



Supporting Families
After a Child, Sibling,
or Grandchild Dies

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

TCF - KATY Chapter Newsletter July 2020



Chapter Co-Leaders Terion Peloquin, Carolyn Porter and Ghislaine Thomsen
Newsletter Editor Ghislaine Thomsen
Treasurer 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.

*** July Meetings ***

- We invite you to join us via ZOOM on Tuesday, July 14th
 - Our sibling group will meet separately on the second Thursday of the month, on July 16th
 - Please look at the details on page 3.
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- **Tuesday, July 14, 2020** **7:00PM - Meeting begins**
 - How do we take time for ourselves during our early grief?
 - When are the big waves of grief most likely to hit me?
 - **Thursday, July 16, 2020** **7:00 PM - Meetings begins**
 - **SIBLING MEETING** hosted by Jill and Stephanie
 - **Tuesday, July 28, 2020** **RSVP requested** **6:30 PM - Meeting begins**
 - **Let's celebrate our loved ones!!**
 - Join us for an In person SOCIAL DISTANCING meeting at Cinco Ranch Beach Park, dinner will be provided by the Katy chapter, and we will end with a floating lantern release.
 - Masks or face shields required. Please bring your own lawn chair
 - we will have masks and face shields on hand, along with sanitizers.

Our members will receive an invitation via E-MAIL to join the zoom meetings online. You may download the ZOOM app on your phone or tablet, or you can join via telephone or your desktop.

[See page 3 for instructions](#)

Welcome

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

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, a sibling or grandchild to death. Each of us has experienced the deep, searing pain that you are feeling now. Each of us has turned to other parents, siblings, or grandparents 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 families 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, siblings and grandparents 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, siblings or grandchildren, the wonderful memories and the various methods we have created to keep them close to us. It is here that many bereaved families 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

3	Tosha Danae Reese	Daughter of	Jason & Sherry Pierce
4	Clayton Brooks Prine	Son of	Mary & Bruce Prine
5	Mario (Mijo) Escareno, Jr.	Son of	Viola Escareno
6	Whitney Ann Grissom	Daughter of	Janet Johnson
7	Elizabeth Anne Chamberlain	Daughter of	David & Colleen Chamberlain
9	Angel Batrez	Daughter of	Tony & Stephanie Batrez
10	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer	Daughter of	Robin Conner-Larsen
10	Zachary Taylor Devane	Son of	Ben & Chantel Devane
10	Blair Giles Benson	Child of	Fred & Sherry Benson
11	Lauren Wiese	Daughter of	Sheryl & David Wiese
12	Juliete Eileen Oretaga	Daughter of	Jennifer Herrera
13	Lillian "Lilli" Grace Curry	Daughter of	Kay & John Curry
14	Angela Iliescu	Daughter of	Victor & Yan Iliescu
15	Ryan Evan Fissell	Son of	Mark & Nanette Fissell
17	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit	Daughter of	Re & E.J. Gilbert
17	Stell Ann Vargas	Daughter of	Michael & Lourdes Vargas
20	Michelle Desai	Daughter of	Afiong Etiese
20	Paul LaVigne	Son of	Dena Bonner
24	Alysa Gay Wiggins	Daughter of	David & Arlene Brunn
25	Ashley Elizabeth Sutton	Daughter of	Patty Sutton
25	Carson Cade Broussard	Son of	Desiree Broussard
26	Amber Nichole Long	Daughter of	Tricia Apostolo
27	Evan Thomas Miles	Son of	Christie & Matt Miles
29	Samuel Arrendende	Son of	Lizbeth & Francisco Arredondo
30	Zachary Wilson Morris	Son of	Michael & Lisa Morris
31	John Michael Moore	Son of	Jeff Moore & Sue Reichl



