

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.

# **SEPTEMBER 2017**

#### **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center 6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20 Spring, Texas 77379 We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>)

Because of the flooding of Cypress Creek Christian Church our meeting this month will be held at the home of Mark and Debbie Rambis. Their address is:

3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr.

Spring, TX 77388

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www.compassionatefriends.org

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

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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

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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.

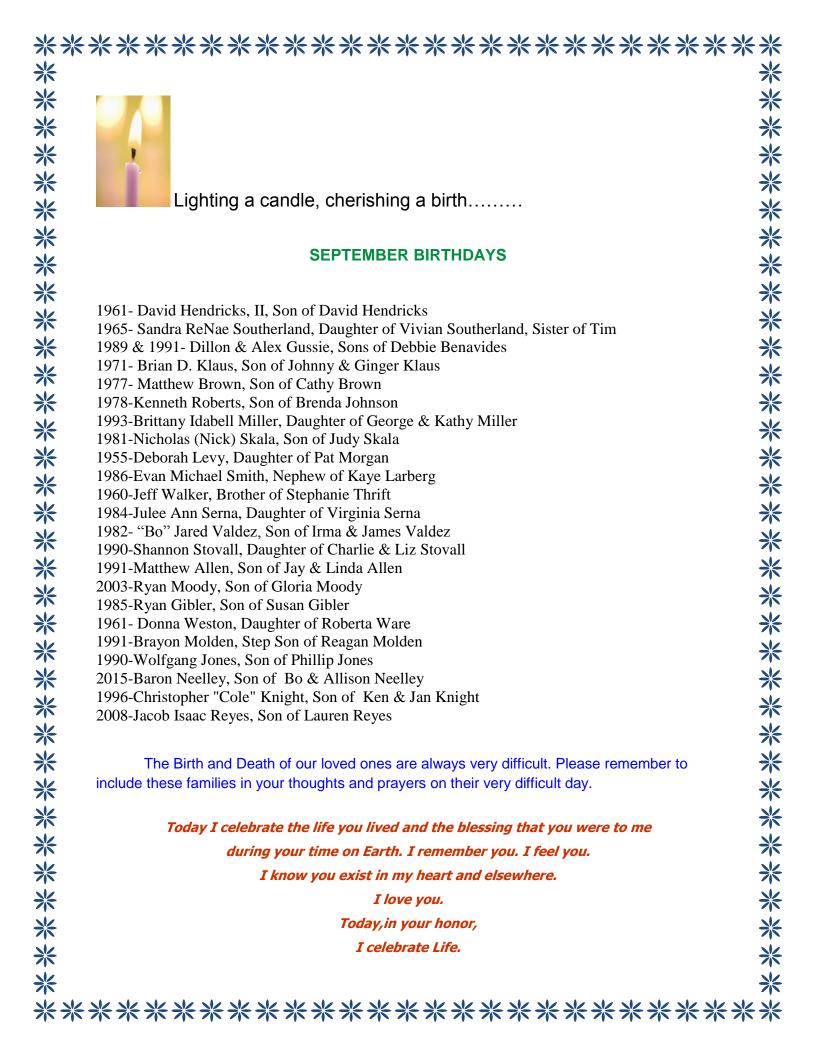
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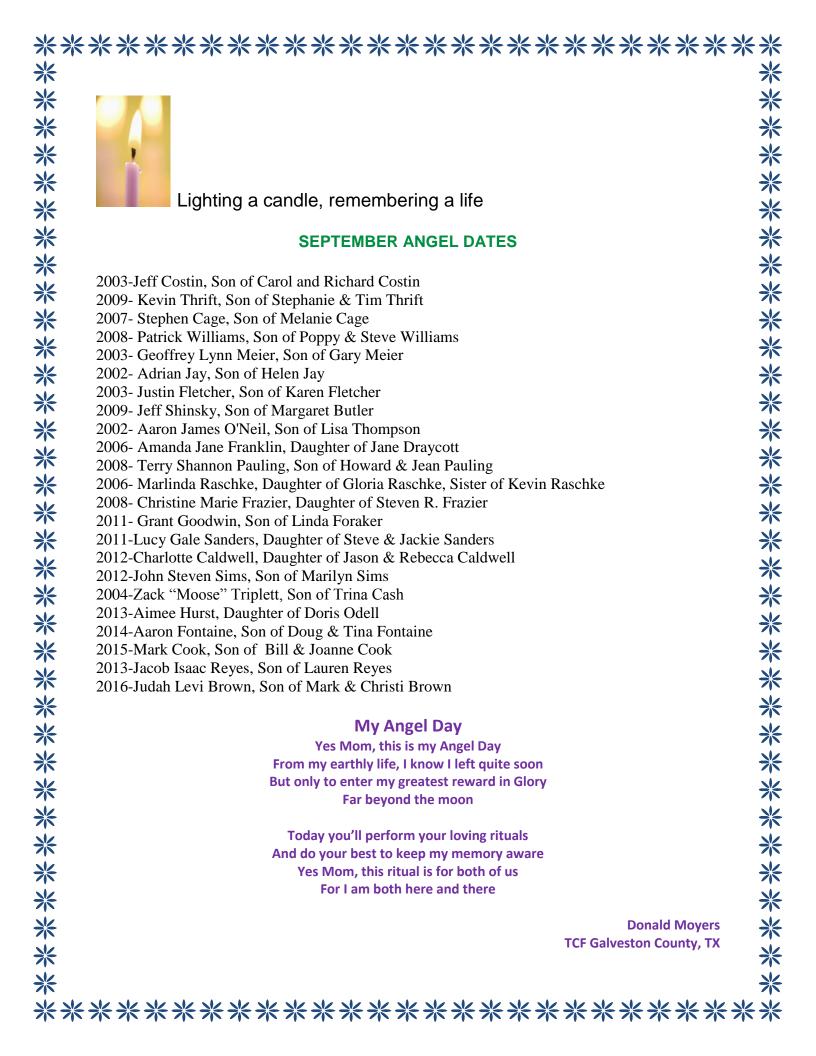
The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey 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.



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# **CHAPTER NEWS**

New meeting place this month. Our meeting on Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> will be held at the home of Mark and Debbie Rambis. The address is 3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr., Spring, TX 77388. I hope can make it.

#### TCF'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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The Compassionate Friends/USA, has appointed Debbie Rambis their new Executive Director, succeeding Alan Pedersen. Debbie will take the reins at TCF on September 25, 2017.

Debbie and her husband Mark joined The Compassionate Friends in 2011 after the drowning death of their son Tony Rambis.

After chartering a new chapter in Savannah, Georgia, she soon became a Chapter Leader, a Regional Coordinator, a Development Director, a Chapter Leadership trainer, and a member of the National Board of Directors in 2016.

Debbie and Mark moved to Spring, TX in August 2015. They came to several of our meetings and attended our candle lighting service. They started The Woodlands TCF chapter in 2016. Congratulation Debbie!

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

To our newest members—we offer our warmest welcome. 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.

As our TCF Credo says, "We come from different walks of life...", but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

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 hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

#### **ONLINE SUPPORT**

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

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#### PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

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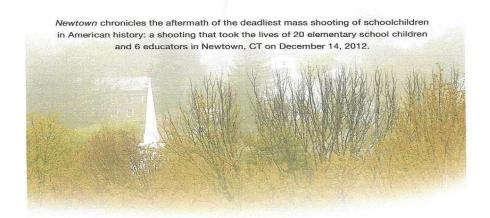
The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. A private message will be sent prior to approval, please be sure to check your mailbox marked "Other" if you do not receive one in your main mailbox. These pages were established to encourage connection and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.

