



Chapter Co-Leaders
Newsletter Editor
Treasurer

Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen
Annette Mennen Baldwin
Terion Pelouin

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 Meeting *****

When: Tuesday, July 10, 2018

6:30 PM – Doors Open at Fellowship Hall
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: Returning to Work After the Death of Your Child

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.



July Meeting Topic: The Return to Work

The July meeting topic will be that most frightening of prospects for the newly bereaved parent: The return to work.

When is it a good time to return to work? What should I say to my co-workers? Should I have a talk with my supervisor? What if I am self-employed? How will I motivate myself to keep my business profitable? What if I have to return to work due to financial concerns? A week off from work can set some bereaved parents back financially for several months.

This is a bridge that every bereaved working parent must cross. There are as many answers to this question as there are employers. You will find that by listening to what other parents experienced, you will begin to get a good feeling about what is right for you.

Returning to work after the death of a child in the US is no easy matter. We do not have the support system that the laws of other countries offer. And yet, most of us know in our hearts when we must return. The difficulty comes with all of the “what ifs” that pop into our minds. Find out how others have handled this most difficult of transitions at our July meeting.

If this is your first meeting, please arrive by 6:30 pm.



The Compassionate Friends
41st National Conference
St. Louis, MO July 27-29, 2018

**Plan Now to Attend this Healing
Weekend Conference**

Our Children Remembered

Birthdays

July 3	Tosha Danae Reese, daughter of Jason & Sherry Pierce
July 4	Clayton Brooks Prine, son of Mary & Bruce Prine
July 5	Mario (Mijo) Escareno, Jr., son of Viola Escareno
July 6	Whitney Ann Grissom, daughter of Janet Johnson
July 7	Elizabeth Anne Chamberlain daughter of David & Colleen Chamberlain
July 9	Angel Batrez, daughter of Tony & Stephanie Batrez
July 10	Blair Giles Benson, son of Fred & Sherry Benson
July 10	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer, daughter of Robin Conner
July 10	Zachary Taylor Devane, son of Ben & Chantel Devane
July 11	Christopher Charles Dunlap, son of Cindy & Lloyd Dunlap
July 11	Michelle Rene Redinbo, daughter of Carole Etzel
July 11	Lauren Wiese, daughter of Sheryl & David Wiese
July 12	Juliete Eileen Orettega, daughter of Jennifer Orettega
July 14	Angela Iliescu, daughter of Victor & Yan Iliescu
July 15	Ryan Evan Fissell, son of Mark & Nanette Fissell
July 17	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit, daughter of Re & E.J. Gilbert
July 19	Randy Krieg, son of Sandra & Tom Krieg
July 20	Paul LaVigne, son of Dena Bonner
July 24	Alysa Gay Wiggins, daughter of David & Arlene Brunn
July 25	Carson Cade Broussard, son of Desiree Broussard
July 25	Ashley Elizabeth Sutton, daughter of Patty Sutton
July 26	Amber Nichole Long, daughter of Tricia Apostolo
July 27	Evan Thomas Miles, son of Christie & Matt Miles
July 29	Samuel Arrendende, son of Lizbeth & Francisco Arredondo
July 30	Zachary Wilson Morris, son of Michael & Lisa Morris
July 31	John Michael Moore, son of Jeff & Sue Reichl



Anniversaries

July 2017	1 Year	Paul Thomas Brueckner, son of Karl & Jennifer Brueckner
July 2016	2 Years	Austin Michael Minks, son of Leonard & Suzanne Minks
July 2015	3 Years	Andrea Mary Stottrup Thomsen, daughter of Henrik & Ghislaine Thomsen and sister of Stephanie & Elizabeth Thomsen
July 2015	3 Years	Jaden Christine-Sue Ayotte, daughter of Bonnie Damstra
July 2015	3 Years	Colby Patrick Brennan, son of Patrick & Mary Brennan
July 2014	4 Years	Keven Lewis, son of Mary & Richard Lewis
July 2013	5 Years	John Edward Nemeth, son of Betty Ann Davis
July 2013	5 Years	Alicia Ann Norman, daughter of Bill & Vicki Norman
July 2012	6 Years	Mark Moellendorf, son of Don Cagle
July 2010	8 Years	Fernando Isaiah Macias, son of Yolanda & Fernando Macias
July 2010	8 Years	Juliete Eileen Ortega, daughter of Jennifer Ortega
July 2009	9 Years	Harley Johannes Hammack, grandson of Susan Hammack
July 2008	10 Years	Dawn Marie Wilson-Shafer, daughter of Robin Conner
July 2007	11 Years	Dustin Elliot Schmidt, son of Erick & Linda Schmidt
July 2005	13 Years	Christopher Frederick Wilson, son of Robin Conner
July 1994	24 Years	Steven Edward Gilmore, son of Ted & Terri Gilmore
July 1992	26 Years	Lindsey Irene Gilbert Willhoit, daughter of Re & E.J. Gilbert

TCF National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522
www.compassionatefriends.org
email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org



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.