Anniversaries

1	Years	Nicholas (Nick) Allen Smith	Son of	Craig & Peggy Smith
1	Year	Stell Ann Vargas	Daughter of	Michael & Lourdes Vargas
2	Years	Michelle Desai	Daughter of	Afiong Etiese
3	Years	Paul Thomas Brueckner	Son of	Karl & Jennifer Brueckner
4	Years	Austin Michael Minks	Son of	Leonard & Suzanne Minks
5	Year	Colby Patrick Brennan	Son of	Patrick & Mary Brennan
5	Years	Andréa Mary Støttrup Thomsen	Sister of	Elizabeth Thomsen
5	Years	Andréa Mary Støttrup Thomsen	Daughter of	Henrik & Ghislaine Thomsen
5	Years	Andréa Mary Støttrup Thomsen	Sister of	Stephanie Thomsen
6	Years	Keven Lewis	Son of	Mary & Richard Lewis
7	Years	Alicia Ann Norman	Daughter of	Bill & Vicki Norman
8	Years	Mark Moellendorf	Son of	Don Cagle
10	Years	Juliete Eileen Oretaga	Daughter of	Jennifer Herrera
10	Years	Fernando Isaiah Macias	Son of	Yolanda & Fernando Macias
11	Years	Harley Johannes Hammack	Daughter of	Susan Hammack
12	Years	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer	Daughter of	Robin Conner-Larsen
15	Years	Christopher Frederick Wilson	Son of	Robin Conner-Larsen
16	Years	Steven Edward Gilmore	Son of	Ted & Terri Gilmore
18	Years	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit	Daughter of	Re & E.J. Gilbert



In your child's birth month, you are invited to bring a special photograph or keepsake of your loved one to share with the group. If you are unable to attend the meeting during your loved one's birth month, please feel free to choose another month to share with us

Katy TCF Volunteers

Cards of Remembrance -	Mary Brennan
Welcome Cards to new members -	Mary Brennan
Newsletter, Social Media & E-Mail correspondence -	Ghislaine Thomsen
Website -	Dustin Brennan
Picture Buttons -	Looking for volunteer
Holiday & Craft Projects -	Neela Sen
Welcome Packages -	Carol Greczek
Treasurer -	Terion Peloquin
Snacks -	Carolyn Porter
Facilities Coordinator -	Melinda Ginter
Memorial Bench Maintenance -	Neela Sen
Sibling Coordinator -	Jill Greczek
Group Facilitators -	Terion Peloquin, Carolyn Porter, Ghislaine Thomsen, Jo Wood



Chapter Leaders

Terion Peloquin, Carolyn Porter and Ghislaine Thomsen



National TCF Contact Information

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



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

Henrik Thomsen
Regional Coordinator, Southern Texas
713-557-6637 or thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com

Welcome..

We extend a warm welcome to the newly bereaved families who attended their first meeting in April!

PLEASE READ: IMPORTANT MESSAGE

**TCF -KATY
is inviting you
to July Zoom
meetings**

Join our Zoom Meetings

- **Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2020**
Time: 07:00 PM Central Time
- **Topic: How do we take time for ourselves during our early grief?**
 - When are the big waves of grief most likely to hit me?
- **Thursday, July 16, 2020**
Time: 7:00 PM Central Time
 - **SIBLING MEETING**
Hosted by Jill and Stephanie ZOOM Meeting ID:869 6606 7161
Please contact Stephanie at 713-824-0873 or email thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com for the meeting password.

From your desktop computer, go to www.zoom.us, click on Join Meeting, enter meeting ID and password
From your tablet on phone, download the ZOOM App, then join meeting and enter Meeting ID and Password
To join us by phone, Dial (346)2487799, then enter your meeting ID and password.



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.

<i>Accidental Death of Child Living at Home :</i>	Jo (281) 795-3235
<i>Loss of an Adult Child:</i>	Ghislaine (713) 557-6637
<i>Only Child:</i>	Annette (281) 578-9118
<i>Murdered Child: ** Looking for Volunteer</i>	Ghislaine (713) 557-6637
<i>Neonatal Loss:</i>	M.E.N.D (405) 529-6363
<i>Death of a child from Addiction or Related Cause:</i>	Terion (713) 907-6250
<i>Death of Teenage Child:</i>	Jo (281) 795-3235
<i>Accidental Death of Adult Child:</i>	Annette (281) 578-9118
<i>Death from long term illness:</i>	Karen (832) 746-0279
<i>Support for Fathers:</i>	Bill (979) 265-9417
<i>Special Needs Child:</i>	Neela (713) 870-7296
<i>Suicide:</i>	Carolyn (281) 574-5715
<i>Sibling Loss:</i>	Stephanie (713)824-0873

Special Small Group Meeting For Families Whose Child, Sibling or Grandchild 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 Families Whose Child, Sibling or Grandchild 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 Young Children Meet in Private Group

If your child was still a minor and living at home (whether your child was 2 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.

SIBLINGS WALKING TOGETHER

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.

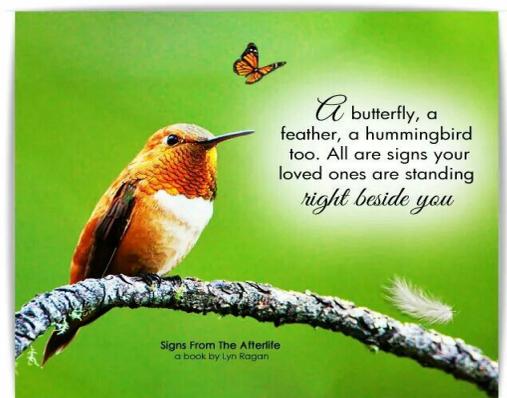
Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.



July Birthday Table

If your loved one's birthday is in July, show us a picture or memento of your child, sibling or grandchild, during our Zoom meeting. Tell us a few words about your loved one.



SAVE THE DATES!

JULY 28, 2020
6:30 PM
IN PERSON MEETING
(Special Location)



**CINCO RANCH BEACH CLUB
 PARK and PAVILLON ACROSS
 FROM THE BEACH CLUB
 3131 S Lake Village Dr
 Katy, TX 77450**

**LET'S CELEBRATE
 OUR LOVED ONES!**

Join us for an **In person SOCIAL DISTANCING** meeting at **Cinco Ranch Beach Park!**
Dinner will be provided by the Katy chapter

Masks or face shields required.

Please bring your own lawn chair

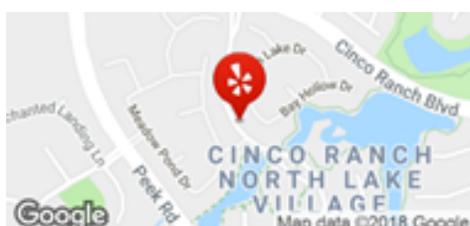
We will have masks and face shields on hand, along with sanitizers.

We will have an informal meeting and celebrate our children, siblings or grandchildren! We will end this beautiful evening with a moving FLOATING LANTERN RELEASE!

The lanterns are biodegradable, and you will be able to write a note to your loved one(s).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Ghislaine Thomsen 713-557-6637
 thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com**



43rd TCF National Conference July 31 - August 2

**WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE TCF'S FIRST
 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
 PLEASE SAVE THE DATE –
 FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 TO SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020**

Thank you to all who completed our survey last month requesting feedback about conference alternatives due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We had over 1,000 responses with overwhelming support for TCF to offer the safer option of a virtual national conference this year. Since that time, we have been working diligently to evaluate the possibility of organizing a virtual conference.

TCF's Virtual Conference will provide an important opportunity for our community to connect in a way that is feasible right now. It also offers the opportunity for many people to attend who may not have been able to do so in the past for a variety of reasons.

The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Sessions
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment

Additional information:

The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.

Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17th, 2020.

Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks. Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

Although we would all love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through a virtual event. We will continue to navigate this new environment we're in and we hope you will join us!

Registration will open soon, and we will make an announcement with a registration link provided when that happens. For now, please save the dates and look forward to connecting virtually with your TCF family through an enriching and inspiring virtual event.

Sincerely,

Shari O'Loughlin
 Connor's Mom & Patti's Sister
 Chief Executive Officer

**SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE TCF NATIONAL VIRTUAL
 CONFERENCE will be available through
 TCF - South Texas Region 15, organized in Memory of
 Andréa Mary Støttrup Thomsen
 Please contact The Thomsens at 713-557-6637 or
 Tcfsouthtexas@gmail.com for more information.**

Self-care during grief can help you suffer less in mind, body and spirit.

Just doing one of them can start the ball rolling, so don't feel like you need to do all 9 at once. The list is in no particular order, so scan through and pick one or two that feels "doable." In a few days, try one more. Don't worry if you backslide from time to time, just do your best!