https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/



JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL SCREENING OF

# NEWTOWN



OCTOBER 19,2017

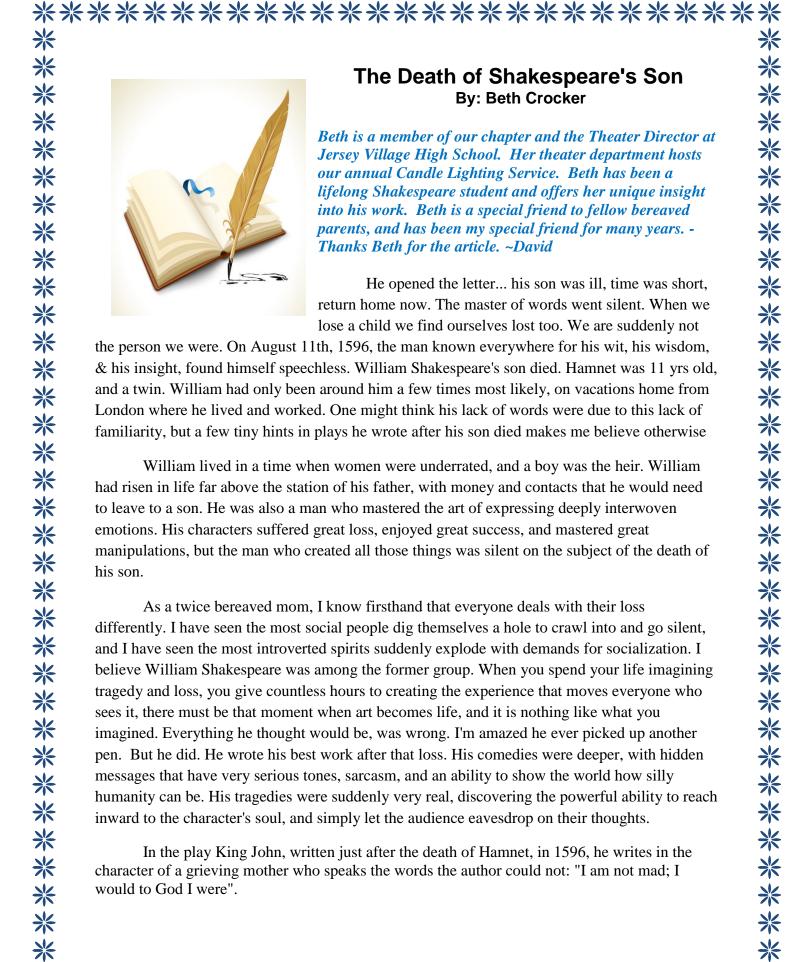
RECEPTION 6:30 WITH KIM SNYDER DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER SCREENING 7:30 Q&A AFTER THE SCREENING WITH KIM PLYMOUTH UCC 5927 LOUETITA SPRING, TEXAS \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

www.NewtownFilm.com

Jane Kelso Winter and her husband Charlie, members of our chapter, asked to share this information with everyone. Plymouth United Church will hold a film screening of the movie Newton on October 19. It is free however the church is requiring you to go on line and register.

http://www.plymouthunited.org/

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# The Death of Shakespeare's Son By: Beth Crocker

Beth is a member of our chapter and the Theater Director at Jersey Village High School. Her theater department hosts our annual Candle Lighting Service. Beth has been a lifelong Shakespeare student and offers her unique insight into his work. Beth is a special friend to fellow bereaved parents, and has been my special friend for many years. -Thanks Beth for the article. ~David

He opened the letter... his son was ill, time was short, return home now. The master of words went silent. When we lose a child we find ourselves lost too. We are suddenly not

the person we were. On August 11th, 1596, the man known everywhere for his wit, his wisdom, & his insight, found himself speechless. William Shakespeare's son died. Hamnet was 11 yrs old, and a twin. William had only been around him a few times most likely, on vacations home from London where he lived and worked. One might think his lack of words were due to this lack of familiarity, but a few tiny hints in plays he wrote after his son died makes me believe otherwise

William lived in a time when women were underrated, and a boy was the heir. William had risen in life far above the station of his father, with money and contacts that he would need to leave to a son. He was also a man who mastered the art of expressing deeply interwoven emotions. His characters suffered great loss, enjoyed great success, and mastered great manipulations, but the man who created all those things was silent on the subject of the death of his son.

As a twice bereaved mom, I know firsthand that everyone deals with their loss differently. I have seen the most social people dig themselves a hole to crawl into and go silent, and I have seen the most introverted spirits suddenly explode with demands for socialization. I believe William Shakespeare was among the former group. When you spend your life imagining tragedy and loss, you give countless hours to creating the experience that moves everyone who sees it, there must be that moment when art becomes life, and it is nothing like what you imagined. Everything he thought would be, was wrong. I'm amazed he ever picked up another pen. But he did. He wrote his best work after that loss. His comedies were deeper, with hidden messages that have very serious tones, sarcasm, and an ability to show the world how silly humanity can be. His tragedies were suddenly very real, discovering the powerful ability to reach inward to the character's soul, and simply let the audience eavesdrop on their thoughts.

In the play King John, written just after the death of Hamnet, in 1596, he writes in the character of a grieving mother who speaks the words the author could not: "I am not mad; I would to God I were".

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She goes on to say:

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"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form." ---(III.4.93–97)

We cannot possibly know (yet) the exact dates that he wrote his plays, and we can certainly argue the point that his plays, and his writing skills, were improving all the time. and the death of his son had no impact on that. That said, the idea that the death of his son stimulated a higher level of understanding, therefore deeper characters and story dynamics, can also be made. We literally have nothing in his words as a bereaved father, we only have the words he wrote into fictional characters in fictional situations of child loss. Even those are very few, but all those references written after the loss of his son are consistent with our own knowledge as bereaved parents, while those references written in his plays before the death of his son, like in Romeo and Juliet, are more like what we hear from those who have not faced the reality of child loss.

