



The Compassionate Friends *of Northwest Houston* Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

JUNE 2017

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.
(Our next meeting is Tuesday, June 13th)

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20
Spring, Texas 77379

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our meeting room.

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks
936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

South Texas Regional Coordinators:

Debbie and Mark Rambis
dsrambis@gmail.com / merambis@gmail.com
812-249-5452 / 812-249-0086

Newsletter Editor:

Linda Brewer 936-441-3840
llbrewer67@hotmail.com

National Headquarters, TCF

P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
1-876-969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

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.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.



Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 1990 - Megan Kathleen Ratcliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratcliff
- 1990 - BreAnna Brashear, Daughter of Julie Jones
- 1976 - Adrian Jay, Son of Helen Jay
- 2010 - Alexandra Kenley Newhart, Granddaughter of Dave & Carol Bell
- 2008 - Keegan Dade Coggon, Son of Kellie & Gavin Coggon
- 1982 - Robbie Hill, Son of Ann Hill
- 1990 - Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird
- 1990 - Ryan Kirby, Son of Cherlynnne Kirby
- 1988 - Meredith Iris Wheelock, Daughter of Carey Wheelock
- 1991 - Cody Ryan, Son of Christy Welch
- 2008 - Leah Elizabeth Davis, Daughter of Ron & Laura Davis
- 1973 - Christopher Birken, Son of Elizabeth Birken
- 1985 - Sloan Nagy, Son of Tammy Johnson
- 1990 - Alan James Stokes, Son of Kellie Harris
- 2004 - Aaron Fontaine, Son of Doug & Tina Fontaine
- 1989 - Danielle Spivey, Daughter of Mark and Donna Spivey
- 2013 - Judah Levi Brown, Son of Mark and Christi Brown
- 1987 - Corey Cole, Son of Tim and Cheryl Cole

JUNE ANGEL DATES

- 2009 - Samantha Campos, Daughter of Amy Arrant
Granddaughter of Maria Picardo
- 2008 - Robert Elizeus, Son of Joanne Wycoff
- 1998 - Molly Long, Daughter of Carolyn Long
- 2010 - Joselito C. M. Boquilon, Son of Raulito & Kim Boquilon
- 2004 - Felipe Danny Sanchez, Son of Lupe Sanchez
- 2010 - Tristen D. Hopkins, Son of Howard & Denise Hopkins
- 1993 - Robbie Hill, Son of Ann Hill
- 2009 - Maxwell B. Heath, Son of Carrie & Dirk Heath
- 2010 - Alexandra Kenley Newhart, Granddaughter of Dave & Carol Bell
- 2004 - "Bo" Jared Valdez, Son of Irma & James Valdez
- 2009 - Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police
- 2011 - Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson
- 2011 - Meredith Iris Wheelock, Daughter of Carey Wheelock
Sister of Mariah Moon
- 1995 - Cody Ryan, Son of Christy Welch
- 2013 - Matthew Allen, Son of Jay and Linda Allen
- 2013 - Lhwhyh Yhshrhal, Son of Taneshia Carey
- 2012 - Crystal Garza, Daughter of Marta Garza
- 2015 - Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen
- 2016 - Brandon LaFavre, Son of Tersa Kobs

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday June 13th at 7pm. At the last meeting our children were lovingly remembered when we held our annual balloon release. Thanks to all those who attended this special tribute to our children. Thank you to Mark and Donna Spivey for bring the balloons.

Our sub-chapter for parents that have lost an infant, toddler, or have had a miscarriage or stillbirth will meet (same location) on Thursday, June 8th at 7pm. Contact Julie Joiner at 832-724-4299 or email dtjb19@gmail.com for more information.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members. If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

If you have recently attended your first meeting, you may have left feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you may feel that you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared in meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return.

These feeling are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least three tries before you decide if these meetings are for you.

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the support which will help you travel this journey of grief, and we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child, who has died, or a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help support our Chapter. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.

LIBRARY

Our chapter offers a lending library with a variety of books on grief and bereavement. We encourage you to browse our library and feel free to sign out a book or CD to take home with you.

If you have read a book that was helpful to you and would like to share it with others, donating that book in your child's name is a wonderful way to honor them.

There is still time to register!

**The Compassionate Friends
40th National Conference**

July 28-30, 2017.

**The Conference will be held at The Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek
14100 Bonnet Creek Resort Lane, Orlando, FL 32821**



Pre-registration will be available until July 7, 2017. Please note: while on-site conference registration will be available, the Friday lunch and Saturday dinner is only available with pre-registration.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/national-conference-registration>



The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember is a highlight of every TCF National Conference. It was created as a symbolic way to show the love we carry for the children we mourn. Held at 8:30 am Sunday on the final day of the National Conference it starts at the host hotel of the Conference. Special Walk to Remember t-shirts are given to all who register, as well as walk bibs where the names of the children being remembered can be written.

The Walk to Remember is also used as a major fundraiser to help support the work of The Compassionate Friends. Many participants seek pledges from relatives, friends, neighbors, and business acquaintances, turning in the dollars they have raised prior to the start of the event.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/walk-remember-registration/>

"Daddy's Love"

By: David Hendricks

In loving memory of my son David B. Hendricks II

I may not always be there to catch you when you fall
But I'll always be there when I can
There will be moments when we don't see eye to eye
One day I know you'll understand

**DADDY'S LOVE
IS HIGHER THAN A MOUNTAIN
DADDY'S LOVE
IS DEEPER THAN THE SEA
IT'S ONE THING I CAN GIVE YOU...UNCONDITIONALLY
DADDY'S LOVE IS A WHOLE LOT STRONGER
THAN A HUNDRED YEAR OLD OAK TREE
THE LOVE I HAVE TO GIVE YOU
IS THE LOVE MY DADDY GAVE TO ME**

When you were a baby, and I would hold you in my arms
What a joy it was to watch you grow
As the years pass by, I still hold you in my heart
And if I haven't told you lately
I want you to know

When I'm there to help you in times when troubles come
Don't be surprised to know I really care
I can't solve all your problems
But I can give you what you need
Cause you and I have such a love to share

Knowing you're a part of me has been my biggest thrill
And when you have children of your own
You will know just how I feel

For three years after David died, in 1997, I worked on a project that included a music CD and an elaborate photo album. It kept me busy, and I felt like I was honoring David with all the effort. When it was over, there was a definite void for a while, but as veterans of this process know, you work through it.

The music CD included original songs like "Daddy's Love". It was professionally produced with musicians, singers and technicians. "Daddy's Love" was my attempt to show a father's unconditional love over

time for his child. It was also my way of being the man in the middle between my father and my child. Thus the line in the song, "The love I have to give you is the love my Daddy gave to me".

I hope all you Dads have a gentle Father's Day, with a little laughter, some joy and lots of good memories. I hope someone says your child's name and tells you a story about your child. Be easy on yourself, and keep your love ones close.



Father & Son 1993

HOPE

Momentarily hidden by grief's agony

HOPE

Not the absence of pain and sorrow

HOPE

The belief in joy and laughter's return

HOPE

Whispers the promise of tomorrow

Hope changes as we do and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found in the moments of our memories - Darcie Sims

FATHERS DAY

By: Charlie Stovall
Father of Shannon Stovall

When our daughter, Shannon, was 15 years old, she was killed by an elderly driver at her school. She was a beautiful young lady, full of life, love, and compassion for others. She had a big Heart, and to my wife Liz, her brother Colin and me, the Heart has special meaning. To us it is a symbol of Shannon and of her love. She never signed her name without drawing a heart. The logo designed for her fundraiser is comprised of a Heart, Wings, and Flip flops. "The Heart Remembers" is on her memorial. We testified in Austin for the law that restricted elderly drivers . . . on Valentine's Day. I could go on . . .

Well, on Father's Day a few years ago, Liz and I went fishing in Port A with my old friend, Brian, from Dallas. Father's Day for me, just like Mother's Day for Liz, is a bittersweet day - Proud to be a father, proud of our son, Colin, yet missing our beautiful Shannon so much. My first fish that day was a very large redfish, just under the limit of 28 inches. Not paying much attention to anything but the length and girth of that bad boy, we threw it in the cooler. . . . but not before Brian snapped a picture of me holding that fish, the largest redfish I had ever caught.

It wasn't until the next day that Brian, while looking at all the pictures he had taken that weekend, sent me this picture and said, "check out the spot on that redfish".



My Father's Day gift from Shannon



*Happy Father's Day
From Your Angel In Heaven*

*Oh, Dearest Daddy
What can I say today
To help mend your broken heart
On this Father's Day?*

*You know I would be there with you
If only there was a way
Although I am in Heaven now
It's in your heart I will always stay.*

*Just like you were always there for me
I will always be there for you
Just look for a sign and you will see me
In each sunrise and each sunset too.*

*Remember the game we used to play?
"How much do I love you" you'd say with a smile
But this time MY arms are outstretched so far
For my love for you goes on for miles and miles.*

*My love for you daddy
Will always be true
You are the best daddy in the world
And that includes the Heavens too!*

*So I'm sending all my love
To you from Heaven today
and remember I will be with you
Just look for me on this Father's Day.
I love you Daddy!*

A FATHER'S PROMISE

Gary Mendell
October 20, 2013

My son, Brian, was a loving child, full of smiles and light.

