down the road of grief. The loss of our child will be the single most defining factor in our lives. However, if we do our grief work and all that this entails, we will



eventually arrive at something akin to a new normal. Life will never be the same. We will never be the same. But we carry our children forward with us in our hearts and minds, imagining all that could have been and accepting that things were not meant to be.

I have managed to find a serenity and purpose in my life, yet the thrill of living is not the peaks, the sadness is not the valleys. Life now is "steady as you go." My compassion for others is almost automatic now, my understanding of the macro perspective of life is deeper and wider than ever before. I guess there is much to be learned on this journey. But it is a painful education.

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



Meeting: March 13, 2018 Topic: Reflections Our Grief Journey



Katy Chapter 136 Cannon Street Clute, TX 77531

Return Address: TheCompassionate Friends