



## Newsletter of the Katy, TX, Chapter

# OCTOBER 2019



Chapter Co-Leaders  
Newsletter Editor  
Treasurer

Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen Annette  
Mennen Baldwin for Ghislaine Thomsen  
Terion Pelouquin

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.

### \*\*\*October Meeting \*\*\*

When: Tuesday, October 8, 2019

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

Where: **Kingsland Baptist Church**

20555 Kingsland Blvd,  
Katy, TX 77450

**Meeting Room Change  
2nd Floor**

**Meeting in Room C231, C233, C235, C237 To  
Enter the building from the BACK parking lot**

Program: Preserving Memories

#### 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.



### Topic of October Meeting: "If Only..."

We all have had the "if only" moments on our grief journey. These moments begin when we reflect on our choices, behavior, and emotions prior to our child's death. For instance, "if only I had not..." or "If only I had"...

The reality is that these small choices were natural at the time, and only now do we second-guess ourselves.

Co-chapter leader Debbie Mercer will be presenting information about these horrifying thoughts and how to overcome or diminish these and other negative thoughts on our grief journey. Controlling how we handle our own thoughts is an important element of the journey towards hope. This is a topic which does touch each of us, albeit on different levels and in different ways.

We hope to see you there.



**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.

## ***Our Children Remembered***

### **Birthdays**

October 1	Joshua Alvarado, son of Martha Alvarado
October 5	Bryan Andrew Lewis, son of Carolyn Porter
October 6	Van Joseph Wisdom, son of Charles & Lilly Faye Wisdom
October 12	Joshua William Freeborn, son of Cynthia Scott
October 18	Elijah Manuel Alvarado, son of Martha Alvarado
October 19	Colton Joseph Peloquin, son of Mike & Terion Peloquin
October 20	Taylor Contreras, daughter of Sherry Contreras
October 21	Dylan Mikel Edwards, son of Allyson & Mikel Edwards
October 23	Lydia Esperanza Perez, daughter of Jose & Glenda Perez
October 23	Edward (Eddy) Wesley Johnson, Jr., son of Trish Johnson
October 24	Jonathan May, son of Doug & Laura May
October 26	Thomas Joseph Hegger, son of Al & Tracy Hegger
October 27	Charles "Chad" Preston Jones, son of Michael & Sheree Jones
October 28	Jorge Alberto Contreras, brother of Maria Amparo Castillo
October 30	Amy Lynn Ellis Oliver, daughter of Diane Ellis
October 30	Heather Dee'Anne Abke Burbee, daughter of Sue & Harvey Abke
October 31	Ashwin Y. Bhandari, son of Sue & Yash Bhandari

### **Anniversaries**

October 2018	1 Year	Amber Lynn Duffy, daughter of Michelle Duffy & Robert Davis
October 2018	1 Year	Bowie Margot Sewell-Ngo, daughter of Christina Ngo
October 2018	1 Year	Alexandra Eileen Trevino, daughter of Carmen Trevino
October 2015	4 Years	Christopher "Cole" Knight, son of Jan & Ken Knight
October 2015	4 Years	Colton Joseph Peloquin, son of Terion & Mike Peloquin
October 2014	5 Years	Cameron Paul Housman, son of Matt & Sheryl Greenwood
October 2013	6 Years	David Cooper, son of Skip & Melissa Cooper
October 2013	6 Years	Kevin Scott Foley, son of Patrick & Lynne Foley
October 2013	6 Years	Francisco "Frankie" Hinojosa, son of Anastasia Hinojosa-Shaver
October 2011	8 Years	Karen Reding, daughter of Laura & Henry Reding
October 2011	8 Years	Christopher Andrew Ramirez, son of Patricia Chavez
October 2010	9 Years	Iris Lee Jones, daughter of Mindy Garcia
October 2009	10 Years	Matthew J. Schmitt, son of Brenda & Steven Schmitt
October 2009	10 Years	John Michael Lee, son of Sandi Gray
October 2008	11 Years	Mark "Bo" Bean, Jr., son of Tedri Pyle
October 2007	12 Years	Matthew Joseph Salcevski, son of Rhonda & Frank Salveski
October 2007	12 Years	Russell Knapp, son of Cathy Knapp
October 2006	13 Years	George Nathaniel (JoJo) Edwards, of George & Tonye Edwards
October 2005	14 Years	Steven Nickel, son of James & Bonnie Nickel
October 2003	16 Years	Jason Kyle Reph, son of Kristin Kennedy
October 2000	19 Years	James M. Braun, son of Jeff & Barbara Braun
October 1993	26 Years	Kimberly Lewis, daughter of Mary & Richard Lewis



*Happy  
Halloween*



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.

### Local Resource for Bereaved Parents

**Red Bird Center** respects the grief process and provides a comforting place where those suffering loss find acceptance and unconditional caring. Our mission is to guide those in mourning through their journey and encourage hope for the future. In addition, Red Bird Center is committed to educating the community about the grief process. 713-621-2700. 6300 West Loop S # 240, Bellaire, TX 77401

*In Memory of Our Beloved Children*

Memorials Given by:

Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen  
Bill & Debbie Mercer

In Loving Memory of:

Andrea Mary Stottrup Thomsen  
Dustin E. Mercer

**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 Pelouquin  
PO Box 366  
Katy, TX 77492**

### 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.

- Accidental Death of Child Living at Home .....* Jo (281) 795-3235
- Loss of an Adult Child.....*Debbie (979) 709-2557
- Only Child.....*Annette (281) 578-9118
- Murdered Child.....* Ghislaine (713) 557-6637 \*Need a volunteer
- Neonatal Loss.....*HAND (832) 752-1919
- Death of a child from Addiction or Related Cause...Jan* (979) 830 3442
- Death of Teenage Child.....* Jo (281) 795-3235
- Accidental Death of Adult Child.....*Annette (281) 578-9118
- Death from long term illness.....*Karen (832) 746-0279
- Support for Fathers.....*Bill (979) 265-9417
- Special Needs Child.....* Neela (713) 870-7296
- Suicide .....* Carolyn (281) 574-5715



### 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.



### 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 program..

In Loving  
Memory Of  
Todd M. Mennen  
1967-2002



## In Fall

By Sascha Wagner, from *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

Things often are  
most beautiful  
before they leave us -

As Autumn ends,  
she spends her final glory  
on us, who hurt  
when we remember spring.



### ***Bowie's 1st Anniversary in Heaven.***

**I love you Bowie Margot**

**I always told you I loved you and gave you kisses and hugs, I'm thankful you've been visiting me in my dreams to still give them to me, baby girl.**

**I don't want to believe it's been a year without you; it doesn't seem like it can be true. My big girl, I hate being stuck here without you.**

**I love you so much my Bowie.**

**You get to experience Heaven before me, and I can't wait to join you! That's what keeps me going on this horrible planet without you.**

**Keep visiting mommy please, you'll always be my daughter. My little best friend.**

**I'm so proud of you, exploring Heaven and waiting for Mommy!**

**I can't wait to see you again.**

*"Pictured here is Bowie taking photos at her favorite snow cone stand, Sandy's, a week before she went to Heaven on October 11th, 2018."*

*Christina Ngo  
Remembering my Daughter, Bowie Margot  
TCF, Katy, TX*

## Are You Receiving Your Messages?

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

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



## Birthday Table

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



## 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 Ghislaine Thomsen at thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com We encourage our members to share with us.

### Resources Available to Our Members

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

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

### Southeast Texas Regional Coordinators

Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen, who joined the Katy Chapter of Compassionate Friends four years ago after the death of her daughter, Andrea, have accepted the position of Regional Coordinators for Southeast Texas. Ghislaine is also a co-leader of our Katy, Texas, TCF Chapter.

Email: tcsouthtexas@gmail.com

Phone: (713) 557 6637

“And once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in”