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The loss of his son left him silent... except in his plays. His play, Hamlet, is a perfect example of the words William Shakespeare was missing in his own life:

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"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." ---Hamlet

"Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince: And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" ---Horatio

The irony of this man's life, a life of words and expression, masterfully written with advanced thinking for his time, is also the life of the deepest silent solitude when it comes to his private story. Perhaps, as grieving parents, we might find solace in the example Shakespeare provided as a man who found an outlet for his grief, behind a mask for safety, but always in public. He continued to have a very successful life, deeply motivated by the man he had become after the loss of his son.



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### There's Help —The Power In Talking

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One of the most valuable things you can do is talk it out with a good listener. We now know that the stress level of bereaved people can be cut in half when they talk about the death to someone who does not judge or advise them.

Having someone as a backboard to hear your thoughts bounced off is the greatest gift you can receive. Too often, everyone wants to make you feel better, so they try to advise rather than listen.

Remember, repeating your story is healthy. Talking about your loved one, the illness and/or death, works like a sponge. Each time you talk, a little more of the pain is squeezed out and the need to talk about the incident becomes less. It's as if your story is being framed within your mind. Soon you can hang it on the wall. You'll always have it there to look at whenever you want, but you no longer have to carry the whole thing around with you and be burdened and controlled by the past.

There will be times when no one is around to listen. You'll need to do something different. Talk into a tape recorder. Keep a journal to write down your thoughts and feelings. Buy a journal just for this purpose. Select a color that you like and write when there's no one around and you need to talk. Talk out loud as you write if it makes you feel better.

Write a letter to your loved one who died. This can be a very powerful process. Share your thoughts and feelings. Pour them out on paper. You may feel emotionally drained afterwards. If so, nurture yourself. Examples: Wrap yourself in a blanket and take a nap, watch a movie, or hold and/or pet the family pet. You may even find it helpful to write a letter back from the person who died.

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Others have found that just talking aloud or into a tape recorder was helpful. Some stand in front of the mirror to talk. As a friend once said to me, "Don't worry about talking out loud to yourself. It's good to have a conversation with an intelligent person." However you do it, remember: "Talking it out is one of the best medicines of all."

While some people won't want to listen to you, you'll also find they can say some really stupid things. Offer them suggestions for kinder, more compassionate words they can use with bereaved people. It will help them to help you and others more effectively because some people really want to help, but just do not know how.

When you go to a support group you will find others who understand. You will meet other mourners with similar feelings and problems. They can provide tremendous emotional affirmation. Why not come to the next meeting? This group of bereaved parents listens, even to those who say nothing. Come, listen, share if you want to, receive love and compassion. You do not have to walk alone. Come walk with us.

Extracted from More Than Surviving—Caring for Yourself While You Grieve , by Kelly Osmont, MSW Reprinted from TCF Cape Fear Chapter, Wilmington NC August 2003



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# TRANQUILITY

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By: Roslen Smith-Hamilton
In Memory of Harmony Faith Hamilton
December 30, 2016-December 30, 2016
Stillborn: PPROM/CHORIOAMNIONITISS

Emotions, feelings, thoughts, can they truly be controlled? Those thoughts of should have, could have, would have will contemplate over and over again in your mind. Had I done anything differently had my child still lived? Emotions are a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationship with others. Feelings are a form of emotional state or reaction. Thoughts are an idea or opinion produced by thinking or occurring suddenly in. During the time of grief, many emotions are experienced. Some occur one at a time. Others all at once. As you go through the stages of grief, you sometimes have the feeling of being overwhelmed. Don't be; however, take the time to deal with your emotions. For those who have never endured burying a child, they will never understand what we feel. Normally family members, friends, and coworkers are the main ones who will advise you to not stay in bed, not to cry all day, and to eat; but we all know too well that is the last thing that is on our mind. Also know it's fine to be angry but don't allow angry to control you.

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary "Anger" is an uncontrollable emotion, rage, wrath, and supposed grievance. It creates devastation when acted upon and destroys lives without a moment's notice.

"Be angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Neither give the place to the devil" Ephesians 4:26-27 KJV

Do express yourself and know that you are not alone. Although most of us are complete strangers, The Compassionate Friends are an extended family. In my time of grief, pain, and sorrow I have found great comfort. Each of us child has died from a different cause, but we all share the same love and compassion for our child.

"And whether one member suffer; all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honored, all members rejoice with it" 1 Corinthians 12: 26 KJV

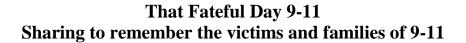
Remember you are in control of your emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Everyone mourns and grieves at a different speed. Hold on to God's promise;

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"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:2 KJV

Sincerely Angel Mom,

Roslen is a member of our chapter. Thank you Roslen for the great article. ~ David



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I can't forget that fateful day, Innocent people, taken away. A sadness filled me up inside, **Emotions that I could not hide.** Tears, they came, sadness too, All my emotions, pouring through. Time will heal, so I was told, but time could never fill this hole. In my heart there is a place, They're always there, keeping us safe. It's filled with love and happy times, It's never dark, their light it shines. In heaven now they do reside, To watch over us, stand at our side. I can't forget that fateful day, but in my heart they will always stay.

Written by Dave Hedges

#### **Tears on Their Shoulders**

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Thank God for friends. Can you imagine your life without your close friends? I have never been one to have a great many friends. I know many people who I care for and love, but there are only a few people that I consider close friends. A true friendship goes far beyond just knowing and caring for someone. A true friend is a person you feel comfortable sharing your deepest feelings with. A true friend is one who does not mind a few of your tears on their shoulder.

Since the death of my daughter, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other bereaved parents. There are far more of us than most people realize—far more than I ever realized until I became one. The grief of losing any loved one is hard to overcome. The grief of losing a child is the hardest to overcome. In fact, I dare say that we never overcome it. We simply learn to deal with it.

One of our greatest gifts as bereaved parents is close, understanding friends. Most of us find that developing friendships with other bereaved parents gives us more comfort than any other relationship. Hopefully, our friendship with our spouse will deepen and give us that comfort; but I have found that does not always happen. I am sure there are psychological reasons why bereaved husbands and wives cannot always be as comforting to each other as we wish we could, but I know it is true in many cases. Perhaps it is because we are trying so hard to be strong for each other that we hold back some of our emotions. I suppose every couple is different,

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depending on their personalities and situations. The point is, very often we are not as comfortable sharing or expressing our grief with our spouse as we are with a special friend. I would really like to hear other bereaved parents' points of view and opinions about this subject.

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The point of this writing is the importance of loving friendships. I have talked to so many bereaved parents who state that they just do not have anyone that they feel comfortable talking to about their grief. It is not that they do not have friends and relatives, they just don't have any that they can or will share their feelings with. They feel isolated and alone in their grief, and to me that would be unbearable. That is one of the many reasons that I am so happy to have found The Compassionate Friend's. Through T.C.F., I have met people that I consider true friends—friends that never mind a few tears on their shoulders—friends that I never mind feeling their tears on my shoulder. In my opinion, a good cry with a friend that has gone through the loss of a child—a friend who knows how it feels—is more healing than anything else I can imagine. Thank God for counselors and therapists, but without understanding friends with loving shoulders to cry on, I believe we miss out on deep, healing grief relief.

We miss our children. Our lives are forever changed without them. There is a void in our souls that nothing can fill, and in many ways we don't want it filled. But we do want relief, and true friends that don't mind our tears on their shoulders are one of our greatest sources of that relief. May the Lord lead you to that special friend, a compassionate friend, with whom you can share your deepest thoughts and feelings, one who will always offer you a shoulder to cry on when you need it. May you offer your shoulder to someone in need as well. There is blessed healing to be found with loving friends who are happy to allow tears on their shoulders.

Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry, TCF Tyler, TX



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#### Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out — because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended."

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

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Renee Little, TCF Fort Collins, CO



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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 Pat Morgan **Connie Brandt** 281-908-5197 713-462-7405 281-320-9973 angeltrack@aol.com linnemanl@aol.com clynncooper@hotmail.com Auto Accident Adult Child Auto Accident

Beth Crocker Julie Joiner **Loretta Stephens** 832-724-4299 281-923-5196 281-782-8182 thecrockers3@comcast.net dtjb19@gmail.com andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net Multiple Loss Multiple Loss Auto Accident

Lisa Thompson Pat Gallien Leigh Heard-Boyer 281-257-6837 281-732-6399 281-785-6170 boyerbetterhalf@yahoo.com lisalou862@yahoo.com agmom03@aol.com

Fire Substance Abuse **Organ Donor** 

Infant Child

#### **FOR FATHERS:**

**Heart Disease** 

**Heart Disease** 

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**Nick Crocker** Glenn Wilkerson **David Hendricks** 832-458-9224 936-441-3840 832-878-7113 thecrockers3@comcast.net dbhhendricks@hotmail.com

glennwilkerson@sbcglobal.net

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Infant Child Multiple Loss **Auto Accident**