Summer Memories

Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country: vacations, holidays, family reunions, relaxed days at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mown grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him. The summer solstice in June was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year. As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST), I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year.



Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light....the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience. We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life-changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship. Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night. We light candles, take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions.

Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.



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

Loving Listeners.....Phone-A-Friend

TCF Katy has established a phone-a-friend list for parents who want to talk with someone who shares a similar loss. If you would like to volunteer to be a phone-a-friend, please contact Annette Baldwin.

- 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



**Special Small Group Meeting
For Parents Whose Child
Was Lost to Suicide**

The Katy Chapter of TCF has a unique program for parents whose children died from suicide. All parents attend the opening of our meeting each month and then adjourn to their own private meeting for the remainder of the meeting. Death from suicide usually requires additional and unique group dynamics.

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

**Tailored Small Group Meeting
For Parents Whose Child Died
From Addiction or Related Cause**

By request we have established a group meeting for parents whose child died from addiction disorders, overdose or a cause of death related to the years of struggle with addiction.

You will still meet at the opening of our evening together with the entire group. Following opening remarks and special topical discussions, we will break into our small groups. If you would like to meet with this tailored group, you simply need to accompany the leader to the small group meeting room.

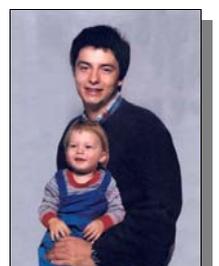
This is a unique group that was requested by our existing members. You are welcome to join this group and share your grief journey with others who have experienced a similar tragedy.

**Parents of Younger Children
Meet in Private Group**

If your child was still a minor and living at home...whether your child was two years old or 17 years old, the experience of your child's death at this young age is unique. Many parents of younger children have requested their own group to discuss their loss and establishing a new normal without their younger child.

This group meets together after the opening group meeting. If you would like to participate with this group, you will be told by the leader which room is in use for this special meeting after the opening meeting.

Printed in Loving
Memory Of
Todd M. Mennen
1967-2002



FOREVER TWENTY-FIVE

Our beloved son, Robin Kumar Sen, left an indelible mark on us and everybody who knew him in the twenty-five years he spent on this earth. He crammed a lifetime of experiences into that brief period and blazed a trail of joie-de-vivre we will never forget. From a very early age he was bright, spunky, and adorable with a mop of curly black hair. Weighing only 41/2 pounds at birth, we were terrified that we would hurt him but nevertheless he flourished.

When he was six months old we took him to St. Augustine Shores on the Atlantic coast of Florida to an acquaintance's time-share for a week and relaxed away from the cold in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada where we were living at that time. Robin was a Canadian citizen by birth and remained so for the rest of his life.

When Robin was eighteen months old, in October 1982, I took him to India to see his grandparents and attend the double weddings of two of my husband's eight brothers. At that time, we were concerned that Robin hadn't started crawling or walking yet but the doctors had told us that he had bilateral flat feet. However, when my mother-in-law saw Robin scooting along the floor on his bottom, she predicted sadly that he might be a cripple; I was appalled. But this did, indeed, come to pass.



After our two and a half month stint in India, we returned to Canada to find that the country was in the midst of an economic recession and that Stearns Catalytic where Salil worked was laying off workers. It wasn't long after that, when the managerial staff were informed that the consulting firm would be closing its doors and we made the decision to put our house on the market. It was our good fortune that the house sold within two weeks and we moved to Port Huron, Michigan until Salil could find a job back in the United States where we had both been students.

Robin enjoyed the ten years that we spent in Naperville, Illinois, growing up with his friends and attending school at Maplebrook Elementary School which was just a mile away from our home. Later, he had his heart set on a home with skylights and his dad fulfilled that wish for him when we had a custom-built home constructed for us on Spindletree Drive. We lived there for only two years until Salil was transferred to Houston.

During those early thirteen years of his life, Robin got to be a world traveler and went to Hawaii, Thailand, Japan, India and Canada and many more places. He truly enjoyed mingling with people of all creeds, cultures, and nationalities. He had an ingenious way of dealing with his personal disability and was always sympathetic to the plight of others. His great sense of humor and good nature sustained him throughout his short life. He will always be remembered with fondness by anybody whose life he touched and we are impoverished by his absence. Rest in Peace, Robin!

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

In Memory of Our Beloved Children

Memorials Given by:

Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen
Bill & Debbie Mercer
Michael, Carol & Jill Greczek
Suzanne Minks
Mary & Patrick Brennan

In Loving Memory of:

Andrea Mary Stottrup Thomsen
Dustin E. Mercer
Phillip Greczek
Austin Minks
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
PO Box 366
Katy, TX 77492**

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.

At this time we have about 20 email addresses that have not been deliverable. So, there are 20 other members who are not receiving the notices and email messages with unique information about resources and the grief journey of bereaved parents that are sent throughout each month.

