



The Compassionate Friends

Bluegrass Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bluegrass Chapter Newsletter

“We need not walk alone.”

www.tcfbluegrass.org

P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, Kentucky 40340

July/August

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Bluegrass Chapter

The Compassionate Friends

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(859) 576-7680

Telephone Friends

Sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort.

Jim Sims

(859) 858-8288

(859) 797-2168

Mary Camp

(859) 737-0180

Suzie McDonald

(859) 576-7680

Janie Fields

(859) 881-1991

We welcome you with Compassion, Love and Hope

It is always difficult to say, “Welcome” to people coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially if they are newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.

New to the Lexington Meeting:

- Mike and Sherry Wainscott parents of Whitney Wainscott Roberts

Love Gifts

A Thoughtful Way to Remember

Love Gifts are a beautiful and loving way to remember a loved one. Through Love Gifts, we are able to reach out to others with our brochures and newsletters as well as obtain books and other information for our library. We truly appreciate every Love Gift, donation and sponsorship. Our Chapter work is done by volunteers and these donations help us reach out in many ways, including the preparation and mailing of the newsletter.

Refreshments

Some of us like to remember our child’s birthday or the anniversary of his or her death by bringing a cake or cookies to the meeting that month. We would appreciate having you bring a special treat to any meeting. You may also want to bring and share a picture of your child.

Thank you!

Meeting Information

Lexington

First Tuesday of Every Month

6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.

Hospice of the Bluegrass

2321 Alexandria Drive

Lexington, Kentucky

Winchester

Third Tuesday of Every Month

7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Hospice East

417 Shoppers Drive

Winchester, Kentucky

The Compassionate Friends
National Office

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522

(877) 969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

July Birth Dates

- 7/1 Carrie Elizabeth Griffin Daughter of David and Debbie Griffin
7/02 Dusty Riggs, Son of Sharon Bellows
7/3 Scott Carter Jeffers Son of Susan Jeffers
7/4 John Harold Putman Son of John and Harriet Putman
7/4 Justin Branham Son of Ruthie and James Willoughby
7/5 Taran Ray Thomas Son of John and Keila Thomas
7/7 Scherrie Lyn Rutherford Daughter of Dee and Jim Whitis
7/7 Zane Gregory Brown Son of Gale and Joe Brown
7/8 Timothy Richard Woodworth Son of Richard and Sharon Woodworth
7/10 Mark Overstreet Son of Kay Overstreet
7/11 Sherilyn Annette Adams Granddaughter of Ann Milton Adams
7/11 Daniel Wyatt Gruber Son of Bill and Pat Gruber
7/12 Heidi Allen Hunt Daughter of Judy B. Horn
7/13 Kayleigh Page Devasher, Daughter of Chip & Missy Devasher
7/15 Richard (Rick) Allen Son of Richard and Linda Allen
7/15 Brandon Todd Wilson Son of Bob and Starr Wilson
7/19 Ian Samuel Napier Son of Jason & Dezna Napier
7/18 Larry "Boo" Crawford, Jr. Son of Evelyn Dee Crawford
7/18 James William Hooper, Jr. Son of Michelle Hooper
7/19 Annie Burke Courtney Daughter of Paul and Anne Courtney
7/20 Christy Weldon Daughter of Connie Weldon
7/21 Kyle Moore Son of Georgia and Doug Moore
7/22 Bill Mahan III Son of Bill and the late Susie Mahan
7/22 Nathan Winston Crim Son of Becky & Keith LaVey and Howard B. Crim
7/23 Jonathan Brewer Son of Teresa and Don Bush
7/25 Charles Hayden "Chip" Lampe Son of Betsy Lampe
7/26 Jim Taylor, II son of Dinah and Jim Taylor
7/25 Ryan Gregory Yeiser Son of George Gregory and Rita Yeiser
7/30 Hillary Paige Troidl Daughter of Jim and Barb Troidl
7/31 Jonathan Hepburn Son of Jo Hepburn

July Remembrance Dates

- 7/2 Glen D. Lay Son of Erwin and Fay Lay
7/2 Kyle Moore Son of Georgia and Doug Moore
7/2 Anthony Eugene Gay Son of Larry and Gayle Gay
7/3 Barclay "Bart" J. Knafl Son of Karen and John Knafl
7/3 Doug Steinkuhl Son of Gary and Barb Steinkuhl
7/6 Andy McLaughlin Son of Iris McLaughlin
7/6 Ruth Ann Proutey Daughter of Sarah and George Hudgins
7/6 Thomas Monroe Routt Son of Stephanie Routt

