

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month at the ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Tennessee) Building, 560 Royal Parkway, Nashville, TN 37214 (**SEE MAILING ADDRESS ABOVE**). We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

April 12th Meeting Program:

Reflections on our TCF National Conference

Have you wondered what it's like to attend a TCF National Conference? Several Nashville members have attended once or even several times and this month they will have a few minutes to share a positive experience at a TCF National Conference.

Once everyone who wants to speak has done so, if time permits, additional comments can be made. If you wish, you can bring a conference tote bag, book, nametag and other mementos.

We hope to see you there.
Our regular sharing tables will follow.



*We know that heartache that you bear
We've felt the pain 'cause we've been there
We share a bond of infinite sorrow
A hope for peace—strength for tomorrow*

*A time will come when you'll seek relief
Solace and comfort to ease your grief
We welcome you—We shall be there
We understand—We've much to share.*

TCF, Scranton, PA

You are Welcome Here

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We need not walk alone.

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM--**In the month of their births**

James Michael Bolton
(Mikey)

April 9

Son of

Jim and Loretta Bolton

Patrick Jonathan Bruce, Jr.
(Jon)

April 18

Son of

Patrick and Pam Bruce

Eric Compton

April 22

Son of

Rick and Mittie
Compton

Kenneth Elberson

April 18

Son of

Harry and Winnie
Elberson

Mark Joseph Dinkel

April 27

Son of

Richard and Kathleen Dinkel
Brother of Amy

Za'Ryiah TeHani Floyd

April 19

Daughter of

Trina Floyd

Aaron Garner

April 30

Son of

Don and Vicki Garner

Michael Hunt

April 13

Son of

Robin Hunt

Viktoria Nicks

(Tori)

April 22

Daughter of

Brad and Amanda Nicks
Sister of
Braden and Austin

Stella Joy Key

April 27

Daughter of

Nick and Andrea Key

Stacy Leigh Kraft

April 10

Daughter of

Keith and Meryl Kraft
and Terry Kornman

David Benton Lowe

April 26

Son of

Charles and Teresa
Lowe

Robin Nicole Henderson

April 24

Daughter of

Greg Henderson

Gregory Adam Henderson

April 5

Son of

Greg Henderson

Don Bruce Winters

April 16

Son of

Jerry and Loretta
Winters

Daniel Wayne Vick

April 5

Son of

Wayne and Marsha
Vick

Christian Thompson

April 14

Son of

Chris Thompson

Janessa Dian Wellman

April 24

Daughter of

Timothy and Debra Pharris
Granddaughter of
Glen and Dian Wellman

Mark William Ryman
(Brutus)

April 2

Son of

Charlie and Gay Ryman

Stephen Austin Macdonald

April 23

Son of

Ross and Carolyn Macdonald

Michael Todd Webb

April 26

Son of

Mike and Debbie Webb

Logan Thomas Suggs

April 25

Son of

Marcus and Linda Suggs

Ryan Lee Wiseman

April 18

Son of

Roger and Deborah Wiseman



And in the month of their deaths

Ashleigh Nicole Blough April 5 Daughter of Deana Malone	Christopher Jay Bradley April 20 Son of Lamar and Joy Bradley	Taylor Martin Davies April 16 Son of Roy and Barbara Davies	William Toale Alix April 13 Son of Greer Allison
Joshua Hovies April 19 Son of Alicia Hovies	Michael Hunt April 21 Son of Robin Hunt	Valerie Marie Magnan April 29 Daughter of Sheila Howarth	Clint Hunton April 15 Son of Teressa Hunton
Viktorija Nicks (Tori) April 29 Daughter of Brad and Amanda Nicks Sister of Braden and Austin	Andrew Morris Pack April 19 Son of Wayne and Cassandra Pack	Matthew Douglas Pate April 30 Son of Melanie Pate	Kevin Moncrief April 5 Son of Sandra Merkel
Brandon Allen Payne April 10 Son of Terry and Kimberly Payne	Bert Rich April 7 Son of Shirley Rich-Brinegar	Blake Thomas Steen April 7 Son of Jennifer Anderson	Lindsay Ware April 8 Daughter of Scott Ware
	Laurie Lynn Shriver Robert April 21 Daughter of Warren and Donna Jones and George Shriver Sister of David, Bekki, and Bonnie		

