



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2020 ISSUE

Vol 41, No. 1

#1184

This issue of the TCF Marin Newsletter is sponsored by love gifts from our members.

Our Co-Leaders:

Eileen and Ed Rusky
erusky@gmail.com

Facilitator:

Mark Rosengarden

TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:

Group meetings will be held on the third Monday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Lucas Valley Community Church.

2000 Las Gallinas Avenue
(at Lucas Valley Road)
San Rafael, CA

First time attendees are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.

I Didn't Have A Sister Until My Child Died

As a child, I often felt a deep loneliness when meeting my friends' sisters. I had no sister. There was no one with whom I could share my secrets, my successes, my dreams, my failures, my fears, my heartbreaks, my environment, my stresses, my sadness or my love. There was no sister who shared the meaningful events in my life. But time moved on.

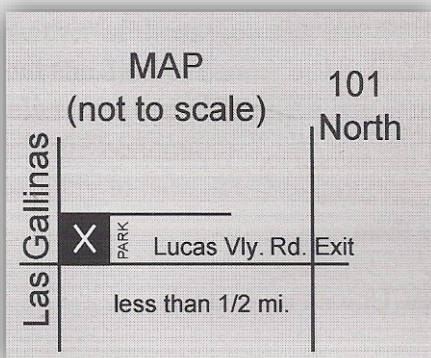
Then my only child died.

My life turned upside down as a mother's worst fear became a reality. I was in shock. I was depressed, withdrawn, broken and lost. I began attending Compassionate Friends meetings. Initially I felt only my heartbreak and the heartbreak of the mothers whose children had died. As I continued to attend the meetings, I felt a kinship to these women. I learned the story of their children and shared the story of my child. I began to think of their children as nieces and nephews who were with my child.

We shared our anxieties, secrets, successes, dreams, failures, fears, heartbreaks, stresses and experiences. We were walking the same lonely road together. We had a common bond, a bond as thick as blood.....our precious children were dead. As I meet newly bereaved parents, I look at the mothers and realize I may well have another sister. This is a big family now and, sadly, it's getting bigger. I experience the pain of many birthdays and death anniversaries throughout the year. I feel the blood-curdling scream of each mother whose child has died. She is my sister. I reach out to her, as others have reached out to me, and in so doing, I may help her and bring a tiny bit of peace to her and to myself.

Yes, it would be easier to turn my back and pretend I don't connect with these mothers. But I do connect with them. And life isn't always about the easy road, as we have sadly come to understand. Life is about finding ourselves in the midst of chaos and tragedy and moving forward to a deeper, more meaningful normalcy. A normalcy that includes the memories of our child and our sisters' children.

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



Meeting Calendar
Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, January 20, 2020
Monday, February 17, 2020
Monday, March 16, 2020



TCF RESOURCES:

TCF Marin County, CA Chapter

P.O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915
www.tcfmarin.org
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36595597804>
Info: Eileen Rusky (415) 457-3123

TCF San Francisco and Peninsula Chapter

Meets: 2nd Wednesday
Taraval Police Sta. 2345, 24th Ave
Contact: Audre Hallum
650.359.7928, cwhallum1@mac.com
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

TCF Sonoma County Chapter

tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com
(707) 490-8640

Northern CA Regional Coordinator:

Nancy Juracka
nancy_juracka@yahoo.com

TCF National Office:

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696
Phone: (630) 990-0010
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
Fax: (630) 990-0246
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
www.compassionatefriends.org

Additional Support Sites

opentohope.com
survivorsofsuicide.com
griefspeaks.com

Other Grief Counseling Resources

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.
Free monthly drop in 1st Thursday 11am-12pm 17 E. Sir Francis Drake, Larkspur.
Marin and SF (415) 526-5699
Sonoma (707) 931-7299
Email: griefsupport@hbtb.org
Website: www.hospicebythebay.org

North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael

www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com
Ph.: 415-250-3027

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org Ph.: 707-968-7563

The Death Anniversary

On June 1, 2007, my 82-year old aunt unexpectedly and suddenly died. She and I had always talked frequently, even though she lived in Washington and I live in Texas. The last time I saw her was at my Dad's funeral in 2000. But we kept in touch, and shared a mutual interest in the family genealogy.

Many nights I would call her and we would talk for hours about the death of my son, Todd. She would always reassure me that I was the best mother a child could have. Her opinion meant much to me as she raised three sons who became very responsible, loving adults. Her life was well lived, her advice always sound.