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

July Remembrance Dates Continued

- 7/7 Jayne Lynn Wawrzyniak Daughter of Loretta Wawrzyniak
7/9 Mark Davis Son of Harold and Jeannie Davis
7/9 Joseph Lewellyn Powell Son of Celia and David Powell
7/9 Jeremy Daegan Hicks Son of Joe and Sheila Hicks
7/9 Jamie Davis Daughter of Lynda Davis
7/11 Leslie Vasser Daughter of Ed and Libby Vasser
7/11 James Richard Dunn Son of Juanita Allen
7/12 John Blair Potter Son of Susan and James Potter
7/13 Juan Pirir Cux Son of Donna and Dave Uckotter
7/13 Phillip Old Son of Priscilla Old
7/14 Michael Bransford Burns Son of Emily and Mike Burns
7/15 Evan Charles Thomas Son of John and Keila Thomas
7/15 Kelly Renee Powell Daughter of Cecil and Barbara Powell
7/16 David Ball Son of Rebecca Fee
7/17 Matthew Charles Estes Son of Barry and Cheri Catron
7/17 Scarlett Lynn Miller Daughter of Ronald and Ruby Miller
7/17 Joe Frank Banks Son of Barbara Kinne
7/19 Ian Samuel Napier Son of Jason & Dezna Napier
7/17 Isaiah Thomas Stewart Son of Connie Stewart
7/18 Adam Harold Cave Son of Mark Cave and Krystal Landers
7/19 Bradley Johnson Son of Don and Sharon Johnson
7/19 Kayleigh Page Devasher, Daughter of Chip & Missy Devasher
7/19 Christopher Everett Grandson of Tawana Everett
7/20 Michael Rhodes Burton Son of Harold and Pat Burton
7/20 Keeley Knuteson Hollingsworth Daughter of Berkeley & Patty Hollingsworth
7/23 Eugene Swisher, Jr. Son of Nancy and Eugene Swisher
7/25 Kiah Nicole Milsom Daughter of Lisa Scott
7/27 Terry Hayes Son of Patricia Morgan
7/28 Jonathan M. Bates Son of Jeane Bates
7/29 Margaret Angela Hunt Daughter of Linda & James Litzinger
07/29 Luke Riddering Son of Harry and Barb Riddering
7/29 Kevin Patrick Hogge Son of Burl and Linda Hogge
7/30 Jackie Peel Son of Carl and Pansy Peel
7/30 Mark Overstreet Son of Kay Overstreet
7/31 Ryan Jason Ross Son of Mitzi and Rick Holbrook

If we have omitted your child, misspelled your child's name, or listed incorrect dates, please accept our apologies and call Janie Fields at (859) 881-1991 to correct the information. Call any of our telephone friends if you are having a hard time on these days. We truly understand your pain; for we, too, remember our own children.

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

August Birthdates

- 8/5 Andrew Clive Cloyd Son of Roxann Devereux & Richard Cloyd
 8/6 James Richard Dunn Son of Juanita Allen
 8/8 Coy Todd Cosby Son of Shirley and Jess Cosby
 8/08 Cameron Jordan Christopher Son of Angelika Traiforos
 8/9 Angela M. Meece Daughter of Claude and Verna Meece
 8/11 Robin Ricci Kuniff Daughter of Norma Forston
 8/11 Louis Tsey Gakpo Son of Seth & Philomena Gakpo
 8/11 Christopher Perry Adkins Son of Linda Brooks
 8/13 Stacey Carol Sea Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
 8/13 Ross Kemper Son of Becky Kemper
 8/15 Jason Randall Johnson Son of Sundae and Brad Parks
 8/15 Mathew Scott Coomer Son of Ray and Bonnie Coomer
 8/16 David Davis Son of Curt Davis
 8/16 Rachel Elaine Sutherland Daughter of Elly and Alan Sutherland
 8/18 Spencer David Turner Son of Kathy and Danny Turner
 8/19 James Earl "Travis" Fryman Son of Rickey and Mavis Fryman
 8/19 Robert Allen "Robbie" Joseph II Son of Mary Treadway
 8/20 David James Rison Son of Karla Scott and David Rison
 8/21 Allyson Mailfald Daughter of Bill and Carole Mailfald
 8/21 Brian Swartz Son of Grace Swartz
 8/22 Michael Terrell John Lee Son of Vickie L. and Terry C. Lee
 8/23 Julian Vincent D. Regalado Son of Ramon & Mary Frances Regalado
 8/24 Luke Bellue Son of Andrea Mills
 8/28 Corey Len Tackett Son of Sallie Jones
 8/28 "Baby" Potts Daughter of Jim and Barbara Potts
 8/28 Allen Grant Borntreager Son of Doug and Cathy Borntreager
 8/29 Jeffrey Scott "Scottie" Wallace Son of Lynn Wallace
 8/31 William "Bill" Kretzer Son of Shirley and William Kretzer
 8/31 Jennifer Lee Toadvine Daughter of Ted and Cyndi Toadvine

"Though life is not as it was before,
 And never will be again,
 Our memories are much richer,
 Than if love had never been."

"It has been said that time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it's never gone." ~

Rose Kennedy

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

August Remembrance Dates

- 8/1 Lori Em Kotzbauer Daughter of Bob and Connie Kotzbauer
- 8/4 Joseph Carl Richardson Son of Jim and Jean Richardson
- 8/4 David Allen Rose Son of Ralph and Carmileta Rose
- 8/5 Thomas Allan Woodrum "Tommy" Son of Thomas and Mimi Woodrum
- 8/5 Elizabeth "Liz" Ragle Daughter of Mitch and Sandy Ragle
- 8/5 William Fredick White Son of Fred and Rebecca White
- 8/06 Luke Riddering Son of Harry and Barb Riddering
- 8/6 John Martin Fay Son of Mary Ann Fay
- 8/9 Michael Wallace Son of Jack and Carolyn Wallace
- 8/12 Davena Ridenhour Hagen Daughter of Cynthia Duncan
- 8/14 Steven Roberts Son of Elizabeth Roberts
- 8/15 Cynthia "Cyndy" Ellen Crim Daughter of Becky & Keith LaVey & Howard Crim
- 8/16 Todd Jeffries Son of Jim and Terry Jeffries
- 8/17 Shawn Wade Kirby Son of Tommy and Teresa Kirby
- 8/22 Emily Ann Preston Granddaughter of Bud and Gwen Preston
- 8/27 Marcie Reynolds Thomason Daughter of Barbara and Bill Thomason
- 8/31 Taiann Nicole Wilson Daughter of Sue Wilson

Finding the "New Me"

When you're newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV—but eventually you will find the "new me." You will never be the same person you were before your child died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving (and there's no way around it), you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again someday—as hard to believe as that may seem. When the newly bereaved come to a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, you will be able to listen and learn from others who are further down the grief road than you. They will have made it through that first birthday, first death anniversary, first holiday, and so many other firsts that you have not yet reached. You will learn coping skills from other bereaved parents who, like you, never thought they'd survive. There are no strangers at TCF meetings—only friends you have not yet met.

The Gap...

The gap between those of us who have lost children and those who have not is profoundly difficult to bridge. No one, whose children are well and intact, can be expected to understand what parents who have lost children have absorbed and what they bear. Our children come to us through every blade of grass, every crack in the sidewalk, every bowl of breakfast cereal. We seek contact with their atoms, their hairbrush, their toothbrush, their clothing. We reach for what was integrally woven into the fabric of our lives, now torn and shredded.

A black hole has been blown through our souls and, indeed, it often does not allow the light to escape. It is a difficult place. For us to enter there is to be cut deeply, and torn anew, each time we go there, by the jagged edges of our loss. Yet we return, again and again, for that is where our children now reside. This will be so for years to come and it will change us profoundly. At some point in the distant future, the edges of that hole will have tempered and softened but the empty space will remain - a life sentence.

Our friends will change through this. There is no avoiding it. We grieve for our Children, in part, through talking about them and our feelings for having lost them. Some go there with us; others cannot and through their denial add a further measure, however unwittingly, to an already heavy burden.

Assuming that we may be feeling "better" six months later is simply "do not get it". The excruciating and isolating reality that bereaved parents feel is hermetically sealed from the nature of any other human experience. Thus it is a trap - those whose compassion and insight we most need are those for whom we harbor the experience that would allow them that sensitivity and capacity. And yet, somehow there are those, each in their own fashion, who have found a way to reach us and stay, to our comfort. They have understood, again each in their own way, that our children remain our children through our memory of them. Their memory is sustained through speaking about them and our feelings about their death. Deny this and you deny their life. Deny their life and you no longer have a place in ours. We recognize that we have moved to an emotional place where it is often very difficult to reach us. Our attempts to be normal are painful and the day-to-day carries a silent, screaming anguish that accompanies us, sometimes from moment to moment. Were we to give it its own voice we fear we would become truly unreachable, and so we remain "strong" for a host of reasons even as the strength saps our energy and drains our will. Were we to act out our true feelings we would be impossible to be with. We resent having to act normal, yet we dare not do otherwise. People who understand this dynamic are our gold standard. Working our way through this over the years will change us, as does every experience - and extreme experience changes one extremely. We know we will have recovered when, as we have read, it is no longer so painful to be normal. We do not know who we will be at that point or who will still be with us.

We have read that the gap is so difficult that, often, bereaved parents must attempt to reach out to friends and relatives or risk losing them. This is our attempt. For those untarnished by such events, who wish to know in some way what they, thankfully, do not know, read this. It may provide a window that is helpful for people on both sides of the gap.

Returning to the Land of the Living – Sort Of...

Sooner or later we make an attempt to return to the land of the living; In order to do that we must find **Hope**. Find one thing that might give you hope. Small or large – just anything that allows even a glimmer of hope.