1. Be Kind To Yourself

Grief is painful, and though it may seem far-fetched, there is one person capable of offering you comfort 24 hours a day and seven days a week. That person is you. While self-compassion is not a cultural norm, it should be. Self-compassion has tremendous healing power, and even makes us nicer to be around for others. Treat yourself as you would treat a beloved friend, in word, thought and deed. Give yourself space to feel the pain of grief, and also give yourself permission to take a break when you need it.

Try This Self-Care Practice: Place one hand on your heart, and the other hand on your cheek. Say to yourself "I care about you. I care about you." This is a radical act of self-care and kindness!

2. Get A Check-Up

When you are grieving, your risk for illness increases due to stress. And while grief is a natural reaction to loss, and not an illness itself, this is a good time good time to check in with a healthcare professional. This check-up will give you the opportunity to attend to any pre-existing health conditions that the stress of grief could negatively impact.

3. Get The Right Amount Of Sleep

If you are experiencing grief-related insomnia, follow these good sleep hygiene for grief. If you are sleeping more than you did before your loss, know that this, too, is normal, and may be exactly what you need. If too much sleep is impacting you negatively, in addition to practicing good sleep hygiene, increase your exposure to sunlight, particularly upon waking.

4. Eat Healthy, Drink Water

This is tough for some of us even when we are not grieving, but now is the time to tend to your body with regular, healthy meals. Drink plenty of water, as it will help your physical and mental state. Avoid alcohol, as it can upset your sleep schedule and depress your mood.

5. Breathe Mindfully

Breathing fully and with intention accomplishes two things. First, it turns off the stress response known as fight-flight-freeze. Second, it focuses your mind on the present moment, which can stimulate your mental well-being.

Try This Self-Care Practice: Take several one to five minute breaks throughout the day. Close your eyes and take three long breaths—focus on creating a nice, long exhale. Spend the next few minutes just focusing on your natural breath.

6. Move Your Body

The right kind of physical movement will help your body release the tension and pain that comes with grief. Whether you take a leisurely stroll outside, practice yoga for grief, or go back to the gym, exercise will contribute to better sleep, mental stability, and an overall sense of well-being. Bonus points if you breathe and drink water while you exercise!

7. Connect With Others

One of the most important things you can do for your physical and mental well-being is to connect with other human beings (and animals!) who care about you. Go for a walk with a trusted friend, or schedule lunch with a family member with whom you can share mutual support. Sometimes when we are grieving we feel like our existing support system has fallen apart, so consider joining a peer support group or schedule an appointment with a compassionate grief counselor or therapist who is comfortable talking about grief.

8. Express & Create

You do not need to be a professional writer or artist to benefit from creative expression. Putting your thought and feelings into word and pictures can help you make sense out of seemingly senseless feelings. Write daily in your grief journal, or make a collage to express your grief with magazines and glue sticks. Crafting activities, such as knitting and drawing in adult coloring books, can help you focus and activate the creative side of your brain, which can increase your resilience and contribute to a better sense of well-being.

9. Meditate

There are many forms of meditation to help with grief. This includes contemplative prayer, mindfulness and mantra based meditations, focus and breath practices, guided visualization, walking meditation and yoga (meditation in motion). Meditation helps you take control of your mind and stay in the present, which contributes to your mental well-being. Practice regularly. The frequency with which you practice is more important than the length of your individual session. Start with two to five minutes a day. If you can, work up to 10 to 20 minutes a day.

By Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT

TCFE-Newsletter

An E-Newsletter is available through the National TCF Organization.

To subscribe, go to TCF's National website home page (www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on Register for E-Newsletter's link.

A Noteto 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 family. 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" 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 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.



The Katy Chapter of the Compassionate Friends makes free buttons for all parents, siblings and grand-parents who provide us with a picture or send a digital picture of their child.

If you would like to have a **picture button** for your child, please email the digital file to thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com or give the picture to Carolyn, Terion, or Ghislaine at a meeting.

In Memory of Our Beloved Children

Memorials Given By:
The Thomsen Family
Patrick and Mary Brennan

In Loving Memory Of:
Andréa Mary Støttrup Thomsen
Colby Brennan

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:

Terion Peloquin P.O. Box 366 Katy, TX 77492

Tears are the silent language of grief.

Voltaire

TheAfterloss.com

JULY

July is a month that is filled with emotions for me. July 10th should have been my daughter's 45th birthday. Dawn died on July 19th at the age of 33 due to a car accident in 2008.

On July 24th, 2005, my son Christopher was murdered. He was just 28 years old. He would have turned 43 last month. This happened 15 years ago.

I am not sure where the time went. When we are at the beginning of our grief, it seems that time goes by very slowly. It is hard to fathom a normal life again. We all know it will never be normal. That was then, and this is now our new reality. Our lives changed forever.

I am here to tell you that it does get better. Immediately after losing your child, you do not think it will ever get better. Yes, we will miss them forever, but it tends not to hurt as much as the years pass. We have only our memories, but we have accepted this fact.

Somehow we learn to smile again and laugh. At first, we feel guilt about that; we ask ourselves, how can I be happy when my child is gone, we ask ourselves. We do get there gradually.

If you have been lucky enough to find The Compassionate Friends, then you are one step closer to healing and using your new tools to help you along your unique grief journey.

I remember after Christopher died, all I did was cry. I probably went to 6 or 7 meetings before I could sit through one without crying.

The women who came before me helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

They gave me hope, and I was able to deal with my grief, and I was able to channel that by helping others that were new to their grief and pain. That is the way it works there. We are all in the same situation, although our circumstances may vary.

By getting involved and by helping others, I had a purpose back in my life again. My advice is to get involved when you feel ready. To continue the friendships you have made along your journey.

It is such a blessing to help others and give them comfort. You are also blessing yourself at the same time.

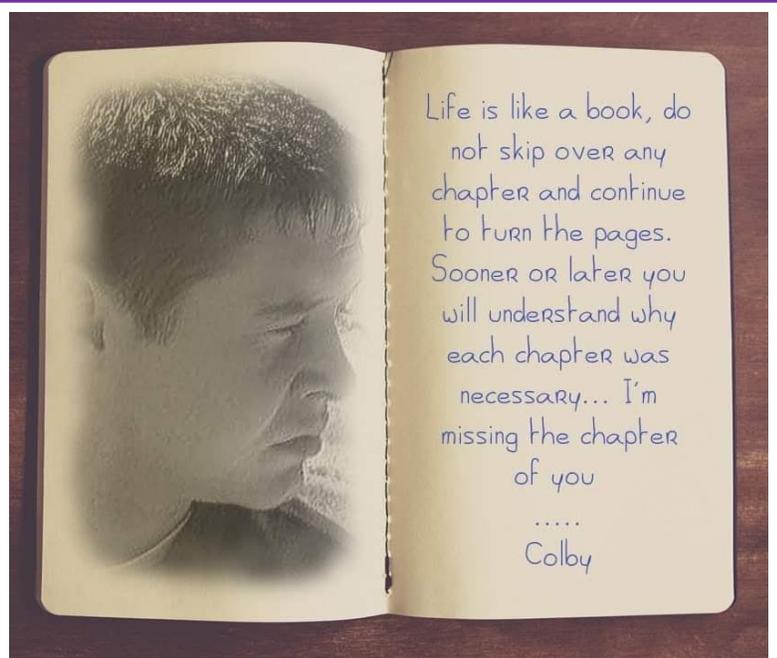
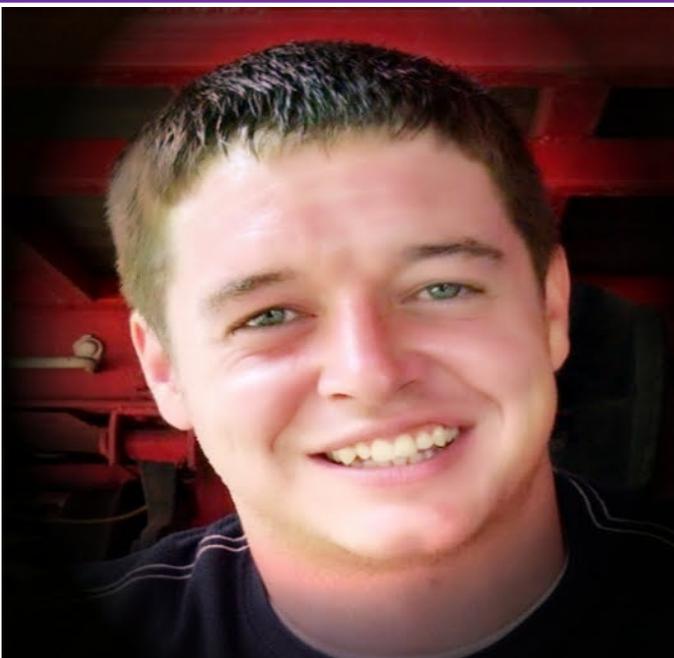
We all have different stories, and we need to share them. I guarantee you will help someone along the way.

