



Newsletter of the Katy, TX, Chapter

SEPTEMBER 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.

September Meeting

When: Tuesday, September 11, 2018

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 To 2nd Floor

Meeting in Room C231, C233, C235, C237

Enter the building from the **BACK** parking lot
(Page 6 Map)

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.



September Meeting Discussion: Preserving Memories

Bereaved parents are always finding ways to preserve the memories of their children for the next generations and for themselves.

The discussion for the September 11th meeting will center around those of us who are the keepers of our child's life story and all the memories that we hold dear.

Whether you choose scrap booking, digital formats, video collections, a special power point presentation, or journaling, writing poetry, or reaching out to the community to share your child's life with others, there is a special way that each one of us keeps these treasured memories.

We will share some ideas from parents who have walked this road much longer than we have. The gifts of their wisdom are priceless, and will ease your grief journey as you choose ways to memorialize your child.

We hope you will join us for this special conversation.



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

September 2	Austin Joseph Becer, son of Joe & Cindy Becer
September 5	Nicholas Irwin Kenefick, son of Maureen Irwin
September 6	Jason Boyle, son of JoAnne Moudik, brother of Julie Hudson
September 7	Alana Scarlett Merlene Rodriguez, daughter of Johanna Rodriguez
September 8	Brian Michael Wood, son of Michael & Jo Wood
September 8	Monica Anne Frederick, daughter of Dorothy Frederick
September 9	Troy David Murphy, son Kimarie Linehan
September 10	John Edward Nemeth, son of Betty Ann & Hunter Davis
September 12	Jennifer Ann Roberts, daughter of Joe & Linda Roberts
September 13	Corey Demaro Renard Linwood, son of Clifton Linwood
September 14	Jaden Christine-Sue Ayotte, daughter of Bonnie Damstra
September 16	Stephen Paul Rider, son of Sharon & Don Sackreiter
September 18	Myron "Spencer" Kinley, son of Karl & Melinda Kinley
September 19	Roxanne Rene Rangel, daughter of Georgina Rangel
September 20	Katrina Marie Barth-McDonald, daughter of David & Michelle Barth
September 22	Laura Eliska Swails, daughter of Markey Swails
September 25	Iris Lee Jones, daughter of Mindy Garcia
September 25	Kelly Brianne Leasher, daughter of Brian & Joyce Dakin
September 27	Sonya Ann Cunningham, daughter of Jean McKinney
September 27	Christopher "Cole" Knight, son of Jan & Ken Knight
September 28	Ryan Bennett Elliott, son of Terry & Susan Elliott
September 29	Eric Travis Knepper, son of Jim & Susie Knepper
September 30	Travis Austin Welch, son of Kelly & Lance Golemon, brother of Kristen Hundley

Anniversaries

September 2016	2 Years	Casey Aren Chesson, son of Philip & Patty Chesson
September 2016	2 Years	Nancy Marie Dean, daughter of Paige & Carmella Dean
September 2016	2 Years	Jenna Davis, daughter of Jimmy & Linda Davis
September 2015	3 Years	Patricio Aguilar, son of Paul & Elisa Mora
September 2013	5 Years	Angel Batrez, daughter of Tony & Stephanie Batrez
September 2013	5 Years	Michael "Shaun" Witt, son of Marika Will
September 2013	5 Years	Stephen Michael Wall, son of Patti Wall
September 2013	5 Years	Trevor "Louie-Bob" Brigmon, son of Richard & Shannon Simmons
September 2012	6 Years	Mark Robert Leal, Jr., son of Michelle & Adam Duncan
September 2012	6 Years	Ryan Anthony Cross, son of Mike & Charlotte Cross
September 2012	6 Years	Nikki Danielle Thelen, daughter of Teresa Tropeano-Wilson
September 2012	6 Years	Johnny "Bryan" Hoover, Jr., son of Bonnie Guillot
September 2010	8 Years	Isabella Ramirez, daughter of Natalie Ramirez
September 2010	8 Years	Christopher Charles Dunlap, son of Cindy & Lloyd Dunlap
September 2010	8 Years	Joe Michael Caballero, son of Rosie & Eddie Caballero
September 2007	11 Years	Jakob Heath, son of Dawn Levell
September 2006	12 Years	Sean Patrick McElroy, son of Jan & Pat McElroy
September 2006	12 Years	Gregg Lanier Holland, son of Carolyn Montgomery
September 2006	12 Years	Nicholas Christopher Sayles, son of Scott & Vickie Sayles
September 2004	14 Years	Gregory Jackson, son of Doug & Christine Jackson
September 2004	14 Years	Jennifer Ann Roberts, daughter of Joe & Linda Roberts
September 2002	16 Years	Christopher James Elder, son of Mike & Berni Elder
September 2001	17 Years	Rein Gregory Henderson, son of Rick & Kim Bozeman, Grandson of Greg & Cheri Hartford
September 1999	19 Years	Laura Bear, daughter of Don Cagle

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.

