



# The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

email - [leaders@sdtcf.org](mailto:leaders@sdtcf.org) / phone - (619) 583-1555 / [www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)



## HOW OUGHT A MAN TO GRIEVE THE LOSS OF HIS CHILD?

By Kelly McCoy  
in honor of his 23-year old son  
Cooper Oct 23

Firefighting is inherently dangerous, and it remains, primarily, a man's work. Yes, women are increasingly joining the US Fire Service, but to this day the profession of firefighting is represented by an overwhelmingly male demographic.

I am a man and I have spent my adult life in the fire service. I lived and moved and found my being with men. Grown men. Aggressive men who channeled their behavior in a positive manner toward protecting life and property in local communities. Compassionate men, who rarely worked alone.

There is biological predisposition and learned behavior firefighters have that expresses itself in what I like to describe as 'John Wayne-ing' it. This looks like fierce determination, grit, problem-solving, and not asking for help. These are behaviors many men learn, certainly, and if we are being fair, are also naturally predisposed to. What then when we, men, experience the loss of our child? *Continued on page 4*

## Meeting Information

The San Diego Chapter of  
The Compassionate Friends

### Dates Times Addresses

#### Virtual / Online

1st Wednesday of month 7:00-8:30pm

EMAIL [sdtcfzoom@gmail.com](mailto:sdtcfzoom@gmail.com) FOR

**ZOOM LINK** and passcode.

VIRTUAL FACILITATORS

Debbi & Dom Montisano

(858) 349-5573

#### In-Person

1st Thursday of month 7:00-9:00pm

Northminster Presbyterian Church

(TCF is nondenominational)

4324 Clairemont Mesa Blvd

San Diego, CA

**The Compassionate Friends  
2025 National Conference  
Information On Page 6**





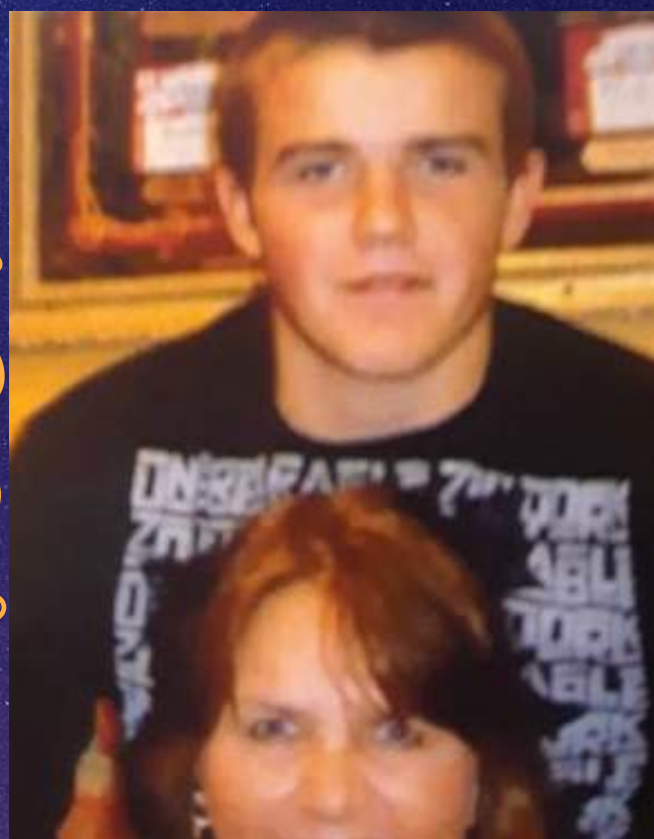
**Beloved son Allen J. Kha**



**Happy Heavenly Mother's Day to  
Esther Janus Best Mother Ever  
From Your Family**



**Camille Barletta - Let me be your wings, leave  
behind the world you know, for another world  
of wondrous things...**



**Michael Scott Ayers with  
Mom Mary**

**If you do not find your child's photo here, find how to include your child's photo  
on pages 8 & 9**



**Did you know that your baby's cells live in your bloodstream for years after their birth and in your brain for your entire life? This phenomenon is known as Fetal Maternal Chimerism. The bond between mother and baby is deep- Always and forever**



*Continued from page 1*

On October 8th, 2023, we lost our 23-year-old son, Cooper, to suicide. I do not like writing this word, suicide. It pains me deeply, yet it remains ground truth. I cannot undo it.

A micro-atomic bomb was dropped on our house, on our lives. I dropped to my knees and the air was sucked out of me. I could not stand, and I could not breathe. Yes, I cried. I wailed. I still cry.

I remember many of the fires I fought. I was never alone; I was with a crew of firefighters. We always practiced the buddy system. We worked in pairs of at least two. If we went into a fire together, we came out together. It was that simple. As the firefighters say in "Backdraft," the movie, "If you go, we go." Meaning, your brother or sister firefighter is not going to leave you in the fire if something happens.

In a fire, in a fire station, in the fire department, firefighters practice a lot of togetherness. Tough times, responding to tough calls, requires "tight togetherness." In a small fire, for example, firefighters can work off the hose line away from each other but within verbal communication range. In a complex, difficult fire, firefighters have a hand on each other's back and do not leave each other. The proximity is dialed to the level of physical touch.

Immediately after my son died, my brother flew into town to be with me. He slept on the floor next to the couch where I slept for four nights. We got up at night a few times, cried and hugged each other. He chose to enter the fire with me, and we practiced a lot of tight togetherness. He had a hand on my shoulder. The immediacy of Cooper's death required this level of proximity. I know of a man who has lost a son. He is grieving deeply. He lives near a lake, and he has chosen to focus on his dogs, fishing, and solitude. He is 'John Wayne-ing' it.

Il respect this. I respect this man. I honor him. Who am I to suggest how a man ought to grieve? If we are truth telling, I could very, very easily be this man. I could check out, thumb my nose at all the things, and live in solitude. I do not think I would be wrong. Perhaps I should do this.

Despite this impression, my history and behavioral conditioning in the fire service runs deep within me, and I want to be with my brother. I do not want to be alone in my grief. I do not want to walk alone.

I know that this is a complex, difficult fire and I need to be working with a crew.

I talk to my wife, my mom, my children, my brother, and my Compassionate Friends frequently. I want to talk about my son, what happened, and how I am feeling. I write. I walk. I breathe. I ground. I lean into tight togetherness and work as a team to help me make sense of this gaping, painful hole in my chest.

To be fair, I think a man needs time alone, processing time, time in the woods with his dogs fishing the lake. We lived in Montana for several years and this resonates with me. As I like to say it, we may need to hole up in a Nepalese cave and drink yak's milk with the shamans to begin to make sense of this tragedy.

A man needs this for a season. Maybe a few seasons. There is no shame in this.

Still, I want to call men to tight togetherness following the loss of their child. When the fire is complex, hot, dynamic, and dangerous, I know it is the time and place to practice tight togetherness. Hands on shoulders.

Knowing men the way I know them, especially working in high-risk operational environments for most of my life, it could be that only other men 'who know' are able to talk with a grieving man who has lost a child. This may be the signal that gets through the noise.

I remember a counselor coming to the fire station after a tragic call that our crew had responded to. The counselor had never worked with firefighters and did not know a thing about fire service culture. We ran the counselor off, as they had no credibility.

If a man has not lost a child and offers to help me, despite his best intentions, it would land flat. I would run him off. To talk to me about the loss of a child, you need to show up with credibility. You need to have lost a child.

The mantra of The Compassionate Friends is, "We need not walk alone." In the fire service, this is a lived reality. Firefighters do not work alone. As the saying goes, "If you go, we go."

Men, how ought we to grieve the loss of our child? With rugged determination and grit, certainly, but also, not alone. My humble admonition is this: do not do it alone. Go in together, come out together. Lace your solitude with compassionate family and friends 'who know' and will put a hand on your shoulder and not leave you during the darkest night of your soul. Especially in the loss of a child, practice tight togetherness. You need not walk alone.

# *Our Children Loved Missed & Remembered*

## **May & June Birthdays**

Michael Scott Ayers 05-02  
 Ramiro Zuñiga-Cedillo 05-03  
 Timothy Douglas Moreau 05-03  
 Matthew Scott Lewis 05-05  
 Jason Wilshe 05-06  
 David Ward Ray 05-07  
 Christopher Koki Haas 05-08  
 Paul Albert Alferos Jr 05-08  
 Julie Hamilton 05-09  
 Stautland 05-09-61  
 Brittany Dawn Williams 05-10  
 Andrew K. Scott. 05-13  
 Camille Barletta. 05-13  
 Jared Dillard 05-13  
 Kyle Joseph Carranza 05-14  
 Anthony William Bane 05-18  
 Gary R. Lopez 05-18  
 Jamie Christopher Yates 05-18  
 Chad Eugene Clausen 05-20  
 Francisco "Frankie" Morales  
 05-20  
 Kai Wright. 05-21  
 Brian Marc Allen. 05-23  
 Jamie Morgan 05-24  
 Mychael Mc Neeley. 05-24  
 Alexander Nicolas Model 05-25  
 Kate Brumfield. 05-27  
 Aymee Sofia Garcia. 05-30

Amanda Jo Stuart 06-02  
 Cooper Jancic. 06-02  
 Todd Schulman 06-08  
 Marsha Cushing 06-15  
 Richard Wilson. 06-16  
 Maxim Dudinov 06-20  
 Heather A. Avilez 06-23  
 Rosa Griffith 06-24  
 Tara Michelle Hickman 06-27  
 Jason Robert Chambers 06-29  
 Nicholas Ferrell. 06-30  
 Ryan McDonough 06-30

## **Anniversaries**

Frank Palmer 05-02  
 Camille Barletta 05-03  
 Dominique Ynette Young 05-05  
 Joseph Roy Elkins 05-07  
 Maxim Dudinov 05-12  
 Todd Almeida Cutler, 05-14  
 Nicholas James Reynolds, 05-16  
 Tara Michelle Hickman 05-18  
 David Michael Ellis 05-19  
 Derek Reed Thomas 05-21  
 Larry Stauffer 05-21  
 Nick Jellison, 05-21  
 Kristy Shoepate, 05-24  
 Michael Shawn Kyle, 05-29  
 Derek Thomas 05-30  
 Allen J. Kha 05-31  
 Joseph Balan 06-04  
 Jason Robert Chambers 06-06  
 Ellie Kennison 06-09  
 Sammy Fishkin. 06-09  
 Michael Lopez 06-10  
 Stephan Mathew Kraft III 06-13  
 Lauren Francis 06-16  
 Karandeep Singh 06-17  
 Klay Budz. 06-19 or 06-20  
 Samuel Michael Parente 06-21  
 Nicole Kaitlynn. 06-23  
 Kyle Joseph Carranza 06-26





## The Compassionate Friends 48th National Conference

BELLEVUE/SEATTLE, WA ▪ JULY 11-13, 2025

# Registration Now Open

## KEYNOTE SPOTLIGHT

TCF 48th National Conference ▪ Bellevue, WA



**Julie McLellan-Mariano**

*The Grief Drawer*

"While cleaning out my kitchen's 'junk' drawer, it became obvious that the 'grief' drawer in my mind also needed cleaning. It didn't honor my grief in the present moment. Its content was outdated, and it certainly wasn't serving my son, any possible personal transformation, or others." Julie shares her multi-year experience of recognizing that she unconsciously created a 'grief' drawer in 2019 after the unexpected death of her oldest son, Jonathan. Years later, she was unexpectedly driven to ensure the content of that drawer was beneficial, truthful, and worth keeping. As Julie shares her grief practice, she openly explains how personal values, philosophy, grief education, art, and time continue to shape her grief practice and her gratitude practice. You'll experience this very human mom's sense of humor, vulnerability, and love as she accepts sudden loss while honoring her son.

[compassionatefriends.org](https://compassionatefriends.org)



TCF 48<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025  
Bellevue, WA



TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief. Participants create friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

**Register Now**



### He's Here

He's here  
 And what was once inside  
 Is now out.  
 It's been two weeks waiting  
 After nine months anticipating  
 I can hardly believe  
 He's here-  
 Sleeping and pooping and breathing  
 With his blue remnant  
 Of an umbilical cord.  
 And uncircumcised penis.  
 Call up God  
 And make sure he knows  
 HE'S HERE! He's here among us-  
 Line up he trumpets and bugle horns,  
 Wheel out the blasting parade  
 And let everyone know  
 Of this perfect little boy  
 My nephew, your son, out reason.  
 You should see him:  
 Quiet and understanding  
 He knows something important,  
 I can tell-  
 So, quick to adjust  
 So much like Buddha  
 And all the enlightened souls  
 He's something to behold  
 So come take a look, hold him  
 near your heart-  
 He's cool and little and  
 wrinkled  
 And best of all  
 He's here.

-David McNeeley

"Jamie's Joy: Honoring Grief, Creating Legacy,  
 Celebrating Life"  
 Elene Y.F. Bratton M.S. LMFT

### THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 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.

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We invite you to share a photo of your beloved child, sibling, or grandchild with us. A suggested donation of \$30 is welcomed for featuring your child's photo in our colorful newsletter. Your contributions and generous donations are warmly appreciated. For further information, please refer to the form on page 9

### Additional Support:

Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang [ybennettniang@yahoo.com](mailto:ybennettniang@yahoo.com)

**PARA HABLAR EN ESPAÑOL** David Bolaños Keyser (760) 310-3632

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**3805 Garden Lane**  
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**[www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)**

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**48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393**  
**Phone toll free (877) 969-0010**  
**Website:**  
**[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**

### OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES

**MADD** 858-564-0780

**Empty Cradle** 619-595-3887

**Survivors of Suicide** 619-482-0297  
[info@SOSLsd.org](mailto:info@SOSLsd.org)

**Bereaved Parents of the USA**  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

**Parents of Murdered Children**  
National 888-818-POMC  
Local 619-281-3972

**Alive Alone - for now childless parents** [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org)



## Gifts of Love and Donations

The Compassionate Friends functions as a nonprofit, volunteer organization for the loss of a Child(ren), Grandchild(ren), Sibling(s). Your generous donations given in memory of your loved one, or in support of The Compassionate Friends, is greatly appreciated. To honor your Child(ren), Grandchild(ren) or Sibling(s) in our newsletter or on our website, please send your contribution to :

TCF, San Diego Chapter, at  
3805 Garden Lane, San Diego, CA 92106,  
or you can reach us at (619) 583-1555  
Or email our treasurer Long Kha  
long.kha@gmail.com

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## We welcome you to share your loved one with us

*We honor your Child, Sibling, or Grandchild by name in our newsletter during the month of their birth and anniversary dates.*

**Send to our editor Anita Barletta - [newsletter.sdtcf@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.sdtcf@gmail.com)**

### Child, Sibling, Grandchild's Name

If you have lost more than one child, kindly use a separate form for each child.

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**Your Relationship**\_\_\_\_\_

**Birth Date (MM/DD)**

**(to be included in our newsletter)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of passing (MM/DD)**

**(to be included in our newsletter)**\_\_\_\_\_

**Tell us something about your child/sibling (Optional)**

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## Please provide your E-mail to receive The Compassionate Friends San Diego Newsletter

Send to our editor Anita Barletta - [newsletter.sdtcf@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.sdtcf@gmail.com)

☐ **Yes, I would like my child's name to be listed on the birthday & anniversary pages of the San Diego TCF chapter newsletter**