I learned so much along my journey. I believe that you come out a better, albeit, a different person after you have experienced the death of a child. I have learned the true meaning of forgiveness after losing my son. I was able to look his killer in the eye and forgive him. I told him that the forgiveness was for me, so I could let go of the anger. Forgiving and releasing my anger has worked for the last 15 years for me. If you are in a similar situation, please try not to be a bitter or angry person. If you are able to forgive, it will change your life in ways you never knew were possible.

Being involved in The Compassionate Friends is the right place to be. They saved my life twice, and I will always be indebted to them. Hang in there, and it will get better.



In Loving Memory of My Children
 Christopher Wilson, 1977-2005
 Dawn Wilson-Shafer, 1975-2008
 Robin Conner



Life is like a book, do not skip over any chapter and continue to turn the pages. Sooner or later you will understand why each chapter was necessary... I'm missing the chapter of you

 Colby

Colby Patrick Brennan

5 year Angelversary 7/29/15

Dearly loved and missed! I treasure the 28 yrs we had together and look forward to the day I get to hold you in my arms again and hear you say: "Hey Mama, what's up?"

Love,
 Mama





5 years!

How can I explain the dimension that these 2 words take for me?

If I write today, it is because it is important for me to explain how to survive the death of her child. It is not a sad message, but rather a reality of what many bereaved families are going through, and it may help to understand.

When on July 4, 2015, a policeman rang at our door at 10:50 p.m., we suspected that it could not be good news! I will always remember the color of his skin. It was gray! We could feel his pain in announcing the news to us. I thought she was in the hospital. A traffic accident, of course, but she was going to make it. There was no doubt in my mind. "No, ma'am .. I am sorry .. your daughter has passed! I am really sorry."

These words are forever engraved in me.

July 4th, national holiday in the US, fireworks, everyone celebrates! Happy Birthday America! My daughter joined the land of stars on July 4, as did so many innocent victims in my hometown of Nice, France, on July 14, 2016, France's Bastille Day. Every year, we dread birthdays of course, but when the whole country celebrates this day with joy and the fireworks are multiple, it's even more painful. Every July 14, I think of all these families who, like us, dread this day.

After the shock of the first year, reality fell on us like as if we had been hit by a train! It should have been expected, but nothing prepares us for this intense open sore that gets deeper every day. For my part, I forced myself to accept the death of my daughter. I went through all the stages, several times, and finally I understood that to be able to continue to live for my daughters and my husband, and to continue to be the voice of Andréa, and to get better, I had to find a new goal! I found this new goal only after accepting that Andréa was never coming back.

I immersed myself, body and soul, in supporting families who have lost a child. The Compassionate Friends has thousands of volunteers, like me, who too have lost a child, and who fully understand what other parents, brothers and sisters, or grandparents feel. Organizing workshops, monthly meetings, organizing conferences, raising funds to make these programs free, that is my new goal. My professional career holds an essential place in my life, of course, but my passion is to be there for those whose heart was broken by the death of one of their children.

Finding a way to get better, and I mean getting better, because we will never be the same, gave me a certain taste for life. We will never forget because love is eternal. We will continue to talk about Andréa until our last breath is taken. We are no longer sad every day, but yes, there is a deep sadness that will always be in us. We do not cry every day, luckily, but we miss her to a point that is hard to understand, and some days we are engulfed by 100 feet high waves.

So, I come back to these 5 years! Yes 2 words which haunt me since the reality settled. 5 years, 10 years, 15, 20 .. For 3 years, I had organized, first in my head, and then concretely, a celebration of Andrea's life this July 4, 2020. We were going to go to Denmark and make a small trip that Henrik had made after the death of his father. We were going to take her with us, go around Denmark, and come back to Nice to celebrate the 24 years that she was with us, and meet up at Coco Beach on July 4 at 9:50 p.m., a magical place where we spread her ashes 5 years ago. We would have sent her flowers, drank champagne, played her favorite music .. in short, a day for her!

Covid-19 is here, and of course everything has changed, again. Very disappointed, but then my daughters and Henrik said to me ..you know, as long as the four of us are together, she'll be there with us anyway .. It's true, no matter where we are, Andréa is always present. It will be an "Andréa Day", certainly with sadness, but also with anecdotes, fun, and a day that will be remembered for a long time. Fireworks will surely be present from afar, but July 4 is now, not only America's Birthday, but above all a celebration of Andréa's life. From up above, somewhere in the stars, I know she will send us a sign!

I will close by thanking you for reading this long message and reminding you that bereaved families love to hear the names of those who left too soon. This is proof that they exist and that you remember them. It is important!



Andréa, ma chérie, thank you for accompanying me at all times on this path of eternal love!

Je t'aime et je t'adore ~ Maman

Celine Dion was Andréa's favorite female singer. She knows loss as her sister, her brother and beloved husband passed. In September 2019, she released this beautiful song, that so many of us can relate to. It made me cry, but crying is part of the grieving process. I wanted to share it with you. Perhaps you will want to share it with others too.

In Memory of our beloved Andréa
Ghislaine Thomsen

Courage

By Céline Dion

I would be lying if I said: "I'm fine"
I think of you at least a hundred times
'Cause in the echo of my voice I hear your words
Just like you're there
I still come home from a long day
So much to talk about, so much to say
I love to think that we're still making plans

In conversations that'll never end
In conversations that'll never end

Courage, don't you dare fail me now
I need you to keep away the doubts
I'm staring in the face of something new
You're all I got to hold on to
So, courage, don't you dare fail me now

Not one to hide from the truth, I know
It's outta my hands but I won't let you go
There's no replacing the way you touched me
I still feel the rush
Sometimes it drowns me 'til I can't breathe
Thinking it's only in our memories
But, then I talk to you like I did then

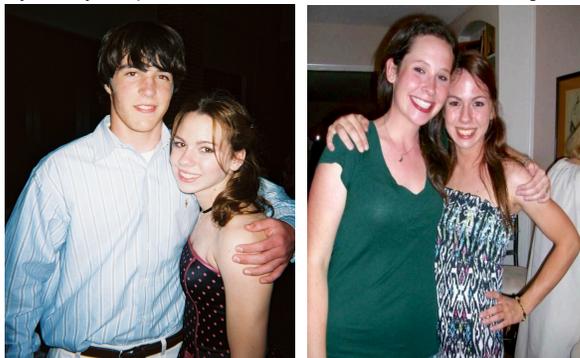
In conversations that will never end

Courage, don't you dare fail me now
I need you to keep away the doubts
I'm staring in the face of something new
You're all I got to hold on to
So, courage, don't you dare fail me now

'Cause it's not easy when you're not with me
This world of madness goes faster now
And it's a train wreck but I won't crash yet
Long as your echo never fades out

Courage, don't you dare fail me now
'Cause it's not easy when you're not with me
This world of madness goes faster now
And it's a train wreck but I won't crash yet
Long as your echo never fades out
Courage, don't you dare fail me now

Lyrics by Stephan Moccio, Erik Alcock and Liz Rodrigues



*This newsletter is edited in loving Memory of
Andréa Mary S. Thomsen,
Forever 24, Forever Missed, Forever Loved,
here pictured with her beautiful friends,
Mark Reilly and Mary Rachael Werle
who have joined her in Heaven*

A CELEBRATION TEMPERED BY NOSTALGIA

On June 16 we celebrated our 47th anniversary but it was intermingled with sadness because our dearest Robin is not with us anymore. It has been just over 13 1/2 years since he departed this earth on August 10th, 2006 and not a day goes by without us thinking about him. We remember him every day when we get up in the morning and before we go to sleep at night. When Robin first passed away, it was very hard to come to terms with our sense of despair and loss. Once we discovered The Compassionate Friends and met so many other parents grieving for their lost children, we experienced what true empathy is all about. Nevertheless, we still feel sorrow when we look at our old photo albums of us all together and just think of how very happy we were.

From the time that Robin was a little tot, his curly hair, huge black-brown eyes, infectious smile and engaging ways attracted others to him. He had many friends while growing up like Siddu and Sheila Majumdar, Angana and Ankit Patel, Holly and Chadwick Moore, Jimmy Kwit and assorted children who went to daycare with him in Naperville, Illinois where we lived until Robin was 13. He developed a great rapport with both teachers and fellow students throughout his elementary, middle school and high school days. Physical activity proved to be a uphill battle for our son and he had difficulty walking on grass or uneven surfaces. We noticed that he would go up and downstairs one step at a time but did not realize that the diagnosis would have such dire consequences later on in life for him.

It is said that "when the Lord closes one door, he opens a thousand windows" and in Robin's case, it is definitely true. He was brilliant as a thinker, academician, artistic and linguistically gifted. He used his wacky sense of humor to ensure that he never took himself and others too seriously. The only time he ever complained about his personal condition is when he first knew that he had Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, and burst out with the desperate question of "Why didn't you abort me, Mom?" After that, he bravely met every challenge that fate threw at him and displayed a stoic "stiff upper-lip" unlike any other young adult we have ever met. When he went to MDA camp, counselors and the administrators would tell us how fascinating he was to converse with.

While he attended Camp Hoover in Yorkville, Illinois, located some 15 miles from Naperville, he was befriended by another boy who also had Duchenne and they became inseparable. Hugh Cummings had 2 sisters, Patti and Elizabeth and also lived in Naperville. Right before we moved down to Houston, I took the 2 boys to the Chicago Zoo and they enjoyed each other's company in their last adventure together. I was able to take copious photographs and corresponded with Leslie, Hugh's mother until his death in October, 2000. Robin was saddened to learn about Hugh's passing and lamented that we had not been able to go back to visit Naperville as we had planned in 1996 due to flooding in the Midwest.

Life has not been the same since Robin left us but the pain has diminished with the passage of time. It is only when we encounter milestones in our lives like anniversaries, birthdays and important events that we feel the onslaught of renewed grief. Those who do not understand that "the loss of a child is the worst thing that can ever happen to any parent", we say that we always think that could never happen to us but when it does, we are utterly overwhelmed by our grief. It is only now, that we know how much Robin meant to us and must comfort ourselves by remembering the adage "better to have loved and lost, then never to have loved at all." We have to be grateful for the experience of ever having been parents to such an unforgettable child and cherish our brief time with him forever!

Lovingly submitted by Robin's mom, Neela Sen



The Compassionate Friends
Katy , TX Chapter



**Remembering our beautiful
Children, Siblings and Grandchildren
Cherished Always
Forever Loved
You Will Remain
In Our Hearts Forevermore**



TCF - Katy Chapter

www.compassionatefriends-katy.org



**TCF - KATY
WOULD LIKE YOUR FEEDBACK!**

As we navigate through this ever changing Covid-19 pandemic, we are realizing that more than ever, we need to stay in touch, especially so for bereaved families.

Since last month, we have been meeting twice each month via Zoom; on the second Tuesday of the month and on the 4th Tuesday of the month.

Our Sibling group meets via Zoom on the 2nd. Thursday of each month.

We were hoping to offer an in person meeting outdoors, with social distancing this month; unfortunately, we feel that amid the rise in Covid cases in our area, it is prudent to postpone our in person meeting in August!

Once our lives go back to normal, and we are, once again, able to meet at the church, we will continue the zoom meeting on the 4th Tuesday of each month, and our siblings will continue their monthly zoom meeting.

Many of you do not like to drive at night, or live far away, and that may be an added tool that will benefit everyone.

We would love to hear from you, if you have any suggestions on how to improve the support that we offer our bereaved families!

Your opinion is very important to us, so don't be afraid to send suggestions, comments, thoughts on how we can improve our chapter! We really are here to serve you, so that you do not walk alone!

You can e-mail your comments to thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com .

We Need Not Walk Alone



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