~Haruki Murakami

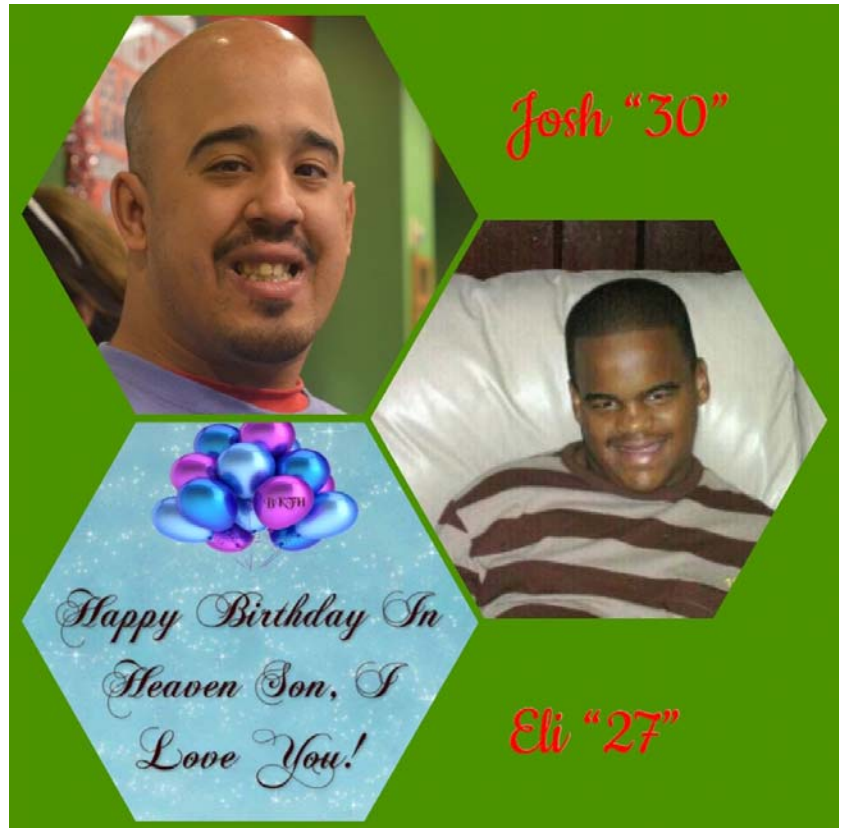


**‘Tis A Fearful Thing**  
By Yehuda HaLevi (1075-1141)

‘Tis a fearful thing  
To love what death can touch.  
A fearful thing  
To love, to hope to dream, to be-  
To be,  
And oh, to lose.  
A thing for fools, this,  
And a holy thing,  
A holy thing  
To love.

For your life has lived in me  
Your laugh once lifted me,  
Your word was gift to me.  
To remember this brings painful joy.  
‘Tis a human thing, love,  
A holy thing, to love  
What death has touched.

*For My Sons...*



Josh "30"

Eli "27"

*Martha Alvarado  
In memory of my sons in Heaven  
Elijah Manuel Alvarado  
and Joshua Alvarado*

**Late Sign-Up available for the Regional Conference ...  
Workshops and Events In Houston Texas on October 4-6.  
See Page 7 for details**

**HAPPINESS TREASURED AND REMEMBERED**

Life has come full circle now that our dearest son has been gone from this earth for almost 13 years, but our love for him has never diminished. It is not as if time has stood still since that dreadful August day in 2006 when Robin breathed his last in the ICU at Christus St. Catherine's Hospital here in Katy, and we were crushed by our pain and anguish over the cruel nature of his passing. Pneumonia and the ensuing Sepsis that followed was dreadful to witness, and we were not able to do anything about either condition! Being Rob's Mother was utterly agonizing for me, and my husband was so distraught with the loss of a son we both idolized that he really was in too much of a daze to either help himself or me. We wandered around totally mesmerized and stupefied by all that was occurring around us.

Alas, poor Robin was doomed to a painful death as soon as they administered that fateful 4cc of Morphine which caused him to spiral into cardiac arrest and his perforate his lungs beyond repair using the defibrillators on his fragile chest. So, all in all, the end result is that Robin's death was primarily caused by medical malpractice, negligence on the part of the staff and doctors at the area hospital. Being Robin's grieving mother, I cannot and will not call this "a comedy of errors" but have to call it what it was "a tragic end to an utterly remarkable life."

That beautiful life began in Ontario, Canada. Rob was educated in Naperville, Illinois where we moved from Canada and later in Katy, Texas when his Dad was relocated to Houston. We moved here when Robin was 13 and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He attended Memorial Parkway Junior High for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and then Taylor High School from 1996 to 2000. Rob wanted very much to go to UT in Austin, but we were concerned about the hilly terrain and his motorized wheelchair. The University of Houston and our flatter landscape came out ahead as the saner choice. We were incredibly proud of Rob for opting to live in the dorm for the first 2 years at U of H and our son proudly took 20 credit hours of AP courses with him when he was admitted to the Bauer School of Business. Unfortunately, his health started taking a turn for the worse and Rob made the momentous decision to drop out of Honors College. He decided only to undertake a few courses per semester and was taking classes in History when the disease that eventually caused his demise started making his life too painful. I kick myself and writhe in guilt because I blame myself for what happened. People at The Compassionate Friends say that I shouldn't do this and that I had no way of predicting what would ensue.

In hindsight, I realize that the caring people at TCF were right, to advise me to banish those feelings of guilt that will always plague me for an eternity. Therefore, let us not bewail the fact that Robin passed away but celebrate the great miracle of his life. Despite the scourge of Duchenne MD, Rob excelled in academics, enjoyed making jokes, conversing with all around him and demonstrated a brave and dignified front to a very empathetic crowd of people around him. Vaya con Dios, Robin, and may you dwell in peace amongst God's Angels until we meet again!



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

## Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment  
and children's pleasure.  
Gremlins and goblins  
and ghosties at the door  
of your house.

And the other children  
come to the door of your mind.  
Faces out of the past,  
small ghosts with sweet, painted faces,  
They do not shout.

Those children  
who no longer march laughing  
on cold Halloween night,  
they stand at the door of your mind-  
-and you will let them in,  
so that you can give them  
the small gifts of your Halloween-  
a smile and a tear.

Sascha Wagner  
From *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*



## Poem for the Child, The Friend We Lost

By Lina Corinth

Like the wind  
Blowing over the trees  
I have come and gone  
Softly and strongly  
Over the sea of souls  
Seagulls over the waves  
Encourage and inspire  
For a short moment  
Such a short time.  
I have come and gone  
Inspiration left with you  
Continue.....the Mission

*Memory* is a way of holding on to  
the things you love, the things you  
are, the things you never want to  
lose."

~ From *The Wonder Years*



## Only Child

By Adam Clay

Breakfast rained on again,  
and I'm lifted up the stairs  
on the breath of what  
the dark of the day  
might promise in its  
perfect silence. The light  
in my daughter's room  
has been on all night  
like every night,  
but the sun shifting  
changes the shape  
of the space from  
a square into an unfolding  
universe. I had always  
imagined a different type  
of fatherhood before  
fatherhood found me, but if you  
asked me to describe it now,  
I don't think I could  
find the words. Try to find  
a way to describe living  
a few different ways at once.  
For a while I imagined  
there would be more attempts  
at trying out what I'm still  
trying to see in the room  
that's gone power out,  
but the weeds in the yard  
grow too quickly to be left  
alone for long. I had forgotten  
the strangeness of a humid  
February. I had forgotten  
all that makes up the memories  
that need me to exist. It was  
easier to carve out a place  
before I had words to describe  
it. Now looking back feels  
like looking forward. I am  
drawing a self-portrait  
and trying to remove the self.



## Normal Day

"Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.  
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you before you depart.  
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow.

Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.

One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow,  
Or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,  
And want more than all the world for your return. "

~ Mary Jean Irion

# Final Opportunity To Sign-Up

Spaces provided for Quiet Time during workshops and sharing for all participants



Join the members of the Katy Compassionate Friends as we share this extraordinary Houston experience

**\*Register now and send in your loved one's picture so that we can add them to our Saturday night slide show**

**\*Sign-In & Sharing sessions Friday night from 6-9 pm**

- 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Pick up packets
- 6:15 pm – 7:45 pm Sharing Session 1
- 6:15 pm – 7:45 pm Sharing Session 2
- 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm Sharing Session 3
- 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm Sharing Session 4

**\*Workshops, Panels, and Crafty Corner all day Saturday**

Saturday AM
8:00-9:00 Sign In and Pick up Welcome Packets
9:15-10:15 Welcome and Opening Speaker (Magnolia Room)
10:30-11:30 Workshops # 1 (Magnolia Room)
10:30-11:30 Workshops # 2 (Pecan Room)
10:30-11:30 Workshops # 3 (Live Oak Room)
10:30-11:30 Workshops # 4 (Elm Room)
<i>11:30 – 1:00 Lunch Break For those wanting to attend Sharing Sessions, there will be time for a quick lunch prior to mid-day sessions. Coffee, Water, and refreshments will be available</i>

Saturday Afternoon
12:00-12:45 Sharing Sessions 1,2,3,4 in Magnolia, Pecan, Live Oak and Elm Rooms
1:00-2:00 Workshops 5,6,7,8 in Magnolia, Pecan, Live Oak and Elm Rooms
2:15-3:15 Workshops 9,10,11,12 in Magnolia, Pecan, Live Oak and Elm Rooms
3:30-4:30 Workshops 13,14,15,16 in Magnolia, Pecan, Live Oak and Elm Rooms
4:45-5:45 Sharing Sessions in Pecan, Live Oak and Elm Rooms

**\*Saturday morning's keynote speaker is [Chris Lourenco](#), who will speak so eloquently about life without his 2 brothers**

**\*Saturday evening dinner is not to be missed... Our keynote speaker is known author, speaker and bereaved mom [Maureen Davidson Wittels](#)! Her story will resonate with so many!!**

**\*Our very moving candle lighting ceremony will be led by [Alan Pedersen](#)!**

**\*We welcome special guest [Denise Ganulin](#), who will share her music with us!**

**\*Sunday Walk to Remember will be a special time for all of us to remember our loved ones!**

**Convenient to West Houston & Katy at Town & Country**



## **SIBLING WORKSHOPS AND SHARING SESSIONS**

### **FINDING HOPE AFTER THE DEATH OF A SIBLING & BUILDING A LEGACY OF LOVE**

*Workshop created by Allie Sims Franklin and presented by Stephanie Thomsen*

After Allie's brother died, it felt that hope was a word for the past or for other people, not for her. She has come to learn that hope comes from allowing yourself to grieve and to receive support from those who understand your loss. Just like Allie, Stephanie Thomsen, who lost her middle sister Andrea in 2015, has allowed herself to see hope for the future, and embrace this grieving journey she is now on. Building a legacy can mean different things to different people and at different stages of your grief: This workshop for parents, grandparents and siblings will explore the main issues that siblings face in finding ways to build a legacy of love for our siblings. We will explore the different ways to find hope and healing in our grief journey. This is an interactive workshop with some information about how to get started and lots of time to share what has worked for you.

**Live Oak – Saturday 10:30**

### **SIBLING PANEL FOR PARENTS**

*Stephanie Thomsen, Jill Greczek, Chris Louranco, Julie Hudson and Christina Unger*

This workshop has drawn a lot of attention over the years since many believe it to be the most beneficial to both parents and siblings. There will be a panel of four to five siblings who will share their feelings and answer questions in a quest to help parents and siblings reopen the door to communication. Parents and grandparents will be able to ask questions that they only wish they could ask their surviving child(ren). Listening to a panel of siblings gives parents an inside look at what their surviving child(ren) may be thinking and feeling.

**Pecan – Saturday 2:15**

### **SIBLING LOSS SUCKS!**

*Workshop created by Dr. Heidi Horsley and presented by Julie Hudson*

After her 17-year-old brother Scott died, the most comforting words that anyone said to Dr. Horsley was that sibling loss sucks! Losing her brother was the worst thing that ever happened to her; it turned her world upside down. This workshop will explore how bereaved siblings can survive after the loss of a sibling. They question who they are without their sibling, and they worry about their parents. In this interactive workshop, the presenter will openly discuss what helped them, after the death of their sibling, and what has helped other siblings that Dr. Horsley has worked with over the years. The presenter will also address the unique aspects and challenges of sibling death and get feedback from participants about issues they are struggling with, and how they have found hope without their brother or sister.

**Pecan – Saturday 3:30**

### **WHEN YOU LOSE A SIBLING: LOSS, GRIEF & FOREVER AFTER**

*Presented by Chris Louranco*

"When you lose a sibling, you lose the past and the future." It's true; sibling loss is unique in the sense of having lost the one you grew up with and thought would always be there. Yet, siblings often feel forgotten in the midst of others' grief. What can we expect to feel after a sibling dies, and for how long? How can we grieve and heal? How can surviving siblings better understand what's been lost? And what can parents and family do to help with the lifelong grief process? We will explain the nature of sibling loss, how siblings can grieve, what to expect in the future, and how parents and family can help, forever after.

**Live Oak – Saturday 1:00**





## **SIBLING WORKSHOPS AND SHARING SESSIONS**

### **MEMORIES LAST A LIFETIME AND OUR SIBLINGS WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED**

*Presented by Julie Hudson and Stephanie Thomsen*

Losing a sibling at any age can leave you feeling heart broken, empty, and lonely with the lingering question "what would my sibling be like today?" Your sibling could have been your best friend or the only sibling you had, either way they were a huge part in your life. Everyone will experience days that will be easier than others, but our sibling's memory will always be part of our daily routine in life. It is important to remember all the memories you and your sibling shared together. Being able to express your feelings and talk about these memories to other siblings that truly understand is a great feeling. Do you have a special way you remember your sibling daily? In this workshop you will be able to share with other siblings one of your favorite memories of your beloved sibling and create a keepsake box to put whatever you would like in it to help you remember your sibling and the special memories you shared daily. Please feel free to bring pictures or an item that represent your special memories with your sibling that you can put in the box.

**Live Oak – Friday 8:00**

### **FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD FOR SIBS – THE INITIAL SHOCK HAS WORN OFF, WHY AM I STILL CRAZY?**

*Workshop created by Jordon Ferber and Cindy Tart, both seasoned sibs! Presented by Christina Unger*

After you have been on this grief journey for several years, according to some that you know you should be over this. Something those people have that you don't is their sibling! Yes, you can have bad moments and moments where you miss your sibling immensely. That is the thing, as time goes on you may have bad moments and not bad days or weeks. Crazy is not a label I would use for seasoned siblings; it can be called a new normal. This is the new life without your sibling physically being by your side. Our two sibling presenters are both further down the road into sibling grief and can offer help and hope if you are too.

**Live Oak – Friday 6:30**

### **A NEW NORMAL: "ADULTING" AFTER THE LOSS OF A SIBLING**

*Presented by Kimberley Isbell and Julie Hudson*

Even with our siblings gone, our lives move on and we day by day acclimate to our new normal. In this workshop we will have a panel of adult siblings available to share their stories about how they "adult" as a bereaved siblings and handle day to day life as well as different milestones. A great sharing session for siblings, and we highly encourage participation.

**Live Oak – Saturday 11:45**

October 2019



## WORKSHOPS

### GRIEVING A STIGMATIZED LOSS: HOW PARENTS AND SIBLINGS HEAL, A PANEL

*With Cathy Seehuetter, Steve Roberts, Jill Greczek, Carolyn Porter*

A child's death from any cause is devastating, but when their death is from suicide, homicide, disease of addiction, mental illness, or other stigmatized manner, the grief of the surviving loved ones is often complicated by stigma and shame. How does one cope with all the feelings of complicated grief such as anger, guilt, betrayal, and depression when often no one wants to talk openly about your loss? A panel of individuals with varied types of stigmatized loss will share their own grief experience and coping strategies useful in dealing with their loss to not only survive but to thrive. Attendees of this workshop should expect open discussions in a supportive environment.

**Pecan – Saturday 10:30AM**

### FINDING A NEW PURPOSE TO LIFE

*Presented by Ghislaine Thomsen*

How can one thrive while going through the unimaginable? Finding a new purpose to life after the death of her daughter was a turning point in Ghislaine's grief journey. A testimonial and a very interactive workshop on how finding a new purpose to life can, not only bring hope and healing, but bring a sense of accomplishment, a sense that the bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling is continuing to honor their loved one in the most loving way. All are welcome.

**Elm – Saturday 10:30AM**

### RESILIENCY

*Presented by Alan Pedersen*

Are you further down the road in your grief journey? If so, you may be ready to change the way you feel. This interactive workshop is for those who are ready to transform their losses and find hope, healing, and joy again. You will learn 10 tools techniques for reducing bereavement stress and will develop skills for healing after loss. Participants have reported that they left this workshop feeling more hopeful and energized and learned techniques that could be used anywhere.

**Magnolia – Saturday 10:30**

### NEWSLETTER EDITORS ROUND TABLE

*Facilitated by Annette Mennen Baldwin and Cathy Seehuetter*

Come and brainstorm with Annette and Cathy on how to make your chapter's newsletter more reader friendly or how to start a newsletter for your chapter! An interactive session of exchanges of tips and ideas between newsletter editors and anyone interested in becoming a newsletter editor!

**Pecan – Saturday 1:00**

### MEN'S PANEL: MEN EXPLAINING MEN TO WOMEN

*With Bill Mercer, Steve Roberts, Ronnie Plotkin, Mike Greczek*

We all hear that men and women grieve "differently," but is that true? Is the grief experience so different for a Dad than it is for a Mom? This interactive question and answer format is designed to help women understand the grief experiences of male partners and if "gender grief" truly exists. The goal is honest conversation about the grieving male mindset, how male partners grieve, why they might be acting differently; to discuss openly how men communicate ( or not), and how to better support their wife, as well as fielding honest questions on how women can best support their husband. No sincerely questioned topic is taboo! Each participant will be encouraged to anonymously write their concerns and placed in a "fishbowl" for open candid discussion. Direct questions from "the floor" will also be welcomed.

**Magnolia – Saturday 1:00**

### BEYOND LOSING A LOVED ONE TO A SUBSTANCE ABUSE RELATED CAUSE

*Presented by Maureen Wittels*

A child, grandchild or sibling's death from any cause is a profound loss. When substances such as alcohol and/or drugs are involved, grief is often complicated by stigma and shame. Any indication of substances as a contributor to death complicates our grief journey beyond the loss itself. Substance related deaths continue to skyrocket in every area of our country with opioid (prescription drugs) and heroin the leading causes today. Understanding the complexity of substance related issues, we erase stigma and discover a future. Together we learn to cope with anger, guilt and depression finding a new purpose beyond loss.

