



Newsletter of the San Diego Chapter of "TCF"
The Compassionate Friends
 A non profit self-help organization for families who are grieving the death of a child.



September / October 2020

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Location, see p. 3

Next Meeting

Cancelled!
 Wednesday Sept 2nd
 Back to Zoom p 6

Wednesday Oct 7th
 Uncertain
 Check Website

These pages Dedicated with Love to:

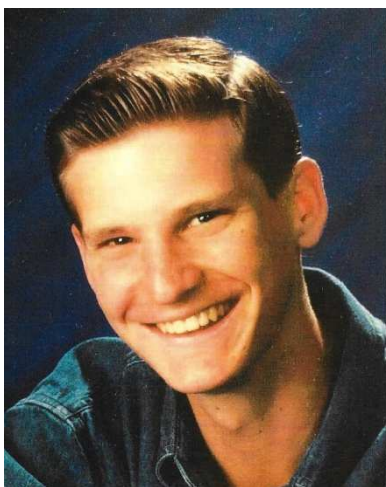


Kristina Michelle Bennett



Jamie Morgan Mychael Bratton

♥ Always In Our Hearts ♥



Ethan Estin Wozniak



Philippe Leyva

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Donations and Love Gifts

Dedications and Love Gifts go towards the cost of: printing and mailing of this Newsletter; outreach activities to the newly bereaved; and other expenses necessary to continue our chapter in San Diego. These donations are tax deductible. Our sincerest thanks to all who honor their children in this way.

- ♥ Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang — In Loving Memory of their daughter Kristina. “Happy Birthday Tina”, Love Dad & Mom.
 - ♥ Steve & Suzanne Wozniak — In Loving Memory of their son Ethan.
 - ♥ Elene Bratton — In Loving Memory of her son Jamie.
 - ♥ Gloria Hurtado — In Loving Memory of her son Philippe.
-

Things we miss about Phillippe:

- We miss the noise that was Phillippe; you always knew when he was in the house. First, because he always announced his arrival; but also, because he generated so much energy.
- We miss the intelligent and passionate conversation on so many topics whether it be politics, sports, music, food or wine.
- We miss the way he connected with people, always so warm and welcoming, engaging and making people feel part of the family.
- We miss him at every family event; always entertaining and the first to get the dancing started.
- We miss the music Phillippe shared with us, especially the individualized playlists. He made every song better when he sang along and included you.
- We miss the joy of watching him with his young nieces, nephews, cousins and goddaughter. He truly enjoyed each and every one and they adored him.
- We miss his mischief, fearlessness and laughter.
- We miss the phone calls, the text messages, the hugs, the noise and the love.
- We miss the way he tried to fix things- whether it was disagreements among friends or family conflicts. Phillippe always tried to make things better.

For those who knew and loved Phillippe, we miss him every day.

♥ Phillippe's Mom Gloria Hurtado



***Our Children – Loved, Missed and Remembered
September & October***
We remember the families of:



Birthdays

Ronald Paul Jones, born 9-1
Creta (CJ) Smith, born 9-4
Dan Gerald Bruce, born 9-6
Klay Budz, born 9-7
Megan Ashley Landis, born 9-8
Lindsey Faye Whelchel, born 9-8
Blake Christopher Whelchel, born 9-9
Vincent Glen Ruddy, born 9-10
George Brers IV, born 9-13
Guy Charles Green, born 9-14
Mario De La Rosa, born 9-15
Duane Charles Alley, born 9-16
Brian Michael Bennett, born 9-19
Vinny Palermo, born 9-21
Philippe Leyva, born 9-22
Aubrey Apodaca, born 9-24
Brent Foster Whelchel, born 9-24
Lucas Daniel Giaconelli, born 9-30
Michelle Weihe, born 10-1
Kristina Michelle Bennett, born 10-07
Mark Metz, born 10-7
Joshua Michael Jensen, born 10-10
Ethan Estin Wozniak, born 10-10
Brian James Gillis, born 10-11
Jennifer Ann Donnell, born 10-12
Nathaniel Poteat, born 10-12
Skip Anaya-Summers, born 10-16
Renee Eleonor Dawson, born 10-17
Jennifer Ann Greenwald, born 10-24
Pamela Broderick, born 10-24
David Sullivan, born 10-25
Michael Dylkiewicz, born 10-28
Leonard Valadez, born 10-31

Anniversaries

Ryan McDonough, died 9-3
Nicole Clark, died 9-3
Blake Christopher Whelchel, died 9-4
Cynthia Lee Kessler, died 9-6
Matthew Steven Spiewak, died 9-9
Vince Lopez, died 9-12
Jason Lee Hansen, died 9-13
Teresa Bowers, died 9-15
Alexander Nicholas Model, died 9-15
Ron Laverty, died 9-16
Jered Dillard, died 9-18
Stephen William Anderson, died 9-19
Nicholas Ferrell, died 9-20
Michelle Weihe, died 9-24
Aubrey Apodaca, died 9-28
William Scott Virdee, died 9-27
Spencer Clay, died 9-30
Lawrence O'Brien, died 10-3
Matthew Scott Lewis, died 10-5
Kai Wright, died 10-9
Duane Charles Alley, died 10-10
Vince Lopez, died 10-12
Emil Ian de la Barrera, died 10-18
Julie Elizabeth Richardson, died 10-21
Michael Scott Ayers, died 10-24
Rory David Boyer, died 9-28
Brittany Dawn Williams, died 10-29
Davey Johnson, died 10-30

43RD TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 31 - AUGUST 2



CONFERENCE IS OVER



RECORDINGS NOW AVAILABLE FOR A FEE.

If interested, more information: www.compassionatefriends.org/

Annual Memorial Balloon Release Picnic

**Sorry, It's impossible to hold
this September event this
year.**



Tomorrow Will Be Better

When my son died, I felt like there would be no tomorrow. I didn't want a tomorrow. I wanted yesterday with its promise of joy and perfection. I wanted my son to be alive. But he was gone.

Now, when life gets me down, I remember the joys of yesterday, think of all that I was given, take measure of all that still needs to be done, and I promise myself that tomorrow will be better because I will work very hard to make it better.

My grandmother often told me, "If you think you can, you're right. If you think you can't, you're right. What do you think?" As a child I thought this was strange. As an adult, I know it to be true.

Tomorrow *will* be better. Tomorrow I will, once again, tell my mind to stop the negative thoughts. And my mind will do exactly that, as I command my ship of grief.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
Forever remembering my son, Todd Mennen

A Friend

I have a friend
who never married,
who never had a child.

She never lost a husband,
as I did;
She never lost a child,
as I did.

Last night I wept for my friend.

Gwen Brown
TCF Winnipeg, Canada

SUMMER

Posted on June 25th, 2020

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

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



LESSONS LEARNED

Posted on July 18th, 2020

As bereaved parents, we are all learning to bear the unbearable whether our child died recently or many years ago. Each morning when we wake up, we have a familiar queasy feeling. We're reminded that she's gone or I can't walk him to the school bus stop today. Daily life is infused with reminders—photos of our beloved, departed child, the empty chair at the table, the unused down parka that we just can't give away. Sometimes, it's the unexpected that can be the harshest, like when you are in the grocery store and you walk past the Little Bite brownies that your daughter loved, and you burst into tears.

Bearing the Unbearable

We have a few choices. We can run away, hide, or despair, or we can painfully accept the journey we are on. In the first months and years after the death of my daughter Elizabeth from a rare childhood bone cancer, I withdrew emotionally except when I was forced to engage with colleagues at work. My concerned friends reached out to me, but I struggled to connect. I was tightly wrapped in a cloak of despair. I didn't know how to unravel it.

In my solitude, I watched the changing seasons more closely. I heard the harsh December winds howling, watched the snow swirling, and observed the earth reawakening with the promise of spring. I planted a garden filled with delicate white roses and flowering pink azaleas. I walked for miles in shaded forests and swam in a crystal-clear lake. I listened to loons calling at night. And slowly, I changed as the seasons did. I began to accept that I was part of the rhythm of life, one that

has no beginning and no ending. A rhythm that drew me in and compelled me to participate in life again.

One day, I pray that we will all find a way back into the rhythm of life again. I don't underestimate how hard this will be or how many times we'll stumble and fall. But if we can pick ourselves back up or grab the hand of a friend, we can steady ourselves once more. In time we can learn that we can hold sorrow and joy, grief and hope, a sense of loss and anticipation of connection.

Sometimes I capture these juxtaposing feelings in poetry. In closing, I'd like to share this poem with you.

I Can Hold My Suffering

I sit by the shoreline and watch the birds for a long time.

A strong breeze pushes in from a new direction.

The birds take one step, suddenly rise,

turn with their backs to the wind,

and lift up as the currents beckon them.

My thoughts flow back to an earlier time.

I was comforting my daughter by her bedside,

as I had done for nearly one year.

Then, one summer afternoon,

after she had held on for as long as she could,

she shifted,

turned from this world,

and lifted away in the wind.

I sat alone shaking for a long, long time.

The seasons changed and I robotically followed them.

I felt the sting of the sand on my skin;

I felt the harsh November winds;

I felt the snow curled under me.
 And slowly I changed as the seasons did.
 I learned to live through each time,
 through each cool night, and the bitter cold,
 and through the warm, gentle rains.
 Each season has a different beauty
 that does not escape me.
 I appreciate the glorious moments,
 and now, I can hold my suffering.

© Facing Into the Wind by Faith F. Wilcox



FAITH FULLER WILCOX

Faith Fuller Wilcox believes that self-expression through writing leads to healing. Faith's journey from grief and despair to moments of comfort and peace taught her life-affirming lessons, which she shares today through her writing. Faith is the author of *Facing Into the Wind: A Mother's Healing After the Death of Her Child*, a book of poetry designed to be a companion to those who are on the journey of grieving and healing. Faith leads a journal writing program, "Journals of Hope," at Mass General Hospital for Children for patients and their families, designed to give participants the opportunity to express themselves, alleviate stress, celebrate victories, and honor their grief. To learn more, go to www.faithwilcoxnarratives.com.



THERE IS HOPE AFTER LOSS

My nineteen-year-old son, Nick, died by suicide when he jumped from a bridge just outside his college campus. His body was lost for almost five weeks. The week prior to its retrieval, I received a call from a coroner who had misidentified another teen's body for my son's. That boy and his girlfriend jumped just two weeks after Nick. Meanwhile, my family tried to remove two cruel videos posted online after the suicide—one making fun of Nick's death. Losing a child to suicide is horrific, and these events certainly compounded the pain.

It is now seven years after my son's suicide. It's important for other parents who are just starting the grief process to know that there is still hope. Life as you once knew it may be over, however, your life is not over. Your family's life is not over. You can get through this. The grief process is grueling and requires a lot of work, but you will find joy again. I'm not going to lie, some of the pain will always be there because you deeply miss your loved one, but you will be happy and engage in life again.

At first, all loss survivors toss and turn in anguish, wondering what you could have done differently, what signs you missed, what things you could have said or done to prevent the unthinkable.

You mentally try to rewrite your tragedy. Remember, the suicide was not your fault, so stop blaming yourself or anyone else. Blame only hinders the healing process and cannot bring back your loved one. As you make your way back into society, you will be faced with stigma and people's misconceptions about suicide, like your loved one was selfish, lacked faith, or was a coward. None of these are true, of course. He/she was in pain, a pain so unbearable that it overpowered and extinguished any instinct to survive. No living person can truly understand the exact level of pain it takes to end one's own life. You will eventually learn how to politely "call out" people's misconceptions in a way that offers them information in hopes of changing their views.

The anniversaries and birthdays will always be tough days, as well as the days leading up to them, because your anticipation triggers memories, reminds you of your loss, and can even reopen some wounds. The good news is that even those days eventually get less painful over time. You learn to make them days to celebrate your loved one's life and not special days of mourning.

Each year gets a little better. For example, you will learn what works best for you when you have to answer that painful question, "How many kids do you have?" Over time, you will learn how to live with your loss. You are a survivor. Your tragedy has most likely made you more empathetic toward others while giving you a better understanding of what is important in life. Use all of this knowledge in your relationships and interactions with others. Some of you may even choose to use your loss to help others. I know this continues to give me joy.

After my son died, I founded Nick's Network of Hope (nicksnetworkofhope.org), a suicide prevention nonprofit. Our website is an information portal to raise awareness, provide resources, and offer hope. Recently, I wrote and published a help book for those struggling in life or

suffering the aftermath of loss, as well as for anyone wanting to help these individuals. *Saving Ourselves from Suicide—Before and After: How to Ask for Help, Recognize Warning Signs, and Navigate Grief* will help grieving families and people like my son. Knowing this allows me to see Nick's death as more than a tragedy. I can't change what happened, but I can use it to help others climb out of a dark hole and find hope.

You will find your own meaningful ways to honor your loved one. Picking up the pieces and rebuilding your life in a productive way that is loving and kind certainly do that. It takes time for it all to come together, so be patient with yourself. Grieving is hard work, especially the first two years, but you've got this. Don't lose hope because better days are ahead. You will smile, laugh, and enjoy life again.



LINDA PACHA

LINDA PACHA is an attorney, a public speaker, and founder/president of Nick's Network of Hope, a nonprofit that provides resources, education, and support about life challenges with an emphasis on mental health awareness, suicide prevention, and grief and loss (nicksnetworkofhope.org).

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You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes; You heal because of what you do with the time. ~ Carol Crandall

Halloween Memories

Most children enjoy Halloween, the costumes, the candy, the parties, trick or treat, the decorations and so much more. My son looked forward to Halloween with great anticipation. Until he reached the fourth grade, Todd was happy to pick out a costume at the discount store....usually the current movie or television monster.

He came home from school in fourth grade and told me that there was going to be a costume contest and he really wanted to have a unique costume. I asked him what he wanted to be, and I will never forget his response: "I want to be a vampire, Mom. A really cool vampire." So, I talked to a friend of mine who was into stage production, and we went to her house the night before the contest.

She had a vampire cape, a vampire body suit, a vampire collar and great makeup. Todd loved it. My friend stopped at the house early the next morning and applied the makeup and did the finishing touches on Todd's costume. He looked just like the vampires in the movies, He was so pleased. He really wanted to win first place in his class. I dropped him at school and told him to have a wonderful time. He was elated.

As the day progressed, I wondered how he was doing. He had never wanted to win a prize before; what if he didn't get first place in his class? I worried about him, knowing that his feelings were easily hurt by cruel children and sometimes by cruel teachers. He called me at 3:30 to let me know he was home. I could hear excitement in his voice, and I asked him how he did.

"Mom, you won't believe this", he said in a serious, low toned voice. "What happened?", I asked, now wondering about the day's events. "I won first place, Mom. First place in the whole school. I can't wait for Halloween. Wait till Grandpa sees me. He won't even recognize me. I even got a certificate for first place....I'm putting it up in my room." I was so happy that tears welled in my eyes. My son had tried his best, and he had won. He had put himself out there and he wasn't disappointed, disillusioned or discouraged.

That was the first of many accomplishments in my son's life. He went on to win in track in high school, restore a 1965 GTO from the ground up and receive numerous trophies and awards. He attained his BS and MBA and was successful and respected in business. He was a great father to his

children, and his love for them was very deep. He never hesitated to tell them he loved them and how proud he was of them. He was a wonderful parent. He was always an amazing son. His death left a scar on my soul and a hole in my heart.

But his first success is forever in my mind. The little certificate which he brought home and hung on his bedroom wall is a treasure of his wonderful childhood. Halloween is still a happy holiday, and it is one of the few which I enjoy. I thank my son for that and for all the joy he gave me in his short 35 years of life.

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

Nostalgia

As school bells ring, young voices sing.
And small ones shout with glee.
The autumn air beckons school to start,
And left alone am I.

What makes me feel so down and blue
And boggled down with thoughts of you?
I see the school bus passing by,
And find myself with a tear in my eye.

Is it the clothes that we can't buy,
While others grab for jeans to try?
Or is it autumn in the air
That pulls at heartstrings – already bare?

Maybe it's falling leaves and dying grass,
Whatever the reason that stirs my heart,
Every year when school must start,
Reminds me how much I miss you.

Barbara Williams
TCF, Fort Wayne, IN

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① OUR LOCAL WEB SITE

Visit the San Diego Chapter homepage:

www.sdtcf.org

Email: leaders@sdtcf.org

The San Diego chapter home page has information about our chapter and links to more grief resources.

TCF Regional Coordinator

① OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES

MADD 858-564-0780
Empty Cradle 619-595-3887

Survivors of Suicide
619-482-0297
info@SOSLsd.org

Bereaved Parents of the USA
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

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

Alive Alone - for now childless parents
www.alivealone.org

① INFORMATION ON THE NET

Visit the TCF national homepage:
www.compassionatefriends.org

The national home page is filled with information and grief resources on-line. A "chat" room for on-line discussion with bereaved families is available.

Chat Room schedule:

Mon 9-10 pm EST: General Bereavement
Mon 10-11pm EST: Men's Chat
Tue 9-10 pm EST: Pregnancy and Infant Death
Thur 8-9 pm EST: No surviving children
Thur 9-10 pm EST: Siblings (Minimum age is 13)
Thur 10-11 pm: Grieving Alone (Single parents)

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TCF INFORMATION PACKAGE

If you would like to send an information package on TCF to someone you think could benefit, (either for themselves or others) phone 619-583-1555. Leave a message with your name and phone number and the name and full address of the person you would like to receive the package.

Be a compassionate friend

Our Lost Children's Photos for Newsletter

The recommended donation for your child's photo in our newsletter is \$30. Children's pictures will be in color. Donations and love gifts are always greatly appreciated.

WE WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS



Deadline for submission to the November /December 2020 Issue of The Compassionate Friend is

October 15, 2020

We warmly welcome your contributions, both original and inspirational writings. Please indicate sources of any non-original texts.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies
San Diego County Chapter

3555 Rosecrans St. #114-569, San Diego CA 92110

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September / October 2020

Love Gifts

Donations and love gifts in memory of your loved one enable us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and help defray newsletter and mailing expenses. Please indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter. When making a donation, please specify the San Diego chapter. Make your checks payable to:

TCF, San Diego Chapter, 3555 Rosecrans St. #114-569, San Diego CA 92110

From: _____ In Memory Of: _____

TCF The Compassionate Friends *newsletter application*

New Address

New subscription

Remove from list

Please send newsletter by regular mail.

By email, address _____

Your name: _____

Child's Full Name: _____

Address _____

Birth date: _____

City: _____

Date of death: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Cause: _____

Home phone: () _____

Your relationship to child: _____

Siblings/Ages: _____

Yes, I would like my child's name to be listed on the anniversary pages of the chapter newsletter

Yes, I would like my child's name to be listed on the anniversary pages of the chapter web site
If you have lost more than one child, please use a separate form for each child.