



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

North Oklahoma City Chapter

December 2019

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The cut-off date for the next newsletter is the 15th of the prior month

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JOIN OUR CHAPTER'S MONTHLY MEETING

THURSDAY: November 14th, 2019

Location: Mayflower Congregational Church 3901
N.W. 63rd Street

(Between NW Expressway and Portland)

Parking is in the back of the church We meet on the second Thursday of every month.

Sign In: 7:00 p.m. Program Starts: 7:30 p.m. FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP FOLLOW THE MEETING

Upcoming Events

December 12th, 2019 7:30pm

Mayflower Congregational Church 3901
N.W. 63rd Street , Oklahoma City

**World Wide Candle Lighting
December 8th, 2019
Mayflower Congregational
Church**



**Regular meeting January 9th, 2020
Regular meeting February 13th, 2020**

If you would like your child's picture included in our December 12 World Wide Candle Lighting ceremony please send a digital copy to gary.clark@cox.net

Please include both birthdate and death date as well. Hope to see you there.

Sibling Corner... Dedicated to our Brothers and Sisters

Reflection on Thanksgiving

By the time this is published, I've celebrated ten Thanksgivings without my brother. For the first few years, maybe the first five, celebrating a holiday without my brother felt the same as every day. I remember explaining to people that it didn't matter if it were Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or his birthday, I missed him every day, those days were no different. But the last few years, holidays have become increasingly difficult. And that is the paradox. Because after all this time everyone assumes I've come to deal with holidays. They believe that I've processed my grief enough, and holidays, while hard, are not unbearable. But that isn't true. I feel like I'm regressing. That I'm feeling the pain of my brother's absence on holidays, after all this time, whereas I didn't really feel it so deeply when he first died. Growing up we never had a large Thanksgiving dinner - just our grandparents, parents, and us (my brother and me). Our house, heated by the warmth of the stove, crackling with the pops of turkey fat cooking, and filled with the aroma of sage, grease, and yeast, was where we gathered each year to celebrate family. As I write this, I realize that I can't remember the last Thanksgiving I had with my brother. In fact I can't remember any Thanksgiving with my brother.

I try. I try really hard. I press my eyes closed and try to think of home. The smell, our dining room table, food, my parent's face. It's like a big black void. I can't remember. My deepest fear is realized; I've somehow forgotten a memory of my brother. And then, I place my feet firmly on the floor. I take a few deep breaths, and remind myself that I've come this far. I reassure myself that forgetting memories does not mean I'm forgetting him. Forgetting his place at our Thanksgiving table does not erase facts: for twenty one years my brother existed, and for twenty years we celebrated Thanksgiving together. And then a small memory of him filling his plate with food, covering it all with gravy to my great disgust appears. And then another memory, one that has been retold for years in my family, my brother still in a highchair insisting on eating the whole turkey leg - barely able to grasp it, and gnawing on it with his tiny teeth. And then all throughout the rest of his life his request was always a turkey leg. My Thanksgivings can never really be whole. There is always a piece missing. I have to remember that missing piece. And after ten years, I have to forgive myself for still being so deeply sad that my brother Brian won't be joining me for Thanksgiving dinner.

Amanda Greenwood

Survivors of Suicide

Parents and siblings of a young person who has completed suicide face an almost overwhelming burden of emotions. It is one of the cruellest tragedies that can happen to a family. To pull oneself out of the emotional wreckage is a mighty struggle. Each parent can be utterly devastated and unable to be supportive to their mate or to surviving children. Other family members are shocked and unable to cope with the event. They do not know how to console or help us. Our friends wonder, "How could such a thing happen?" They too, do not know how to help us. We struggle with the "Whys?"...the unanswered questions and painful memories.

We, who count ourselves as survivors—we've made it a year, two years, some of us are in the third year—would like to share a few thoughts. First, you are not alone. We understand whatever you may be feeling for we have been there! Suicide can intensify the feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, depression—all a part of the grief process. The course of recovery is up and down. Give yourself plenty of time. You need a great deal of support, at least through the first year. The suicide of one's child raises painful questions and doubts and fears. We can find ourselves in a spiritual crisis. We question our beliefs and may feel cut off from God. Through sharing with others and listening to others who have walked the same path, you may gain some understanding of your reactions and learn some ways to cope.

But most of all, we, who are in the process of rebuilding our lives, have not forgotten the dark hours of those early days and weeks when we thought we could not live again. We cannot offer you any shortcut through the pain. There isn't any. But you can help yourself along the way to healing. We can offer you support, encouragement, and the hand of friendship.

JoAnn Dodson, TCFLouisville, KY

A STEPPARENT'S THOUGHTS

I am a bereaved stepparent – Stepfather to be exact. Robin Ann Craney, my stepdaughter, was killed at the hands of a drunk driver on June 8, 2001. She was 17 years old. I have a son named Greg. His Mom remarried so I saw him on weekends, did the trips, and long summer visits as many divorced parents do. I did not get the chance to be a part of his life and see him every day.

I got to hear about his activities and accomplishments all after the fact. When you marry someone with kids, you get another chance. After several months of dating my (now) wife Cindy, I finally met her kids, Chris and Robin. Robin was almost 7 years old at the time. I remember that first meeting clearly because she wasn't feeling so good. She ended up getting sick and had to go home. What a first meeting that was! After that, I became totally involved in the lives and activities of both of the children. I remember one of those nights well! Cindy and I attended parent-teacher conferences for both kids, a Cub Scout Pack Meeting and a Girl Scout Brownie Meeting...not bad for a single guy, who had been unmarried for 13 years!

Over the years, I got to know Robin's likes, dislikes, and all of her friends – and she had a lot of

friends! I attended and participated in all of Robin's activities, supporting her in her many endeavors – including gymnastics (her favorite). I was there when she had migraine headaches, running her to the doctor when her Mother couldn't, encouraging her, supporting her – all the things Dads do for their kids. I want to tell you in no uncertain terms, being a stepparent is so much harder. You get the responsibility and, often times it seems, none of the respect. "Mom said I could so I don't have to listen to you" or "You can't tell me what to do, you are not my dad" and so forth. I tolerated and dealt with her emotional outbursts when she became incensed at anything (sometimes it seemed everything) during the teen years. All Dads know how trying those times can be!

Now I am a bereaved stepparent...the one in a kind of "no man's land." I am not biologically connected to Robin; I sometimes feel like an outsider around people who were once a family - Mother, Father, Son, and Daughter. Many of our friends have worried about Cindy and Chris. They often ask me "How is Cindy doing?" or "Is Chris OK?" Although I knew and lived with Robin for 10 years, very few ask, "How are you doing?" I am only the stepparent. The idea that this tragedy cannot be as devastating to me as it is to "real family"

is incomprehensible. One definition for the word father is "father figure: one often of particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father." This is what I was for Robin. She loved to push my buttons – but that was part of our relationship – could be. Robin is the only daughter I will ever have. I was every bit a father to her. I love her and I miss her.

We, the stepparents of children who have died, grieve for our children too. Only society puts the "Step" in the name. Parent is still the biggest part of who we are. We hurt because they were our children too without the support and understanding that is demonstrated towards the biologically connected parents. These beautiful with whom we developed emotional bonds are now gone out of our lives; and we, too, endure the same feelings of loss and sadness

Tony Cinocco TCF-Denver, CO



Thirty Years

Thirty years ago today
On a cold snowy winter day
You came into my life, my son
And changed my life in many ways

You taught me unconditional love
And what a mom should feel
You taught me compassion in many ways
The kind only the heart reveals

You taught me how to smile
When heartprints ruled my days
You taught me so much laughter
My love was endless in so many ways

I taught you, as you taught me
The years flew by too fast
And then God's Angels called you home
All I had left, was memories of the past.....

Today's your 30th birthday,
Andy And I sit here all alone
Wondering how you're spending yours
While I spend my at home

Thinking of the ones we had,
The double birthdays we once shared
I close my eyes and remember
It makes my eyes begin to tear

I remember when you were one
And I was twenty-seven
If I'd known then, in four years
God was calling you to heaven.....

I'd held you even more tightly,
I'd have kissed you even more
And probably went to school with you
Each day you went out the door

I'd have tucked you in more tightly
I'd have read more stories at night
And had I known what life held
I'd never let you out of my sight

But none of us knows what life holds
Or what our future will be
God gave us five great years
I treasure those precious memories

Happy Birthday Andy I love you with all my heart
One day again we will share this day
But for now, I'll share you in my heart
I'll love you forever my son.....
on air, land, and sea
and through eternity

In Memory of Andy Dunbar's 30th birthday January 22, 1972-
October 24, 1977 By Mom, Sharon Bryant

FEED THE CAT???????

My son is dead - and you expect me to feed the cat???
Isn't it amazing how society is so rigid in their expectations? "There are rules you know...Steps we must all take..." Whoever set these standards obviously has never lost a child, the core of your heart and soul. It just doesn't work that way.

Simple every day tasks are impossible to complete.
The only constant in your upside down world is pain, unlike any pain you have ever known. Shortly after your child's death, you are expected to return to your job, take care of your household, pay the bills, and yes, feed the cat! It has been a year for me, since I lost my son, and I still go blank mid act. I stand in a store with no idea what I came in for, or I cry over bananas, because Lee loved them. I can go from laughter to tears in 1.1 seconds.

The Compassionate Friends has been a life saver (or perhaps a heart saver) for me. Only those who have experienced the same heartache will understand when you say I need to be alone - but I can't stand to be alone! Each grieving parent must heal in his or her own way, in his or her own time. One step forward, 15 back, spin around and start over, only to repeat the same progress, one step forward, 15 back, spin around...You get the picture. But you don't have to heal alone. You need not walk alone. Join us, we know you're not crazy - just a grieving parent. We do care.

by Ann TCF Roseburg, OR

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

OUR CHILDREN Loved...

Missed... Remembered...

As long as we live, our children too shall live, for they are part of us in our memories.

We lovingly remember the following children on Their Anniversary.

Birth Days

1	GUNNER SHULTZ
1	RUSTY LOFTIS
2	DUSTIN LYLES
5	JETT STARK
7	AMY HELMS (WITMER)
9	ANDREW JOSEPH LAWS
9	JOLEE BRITT WHITE
10	TAMMIE LYNN ERWIN
12	HUNTER "COLE"MAN JACKSON
14	CARTER WILSON
15	RAHSAAN "ROME" DURHAM (COLBERT)
16	BREANNA STAR SWANSON (KELLY)
16	TARA JONES
17	JOSEPH "JOEY" CULLNAN
17	RYAN ELSASS
20	CHARLES HUDDLESTON
21	CHARLES BAXTER (WORDEN)
21	CHASE ASHLEY
21	JACKSON CLAY HENSLEY
23	LINCOLN VAUGHN HENRY LEWIS
24	KEITH BROOKS "MARTY"
27	GREGORY O. GLENN JR.
27	MARK CHRISTOPHER PIERCE
28	BRANDON LEON GARRISON
28	BRIAN ALAN EATON (MOORE)
28	KELSEY FOLMAR
28	LARISA RHINEHART (CONSTANCE)
30	PATRICIA JEAN BASCO-YOUNG

Angelverseries

1	ROBERT L HOPPER JR
2	DYLLAN ROSS SANDERS
5	JEFFREY SHRADER
5	JENNIFER SIPES (PERRYMAN)
5	MICHAEL KEVIN ADKISSON
5	RYAN ELSASS
6	ANDREW ROGERS
8	JAMIE STARR MURRAY (BROTHER)
9	JENNIFER BORING
9	TARA JONES
10	BRYAN NICHOLSON (BAKER)
12	JEFF JEHLIK
12	JOSHUA GRIGGS
15	MELISSA CAOLE (BAKER)
15	SEAN M TUCKER (LEWIS)
16	LANCE WALTER HARTSFIELD
16	MATTHEW DAVID HAMILTON
19	JONATHAN GOOTEE
23	MICHAEL D BARKER (GATLIFF)
23	SHYAM DEV PATWARDHAN
24	CONNIE CAPPS (STANBROUGH)
25	JUSTIN RYAN LASSITER
26	CARTER WILSON
26	ZAYD ZUBAIDI
29	STEFFANI CATHLYN TATE (THRIFT)
30	JARED MARC SMITH





Love Gifts...A thoughtful way to remember our precious children.

A *Love Gift* is given to The Compassionate Friends in honor of someone who has died...or a memorial to a relative or friend...or simply from those who wish to help.



Because TCF is a non-profit organization, *Love Gifts* are an important means of financial support, which enable us to continue to reach out and support bereaved families. **We are so very grateful for the *Love Gifts* listed below. Thank you for caring**

When someone you love becomes a memory ,the memory becomes a treasure.

Charles Erwin "In memory of Tammie & Michael Erwin"

Elizabeth Cunningham. "Billy Joe, my Beloved Son, I love you with all my heart."

Christine Worden, "In loving memory of my son."

Patty Elsass, "In Loving memory of Ryan Elsass."

"In memory of Karen Elaine Sheffield, 11-21-67.

From Curtis, Mary, Megan, Sara, Lauryn, Lauryn,+ Stevens' family.

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would. This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children. Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive. Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand. For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief. We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Sometimes when grief overwhelms us it is comforting to know that someone who cares is just a phone call away. A Loving Listener is someone who is willing to talk on the phone with another bereaved Parent, Sibling or Grandparent. A Loving Listener's phone number will be published in the newsletter as another resource to our bereavement community. Names will be listed along with special circumstances, such as auto accident, illness, suicide or homicide.

If you are willing to be a Loving Listener please let me know and I will add you to the newsletter. Contact Gary Clark at gary.clark@cox.net.

Loving Listeners



Gary Clark: Skiing Accident 405-691-7144

Melinda Heidling: Infant Death 405-885-2739

Sharon Ellington: Drunk Driver 405-721-6939



Robi Long: Unknown 405-408-2102



***** PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING *****

We all want to help when we can. It is a BIG part of our healing process. Being helpful, productive people is key. Our chapter very much needs to strengthen our steering committee. The Steering committee meets once every other month, and perhaps once or twice a year for special projects, such as the Walk to Remember and the December Candle Lighting.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS, YOUR CREATIVITY, YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS.

WE NEED YOUR INDIVIDUAL TALENTS.

Our chapter has been operating with just a few volunteers for sometime now and we have not been able to do the Outreach to the community and Public Awareness that was once our strength. We know there are so many hurting families in our community who have not heard of us.

We can all probably help a little, which will help our chapter a lot. If you can help please contact Sharon Ellington at 405-721-6939 , or Gary Clark at 405-691-7144, or come to our next meeting and talk to us. We will be very happy to have your help.



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. ©2007

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73157-2249

P.O. BOX 12249

NORTH OKLAHOMA CITY CHAPTER

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

December 2019

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The Compassionate Friends offers 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. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "Men Only Sharing," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide," "There are also sessions for surviving siblings. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.