**Elm – Saturday 1:00**

October 2019



## WORKSHOPS

### JOURNALING/WRITING A MEMOIR/MEMORIALIZING

*Presented by Annette Mennen Baldwin and Nada Scanlan*

The death of a child is the worst thing that can happen. You lose a big part of your future. It is well known that keeping your child's memory alive, saying your child's name, and telling your child's story are important to the grieving process and to the new life you did not choose. Annette Mennen Baldwin, an accomplished published author, will show you valuable tips and techniques on capturing precious memories, and penning them to paper. Nada Scanlan will focus on the many other ways parents and families can keep their loved one's memory alive. **Live Oak – Saturday 2:15 PM**

### COPING WITH TRAUMATIC GRIEF

*Presented by Dr. Lynn Hagan*

Grief is the emotional reaction to loss – any loss. Painful as an experience might be, many people are able to cope. But when we talk about traumatic grief, we speak of a life-altering experience that brings horror, helplessness, shock, pain, and a feeling of "losing it". The ongoing effects of this type of event can be devastating. We will explore ways to handle traumatic grief and provide strategies for managing these intense effects of trauma. **Elm – Saturday 2:15PM**

### HEALING GUILT AND REGRET

*Presented by Alan Pedersen*

Participants will gain an understanding of guilt and regret the bereaved may face in relation to both the life and the death of their loved one. They will be given many examples of how the bereaved may try to cope with guilt and regret. Alan will share his personal story of guilt and regret and give examples of some of the common regrets of others, The participants will be given effective tools to offer the bereaved to help them work through guilt and regret including owning their guilt, accepting their guilt, sharing their guilt and releasing their guilt. With this workshop, they will have an understanding of some of the common denominators at work in the lives of the bereaved who successfully move away from their guilt, The 5 H's (hurt, hope, help, honor, and healing) will be shared in detail and practical examples given of each. **Magnolia – Saturday 2:15**

### UNDERSTANDING WHY PEOPLE COPE DIFFERENTLY & LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

*Created by Allie Sims Franklin and presented by Penny Leone*

Every person grieves in a unique way. This can become very complicated in families where the grieving styles of each member seem to clash. Come spend some time exploring the ways in which children, adolescents and adults grieve differently. We will discuss how the factors of personality, temperament and character traits affect grieving styles. This is a fun workshop for all ages to come and learn about ways to honor your own coping style, while learning to cherish the different styles within a family. When families, couples, people, learn to support one another in the way that best suits their unique perspective, healing can begin. **Live Oak – Saturday 3:30**

### GOOD GRIEF: LEARN TOOLS TO NAVIGATE THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

*Presented by Dr. Lynn Hagan*

A death not only affects families but also friends, peers, teachers, co-workers, community members and even strangers to the situation. The onset of being faced with grief and loss can affect one's ability to engage with others. Many people of all ages continue to live with untold hardships and hidden traumas tucked away in their backpacks. The goals of this no-nonsense presentation are to educate and provide some much-needed honesty and candor about a topic that everyone else is afraid to discuss or bring out into the open. This session will offer effective methods for dealing with loss and sadness. Attendees will learn the right things to say and the wrong things not to say when dealing with grief or loss. Attendees will be learning how they can positively navigate life after loss and help others deal with changes in their lives in a positive way. This session will educate parents, siblings, and grandparents by providing "Good Grief" educational guidelines that can help them acquire lifelong healthy responses for coping with situations if they arise. **Magnolia - Saturday 3:30**

### AM I STILL A PARENT? BECOMING CHILDLESS

*Presented by Steve Roberts*

This workshop covers not only the loss of a child (or all children) but the singular grief and additional questions that come with becoming suddenly childless. "Am I still a parent?", "How do I answer the question 'do you have children'?", "Who will care for me in my old age?" and many more. Becoming childless presents a unique set of challenges. In this workshop, we will attempt to touch on many of the issues "now childless" parents may be reluctant to discuss. **Elm – Saturday 3:30**



## SHARING SESSIONS

**EARLY GRIEF – UP TO 5 YEARS – SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Patricia Timpanaro*

Magnolia – Friday 6:30 PM

**LOSS FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD – 5 YEARS AND BEYOND – SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen*

Magnolia – Friday 8:00 PM

**LOSS TO SUICIDE – SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Carolyn Porter*

Pecan – Friday 6:30 PM

**LOSS OF AN ONLY CHILD – SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Terion Peloquin*

Pecan – Friday 8:00 PM

**PERSPECTIVE OF THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP IN LIFE & DEATH – PARENTS, SIBLINGS AND GRANDPARENTS – SHARING SESSION**

Elm – Friday 6:30 PM

**SUDDEN ACCIDENTAL DEATH – SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Bill and Debbie Mercer*

Elm – Friday 8:00 PM

**HOW TO DEAL WITH GRIEF BULLIES – SHARING SESSION**

*Presented by Dr. Lynn Hagan*

Pecan – Saturday 11:45

Grief Bullies seem to be everywhere. They are the people in our lives who wish we would, "buck up and get over it." They may be friends, co-workers, family members, clergy, and even well-intentioned counselors. This workshop will point out some of the tactics used by grief bullies. Also, information will be given on ways in which a bereaved parent can push back and protect their own grief journey. Adequate time will be given to share ideas and suggestions as we seek to support and encourage one another. Bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings are welcome.

**MULTIPLE LOSSES SHARING SESSION**

*Facilitated by Cathy Seehuetter*

Elm – Saturday 11:45

This workshop is for parents, grandparents, and siblings, that have experienced the loss of more than one child, sibling, or grandchild, either simultaneously or at different times. Open discussions.

**LOSS of an only child – SHARING SESSION**

Magnolia – Saturday 11:45 AM

**PARENTS AND SIBLINGS – SHARING SESSION**

Live Oak – 4:45 PM

**EARLY GRIEF AND SURVIVING TIPS – SHARING SESSION**

*Presented by Pat Timpanaro*

Pecan – Saturday 4:45PM

**DEATH OF A TROUBLED OR DIFFICULT CHILD – SHARING SESSION**

*Created by Marcia Alig and presented by Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen*

Elm – Saturday 4:45

The isolation and loneliness experienced upon the death of a child, sibling or grandchild may be intensified by the way the child lived. It is hard to talk about a difficult or troubled child to others who had "perfect" children. It was hard enough to talk about that child's behavior or troubles when he/she was alive. This workshop provides a safe place to discuss your difficult or troubled child, sibling or grandchild and the impact that that child has had upon your family, both before and after the child's death. It may be your first opportunity to really tell your story. Extreme confidentiality will be maintained.



**Thank you to the following people who joined us at the Great Day Houston Show on September 17:**

**Bill and Debbie Mercer, Julie Hudson, Terion Peloquin, Julie and Trey Brandt, Ronnie and Elaine Plotkin, Tricia Scherer, Steve Roberts, Elizabeth Thomsen, Neda Scanlan, Jeanne Kugler, Amber Griffin, Colin Healy, Kristyn Wilkinson, Jim Elles, Whitney Buza, Lori Boin and Aurore Artus.**

**The Compassionate Friends Regional Conference was profiled, and we were interviewed by Deborah Duncan, herself a bereaved sibling! Community Outreach is so important! Letting others know about The Compassionate Friends is the first step in helping others!**

**We are very grateful for the wonderful support received throughout this year as we were organizing the *Deep In The Heart of Hope Regional Conference*. It has been a labor of love and collaboration with all local chapters!**

**On to a great conference!!**

**Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen  
Regional Coordinators**

## Katy TCF Volunteers

*Cards of Remembrance* - Debbie Mercer  
*Welcome Cards to new members* -  
*Newsletter* - Ghislaine Thomsen  
*Website, Social Media & E-Mail correspondence* - Ghislaine Thomsen  
*Picture Buttons* - Bill and Debbie Mercer  
*Holiday & Craft Projects* - Neela Sen  
*Welcome Packages* —Carol Greczek  
*Treasurer 2018*—Terion Peloquin  
*Snacks*—Carolyn Porter  
*Facilities Coordinator* - Melinda Ginter  
*Memorial Bench Maintenance*—Nee  
*Sibling Coordinator* -  
*Group Facilitators* - Jo Wood, Terion Peloquin, Carolyn Porter, Debbie & Bill Mercer, Ghislaine Thomsen  
*Chapter Leaders* - Bill & Debbie Mercer 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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**

Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen  
**Regional Coordinators, Southern Texas**  
 713-557-6637 or [TCFSouthTexas@gmail.com](mailto:TCFSouthTexas@gmail.com)



The Compassionate Friends  
Katy, TX Chapter  
10878 Westheimer Road #212 Houston, TX  
77042

Tuesday, October 8, 2019  
Monthly Meeting: If Only ...  
Preserving Memories  
Doors Open at 6:30 PM  
Meeting starts at 7:00 PM

