



# The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter*

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National TCF Website:  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:  
[www.tcftopeka.org](http://www.tcftopeka.org)

July ~ August 2019  
Editor: Susan Chan  
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66614-3629  
(785) 272-4895

## JULY MEETING

Monday, July 22, 2019

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

*Please Note LOCATION Change!!*

**Grief and Your Health** - When you are grieving your physical, emotional and psychological self are under a great deal of stress. It is especially important that you be mindful of your health as this is also a time when your immune system may be compromised. At this meeting we will talk about some health-related issues that may occur during your grief journey, ways to keep yourself healthy as you grieve, and strategies for relieving stress and tension. **Please Note: Because the MPH Parish Center will be closed for maintenance during our July meeting time, we will be meeting in the St. Vincent Center south of the Parish Center and School building. Follow the signs to the entrance on the north side of the building. We will be meeting downstairs in the basement area.**

## AUGUST MEETING

Monday, August 26, 2019

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

**What's in a Name?** - This meeting will offer each of us an opportunity to talk about our child, grandchild or sibling's name. Why was that name chosen? Does it have any particular connection with your family's heritage? Were they named after a family member? Did they have a nickname? How do you feel their name may have reflected their personality? Do you have a special story about their name - how it came to be chosen, how they liked or didn't like the choice, etc.? Please plan to share and enjoy the opportunity to say your loved one's name.

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions.

### *This newsletter is sponsored by:*

*Don and Sheryl Bieker in loving memory of their son,  
and Andrea Smith in loving memory of her brother,  
Jon Bieker who was born on August 5<sup>th</sup>*

*Penny Lumpkin in loving memory of her son William  
Henry (Hank) Lumpkin who died on August 19<sup>th</sup>*

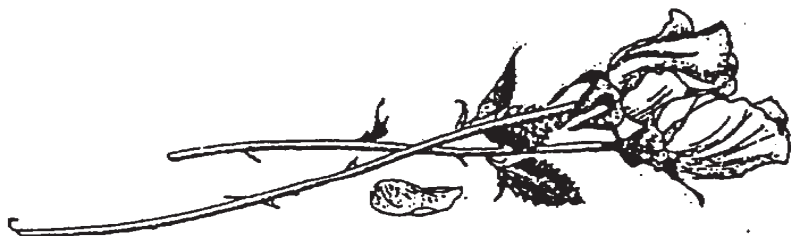


*Linda and Mark Marling in loving memory of their  
grandaughter Morgan Marie Pollak who was born  
on August 4<sup>th</sup> and died on August 27<sup>th</sup>*

*Marty and Debbie Tyson in loving memory of his son  
Brandon Toler who was born on August 18<sup>th</sup>*

*The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experience following the death of a child of any age, from any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.*

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## We Need Not Walk Alone

# From the Newsletter Editor



Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

We hope that some of you will be able to attend this year's National TCF Conference in Philadelphia. However we do realize that the expense and travel distance to attend may not make attendance possible. So I would certainly encourage you to consider attending one of the smaller, less expensive TCF Regional Conference planned for October 2019. One will be held in Houston, TX and one in Nashville, TN. You can find more information by going to the national TCF website ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and look under News & Events) or check out the websites listed in the Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember on the opposite page of this newsletter.

We do hope to see many of you at our Annual Memorial Picnic that will be held this year on Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup> at Shelter House #3 at Lake Shawnee. Gathering for a community potluck luncheon and a special Memorial Program, we will all have an opportunity to remember and to honor the lives of those children, grandchildren and siblings who "left too soon". Please see the RSVP insert in this newsletter. Please also remember that the Memorial Picnic takes the place of our regularly scheduled support group meeting for September.

We are always looking for those who would like to help with the work of the Topeka TCF Chapter. Many people find that reaching out to help others who have suffered a great loss can also be a very healing experience. Jobs within the Chapter vary from helping to set up and take down the room for a meeting, to serving as librarian for our extensive grief resource library, to producing this newsletter, and more. So please give some thought to helping keep the Topeka TCF Chapter vital and active so that it will always be here for those who not only need it now, but for those who will need it in the future. Doing so is a wonderful way to honor your loved one's memory.

Until next time, be gentle with yourself and let the healing happen.  
Remember, We Need Not Walk Alone.