Welcome...

We extend a warm welcome to Stephen and Courtney Knight whose son,, Elijah James Knight, died in June, 2018. Stephen and Courtney attended their first meeting of the Katy Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in August, 2018.

In life you will realize there is a purpose for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you and some will teach you. But the most important are the ones who bring out the best in you, respect you and accept you for who you are. Those are the ones worth keeping around.
 ~John Geiger

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..



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*.....Annette (281) 578-9118
- Only Child*.....Annette (281) 578-9118
- Murdered Child*..... Robin (281) 851-5425
- Neonatal Loss*.....HAND (832) 752-1919
- Death of a child from Addiction or Related Cause*...Jan (979) 830 3442
- Death of Teenage Child*..... Brenda (281) 804-7087
Jo (281) 795-3235
- Accidental Death of Adult Child*.....Annette (281) 578-9118
- Death from long term illness*.....Karen (832) 746-0279
- Support for Fathers*.....Albert (832) 885-4741
- Special Needs Child*..... Neela (713) 870-7296
- Suicide* Sherrie (281) 579-7741



In Loving
Memory Of
Todd M. Mennen
1967-2002



Coming to home after vacation

Yan Iliescu in memory of her daughter, Angela Iliescu

Driving closer, can see the house,
Heart beating fast...
The precious little girl, after a short moment of recognition,
will be red-faced, giggling, excited, running as fast as she could,
and jumping into arms of Daddy...
Teenage son, with sleepy eyes, coming out, giving a loose hug
...
No, no one; precious daughter is gone, it has been over two years
Son is in another city
No one, but he and me in the car
...
See, that's Frank, he has been watering our flowers
while we were gone
See neighbor Mari's truck, she is waiting for us back home.
And Friend Anna, she would be glad to hear from me.
And my job, colleague and boss have sent
me messages to see me tomorrow
I already start a new life...
...
My husband and I, we still have each other.
We are together, have lived the happiest time,
have experienced the worst devastation...
We are in the same boat, although this boat,
having been hit hard by storms of life, has been broken...
It's still going, we are still together to carry on
the rest of the journey
Until the day, we reach the other side of river
The precious little girl, after a short moment of recognition,
will be red-faced, giggling, excited, running as fast as she could,
exclaiming: "Daddy, Mommy", and jumping into our arms...



Each Grief Journey Is Unique

I am visiting with a couple whose child had recently died. Mom is sobbing; dad is stoic. I look into dad's eyes and feel the pain that he endures. Yet he is strong...strong for his wife, strong for his family. Strong because that's the way men are supposed to be. He comforts his wife; she collapses into a chair. He sits down in a chair next to her, patting her hand.

Mom talks about her child, about the death. She repeats her story many times. Dad looks at a booklet that I have given them. We talk about the many diverse paths they have taken throughout their lives and their marriage. They are different people with different interests. I mention that each parent grieves differently. This is a time to lean on each other but also to respect the other's choices on this terrifying grief journey. Each journey is unique.

We talk about their child. We talk about raising children. We talk about the unrealized dreams of their child. He asks about my husband. I tell him that my husband was driving the car when the accident occurred that took my son's life. I tell him that my husband's sanity was nearly lost after the accident and that he cried for a very long time...he still cries sporadically and probably always will. But he is moving into hope, living his life, honoring my son's memory, loving unconditionally. He is rebuilding his life a day at a time. But first he had to take his grief journey, a journey that was different than mine. I go to monthly TCF meetings; he goes to two ceremonies each year. I participate actively; he doesn't. He doesn't talk to anyone but trusted friends and family about the accident and how much he misses Todd. I talk to many people. We're different, he and I. Though we share the same grief, the same horrendous pain, our perceptions are different.

Suddenly dad starts trembling. A soft cry which soon becomes a wail erupts from deep within his psyche. His surprised wife reaches over to comfort him. This is the first time he has cried since the funeral. He cries uncontrollably for a very long time. I tell him the tears are good, they are cathartic; tears help our souls to heal. I look into his eyes. They are red, but the pain does not dominate; I see a bit of hope in his eyes now. He won't come to the meetings, but his wife will, he tells me. There are no rules, I tell him. We make them up as we go along. He smiles.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Southeast Texas Regional Coordinators

Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen, who joined the Katy Chapter of Compassionate Friends three years ago after the passing of their daughter, Andrea, have accepted the position of *Regional Coordinators for Southeast Texas*.