Like so many children, as he entered his teenage years, Brian tried marijuana. And like far too many, this led to other drugs to which he became addicted. For almost ten years, Brian battled the disease of addiction and its cycle of shame, isolation and failure. During that same time, my family and I fought to navigate the complex and confusing web of treatment programs and therapies. If you know someone who has struggled with addiction, you know all too well the pain and anguish of watching a loved one in the clutches of this disease.

Loving and compassionate, through it all Brian wished others did not have to suffer from this devastating disease. During a visit home in the summer of 2011, as we sat on our back porch one night, Brian spoke about the stigma and shame he felt:

“Dad, 300 years ago, they burned women on stakes in Salem, Massachusetts because they thought they were witches. Later they learned they weren’t and stopped. Someday, people will realize that I have a disease and that I am trying my hardest.”

This turned out to be my son’s last visit home. Four months later, in the middle of the night on October 20, 2011, I got the phone call that is every parent’s worst nightmare. Brian was dead.

Brian's passing was and continues to be excruciatingly painful. Perhaps just as tragic, is the undeniable reality that it was not just addiction that claimed my son’s life. It was the shame that he felt every morning when he opened his eyes that led him to wake up that morning, research suicide notes, light a candle and take his own life, alone.

In the aftermath of Brian’s death, I struggled to make sense of what had happened. After months of research and reflection, four facts haunted me:

- Brian died of a disease that afflicts more than 22 million Americans every day, as well as tens of millions of family members that love them so dearly. That’s one quarter of American families. Over 370 die every day, shattering countless lives.
- Like Brian, the majority of those addicted, nearly 8 out of 10, develop this disease before their 18th birthdays, while their brains are still developing. We as a society are not protecting our children when they are most vulnerable to becoming addicted and unable to protect themselves.
- Research exists that could have saved Brian and countless others like him, but is not being implemented though community programs.

- For every major disease in this country there is one well-funded national organization devoted to funding the discovery and implementation of prevention and treatment protocols, changing public policies and supporting families as they navigate some of the most trying times that they will ever face. For every major disease, but not for addiction.

Disquieted by this information, and inspired by Brian's compassion, I made a promise to my son to spare others of this tragedy. From this promise emerged a vision to unit millions of Americans within one organization, and empowering them to create change. The essence of this vision was articulated in my [remarks](#) at the Clinton Foundation's Health Matters Conference this past January.

As you review our website and understand our mission, you'll see that Shatterproof has an ambitious vision. Changing a country's consciousness will not be easy. But, with your help, we will build a national organization that will treat addiction like the chronic disease it is, offering evidence-based and tangible resources for prevention, treatment and recovery. It will foster tolerance and compassion, and to dismantle the discrimination and judgment associated with this non-discriminating and devastating disease.

<http://www.shatterproof.org>



When Fathers Weep At Graves

I see them weep
The fathers at the stones
Taking off the brave armor
Forced to wear in the workplace
Clearing away the debris
With gentle fingers
Inhaling the sorrow
Diminished by anguish
Their hearts desiring what they cannot have
To walk hand in hand
With children no longer held
To all the fathers who leave a part
Of their hearts at the stones
May breezes underneath trees of time
Ease their pain
As they receive healing tears
. . . the gift the children give.
By: Alice J. Wisler

Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

Laura Hengel
281-908-5197
linnemanl@aol.com
Auto Accident

Pat Morgan
713-462-7405
angeltrack@aol.com
Adult Child

Connie Brandt
281-320-9973
clynncooper@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Beth Crocker
281-923-5196
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

Julie Joiner
832-724-4299
dtjb19@gmail.com
Infant Child
Multiple Loss

Loretta Stephens
281-782-8182
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net
Auto Accident

Lisa Thompson
713-376-5593
lisalou862@yahoo.com
Auto Accident/Fire

Pat Gallien
281-732-6399
agmom03@aol.com
Organ Donor

Leigh Heard-Boyer
281-785-6170
boyerbetterhalf@yahoo.com
Substance Abuse

FOR FATHERS:

Nick Crocker
832-458-9224
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

David Hendricks
936-441-3840
dbhhendricks@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Glenn Wilkerson
832-878-7113
glennwilkerson@sbcglobal.net
Infant Child