NOW what do we do? When the universe flip-flops and upside down is right side up and happiness seems impossible and the sight and sounds of a single day much less any season -only annoyance and hurt, what do we do to survive?

Survive? Everyone is tell us we must move forward, learn to LIVE AGAIN, but how do you do that when everything has changed? Nothing fits, belongs or feels right anymore.

At times we can't find our shoes, keys, glasses, things that we just had in our hand so how can we find HOPE? Has it been stolen from us forever?

NO! HOPE is still in our midst, we just have to seek it out now. Our lives have changed in every aspect we now have to find what could possibly bring us hope to re-enter the land of the living.

WAYS TO FIND HOPE AND SURVIVE

1. Brush your teeth, every morning. No matter what else happens, do that and you are on your way to “recovery”. Of course, if you don't want to recover, you still should brush your teeth. Just keeping a routine is a way to counteract the craziness. It is a “responsible, adult” thing to do and is a start. Just do it! Everyone you encounter will be glad you did! Then find
2. Get it out of the house. Take out the trash; just get out of the house for a minute! While you are doing this task, look around you for a **HOPE**.
3. Eat. Whatever you want, just make sure you eat whatever you are “supposed to”. Skip the “oughts” and “shoulds” right now and concentrate on the comfort foods. You can't eat this way forever, but you might as well take advantage of your grief and treat yourself.
4. Buy a gift for yourself. While you are buying a gift for yourself, buy one for your loved one as well. Pass on the love you share together and it can never die.
5. Take deep breaths every so often, In and out; In and out. This takes some of the weight off you and your grief, for a moment or two. We need all those “moments” we can get! It's that simple and that hard. Some days just breathing is all you can manage and that is okay because other days it's a bit easier.

When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller-coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts on some of what you may be experiencing or feeling (many of these will apply to bereaved siblings and grandparents):

Psychological

- You're in shock from what has happened and a numbness surrounds you to help shield you from the pain.
 - You find yourself in denial. Your child cannot be dead. You expect to see your child walk through the door any moment.
 - You see your child in the faces of others walking down the street.
 - You wonder how someone can feel this much pain and survive.
 - Thoughts of suicide briefly enter your mind. You tell yourself you want to die—and yet you want to live to take care of your family and honor your child's memory.
 - You want to know how the people around you can go about their day as if nothing has happened—don't they understand that your life—everything that meant anything to you—has just ended? Your purpose in life is gone.
 - You are no longer afraid of death as each day that passes puts you one day closer to being with your child.
 - Thoughts of "what ifs" enter your mind as you play out scenarios that you believe would have saved your child.
 - Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk, you may find yourself involved in "little accidents" because you're in a haze.
 - You fear that you are going crazy.
 - You find there's a videotape that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
 - You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.
 - Placing impossible deadlines on yourself, you go back to work, but find that your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently or, some days, at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it," not understanding that you'll never be the same person you were before your child died—and the passage of time will not make you so.
- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.

Emotional

- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed the choice to die instead of your child.
- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, a person you believe is responsible for your child's death, God, yourself, and even your child for dying.
- You yearn to have five minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love or thoughts left unsaid.
- Guilt becomes a powerful companion as you blame yourself for the death of your child. Rationally you know that you were not to blame—you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.

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- You feel great sadness and depression as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken from you. Your future has been ruined and nothing can ever make it right.

Physical

- Either you can't sleep at all or you sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have slept.
- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself—it just doesn't seem that important anymore.
- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort—you're told they're panic attacks.
- The tears come when you least expect them.

Your appetite is either gone or you find yourself overeating.

Family & Social

- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly overprotective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.
 - You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground which seems difficult to find.
 - You've been told by well-meaning people, even professionals, that 70-80-90 percent of all couples divorce after their child dies. You are relieved to find that new studies show a much lower divorce rate, from 12-16%, believed to be caused by the "shared experience" aspect of the situation.
 - Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief.
 - Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.
 - Others say you'll someday find "closure," not understanding that closure never applies when it is the death of your child.
 - Fleeting thoughts of pleasurable activities bring about feelings of guilt. If your child can't have fun, how can you do anything that brings you enjoyment?
- New friends come into your life who understand some of your grief because they've been there themselves.

THE TIDE RECEDES

The tide recedes but leaves behind
bright seashells on the sand....

The sun goes down but gentle warmth
still lingers on the land....

The music stops and yet, echoes on a sweet refrain....

For every joy that passes, something beautiful remains....

Dear sweet Kristina, even though for now, we are apart...

The beauty of you, lives on, in all of our hearts.

~by Lisa Comstock, Jeffersontown, KY

Vacations

Elizabeth Estes, TCF Augusta, GA

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind-at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you. We've said it many times: YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE. Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change-it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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.

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