Ghislaine is also the co-leader of our Katy, Texas, TCF Chapter.

Email: thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com

Phone: (713) 557 6637

Are You Receiving Your Messages?

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



Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in September, please bring a picture or memento to our September 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 Annette Mennen Baldwin at tcfkaty.messages@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

A Belated but Heartfelt Eulogy

On September 13, it will be six months since my son, Ronny, died. At times, it feels like only yesterday. At other times, it feels as if the grief and despair have lasted forever. Some—including even members of my family—tell me that he had a full life and raised two children; so I shouldn't still be grieving. They don't understand about a mother's grief. It's not natural or normal for a child—no matter what age—to die before a parent, and I know that I will grieve for him until the day I die.

My son was a good person with a kind heart. He would never intentionally hurt anyone. When he did some bad things, it was always under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It pains me to even say it, but the truth is that he had an addiction that became more severe in the last few years and led to homelessness and two short jail terms. Eventually the addiction claimed his life. His weakened heart could not handle any more and stopped it. He left behind all those who loved him and tried to help him.

Before the addiction held him in its iron grip, he was a loving and attentive son, and a hands-on-father who adored his two boys, and he often told me his sons were “the light of his life.”

When they were young he would regularly take them to nearby parks and help them feed the ducks in the pond as well as teach them the names of the birds in the park, with the aid of his bird handbook. He would refuse to hunt, saying that he loved wildlife too much to kill.

When he was a child himself, he was a sweet natured, bright little boy who loved books and practicing his clarinet and saxophone for hours. Everyone liked him. His teachers praised him, and his Boy Scout leaders used to tell his father and me that he was one of the few scouts who never complained about the weather or camping conditions—even in the non-stop rain.

He had his pick of colleges and scholarships, because he had made the “National Merit Scholar” finalist list. He always loved to debate, so nobody in our family was surprised to see him go to law school. After he passed the Bar Exams, he moved to California and stayed there. He loved living there and even though I missed him a lot, I understood that the year-round outdoor lifestyle and climate were suited just for him.

He had a keen sense of humor and a booming laugh that I can still hear in my head. He loved the old “Pink Panther” movies and would watch them with his children again while imitating the fake French accent.

He loved his pets and even other people's pets. To the dismay of his wife, he would feed his cats on wedding china plates and when she complained he would say, “Why not? They are members of our family, too.”

Ronny had so much potential, yet he died on a park bench, away from family and friends because of his terrible addiction disease.

He will always live in my heart.

*Froso Sendukas
In memory of her son, Ronny Sendukas*

A Letter to My Daughter

Teresa Tropeano-Wilson
In memory of my daughter, Nikki Danielle Thelen

Nikki, September 3rd is now six years since God called you home...missing you is painful, unbearable at times - the most difficult part is being expected to smile and go on, knowing you're never coming back. I loved you like there was no tomorrow and then one day there wasn't! The day God gave you to me as my beautiful baby girl you were laid in my arms and I cried from happiness and joy and love that was unexplainable...unknowing that he would take you from me and again you would lay in my arms and again I would cry but now from pain, anger, shock, disbelief that your life here on earth was over and your beautiful journey with God would now begin...in your short 22 years, you were a beautiful fun loving, baby, toddler, teen, young lady, adult, Mommy...And I was proud, blessed, ecstatic to be your Mommy! God blessed our family with you then gave you the gift of motherhood for us to have someone to hold, part of you, and dear to our hearts once you passed on...never a day went by that you didn't smile, make us laugh, touch someone's life or heart!

But, now you're gone! The memories of your joy, laughter and amazing contagious smile linger on in all our lives and hearts - sometimes bringing a smile of our own and tears...I never knew that my heart could hurt so much that I could feel like I lost my breath and not be able to catch it again, that saying your name would now make me smile and choke up all at the same time. Nikki lived an amazing carefree life in which she touched so many lives and brightened so many days and warmed so many hearts...Not a day, hour or minute goes by that I don't think of her, Nikki is a wonderful person, daughter, sister, aunt, mother! No one can deny that her laugh and smile will forever be a memory cherished by all; I'm sick to my stomach and in so much pain every day that she's gone physically from our lives but try to live with all her crazy memories and hilarious stunts that brightened our days when she was with us. Nikki was never seen without a smile and loved her family more than words can explain. The birth of her son Conner was just an extra added blessing to us all - we will forever have a way to love, honor and cherish her life...I miss you Nikki so much that sometimes I can't breath - you will forever be in my heart and I will forever cherish the 22 years of life God blessed myself and our family with. Losing you was a heart-ache I will never be able to get over - loving you and being grateful for your beautiful life I will forever remember! I hope you are having a wonderful time in Heaven with Corey, Nannie and all your family...until I see you again and hold you in my arms to never let go..
Love you, Forever and Always...Mommy



**Plan Now to Attend the October
TCF Katy Meeting**

**FLOATING LANTERN RELEASE CEREMONY
with a special performance by
Ad Deum Dance Company**



**At Cinco Ranch Beach Park
Dot Luck Dinner to
Precede Release of Lanterns**

**Tuesday, October 9, 2018
Circle The Date on Your Calendar**

Native American Prayer

I give you this one thought to keep
 I am with you still; I do not sleep.
 I am a thousand winds that blow,
 I am the diamond glints on snow.
 I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
 I am the gentle autumn rain.
 When you awaken in the morning's hush
 I am the swift, uplifting rush
 Of quiet birds in circled flight.
 I am the soft stars that shine at night.
 Do not think of me as gone,
 I am with you still, in each new dawn.

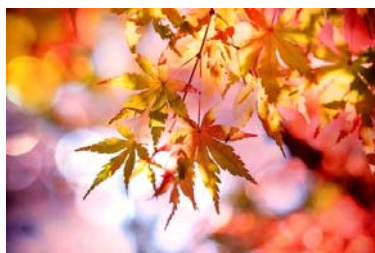


Indian Summer

This may well be
 the softest time of all.
 Does mild September
 still surprise your mind
 with memories you thought
 you would not have?

Believe me, friend, that
 (after many tears)
 this may well be
 the softest time of all.

Sascha Wagner
 From The Poems of Sascha Wanger
 © The Compassionate Friends



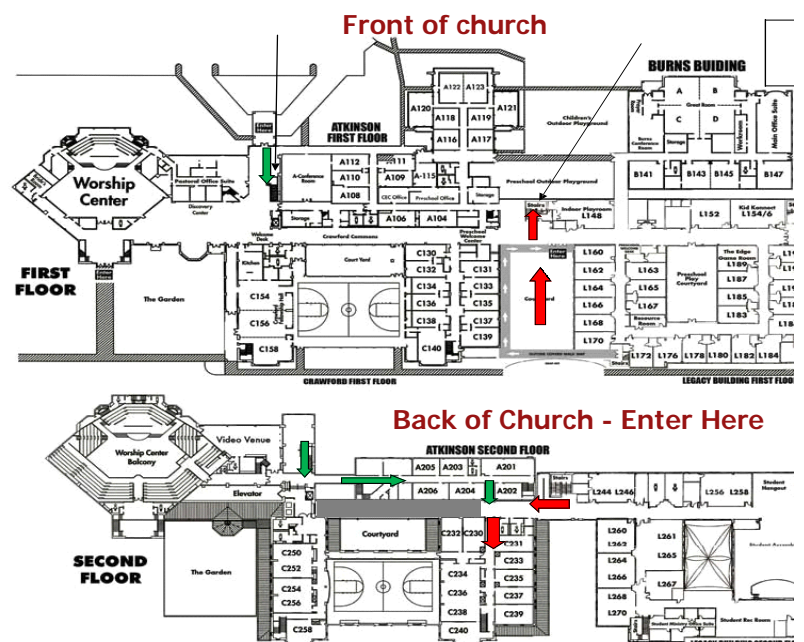
**Denial helps us to pace our feelings of
 grief. There is a grace in denial.**

**It is nature's way of letting in only as
 much as we can handle.**

Elizabeth Kubler Ross & David Kessler
 From On Grief and Grieving
 Grief.com

Katy TCF Volunteers

- Cards of Remembrance*—Debbie Mercer
- Welcome Cards to new members*—Ghislaine Thomsen
- Newsletter*—Annette Mennen Baldwin
- 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 & Social Media*—Ghislaine Thomsen
- Treasurer 2018*—Terion Peloquin
- Snacks*—Debbie Mercer
- Facilities Coordinator*: Melinda Ginter
- Memorial Bench Maintenance*—Need a volunteer
- Group Facilitators* - Annette Mennen Baldwin, Jan Bigbee Weesner, Sherrie Schurman, Jo Wood, Terion Peloquin, Debbie & Bill Mercer, Ghislaine Thomas, Lisa Leanard
- Chapter Leaders*—Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen



*September Topic:
 Preserving Memories*

**Meeting: Tuesday, September 11, 2018
 Doors Open at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm**