



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.*



July / August
2019

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**Location,
see p. 3**

Next Meeting

Wednesday
July 3rd

Wednesday
August 7th

These pages Dedicated with Love to:



John Thomas Gittelson



Kristina Michelle Bennett

♥ Always In Our Hearts ♥



David Michael Ellis



Joshua James Lubrich

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Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org/

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.

- ♥ **George Gittelsohn — In Loving Memory of his son John. “Happy Heavenly Birthday to you my son John. From our last I Love You while you were here and for the past twenty-five years not a day goes by that I say I love and miss you!!” Missing you and your mom every day.**
- ♥ **Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang — In Loving Memory of their daughter Kristina.**
- ♥ **Maxine Ellis — In Loving Memory of her son David.**
- ♥ **Sandi and Mark Terrell — In Loving Memory of Joshua. To our beloved son & brother, Joshua: “We Love You and Miss You Forever and Always!! You will always be our "Jewel" in the family, one to be "Gone But Never Forgotten!" We miss you more with each passing day! You're still a part of everything we do; you're on our hearts, just like a tattoo, just like a tattoo, we'll always have you. Love, Mom, Dad, Best Friend Zachary and Stephane, Ryan and Kiersten with baby Lily Mae, Andrew and Virginia with baby Andrew Joshua and Austin Lee, Best Friend Jason and Brittney with baby Dylan Amir and Jayce Benjamin and Best Friends Forever, Persio!”**

WHY ME? - The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

Polly Moore TCF Nashville, TN

The Compassionate Friends

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".



Telephone Friends

Ever feeling blue and need someone to talk to, who understands and cares. Just pick up the phone and call:

LONG TERM Lynn Lyon
ILLNESS (760) 639-4601

ONLY CHILD Wendy Jones
(619) 371-2335

ALCOHOL Elizabeth
RELATED Richardson
(619) 280-1832

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

Meeting Place and Times THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF SAN DIEGO MEETS ON

1st Wednesday of each month at 7 P.M. at:

Community of Christ Church
4811 Mount Etna Dr. 92117
In the Clairemont area of San Diego

Take I-805 to Balboa Ave. west. Turn right (north) on Genesee Ave. one block, Left turn (west) on Mount Etna Dr.; One half mile or so.(Church is on left side.)

Genesee Ave. runs north and south about one mile west of I-805 and can be accessed from Balboa Ave.; Clairemont Dr.; or Hwy 52.

OF NOTE

The Compassionate Friends is not a religious organization. All bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents are welcome to TCF no matter your personal religious beliefs.

About Our Newsletter

Cost of printing and mailing our newsletters is expensive. Thanks to all of you who send in a Love Gift whenever you can, we are able to keep our monthly newsletters going. It encourages us when we hear from you.

We hope to hear from each of our readers sometime during the year. Your gift does not need to be a great amount to make a difference. It all helps...and it offers each of us the opportunity to remember your child, too, in a special way when we see his or her name. Each child touches our hearts, and in various ways, bonds us together.

To Place Child's Picture In Newsletter

If you wish to have your child's picture in our newsletter please use the Application / Love Gifts form on the back page. Recommended for Love Gifts is \$30. Donations / Love Gifts are always greatly appreciated.



***Our Children – Loved, Missed and Remembered
July & August***

We remember the families of:



Birthdays

*Alan James Hein, born 7-1
Matthew C. Colbert, born 7-6
Karandeep Singh, born 7-8
John Thomas Gittelson, born 7-15
Heather Rose Powell, born 7-16
Matthew Steven Spiewak, born 7-17
Douglas Lorente, born 7-19
Jerome Allen, born 7-19
Kelli R. Smith, born 7-19
Sara Elizabeth Chandler, born 7-20
Lisa Trujillo, born 7-23
Emily Quinlan, born 7-26
Brittany Star Curcio, born 7-27
Nicole Clark, born 7-27
Ellie Kennison, born 7-31
Trevor Shane Kirby, born 7-31
Michael Lee Collins, born 8-4
Derek Reed Thomas, born 8-5
Andrea Lynn Montisano, born 8-10
Kashad Harvell, born 8-15
Delia Kelly Sables, born 8-16
Lawrence O'Brien, born 8-16
Julie Hart, born 8-21
Nick Jellison, born 8-29
Scott Ray Sturgess, born 8-29
Nicole Kaitlynn, born 8-30
Allison Anne Dunn, born 8-31*

Anniversaries

*Joshua James Lubrich, died 7-1
Mark Metz, died 7-1
Heather Rose Powell, died 7-2
Michelle Cleveland, died 7-2
John Thomas Gittelson, died 7-6
Kenneth W. McCormick III, died 7-6
Kristina Michelle Bennett, died 7-12
Matthew Aiden Baxley, died 7-14
Justin Knapp, died 7-28
Rick E. Pieramico, died 7-30
Katie R. Dix, died 8-11
Yehudit Sherman, died 8-2-
Craig Thomas Markley, died 8-2
Daniel A. Pitcher, died 8-5
Lindsey Faye Whelchel, died 8-6
Brent Foster Whelchel, died 8-6
Scott Ray Sturgess, died 8-8
Michael Lee Collins, died 8-11
David Ward Ray, died 8-13
Richard Wilson, died 8-14
Mitchell Szegi, died 8-16
Todd Schulman, died 8-17
Alexis Morgan Dale, died 8-20
Lawrence Wayne Hennessee, died 8-20
Pamela Broderick, died 8-20
Sumi Suresh, died 8-31
Delia Kelly Sables, died 8-31*

Annual Memorial Balloon Release Picnic

Sunday, September 22, 2019, Admiral Baker Field, 2400 Admiral Baker Rd., San Diego, CA 92120
 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 Lunch 12:00 Noon, Balloon Release 1:00 PM

New mailing address. Listed on the first and last pages of the newsletter . Emails remain the same.

We thank Long Kha, our treasurer, for taking over new mailbox duties from Barbara Lopez. Barbara has taken care of mail and correspondence for many years. Prior to that she was also our chapter leader. She has done so much for this chapter. We are grateful and appreciate her guidance on so many issues. Thank you Barbara for keeping us on the right path. We are still looking forward to your visits with us.

42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



RINGS OUT IN PHILADELPHIA

JULY 19-21, 2019

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Pre-registration Rates

Adult – \$125.00
 Senior (65+) – \$115.00
 Active Military – \$75.00
 Full-time College Students (with ID) – \$60.00
 Child – \$60.00

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Philadelphia 201 Hotel
 201 N. 17th St.
 Philadelphia, PA 19103

MAKE A RESERVATION

Or call 215.448.2963 ext. 6415 to reserve a room and use group code TH1326. Room rate is \$145 for guest room with Queen/King or 2 Doubles.



SHE WOULD BE TURNING 7 THIS YEAR

Posted on June 17th, 2019

As you lay there sleeping,
gently lay your head,
dreams of your future
dancing through my head.

At one, you'd be walking
Scurrying around,
getting into mischief,
feet firmly on the ground.

At two, your words start forming,
at three a sentence clear,
as grandpa reads you stories
keeps you safe and warm and near.

By four, you're learning numbers,
five headed off to school,
sitting in a classroom with friends,
that is so cool!

At six, you'd be excited,
a part in the school play!
What a glorious feeling
as the years just slip away.

But then I wake at morning
see that you're not here,
only while I'm sleeping,
and shed another tear.



IAN ROWAN Ian's
granddaughter Sophia was
born 6/14/12 at 23 weeks, she fought for
nine hours but wasn't able to hold on. She
would have been 7 on 6/14/19. Ian's
daughter, Julia, Sophia's mom, is pregnant
again and their family is looking forward
to a grandchild in December.

SUMMER

Posted on June 20th, 2019

Summer in Michigan can warm the heart and heat the body. There are soft silky nights spent viewing dots of light in the heavens. Beaches, barbecues, baseball, family reunions, fireworks, carnivals and cool drinks make the summer a special time of the year for a Midwesterner eager to shed winter's coat. School's out while vacations blend together for happy times. Even blue skies push the gray away in the peninsula state begging us to view, if not experience, the outdoors.

Someone is not there in their normal place and the season of the year will never change that fact. Determination to make "things" better is a laudable, though often quite challenging goal. Having a good time between spring and fall may be a difficult task when a good day may be a notable achievement. The simple act of attempting to have fun may be a simple, innocent act of honoring our child's memory. Every month seems to bring specific special thoughts and those fun times may bring along some unwanted baggage of sad moments that will never go away, but they will become more manageable, more easily carried.

It seems that if we keep busy sometimes "things" get better even if it's only for a little while. An idle mind is



the devil's workshop is another one of those phrases that seem to finally have some meaning for the bereaved. Find something, anything, to occupy the mind and the heart will most likely follow, if only briefly. If there is no time to think then there is no time for heartache, and this fragile formula may work on occasion to soothe the soul, providing rare relief from the staggering, stunning, seemingly endless pain.

Other times it is just too overwhelming, too exhausting to keep one step ahead of the darkness that reality has inflicted. We are transported back to when "things" were different, normal, better, so briefly we let go of hope and that is ok, it happens. The fight for survival is not easy but it is possible. The struggle may be measured by where we have been, how far we have come, as well as where we are. Congratulate yourself for making it this far. We may share many similarities, but no one knows your hard road better than you.

I think that our son Brian is having the best summer of all. That is what I choose to think, choose to know, choose to feel. So when I close my eyes tonight I will remember fireworks and sparklers of the past, the amusement parks yet to be visited.

The happy faces
of yesterday's memories will visit while
dreaming of the hugs of tomorrow in
that most beautiful perfect summer,
that someday forever summer,
together.

PAT O'DONNELL

In 2000, Pat O'Donnell and his wife, Janet, were devastated by the tragic death of their 18-year-old son, Brian, in an automobile accident. They credit their local chapter of The Compassionate Friends for helping them rediscover hope in their lives. Pat eventually served as a chapter leader and served as a member of the national TCF Board of Directors. Janet and Pat served as co-chairpersons for the 2006 TCF National Conference in Dearborn, Michigan. They have one other son, Andy. Since Pat's brother Billy passed away in 1972, he has suffered the loss of his brothers, Jim and Tom. Pat can be contacted at billyodee@yahoo.com.

Grief Work is Hard Work

When I first began my journey of grief following the death my only child, Todd, I didn't comprehend that I would have to take an active role in what would come to be defined as "grief work." All I knew was the pain, the shock, the sorrow, the desire to go to sleep and never awaken. My child was dead, and I had no desire to live.

As the months and then the years passed, I began to realize that I was, albeit

unconsciously, doing grief work. Once I realized I could not walk this road alone, I became involved in our Compassionate Friends Chapter. That was the beginning of my "grief work." A few months later I enrolled in a six week program for bereaved mothers. More grief work. I have since attended seminars, retreats and workshops. From each effort I gained something new, something insightful, something that eased my burden just a bit, something that helped me to cope with this, the worst, of all losses.

I consumed books. Some were about grief; others were about life. I watched movies, some about grief and some about life. I talked with friends.....sometimes about grief and sometimes about life.

Along the way I found that if I reached out to others, I was, once again, doing grief work. You see, I discovered that grief work is healing work. It doesn't dry my tears, nor does it mend my broken heart. Instead, it allows me to accept that I am in this place and living in this moment. That doesn't sound like much.....unless one has lost a child to death. Lost a child to death. What a horrifying thought. Yet now I can say it to others, talk with others who are raw and new in their grief and know that I have come to accept that my son is gone from this plane. My grief work will continue until I die.

When we attend workshops, seminars, special presentations, Compassionate Friends meetings and privately contemplate the depth of our loss and changes in our lives, we are doing grief work. Each of us travels this road differently, but we owe it to ourselves to do our grief work. Not easy work, not fun work, not immediately rewarding work, but this is work, just the same.

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

Dormant Anger Erupts Unexpectedly

Over three years ago, just 15 months after my son was killed in a traffic accident, a Dodge Ram dual cab truck that was traveling at 55 miles per hour when it ran a stop sign struck the vehicle I was driving. The front end of my car was ripped from the frame, the hood was crumpled and car spun from the impact. The other driver was cited for running the stop sign. A very credible witness gave his statement. Three months later I had neck surgery for the injuries sustained in the accident. The facts were simple in my mind. He ran the stop sign. I stopped. He was negligent. His insurance company paid for my car that was totaled but stopped talking to me when the adjustor heard about the necessary surgery that was performed a month later.

Mediation failed. The defense postponed the trial eleven times. The attorneys for the defendant's two insurance companies dug in. Delay, deny, debate...the mantra of all defense attorneys now became my reality.

Finally we had a court date. The players knew their lines....the diminutive judge whose campaign election funds are donated by the attorneys who practice in his court, the four well-dressed defense attorneys, my attorney and his associate....all knew the rules. All played the game well. This was their theater, their play, and their world. I was not happy with the pre-trial instructions that ruled out much of the evidence. But I wanted my day in court. I'd served on many juries, but I had never seen this side of the courtroom. It was a revelation.

All went fairly well with the testimony of the eyewitness and the policeman who had handled the accident scene. Then it was my turn. My attorney began asking me questions and suddenly, out of somewhere in my soul, anger akin to a long dormant volcano arose. I repressed it after my attorney asked me if I was angry. That was my hint: be sweet, be likeable, Harris County juries are notorious for stingy awards. I settled back down until the louder of the six defense attorneys began asking his carefully prepared questions.

I spoke over him. I responded with no small amount of hostility. He baited me, and I swallowed the hook. The volcano unleashed. I raised my voice, became animated in my anger and finally drew the judge's wrath. I even interrupted the judge to say I was sorry. The judge raised his voice to top volume, berating me for failing to answer the

questions in a single word, for continuing to respond while the defense attorney was talking. The judge gestured wildly at the court reporter, explaining that she couldn't write the words of two people at one time. Someone who was very important in his own world had chastised me. But more significantly, I had discovered something about myself: the anger that had erupted from within me like a volcano was not caused by the accident, the neck surgery, the legal-eagle games, the courtroom setting or the judicial stage.

I discovered that the repressed anger that I had managed to contain for over 4 1/2 years was still alive and well. Much was learned that day by this bereaved mother. As the volcano of anger erupted, the truth was so apparent to me that I smiled at my naivety.

Since my son's death, I have intentionally placed myself in situations where the people are gentle, positive, upbeat, balanced and not aggressive and violent in their actions or words. Subconsciously I knew that my anger was still there, and I didn't want to tempt the fates; the anger caused by the death of my only child was not going away. Now it had become apparent that my anger had to be addressed. So I brought it to the forefront of my mind as my husband and I drove home. I examined it closely, seeking an answer.

Sitting quietly that evening I realized that my anger has surfaced from time to time since my son died but never in such a nerve jolting eruption. When I realized the depth and scope of that anger, when I acknowledged its existence, when I faced it down, the volcano quietly went back to simmer. I must be very careful about quick retorts, actions without thought, words spoken in haste. I must be conscious of my anger during the process of releasing that anger in a gradual way. One day the anger volcano will become dormant.

Our grief journeys are life-long. I will always feel the many emotions that accompany the death of my only child. But each emotion has moderated over the years. My anger will be less raw, just as the other negative emotions and feelings have become less pronounced over time. Actively identifying each enemy that lives in my psyche has enabled me to address it. Negativity cannot fester when exposed to the light of hope. And, yet, I must always remember that I am still a work in progress. We are all a work in progress.

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

(Sibling page)

THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL

I walked slowly into Philadelphia's Society Hill Playhouse. It wasn't my first time. I had been there many times before to see shows that my brother, Alan, had publicized.

This time the show would be about Alan.

Until shortly before he died, Alan worked full time as a publicist for an agency for the aged. He also juggled many freelance *projects simultaneously*, and donated much of his *free time* to a variety of community organizations. He would have been shocked at the eleven obituaries that were published. Those came from two Philadelphia daily papers, two weekly papers and the others in newsletters from various organizations where Alan had volunteered.

This October night, the 26th of 1992, we returned to Philly for his memorial service. My entire family was there-except for my twin brother Alan. I was fine-until I saw the bulletin board displaying his pictures. We had asked to videotape the service but his friends said it would make them uncomfortable.

We *needed* to have something else to remind us of Alan. So, unknown to anyone, except my family, I slipped a tape recorder under my seat.

Although Alan's friends had designed a postcard with a picture and a favorite quote, I felt he deserved a Playbill for all of the shows he had promoted. After being turned down by Playbill I designed my own program, including his biography.

Following an introduction by the master of ceremonies, my brother Joel spoke of Alan's family life. He said how 1992 was a difficult year for all of us. "The pain of losing someone who touched you so closely is just indescribable," he continued. "No one in this world was closer to Alan, closer to each other than Alan and Danny were. Danny, no one has felt the intensity and loss and pain that you have. On the one hand I envy you, you were the luckiest of us all. I know I am a much better person because of Alan and the way he touched my life... Danny, no one loved you more than Alan, no one was more loved by Alan than you, you are truly a very lucky man..."

After his speech Joel recited something I had written, but was too heartbroken to read. It is

called," I remember" and contains some of the highlights of my life with Alan. This is only a small portion of it:

I remember playing in the sandbox with our matchbox cars.

I remember getting up early on Sundays to walk to the bakery for chocolate chip cookies.

I remember our walks back to Alan's apartment after the movies.

I remember our trip to Hershey by bus, at age 14.

I remember staying up late to help Alan get his mailings finished.

I remember when we would go to see Grandma Sloane, sometimes at 2AM.

I remember how Alan would give me support when I was worried about him.

The memorial service continued, with a total of five friends talking about different aspects of his life. A wonderful singer, Kathy Sledge (of the group Sister Sledge), sang "I'll Be Seeing You" and "Goodbye Old Friend." When the microphone was open to anyone, we heard from many, each person recalling the fond moments they had with Alan. For months after, I would listen to the recording. It was often difficult to hear--due to footsteps and my loud sobs but it helped me when I needed to cry.

My twin brother Alan, who died of AIDS on June 25, 1992, knew that his illness was terminal but managed to enjoy life to the fullest. I have chosen to remember him this way, enjoying life as best I can, and getting involved, as he did.

Daniel Yoffee
In Memory of my brother, Alan

Daniel Yoffee's twin brother died in 1992. Helping with two TCF chapters, Daniel does newsletter layout for the Bergen-Passaic, NJ TCF chapter and is treasurer of the Rockland County, NY TCF chapter, and is on the steering committees for both chapters. He is also involved with an AIDS service provider in Rockland County assisting with fund raising, as well as being newsletter editor and creating a web page.

**THE
COMPASSIONATE
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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)

member web/e-mail

<http://www.RickPieramico.com>

Charlene Tate
caricat83@hotmail.com

Elene Bratton
jamesjoy@simplynet.com
www.jamesjoy.org

Tami Carter haley1@san.rr.com

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
September / October 2019
Issue of The Compassionate Friend is

August **15, 2019**

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

July / August 2019

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.