Getting to Know Our Children

We are starting a new tradition for our newsletter: a Getting to Know Our Children section. Each month, you are invited to submit a small article telling a memory of your child, sibling or grandchild that will help us get to know them better through sharing an anecdote that shows their personality, talents, or gifts, etc. Please email your articles by the first of each month for publication in the next month's edition (i.e. submit by the first of April to be included in the May issue.) to the editor, Melanie Bell at melaniebell2210@gmail.com and put 'Getting to Know Our Children' in the subject line. I may extend the deadline a few days just for our next issue. Below is our first article and we hope to have one or more each month.

Happy Birthday Mike Hunt!?

In the early 1980s, Michael and his sister Trish worked at the Lakeside Hamburger Pavilion in the Theater By The Lake area of Opryland Theme Park. The season started in March with cleaning and stocking the restaurant with supplies. There was a paper calendar hanging on the wall in the kitchen for the employees to write down days off. Proms, graduations and birthdays made up most of the notes added to the calendar. One day in the summer, one of the co-workers came up to Trish to ask her, "just when is Mike's birthday?" Trish answered him with a question of her own. "Mike's birthday is April 13, why?" The friend then informed Trish that there was a notation on a day in every month, Mike Hunt's birthday! When Trish checked it out, she saw that indeed Michael had claimed to have a birthday in every month of the year. I'm sure he did it to get extra birthday wishes, even if they weren't deserved. He could have never imagined that 37 years after his death, his real birthday is still remembered by a host of friends. Happy Heavenly Birthday my precious son! I love you muchly!!

Robin Hunt
TCF Nashville, TN

GIFTS OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

We are deeply grateful for the voluntary gifts of love that make it possible for The Compassionate Friends to offer comfort to those families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

Jim and Loretta Bolton
in Loving Memory
of their son,
James Michael "Mikey"
Bolton

Marsha Vick
in Loving Memory of
Daniel Vick,
son of
Marsha and Wayne
Vick

Linda Black
in Loving Memory
of her son,
Christopher
William Black



Patricia Fields
in Loving Memory
of her daughter,
Elizabeth Lucille Wyatt



Each month, Price Printing, 615.360.3339, donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family assemble, label, sort, and mail the newsletter in loving memory of her son, Marcus Dean Brown. We appreciate so much these people and their generosity to all of us.

A Yes for Spring

*Crocuses, robins, light breezes and warmth
 Signal the coming of Spring.
 Already my neighbor measures his lawn
 With the spreader to encourage
 Green grass and new life.
 But not for me. No, not for me.*

*How dare that robin build
 A nest in my apple tree!
 Can't she see that here
 Winter still shrouds the house—
 That storms still howl within?*

*I do not yearn for Spring.
 There is no new awakening
 Or joy within my heart.
 I cling to winter's dreary cold
 For it echoes the cry of my soul.*



*And yet that bird builds!
 Now comes her mate to add
 A ribbon fallen from the Christmas rubble.
 Together they stack and weave
 Until a strong new nest appears.*

*Was last year's nest torn asunder
 By winter's brutal wrath?
 Were the nestlings caught
 By neighbor's greedy cat?
 Whatever: robin sits upon the new nest.*

*I watch the robins and long to stay in winter;
 To postpone the pain of rebuilding.
 But I cannot—I must not.
 Spring is coming even here.
 Crocuses grow in my yard, too.
 And for me—especially for me.*

Marcia F. Alig
 TCF, Hightstown, NJ

*Those of us who've lost a child come to realize
 The miracle of memories of love that never dies*

Mike Bell
 TCF, Nashville, TN
 From his song "If You can Hear this Song."

When Tori Died It Felt Like EVERYTHING

It was...

Clouds swallowing sunshine
Sink holes enveloping all the glitter
Darkness destroying rays of hope
Lava raining down and making all things desolate
Strip mining that depletes every notion of joy
The entire world of flow drying up
Brittle ice freezing essence
Fundamental truths blurring then breaking
Eternity stretched out endlessly like a grisly battle scene
Every flower is drained of its beauty and intent

It is almost five years later and even though I stubbornly want to hang on to these feelings in some ways, I also must admit that I see clearly that Tori's death is not everything. It sure is a lot, and it affects everything, changes everything, but it's not everything anymore.

Now, there are days, sometimes weeks at a time when the sun shines through the clouds. When Tori was little, I often sang "You Are My Sunshine" to her, and as puzzling as it is the sun still comes out even though she's gone. So, even though it's wonderful that the sun shines again, it can be confusingly painful as well.

Now, I see glitter all around me at certain times. Tori sure loved glitter so I'm glad it's back. I even decorated Christmas ornaments last year and put glitter on them. She would have really loved that.

Somewhere around 9 to 11 months after Tori died, I felt a slight shift and though I could not put words to it then I believe now it was the first inklings of hope seeping back in.

Now I often feel hopeful about various things.

Now, there are only stretches of time when all things seem burnt and desolate.

Now, I experience joy regularly. Sometimes it's for specific moments like spending time with my husband in Gatlinburg or watching my two big linemen sons duke it out on the football field, or even a simple cup of coffee shared with a friend. Sometimes I feel joyful in general with no specific cause for long stretches of time.

Now, flow is still difficult, and I suspect that it might be a regular challenge. However, there are times when it seems like things are smooth and flowing, like I can physically go along with it, but internally I still can't let go enough.

Essence, fundamental truths, eternity—these are all concepts that are personal and take a lot of mental energy to wade through. So, it's very slow going on these. I guess for me it shows how deeply Tori's death did affect everything. Profoundly.

Today, flowers are beautiful again and, in our household, they have regained their healing intent, the majority of the time.

I am certainly grateful that some healing progress has occurred, and I can slowly but surely live my life again even though my only daughter is gone from this earth. I will say, though, that it is painful to acknowledge this.

I love her so much that I want her death to be everything because how could it not be? Yet, as I heal and my life fills back in, the reality is that I'm looking in my husband's eyes, I am hugging my two amazing sons, I am seeing the sun rise, I'm drinking that amazing cup of coffee with a friend, and I am growing incredibly beautiful flowers and I realize that Tori is in fact a part of everything. Her life and her death.



Amanda Nicks
TCF Nashville, TN

The Child That's Not There

The child that's not there

Takes up every piece of me.

The child that's not there

Consumes my every thought.

The child that's not there

Makes me feel like I failed.

The child that's not there

Took away a main reason for being.

But

The children that are there

Still somehow bring me joy.

The children that are there

Still need my love.

The children that are there

Don't need any more grief.

The children that are there

Force me to go on.

Tricia Palmer
TCF, Tidewater, VA



A Grandparent's Point of View

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives—family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there.

The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton
TCF, Savannah, GA



Time for Spring Cleaning

The smell of spring is in the air. At your house it's probably lilacs, lilies and hollyhocks, but at my house, it's Lysol, Lemon Pledge and Clorox. These fragrances are the harbingers of my favorite secular celebration, spring cleaning. I admit it, friends; I love to clean.

I learned the joys of tidiness at my mother's (housemaid's) knee. She is Norwegian, and for centuries the women in her family have dedicated their lives to cleanliness. Early in my indoctrination, my mother taught me the old Norwegian expression "Ingen kysten skogen mogen!" which loosely translated means, "When in doubt, toss it out."

I'm pretty sentimental myself but, until recently, I was never a saver of things. That changed when Blake died. I found that I could not part with anything that his little hands might have touched, from his childish scribbles to lucky rocks to plastic dinosaurs.

Shortly after he died, I went through all of Blake's clothes and gave away his newest and Sunday best. The things I saved were his play clothes—the shorts and shirts with mud and pizza stains that never quite came out, his favorite pajamas, his Charlie Brown underwear. My mother and I gently packed them away in tissue paper as if they were the finest silks and linens.

Sometimes when I open that drawer, I think I catch a sniff of Blake's musky little-boy scent. The yearning it awakens in me is almost more than I can bear.

This spring, in conjunction with my usual cleaning frenzy, I'm thinking of getting rid of some of the junk I've accumulated since Blake died, stuff I've lugged around but really don't need anymore. I'm going to call my favorite helpful hardware man and ask him to bring the biggest box in his warehouse. Into that box I'm going to chuck the following:

- That residual bitterness toward those who said or did the wrong thing, or worse, nothing.
- Vestiges of anger that surprise me when they still crop up from time to time.
- That awful anxiety about my surviving children and other loved ones.
- That old bugaboo, guilt, for all I should have said or done or been.

Friends, this is going to have to be a gigantic box! I'm probably going to need a dolly to get it out to the street so the garbage man can pick it up. Maybe I'll just let it sit in the garage for a while so I can look in it from time to time and think about how far I've come. Better yet, perhaps I'll just dump everything into the recycling bin. Who knows? Something valuable might emerge from all that pain.

Pat Dyson
TCF, Beaumont, TX

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, we pay to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay again to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 3 in The Children Remembered list, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. Drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 8283, Hermitage, TN 37076. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

Corporate Donations to TCF

To benefit TCF, go to the Kroger website and click on “Community Rewards”; then follow the instructions on that page and designate The Compassionate Friends Nashville Chapter. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to our chapter.

How You Can Help

Most people who attend TCF meetings never heard of TCF before they lost a child, and many bereaved parents still have not heard that there is an organization that exists to help them navigate their grief journey. If you know a family in the middle Tennessee area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you think they would benefit from finding out about TCF and possibly attending a TCF meeting, we will be happy to send you some information that you may share with them about what TCF is and what we do to support bereaved parents. If you have attended a TCF meeting, it might be helpful if you would invite them to attend their first TCF meeting with you. We also have a monthly newsletter that they can receive free of charge simply by asking for it.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Alive Alone

Alive Alone is an organization to benefit parents whose only child or all children have died. Visit their website at www.alivealone.org.

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

For general information about grief support services and groups at Alive, please call the Grief Line at: 615-963-4732 or email griefsupport@alivehospice.org. They offer eight-week groups, ongoing monthly groups, family group and Little Hearts Club for children who have experienced the death of a sibling. Services are in Franklin, Nashville, Hendersonville, Lebanon, and Murfreesboro.

Sharing

SHARING is a community organization for parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of an infant. The website is sharingmiddletn.org.

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call (615) 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at TSPN.org, and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

TCF Website —A Treasure for You

When you log onto the TCF Website at www.compassionatefriends.org you will find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter Web sites and numerous other resources.

The Compassionate Friends

P.O. BOX 8283
Hermitage, TN
37076

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A Few More Wishes

*Wish I had known you longer
Wish I had more time to hear your dreams,
watch you grow, navigate life
Wish we had more summers together,
Experienced a few more rainbows after the rain
Wish you were here for a few more sunrises,
a few more winters
Wish I had more time to see your smile,
admire your crazy style,
To feel your warmth, hear your life song,
capture more beautiful melodies
Wish we had taken a few more runs together
Shared a few more adventures,
a few more meals together,
a few more ping pong matches,*

*A few more heated discussions, a few more belly laughs
Wish I had more time to watch you, ride with you,
grow with you, learn from you
Wish I had more time to see you high jump a little longer,
become stronger,
Stand taller, walk farther
Wish I could step into where you are
Give you one more hug, one more kiss,
one more high-five
Wish your sunset had not come so soon
See you in our tomorrow my Love
See you in our sunrise
Tomorrow will be brighter.
Together we will welcome the sun.*

Pamela Hagens
TCF Nashville, TN