In the spring of 2006, my aunt lost her husband of 60 years. Her three sons helped her for a while then she suggested that they get on with their lives. Moms are like that. But she and I talked about her loss, my loss and the differences between the two.

When the first anniversary of my uncle's death was approaching, I sent her a card. I wanted her to know that I remembered this sad anniversary date. I wrote about her husband, their relationship, how much I admired them, and that I was keeping her in my thoughts and prayers on this sad day.

She e-mailed me right after she received the card. She thanked me over and over for the card and reiterated her absolute certainty that I was a good mother for Todd. Her sons had called to talk with her. However, they didn't bring up the anniversary, even though it was obvious that they were thinking about it. "Men are like that", she told me. Her sisters called and talked to her about her husband, the anniversary and more. My dad's sisters are special people. I'd like to think that I have learned from them. We must talk about our feelings; death cannot be ignored. If one of us breaks down and cries, the "girls" are there with an understanding that transcends distance. They listen; they talk about the loss, the life, and the sadness. They encourage us to take our loved one with us. That's what they did when they lost children, parents and their husbands to death.

Bereaved parents understand the importance of death anniversaries to the family, especially to each parent. When we have lost a child, that date takes on a significance that cannot be measured. That is a date that we will never forget. A month before the date, bereaved parents begin anticipating the anniversary date. Anxiety sets in. Depression can sweep over us. We count days until the date finally arrives. Then we go with it. We let the day take us where it will. We receive cards from our Compassionate Friends. We receive some telephone calls. Sometimes our families call or send a card. Sometimes friends come over and talk. Sometimes we hear from very few people and find that to be just fine. This is a day for us, the parents who have endured the worst, to reflect, to cry, to remember, to honor our child.

Each month I read the names and death anniversary dates of the children of our Compassionate Friends. Each month I sigh, shed tears for the upcoming pain and then begin to edit the newsletter. Yet each month I feel as if, somehow, we are each lightening the burden of the others. Our presence, our concern, our acceptance of each grief journey....no matter how that road twists and winds, are meant to give each parent the light of hope.

We don't walk this road alone. We are connected to each other with an invisible golden thread that touches each heart. This is our journey.

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

"You care so much you feel as though you will bleed to death with the pain of it." — J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

Carol's Corner

by Carol Kearns, PhD
author of "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare"



Columns for The Compassionate Friends

I have found great solace volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, a hard-working group that supports families seeking "the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child" (www.compassionatefriends.org). My columns discuss topics of continuing concern in the Marin County CA newsletter. - Carol

More On Surviving Siblings

I gained a greater understanding of how powerful guilt can be for surviving siblings observing my son Michel after the death of his sister, Kristen. As parents, it is our role to support, nurture, and protect. This is not the role of siblings, yet it gets twisted into their grief as well. As a result, it is common for brothers and sisters to feel that they failed in some way.

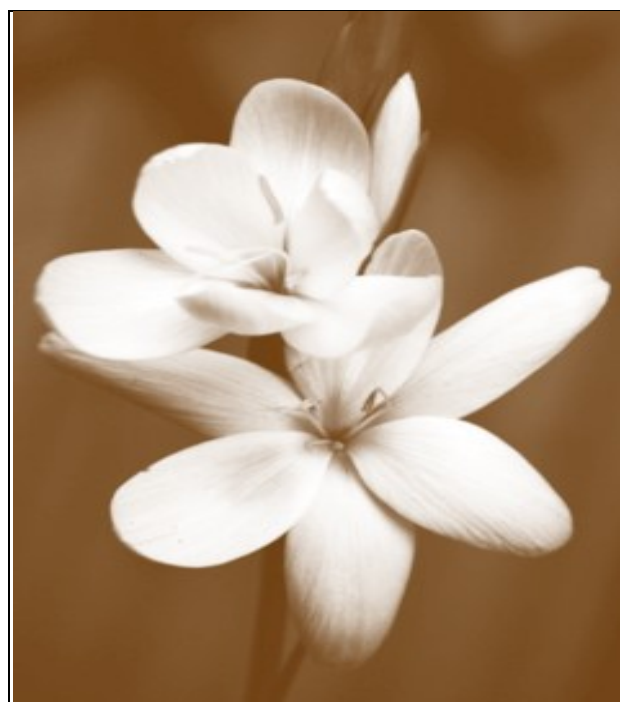
Siblings may often believe there must have been something they could have done to prevent the death. And sadly, it is not uncommon for siblings to believe they caused the death by wishing ill thoughts on their sister or brother during a disagreement or fight. This can have unfortunate repercussions if the sibling dies. Well-intentioned people may add to the confusion by making statements like, "You need to be strong for your parents." adding an unnecessary burden for the child to now care for us. Michel also heard, "God must have needed Krissie." causing him to fear that God may want him too.

Survival guilt is also common. Not only do parents believe they shouldn't outlive their children, but brothers and sisters often feel guilty for being alive and enjoying life. They may believe as well that they need to be the perfect child to make up for the loss. This is a real complication of grief. As parents, we need to be aware of this and reassure them that they don't need to make up for anything, nor can they. We might want to tell them that the greatest gift they can give us is to be their own person and live life to the fullest.

When death lands on the doorstep of our surviving children at a tender age it most likely becomes their threshold into adulthood

for understanding death can demand adult-sized answers. I definitely noticed this with my son who was only nine when his sister died suddenly. He became a quieter, more serious boy. The innocence of his childhood was left behind when he realized his sister, his buddy, was gone forever.

Watching our surviving children come to terms with death of this magnitude, I've always felt, is the double-edged sword of the bereaved parent. We are wrestling with our own grief and the endless questions with answers that don't come easily, making us, once again, feel as helpless as we did when our child died. Being open and honest with our children and their struggle and keeping the channels of communication open, can actually bring us closer to them. We can heal together.



Our Children Remembered, January, 2020

<i>Child</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Bereaved</i>
Peter Demitrius Alex		Bill & Pat Alex
John Christopher Alioto, Jr.		John Alioto
Eric Tyler Anderson		Bill & Liz Anderson
Daniel Zacharia Ashkenazy		Pamela & Dan Ashkenazy
John Charles Berges		Mary Berges
Jonathan Eugene Brilliant		Girija & Larry Brilliant
Christopher Abram Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Laura Alicia Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Daniel Keith Cracchold		Linda Winslow
Misty Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Nina Embervine		Barbara McNeil
Adam Teplin Emmott		Kristina Teplin, Michelle J. Maguire
Matthew Christopher Fields		Cathy Morocco
Basilio Nathan Garza Jr.		Renee Garza
Peter Alexander Helldoerfer		Peter Helldoerfer, Kathleen Freitag
Vincent Alfred Hinds		Henry & Ginny Hinds
Mina Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Stefanie Helen Jacobs		Nanette Jacobs
John Nicholas Klingel		John & Karen Klingel
Dylan Clarke Krings		Randy & Sioux Krings
Trey Lagomarsino		Mike Baxman & Susan Kim
James Scott Lambert		Linda Hicken
Mathew Gary Luce		Alice Clary, Christie Clary
Marci Eilene Meyring		Gary & Natalie Meyring
Brian David Mixsell		Bill, Sandy & Belinda Mixsell
Michael Patrick O'Riordan		Mary O'Riordan
Eli Thomas Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Luke Benjamin Pedemonte		Richard and Therese Pedemonte
Lindsey Opal Quinby		Paul Quinby, Jean Quinby Reiss
Anna Elizabeth Russell		Lorene Jackson
Ruby Salkeld		Cathie Merkel
Dennis Howard Schonborn		Felicia Schonborn
Kyle Aaron Scourbys		Bill & Kimberly Scourbys
Dwayne Anthony Simón		Donna & Flennis Simón
Julian Ali Thomas		Fariba Thomas
Karl Ingemar Thunstrom		Avghi & Bert Thunstrom
Adrian Rodolfo Valderrama		Rosa Sandoval & Rodolfo Valderrama
Gregory Brian Wilhelm		Patricia & Roger Wilhelm
Malika Ziani		Phyllis Callahan

When a person is born we rejoice, and when they're married we jubilate, but when they die we try to pretend nothing has happened. - Margaret Mead

“In times of grief and sorrow I will hold you and rock you and take your grief and make it my own. When you cry I cry and when you hurt I hurt. And together we will try to hold back the floods to tears and despair and make it through the potholed street of life”
— Nicholas Sparks, *The Notebook*

“Come back. Even as a shadow, even as a dream.”
— Euripides

Our Children Remembered, February, 2020
Dates

Child

Bereaved

Maraina Lee Arik
 Cailin Faith Baldes
 Tobias M. Biedul
 Kevin Connor Bledsoe
 Jacob Westley Brumbaugh
 Joey Burger
 Max Hart Chappell
 Joey Ciatti
 Lisa Danielle Clark
 Michael Anthony Dollwet
 Debra Lynn Ferrua
 Matthew Christopher Fields
 Matthew Finzen
 Lori Ann Elizabeth Gentry
 Pamela Dawn Heaster
 Dana John Hudson
 Chris Leach
 Ruth Dasha Goldie Levy
 Sabrina Elizabeth Lew
 Laura Catherine Maatz
 Marco Antonio Joseph Martinez
 Christopher J. Murphy, Jr.
 Michael Patrick O'Riordan
 Alexander Rayburn
 Justin Daniel Reynolds
 David Arthur Ross
 Warren James Ruehle
 Theodore "Teddy" James Russell
 Michael Kevin Sadler
 Colin Edward Schreck

 Richard Sielert
 Dwayne Anthony Simón
 Flennis Anthony Simón II
 Andrew Phiip Swig
 Brigham Robert Thompson Thompson
 Elizabeth Torlakson

Rich & Linda Arik
 Diana Baldes
 Charles Feeney & Holly Biedul
 AnnMarie Bledsoe
 Mark & Deborah Brumbaugh
 Bob & Darlene Burger
 Jeanne Vukasovich
 Becky Oken
 Julie & Bruce Clark, Lucy Martinez
 Ronald & Joan Crook
 Ronald & Joan Crook
 Cathy Morocco
 Barbara & Fritz Finzen
 Genesse & Bill Gentry
 Ila Benavidez-Heaster
 Diana Hudson
 Marcie & Don Leach
 Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
 Teri Miller
 Russell & Marcia Lizza
 Samuel Martinez & Brenda Bloomfield
 Tina Smith
 Mary O'Riordan
 Mindee & Steve Rayburn
 Carole Bonnici
 Arthur & Joan Ross
 Kate & Glenn Ruehle
 Anne & Tim Russell
 Kathy Miles
 Daly & David Schreck, Lesley & Ireland
 Cannan
 Diane Sielert
 Donna & Flennis Simón
 Donna & Flennis Simón
 Maureen Swig
 Elizabeth Thompson Mollner
 Kathy Bodnar

Three Grief Haikus

#1

A tear shimmers down
 Looking out, late summer day
 Sunshine missing you

#2

Tear down cheek slides soft
 Sorrow in heart heavy pain
 Pond so still, sunshine

#3

Dream broken so fast
 Before and after so quick
 Tear, tears, and more tears

Melissa Anne Schroeter
 TCF Rockland County, NY
 Copyright 2010/Permission for TCF chapters to
 reprint granted by the author

Love Gifts

Love Gifts are "messages" published in our newsletter that honor children who have died. We are grateful to parents, grandparents and others who, by their Love Gifts donations, allow us to offer resources such as the Annual Candle Lighting Event, the newsletter, books, brochures and pamphlets at no cost to assist bereaved families. They also allow us to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. The donation amount is your choice.

We have received the following Love Gifts for the Jan/ Feb newsletter.

Donor/s: Tim & Anne Russell
Child: Theodore James "Teddy" Russell
Dates: 2/17/99 - 6/16/18

Donor/s: Ellen & Fred Coffman
Child: Blake Coffman
Dates: 12/21/00 - 4/17/19
"We see you in every blade of grass and every butterfly."

Donor/s: Diane Sielert
Child: Richard Sielert
Dates: 2/19/64 - 7/12/14
"Always on my mind. "

Donor/s: Daly & David Schreck
Child: Colin Edward Schreck
Dates: 8/5/76 - 2/17/17
"We love you always Colin. Mother & Dad, Chris, Lesley & Ireland, Ireland David & Michaelanne Daly"

Donor/s: Alan & Virginia Pabst
Child: Rebecca Pabst
Dates: 8/8/68 - 11/9/94

Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:

Jan/Feb issue Dec. 15 Jul/Aug issue Jun. 15
Mar/Apr issue Feb. 15 Sep/Oct issue Aug. 15
May/Jun issue Apr. 15 Nov/Dec issue Oct. 15

Danny

Danny, our only child, passed away at the age of twelve. His death was unexpected, and the pain almost unbearable. Our pastor told us that yellow is the color of life. What then could be more fitting than yellow roses? To ensure these symbols of life for years to come, I bought a rose bush for my wife. After all, she was still Danny's mom and needed more than ever to be reminded of that. I planted the bush on Mother's Day. On the day before Father's Day, the roses bloomed - three of them, to be exact. They were arranged in size order, just as our family had been in life. When I bought the bush, there was no way to know that there were to be only three roses. I have no doubt this was a sign from Danny. He wanted us to know that he still lives, and that there are still three roses.

John W. Carlsen
In memory of Danny
Reprinted from Bereavement Magazine,
5125 N. Union Blvd., Ste. 4
Colorado Springs, Colorado 89018

"Perhaps this is what the stories meant when they called somebody heartsick. Your heart and your stomach and your whole insides felt empty and hollow and aching."

— Gabriel García Márquez

Love Gift Form:

Child's name _____ Donor's name _____

Child's Birthdate & Anniversary Date _____

Newsletter month _____

Message _____

Include your name, address and phone # if not on check in case of questions:

Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to TCF/Marin
to: TCF/Marin c/o Love Gifts, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.

New Year a Time to Search for 'Ray of Hope'

*Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter.
Be my song to sing that guides me on my way.
Be the arms that hold me.
Be the love that enfolds me, be my light,
Be my ray of hope today.
...Paul Alexander, songwriter*

Snowflakes drift silently to earth.

A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended

As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for "recovery" in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life—a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Time Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does *this* new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

Can we be kind to ourselves? Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say 'NO!'

Can we enjoy life again? Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago? By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

*Inside of me are all the answers.
Everything I need to know
Lives inside of me.
Come behold my miracle,
Come and hear my story.
Come and paint a memory with me.
. . . P. Alexander*

Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area, MI

"Ray of Hope" by Paul Alexander on the CD "The Best of Paul" at www.griefsong.com (Paul wrote LIGHT A CANDLE which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs). Permission to use excerpts from "Ray of Hope" granted by Paul Alexander.

SEASONS OF THE HEART

Your special days are unchanging
Seasons of the heart I celebrate.
Your birth, forever spring,
Tender memories relate,
New and green, a dream
From which too soon I awake.

The summer of your life was bright
Laughter needed no reason,
Seemingly endless days of sharing.
Sixteen summers. Short in season.

Your death brought winter without warning,
What sense in all this can be found?
Summer dreams replaced with mourning.
Where is hope now?

But the heart knows what
The mind cannot accept
That when all is lost,
It is love that is left.
Love knows no barriers
Time or distance recognize.
Love does not diminish,
But is constant in our lives.
And like a summer breeze
Uplifts and inspires us
With healing memories.

Peggy Walls
TCF Alexander City, AL
In Memory of my son, Eddie

Where you are...

Are my tears holding you back, is my pain holding you down, do you yearn to fly... to be free?

But you are no longer here...

I hope you are where you need to be to fulfill your destiny and not hold back to appease my sadness...

In actual time, on this plane... it has been a long time... in my heart time has stopped... you were here just a short while ago... in whatever plane and space your spirit dwells, I desire nothing but peace for you...

I set you free from a place of deep love... a place of gratitude for having chosen me as your mother during your brief stay this time around...

I see you in my mind, I feel you in my heart... that will never, never change...

I will know, when the time is right, where you are... I imagine that will come to be when I leave this place I know as life...

Until then...

Mama



The Compassionate Friends
Marin County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

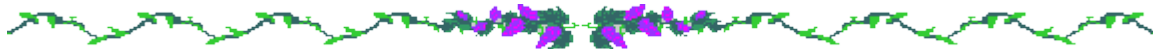
Non-Profit Org.
 US Postage PAID
 Larkspur, CA
 Permit No.41

The Compassionate Friends of Marin County
 P. O. Box 150935
 San Rafael, CA 94915

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2020

Copyright © 2019 - All Rights Reserved
 The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



It's Easy to be a Sponsor of the TCF Marin Newsletter

Please email tcfmarin@gmail.com with any questions.

Our TCF families and friends now have the opportunity to sponsor our TCF Marin Newsletter. This is a meaningful way to honor your child, grandchild or sibling and help our chapter at the same time. Sponsorship donations are \$200 for an entire issue or it may be split with two families for \$100 each. Your name and your child's name will be included in the dedication or you may choose to donate anonymously.

Donations may be sent to TCF Marin, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915. Thank you for considering this generous contribution to our chapter.