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

## Healing Hearts Grief Camp

Healing Hearts Grief Camp is a fun and safe place for children to learn about grief, a safe place to heal and to learn new coping skills which will help them on their life journey. Healing Hearts is for children ages 6-12 who have experienced the death of a loved one.

At Camp we share memories, express feelings, sing, eat s'mores, build campfires, do group activities and make friends! The fee for camp is \$75 and there are scholarships available.

Camp is scheduled for September 27-29, 2019 and will be held at Tallgrass Camp in Harveyville, KS. Applications are now available (in English and Spanish) on Midland Care's website at [www.midlandcareconnection.org](http://www.midlandcareconnection.org). Applications are also available by contacting Sherry Combs at 785-430-2199 ext. 701107 or by emailing her at [scombs@midlandcc.org](mailto:scombs@midlandcc.org)



Some of the most  
comforting words in the  
universe are 'me too.' That  
moment when you find out  
that your struggle is also  
someone else's struggle,  
that you're not alone, and  
that others have been  
down the same road.



- Rita Chalourey

# Love Gifts

**Your Love Gifts Help Spread  
the Message of Hope & Healing ~ Won't You Help Today?**

What is a Love Gift? A Love Gift is a gift of money (or books, etc.) to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died, but it may be from individuals who wish to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanks that their children are alive, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help. The Compassionate Friends charges *no individual dues* or fees and depends on such Love Gifts to meet the Chapter's expenses, including the printing and mailing of this newsletter. **When you make a donation, make sure to check to see if your employer may have a "matching gifts" program** as this could double the amount of your donation. If you are not sure whether your company has such a program, check with your Personnel Department. This month we thank the following:

♥ *Mary Harrington in loving memory of her daughters ~  
Juliet Faith Harrington (September 2<sup>nd</sup> - August 25<sup>th</sup>) and  
Clara Harrington-Jones (August 26<sup>th</sup> - August 26<sup>th</sup>)  
whom she misses terribly every day ♥*

Your gifts enable us to print this newsletter and reach out to newly bereaved families. Donations are our only source of income and are **tax deductible**. If you would like to sponsor a newsletter, the cost is \$30.00. If we have more than one sponsor, we recognize all of them. If you wish to send a Love Gift, any amount is appreciated. It is whatever you feel you can give. Donations of books that you have found helpful to the Topeka Chapter Library are also greatly appreciated, and it is a nice way to remember your child or other loved one. If you would like to send a Love Gift or a Newsletter Sponsorship, you may do so by sending it to: The Compassionate Friends, c/o Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. For Newsletter Sponsorships, please indicate which issue you wish to sponsor (Jan/Feb, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, or November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

**TCF National Office e-mail:**  
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Compassionate Friends web address:**  
www.compassionatefriends.org

**Topeka TCF Chapter web and e-mail addresses:**  
www.tcftopeka.org    tcftopeka@gmail.com

**Kansas Regional Coordinator:**  
Marty & Renda Weaver - (785) 823-7191  
mweaver@cox.net

## Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

**Saturday, September 28, 2019 - Topeka TCF Chapter 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Memorial Picnic** at Shelter House #3 on Memory Lane at Lake Shawnee. See more information on the insert in this newsletter. We hope you will join us for this special event honoring the memories of our sons, daughters, grandchildren and siblings.

**October 5-6, 2019 - TCF South Texas Regional Conference in Houston, TX.** Theme is "Deep in the Heart of Hope". 25 workshops, sharing sessions and panels plus Crafty Corner, Candle Lighting and Walk to Remember. \$50 for all workshops/sessions. \$25 each for Candlelight Dinner and Walk to Remember. Go to: [www.tcfSouthTexasRegionalConference.org](http://www.tcfSouthTexasRegionalConference.org)

**October 18-19, 2019 - Regional Conference hosted by the Nashville, TN TCF Chapter.** Theme is "Memories of Love, Melodies of Hope in Music City". Two days of workshops, speakers, sharing sessions, Crafty Corker, Butterfly Boutique, and Candle Lighting. \$95/person includes all speakers and workshops as well as Dinner and Candle Lighting on Friday and Continental Breakfast and Lunch on Saturday. Go to: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://www.tcfnashville.org)

*Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:*

2020 ~ Atlanta, GA                      2021 ~ Detroit, MI  
2022 ~ Houston, TX

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**Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER** - Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to [www.dillions.com/community](http://www.dillions.com/community) rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity you wish to support. **The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is TC248.** Once you have done so and have a Dillions Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillions a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.  
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**Our Thanks to:** Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite the printing cost of this newsletter.

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**838 MASSACHUSETTS ST  
LAWRENCE, KS 66044  
785.842.3610**

**1033 SW GAGE BLVD, STE 200  
TOPEKA, KS 66604  
785.272.0070**



# And We Remember.....

*Because of the potential for the hurtful crime of identity theft, TCF Chapter Newsletters will now only publish the date of a child's birth or death without listing the year of each event. This is a directive from the National TCF Office to protect all TCF members. **Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing list will be included in the We Remember section***

Charlie Allen, son of Tanya Allen, who died on September 18<sup>th</sup>

Tyler James Baker, son of Barbara Baker, who was born on August 2<sup>nd</sup>

Jon Bieker, brother of Andrea Smith; son of Don & Sheryl Bieker who was born on August 5<sup>th</sup>

Alexander Birchmeier, son of Khristine Henderson, who was born on September 11<sup>th</sup>; and died on September 19<sup>th</sup>

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, born on September 17<sup>th</sup>

Aaron M. Campbell, son of Marilyn Campbell, who was born on September 6<sup>th</sup>

Christian K. Charay, son of Alfred Charay and Laurie Charay who was born on September 30<sup>th</sup>



Carly Kathleen Cornelison, daughter of Corie Green, who died on September 15<sup>th</sup>

Rebecca Lynne Smith Crismas, daughter of BobbyJean Smith, who was born on August 13<sup>th</sup>

Kevin Lee Cronister, son of Richard and Judy Cronister, who was born on August 8<sup>th</sup>

Wendi Sue Cushing, daughter of Scott and Denise Cushing; sister of Deana and Dylan Cushing, died on August 9<sup>th</sup>

Jeffrey Darrell Darting, son of Gerry and Judy Darting and brother of Sarah Escobar and Jenny Darting, died on August 29<sup>th</sup>

Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, who was born on September 1<sup>st</sup>

Amber Fleer, daughter of Darla Hughes and Terry Fleer, who was born on September 21<sup>st</sup>

Jeremy Scott Goehl, son of Danny and Kim Goehl; brother of Jason Goehl, who was born on August 29<sup>th</sup>

Tyler Grame, son of Amanda Grame and brother of Brendan and Jacob Grame, who was born on August 9<sup>th</sup> and died on August 18<sup>th</sup>

Rex McCarthy, son of Janet Hamilton, who was born in August.

Juliet Faith Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, born on September 2<sup>nd</sup>; died on August 25<sup>th</sup>

Colby Deab Harris, son of Chris and Dana Harris; grandson of Marquita Baxter and Mary K. Harris, who was born on August 10<sup>th</sup>



Spencer Mark Hastings, son of Steve and Sue Hastings, died on September 28<sup>th</sup>

Vernon A. Jamison, Sr., son of Eugene A. and Mayverdis Jamison born on August 30<sup>th</sup>

Clara Harrington Jones, daughter of Mary Harrington and John Jones, born and died on August 26<sup>th</sup>

Jonathan Kaspar, son of Jeffrey and Susan Kaspar; sister of Jen Kaspar, who was born on September 17<sup>th</sup>

Riley Kern, son of Emily Kern and brother of Mary Gifford, who was born on August 4<sup>th</sup>



Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, born on September 14<sup>th</sup>

Joel Andrew Knight, son of Jim and Gloria Knight, who died on August 23<sup>rd</sup>

William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin, son of Joe and Penny Lumpkin, died on August 19<sup>th</sup>

Nicholas Artck McCarthy, son of Sabrina Cruz, who died on August 19<sup>th</sup>

Belinda Meier, daughter of Maggie Walshire, who was born on September 14<sup>th</sup>

Sharis Thompson Meyer, daughter of Gary and Margaret Thompson, born on September 15<sup>th</sup>; died on August 25<sup>th</sup>

Russ Moreland, son of Barb Moreland, who was born on August 24<sup>th</sup>

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who was born on August 20<sup>th</sup>

Robin Lynn Paulson, daughter of Frank and Brenda Bissey and sister of Brad Bissey, and Greg Lee Paulson, son-in-law of Frank and Brenda Bissey and brother-in-law of Brad Bissey, both died on August 27<sup>th</sup>

Krystil M. Pearson, daughter of Patti Cox and sister of Kendall Pressler, who died on September 24<sup>th</sup>

Kasey Pike, grandson of Grace Reichle, who died on August 7<sup>th</sup>

Morgan Marie Pollak, daughter of David and Shelley Pollak; granddaughter of Mark and Linda Marling, born on August 14<sup>th</sup> and died on August 27<sup>th</sup>

Abbey Rubottom, daughter of Darcey Evans, who died on September 15<sup>th</sup>

Gregg W. Scott, son of Garry and Jo Scott, who was born on September 11<sup>th</sup>



Cory Sprecker, brother of Chelsea Sprecker, who died on September 26<sup>th</sup>

Keith Strathman, son of Don and Julie Strathman, brother of Becky Strathman, born on September 10<sup>th</sup>

Brandon Toler, son of Marty Tyson, who was born on August 18<sup>th</sup>

Dawn Lee Wilson, daughter of Don J. and Dixie Lee Wilson, who was born on September 19<sup>th</sup>

(Use the form on opposite page to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter. (This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for August and September)

## Making Choices

You can shed tears because they are gone,  
or you can smile because they lived.  
You can close your eyes and pray  
They will come back, or you can open your eyes  
and see all that they have left you.  
Your heart can be empty because you can't see them,  
or you can be full of the love you shared.  
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,  
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.  
You can remember only that they are gone,  
or you can cherish their memory and let it live on.  
You can cry and close your mind and feel empty,  
or you can do what they would want.  
Smile, Open your heart, Love . . .and go on.



~ from Victory Today

## For Max

You are not lost to me.  
An echo of memory,  
You live,  
You dance,  
A waltz of my heart.  
You sing sweet lullabies  
To my brave future,  
A symphonic melody of you - -  
My finest song.



You are my postscript and my landmark,  
You are the sun at midnight,  
A beacon on a dim path  
That summons my bravery.  
In the wild wind's hum,  
You live,  
You soar with all my dreams  
And hold them in your steady soul  
For me.

And I, your handmaiden,  
Who knows your touch of grace on my shoulder,  
Knew you then and always,  
And remember you most dearly - -  
A wonderfully furious delight  
That chimes a cacophony of love  
In my purple heart.

~ Mary Butenas, TCF Atlanta, GA

(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)

.....  
**And We Remember** - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in the We Remember section of this newsletter, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email the information to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those parents requesting it. If you have previously submitted your child's information and it has appeared in the newsletter during the past year, you **do not** need to resubmit it. If you have just begun receiving this newsletter, or have never submitted this information, you will need to do so in order for it to be included. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Son\_\_ Daughter\_\_ Grandchild\_\_ Brother\_\_ Sister\_\_  
  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Death \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Father \_\_\_\_\_ Mother \_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please list your address and phone number. You will only be contacted if there is a question about your listing.

**Is this a change of address for you? (please circle) YES NO**

## A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

### *Additional Support Group Resources*

**HEALs** - Healing after loss of suicide offers support to all survivors affected by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Meetings are at 6:30-8:00 p.m. on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email [TopekaHeals@gmail.com](mailto:TopekaHeals@gmail.com)

**Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group** - Meets 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email [lrosen@stormontvail.org](mailto:lrosen@stormontvail.org). For information call (785) 354-5225.

**From Victims to Survivors** - Support group for families who have had a loved one murdered. The group meets the fourth or last Wednesday of each month at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 S.W. 21st. For more information, call Bill Lucero at 232-5958 or see <http://fromvictimstosurvivors.com>.

### **Are You Moving?**

If you move, please let us know your new address so you can continue to receive this newsletter. It costs the Chapter 71 cents every time a newsletter is returned by the Post Office with an outdated address. Please send address changes to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may email address changes to [chanx2@cox.net](mailto:chanx2@cox.net). We appreciate your cooperation as this will save the Chapter money which can be better spent on bereavement outreach. If, for any reason, you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, please drop me a note or email and I will take your name off the list.

**TCF Mission Statement:** When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

## TCF National Magazine

*We Need Not Walk Alone* Available Free Online

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

*We Need Not Walk Alone* provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year.

Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, [compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org). It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.

### **Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter**

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.



**TCF National Page (open group)**

<https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA/>

**Los Amigos Compasivos/USA**

<https://www.facebook.com/LACUSA/>

**TCF Private Facebook Groups**

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

**Loss of a Child**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407123299460580/>

**Sounds of the Siblings (bereaved siblings only)**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

**Loss of a Grandchild**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759177998317/>



# Grief, Healing, and Time

Posted by Deb Kosmer on <https://whatsyourgrief.com>  
November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Today someone I loved died. I can't believe it. I don't believe it. I won't believe it. Family comes. Friends come. The phone keeps ringing. The doorbell rings again and again. The ringing seems far away. I hear it but I seem unable to answer. My legs won't move. My feet won't move. I am glued to the chair. Others answer for me. They seem to know I don't remember how.

Tomorrow comes. I didn't want it to ever come. I wanted to go back to the time before you died. There, I said it. You died. Does that make it true? There must be some mistake, I tell myself. Maybe this is just a bad dream I need to wake up from. If only someone would wake me up. When people ask me what they can do for me, I try to tell them the only thing I want is you. They look sad, they gently shake their head, they hug me, and still, you're not here.

Your funeral is over. Everyone says I did so well. I hardly cried. Don't they see I can't cry, not yet? I am in shock.

I hear someone else say, "Give her time, that's all she needs." I wonder: Can it really be that simple? If it is, I just want to run through time, however much it takes to get to the place where I don't hurt so bad, don't miss you so much. But no, I can't do that. Even if I could, I would only be farther from you. My heart cannot bear that.

Days pass. Tomorrow will be one month since you died.

I wonder how I can just skip that day. I am afraid of it; of reliving every single detail of your death, knowing that one month ago you were here with me and my world was okay. Now I have no world. Everyone keeps telling me I just need to make a new world. But I liked my old one. I never asked to have it taken from me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to start over. I don't know where the beginning of that world is or how to get there. Everything is so hard and makes me so tired. I just want to stay in bed.

Days pass and turn into weeks. I am stuck in a world foreign to me, wondering where it is that you are and how you could have left me.

I force myself to go through the motions of living and caring for others. They don't seem to notice it's just pretend and I am starring in the hardest role of my life. If only they had just an inkling of the place that I am in, of my fractured and broken heart.

I never used to read the obituaries. Now I feel compelled to do so. I feel like a kindred spirit to others who must also travel the road I am on. I still feel so alone. Now they will feel alone, too. I feel like I should say something to them, but I do not know them; I only know their pain.

Months continue to pass. I am back at work, back in church, getting my hair done. It all still seems strange, different, and doesn't matter like it used to. Friends call. Sometimes I say, "Yes, I will go to dinner." Other times I say, "Thanks for calling, but not today." Many days it is still easier to just be alone where I don't have to hide my tears when they come, where I can talk to you and not feel strange, where I can just be however I am that day and not try to fit into the place others have carved out for me.

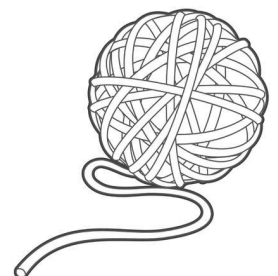
Finally, one day I surprise myself. I am humming a tune. For a little while, I feel lighter. I almost smile. I begin to judge myself. What's the matter with me? How can I be even a little happy when you're not here? But then I hear your voice in my head—or is it my heart, the place where you live—saying you are glad that I am humming, glad I can smile, encouraging me to live again. I don't know whether to laugh or cry, so I do both. But later that day I find myself humming again, and I smile and I know that I am going to be okay.

*About the Author: Deb Kosmer has worked in hospice for the past eleven years as a bereavement coordinator and social worker. She is the bereaved mother of a son and a stepdaughter, and is a bereaved sibling.*

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Grief work is like winding a ball of string. You start with an end and wind and wind, then the ball slips through your fingers and rolls across the floor. Some of the work is undone, but not all. You pick it up and start over again, but never do you have to begin again at the end of the string. The ball never completely unwinds; you've made some progress.

~ TCF, Fort Smith, AR  
Reprinted from *Heartbeat Newsletter*  
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# Heaven's Pennies

*By Kelley Collins McCrain, Paonia, CO*

It's always a pleasure to open the mailbox and find a handwritten note from a loved one, especially when it is from one of your grown children. I eagerly opened the envelope from my oldest son, recently graduated from college and beginning his career as an engineer in another state. Taped to the bottom of the sheet of yellow notebook paper were two pennies and a note explaining that the first penny he found in the driveway of his new house and the second he found at the site of the mine project he had just been assigned.

We believe the pennies are signs from his little sister Kaylyn who lives in heaven. My beautiful three-and-a-half-year-old daughter was killed in our backyard when a dead fork of a large cottonwood tree fell on the trampoline she and I were playing on. That was in 2002 and, over the past decade, we have found pennies in the strangest of places and at times when we miss her the most.

Of all the countless prayers I have prayed, both then and since, one of the very earliest was to receive a sign telling me she was well. I asked for something tangible, something that I could hold on to as I struggled to put our lives back together in the aftermath of the tragedy. The first penny I found was sitting on the coin box at the car wash and I knew it was from my daughter. The day she was killed we had taken the Jeep in to be washed. While I worked, she unbuckled her car seat and pilfered through the glove box while sudsy waves washed the exterior of the vehicle, then hurriedly put the mess straight before I got back in.

It was all I could do to drag myself to the car wash after Kaylyn died. I had to sit there for several minutes before I could even get out of the car. My leaden hands worked mechanically to retrieve the coins from the pocket of my jeans. In the midst of the deep dark depths of pain, I saw a bright shiny penny just sitting where people usually leave stray quarters. Without a doubt, I believed the penny was a sign that my prayer had been answered.

When I came home there was another penny lying in front of the door to the back porch. I had walked through that very same door less than 20 minutes before. No one else was home, and no one had been there while I was gone. The front gate was locked and the door so tight and close to the cement that opening it when I left would have pushed a penny to the side. Clutching the two pennies, I walked over to where the trampoline had been. I felt God's presence was so very close and when I looked down, there was another penny lying on the ground. A few days later, while moving one of the funeral plants on the living room end table, I discovered another penny.

That was just the beginning of our signs from heaven. During periods when it has been too difficult to even speak Kaylyn's name, one of us would find a penny and hand it to the other. No words were necessary; we knew where the other was coming from. As a teen and a preteen, it was difficult for the boys to watch their mother cry and know what to do. The pennies from Kaylyn helped to bridge that gap.

The first job I had following Kaylyn's death and my subsequent abandonment from her father was teaching at the middle/high school where the boys were students. There



were many times when we were walking home together that we would find a penny in our path. Not many people walked the mile-long stretch, so it wasn't as if a number of pennies were falling out of backpacks and pockets. It was a tumultuous time with one son in high school, another in middle school, being a single parent, dealing with a divorce, joining the workforce again, trying desperately to keep my head above water emotionally and financially, and all the while, grieving the death of my precious daughter. It was so awesome to have one of my wonderful sons hand me a penny at a time when the weight of the world was pulling me down. God was holding us in His hands, and I could feel it in the love and understanding shown to me by my children. Milestones in our lives, such as the first day of school, championship football games, prom night, homecoming, opening day of hunting season, holidays, birthdays, graduations—the list is endless—have been heart-wrenching. I watched the older boys grow and mature and progress through school and their other interests and activities, and at the same time, the little girl I had so looked forward to doing the same with was not with them.

At the boys' and my baptisms, I held a penny in my hand that I found by the sink of the changing room. During trips to buy show steers for the boys' 4-H and FFA projects, we have found pennies from Kaylyn to keep us company. On the road trip to look at colleges in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, Idaho, and New Mexico, a cache of several pennies rode on the dashboard of the truck. Pennies were discovered moving each of the boys into their freshman dorm room at college. As my career transitioned from teaching to publishing the local newspaper, I found pennies during both trying and profitable times. I even found a penny in the mountain meadow where I bought my equine friend, Amigo.

Like the early emotions and depth of loss, those early findings were strong and overpowering. While those tidal waves of emotion have subsided, ten years later I still pause and say a thankful prayer each time I find a penny and share a few private words with my daughter. I often laugh out loud and marvel at her playful nature. I think she thoroughly enjoys the unusual places we find her pennies. A year ago, I married the love of my life, and walking up the steps of the church on the day of our wedding, we found a penny. There was a penny waiting for us on the way to the closing of the farm and ranch we bought together.

Our lives have moved forward, and Kaylyn has been right there with us every step of the way. Love really does live forever. I have a vase full of pennies sent straight from heaven to prove it.

*Source: <https://whatsyourgrief.org>*



# When You Wish Upon A Star

~ Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom, TCF Atlanta Chapter

Every time that I am with a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." That wish, unfortunately, can never come true. The other wish I hear is, "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child?



Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child has died cause my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, his artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day that my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse or pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew that all of the "crazy" grief reactions I am having are, in fact, normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forever more be a "recovering bereaved parent."
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses or be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you could tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try and coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us reexamine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish that you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drugs or drinks. These are just temporary crutches and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was the moment before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me - maybe you'll like me still.
14. Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us.

Do you remember Pavlov, the famous psychologist, rewarding his dogs for doing the right thing: Their behavior repeated! If a neighbor sends a plate of cookies on the day of your child's birth, tell her how much you appreciate her remembering your child. If a relative jots a note in a Christmas card and says he thinking about you during this difficult time, write back and thank him for acknowledging your pain. If by accident a friend mentions your child's name and it makes you cry, you may not be able to thank them at that time, but you can tell them later how important it is to talk about your child. Whether one of you wishes is fulfilled by accident or through great sensitivity, reward others for what they have done for you. Chances are good that they will repeat these kindnesses on other occasions and perhaps your wish of having more understanding friends and relatives will come true.

## Vacation Thoughts . . .

Remember previous family vacations? Not all of them were tension-free or without periods of adjustment, but that did not mean they were not successful experiences. We have to live with the everyday upsets and annoyances of marriage and family life as well as the added stress that grief places upon those relationships.

Grief goes with you in your suitcase, on the airplane, and in your car. So the following tips, which are contradictory, can help in deciding how to best plan your vacation.

- If you need time to share feelings, to remember the past, or to be alone, make sure you explain these needs.
- Plan a vacation that is neither totally relaxed time without a schedule nor totally hectic sightseeing.
- Be realistic about what the vacation can accomplish.
- Avoid going back to places you had visited with your child.
- Some find fast-paced vacations at places they had never been to were the best. The stimulation of new experiences and preparing them for picking up on their grief work.
- Allow enough time for sleep, otherwise an exhausted body can cause depression.
- If you made plans involving other people before your child died, you may have to cancel them. It is important for you to be with people who understand that life is different for you now.

Warm and caring friends or family who are sensitive to your feelings can be very comforting.

However, it could be burdensome if you have to create a sense of normalcy for their sake. Therefore, canceling these plans may be the best thing for you and your family.

- Keep your vacations simple with a 'back' door through which you can escape if you need to be alone for solitary reflection. Too much together time can be overwhelming.
- Coming home is hard. It does help to change the scenery, but be prepared. All that you left behind you is still waiting to be confronted.

You've heard it many times: you have to find your own way, your own peace. Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale, where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change. It can help you with your re-evaluation of life.

~ Mary S. Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA

~ Elizabeth Estes, TCF, Agusts, GA

~ Susan L. Johnson, TCF Potomic, MD

## CELEBRATION

I went to the fireworks tonight,

I thought of you.

Some were yellow, like your hair,

Some were blue, like your eyes.

Some were red, like your passion

And some were gold, like the warmth you spread.

A few fizzled, barely clearing the ground,

But most catapulted a thousand feet into the sky,

Then burst into brilliance, like most ideas you'd try.

I went to the fireworks tonight.

It was an exceptional celebration.

We were all deeply touched, enriched.

I thought of you.

It should have lasted longer.

~ Terry Stepp, in memory of his nephew Jon Campbell

## The End of Summer

On a beach, cool breezes blow across the water, but the sun's rays feel warm upon my face. The ocean laps gently on the shore. I see one golden haired lad with a shovel and pail filling the moat around his carefully constructed sand castle.

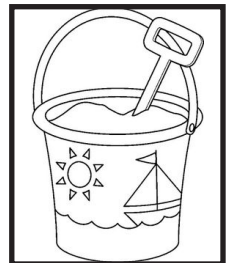
I remember another golden haired boy of years long past, wearing his bright red swimsuit, busy at his task and oblivious to all around him. Carefully, patiently, he fills and empties his pail again and again, molding and shaping the sand until he has it just right, until his perfect castle is completed. He runs to me eyes aglow with pride, his dimpled smile stretched ear to ear. He dances around me.

"Mommy, come see! It's finished and it's perfect!" We stand and admire it together. One bucket of sand turned upside down, a tiny trench encircling it. To us it a perfect castle.

But then it happens. A wave much bigger than the rest washes away his labor of love. His green eyes fill, his lip quivers momentarily and then he squares his shoulders and announces, "Oh well, I'll begin again tomorrow.

And now, recalling that other sunny summer day, my own eyes brimming with tears, my own lip quivers until I remember that I, too can square my shoulders and begin again tomorrow.

~ Betty Stevens, TCF, Baltimore, MD



## *But Love . . . Love is Immortal*

As bereaved parents it can be happy for us or not, depending upon our state of mind and our particular juncture on the road to healing.

Many of us will resent the lengthening of time between our child's life and our own present. Others may welcome the increasing distance in the hope that time itself will be a balm to pain.

Yet all of us perceive, beyond all the hype and expectations, that new years and new seasons are merely calendar events. Whatever problems we have had in the past will follow us into the present. There is no inner demarcation with hurting behind and joy ahead.

Each of us has the same opportunity now as we had before. We can permit time to simply pass, or we can work to mold its passage into constructive growth.

In the deaths of our children, we have discovered with certainty that we lack the means to control the most cherished elements of our lives. But we also know that within each of us is the potential to rise above the debilitating anguish we have experienced.

Time continues to move forward and most of us have been too damaged to even play the games of ... resolutions or dance the rites of spring. We are beyond the futility of such existence. But let us each confront this moment and time with an inward commitment to recovery, to living the hours, which comprise our existence with all the fullness and love of which we are capable.

Hurting will ultimately lessen. Pain will slowly become more bearable. Fears and guilt will gradually pass away. But love, that inner dance of the heart that leaps to our child's name or the memory of an especially close experience that bears only the mantle of endless joy, will not pass away. All else, fame and fortune, distress and dismay, wealth and power, even ourselves, will at the end be done.

But love...love is immortal.

...may the immortality of love grow secure and healthy again within each of us.

~ Don Hackett, Tauton, MA TCF



## *Who Packed Your Parachute?*

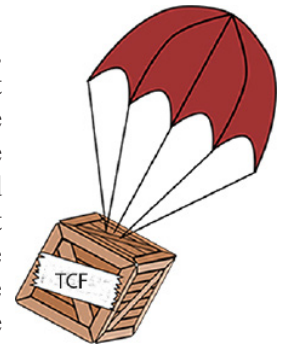
Charles Plumb was a U.S. Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from the experience.

One day Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant and a man at another table came over to them and said, "You're Charles Plumb, aren't you?" Surprised, Mr. Plumb said yes. The other man said, "You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft Kitty Hawk. You were shot down?"

"How in the world do you know that?" Plumb asked. "I packed your parachute," the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. He jumped up and shook hands and thanked the man. "If that parachute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today," he told him gratefully.

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about the man. He kept wondering what the man might have looked like in a Navy uniform. He wondered how many times he had walked past him on the ship and not even said "Good morning" because he was a fighter pilot and maybe thought he was a little better than the sailor. He thought of the many hours that sailor spent on a long wooden table down inside the ship carefully weaving and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands the fate of someone he didn't know.



In his speeches now, Plumb asks his audience "Who's packing your parachute?"

I know who packed mine, It was other TCF parents who had been shot down before me when they lost their child. These people knew my parachute had to be packed carefully. It was Charlie Wilson, whose book "When There Are No Words" gave me the first glimmer of hope. None of these people could spare me the pain of landing in foreign territory and serving that time in grief prison, but they saved my life just the same by packing my parachute well.

I hope I am passing that on to someone else and packing their parachute well. I can't spare anyone the heartaches of the grieving process, but I can try to pack their parachute well enough so that they survive. And a heartfelt thank you to all of you who packed my parachute so well, holding in your hands the fate of someone you didn't really even know.

~ Marcia Carter, TCF Marietta, GA



# **The Compassionate Friends**

Topeka Chapter, c/o Midland Hospice Care., Inc.  
200 S.W. Frazier Circle, Topeka, KS 66606-2800

**A self-help organization offering friendship and  
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## **TCF CREDO**

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.