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 July, please bring a picture or memento to our July 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.



TCF E-Newsletter

An E-Newsletter is available through the National TCF Organization. To subscribe, go to TCF's National Web site home page (www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on "Register for E-Newsletter" link.

Articles & Poems For Our Newsletter

If you would like to submit a poem, a writing or a brief article (no more than 800-825 words) about your child or your grief journey for publication in our Katy Compassionate Friends newsletter, e-mail your work to Annette Mennen Baldwin at amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com. We encourage our members to share with us.

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.



The Thomsen's Tiny House

By Ghislaine Thomsen
Andréa's mom



Ma Chérie,

As we are approaching your 3rd Angelversary, I am thinking about these last 3 years and how our lives have been turned upside down. I have somehow been able to get my head above water and lead a productive life! It seems so unreal that on July 4, you will have already been physically gone from us for 1095 days ...

I have learned a lot in the last 36 months. I have learned that through eternal love, we can find the strength to live in the face of tragedy, we can find a purpose to live, we can manage this grief, and turn the tragedy into a tool to help others. All four of us have been able to find this strength, thanks to you. You are a guiding light, and your signs, your life lessons, your passions are carried on by your 'seesters', our Papo and me.



One of your dreams was to build your own **Tiny House**, remember? Papo even had a trailer for you to build it on! So much research went into this .. So, my Angel, hear our little story, you will love it!

Papo and I decided to go camping one weekend, and we borrowed your tent and camping equipment, and we were off to Lake Texana .. So many great memories of our family time there years ago. We had so much fun that the next week, we decided to look at campers!! What is a camper? Well, it is a **tiny house** on wheels. This was a no brainer, we had to have our own TINY HOUSE!! We could hear you telling us: *"Way to go parents!! Have fun, you deserve it!"* That is the way you were, enthusiastic, always cheering and pushing for adventures!! We love our Tiny House on wheels, and your sisters and our pack of dogs are as excited as we are. You see, from up in the sky, you are bringing joy to us because we carry on your passions, your work, your love for others, and so much more ...

Findings

The greatest comfort
At time of grieving
Comes, quietly,
From the love that lives
Within ourselves.

Sascha Wagner,
from *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

I often write about hope, and today is no different. I am going into this 3rd Angelversary on July 4th with the anticipation of celebrating many times, July 4th is forever your new birthday! You loved birthdays, so you have 2 per year!

I know that you will be with all of us at all times, just as most days, and Papo, Stephanie, Elizabeth and I will have an ANDREA DAY. We would not have it any other way, since we cannot change the past.

Despite my sadness, I will always look at your departure as what you would have called a promotion to becoming an Angel. Remember, you used to talk about how our time on earth was short, but Heaven was forever and a promotion to the status of 'Angel'? I admire your spirituality then, and how you have been able to show us the way to Healing and Hope.

Our family will never be fully whole because you are not physically here, but your spirit is so strong that we can feel your presence.

Happy birthday my Angel! There will be fireworks on July 4th, and in my heart, they will all be for you!

I am posting these 2 signs that represent all 5 of us! I think they would make you happy! They were made with love by your talented sisters (they take after you). You are prominently referenced on the Tiny House sign :) and yes ..



FAMILY IS EVERYTHING!



**WE ELSKER TOI –
TELLEMENT J'AI
D'AMOUR POUR
TOI -**

**Happy Birthday
My Beautiful Angel!**



**OWL ALWAYS LOVE YOU -
FOREVER 24**



July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.

"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month

And she chose this month to die.
Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was she
Having been, and left her mark.

A glorious incandescent life,
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of
my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart..
With love that never dies.

Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, Long Island, NY



Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

Eva Lager
TCF/Western Australia
(Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide on 4 March 1990.)

Adjusting to the New Reality

How often have you heard, "You've been in the back of my mind for a while now", "I wanted to call but didn't want to disturb you" or "I thought you had moved on by now"? These words cause us pain.

Your true friends (of which you may have a few) will call, will disturb you, will take you to lunch, will cry with you and will never ask if you've moved on. But other people don't really think about us that much. They didn't before our child died, and they don't now. *We are in a heightened state of sensitivity. We perceive differently.*

Hard reality? Maybe. But this is a fact. Our lives have changed, our relationships and values are forever perceived through the prism of "before" and "after." Many old "friends" will be gone from our lives. Many new friends will enter our lives. Throughout this process we must be gentle with ourselves and firm with those who do not understand the depth of the scar that is our grief. For bereaved parents, there is no other choice. This is our new reality.



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

Grief is not a linear journey
with a rainbow at the end.
It's a storm of pain and memory
and wailing and grace
and hope and fear and love.
So. Much. Love.
This love carries us, in eternity...
-Tim Lawrence



Returning To Work
Meeting Topic:

Meeting; Tuesday July 10, 2018
Doors Open at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm