



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
2022

Issue 162

Dedication and Love Gifts 1-2

Mission Statement Meeting Location Telephone Friends 3

Loved, Missed and Remembered 4

Articles 5-10

Websites Steering Committee 11

Next Meetings

In Person Meeting
See page 3

Wednesday
July 6th

Wednesday
August 3rd

These pages Dedicated with Love to:



Kristina Michelle Bennett



John Thomas Gittelson

♥ Always In Our Hearts ♥



Nicholas Ferrell



Jamie Mychael Bratton-McNeeley

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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.** “On what would be your 44th birthday. Always in my heart.” Love always Dad
 - ♥ **Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang — In Loving Memory of their daughter Kristina.** “The moment that you died our hearts were torn in two. One side filled with heartache, the other died with you.” We love you, Dad & Mom
 - ♥ **Elene Bratton — In Loving Memory of her son Jamie.**
 - ♥ **Brenda J. Ferrell — In Loving Memory of her son Nicholas.**
-

My "Chris" Birds

It's the twigs below the birdhouse
Let me know your birthday's near
This back yard once sat empty
Not a bird in sight all year

We placed the houses in our yard
To give the birds a home
But never did we see one
Til the day that you went home

We looked outside on that day
We laid you in the ground
On that dark day in September
The starlings swarmed around

We had never seen so many
Certainly not in our back yard
But there they were aplenty
On that day that was so hard

They came again in the Spring
Round your birthday, the end of March
The starlings flew around again
Bringing twigs, a home to start

So March and in September
Are special months indeed
The starlings come to see us
They recognize our need

Because they came when you left
They were never here before
I've named them after you my son
Your legacy, I'm sure

So, it's these twigs below the birdhouse
That lets me know that you are near
My "Chris birds" come a-callin
Reminding me of you so dear

Robyn Kingery
In Memory of my son, Chris Kingery

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".



Wednesday in-person meetings at the Legacy Church from Jan-Dec 2022.

Meetings first Wednesday of the month

Virtual meetings offered. Contact Gary Hochstetler gshoch@cox.net

Legacy Church 8076 La Mesa Blvd. in La Mesa. The Church is within the La Mesa Springs Shopping Center.

No food. (7-9 PM)

Easiest Directions:

From I-8 going east exit Fletcher Pkwy.

Right turn on Baltimore Blvd.

Right turn to University Ave.

Pass traffic light at Allison Blvd. turning left into "Vons La Mesa Springs" shopping center. Pass Von's entrance continuing to the end of the parking lot, Legacy Church on left. Ample parking.

For another entrance to the "shopping center". Left turn on La Mesa Blvd (next intersection). Left turn next traffic light into the parking lot. Church toward the right.

Telephone Friends

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

LONG TERM ILLNESS Lynn Lyon
(760) 639-4601

ONLY CHILD Wendy Jones
(619) 371-2335

ALCOHOL RELATED Elizabeth Richardson
(619) 245-3515

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

About TCF and 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 donation is \$30. Donations / Love Gifts are always 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
Kelli R. Smith, born 7-19
Sara Elizabeth Chandler, born 7-20
Roosevelt Jerard "RJ" Carter, born 7-23
Lisa Trujillo, born 7-23
Emily Quinlan, born 7-26
Nicole Clark, born 7-27
Brittany Star Curcio, 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
Christinee (Bowden) Maconnell, born 8-9
Andrea Lynn Montisano, born 8-10
Kashad Harvell, born 8-15
Lawrence O'Brien, born 8-16
Julie Hart, born 8-21
Kathryn R Main, born 8-24
Nick Jellison, born 8-29
Scott Ray Sturgess, born 8-29
Nicole Kaitlynn, born 8-30
Allison Anne Dunn, born 8-31

Anniversaries

Mark Metz, died 7-1
Joshua James Lubrich, died 7-1
Heather Rose Powell, died 7-2
Michelle Cleveland, died 7-2
Kenneth W. McCormick III, died 7-6
John Thomas Gittelson, 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
Eddie Diaz, died 7-31
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
Pamela Broderick, died 8-20
Sumi Suresh, died 8-31



TCF 45th National Conference
Houston, TX • August 5-7, 2022

45TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

AUGUST 5 - AUGUST 7

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

We are pleased to announce that registration is open for the 45th TCF National Conference. After two years of not being able to meet in person, we are really looking forward to being together! Our conference is a place for bereaved families to find community and hope, while learning and sharing with others. Lifelong friendships are often made at the conference through meeting others who truly understand the painful loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. This eagerly anticipated event will take place in Houston, Texas, during the weekend of August 5-7, 2022.

[REGISTER NOW](#) [SPEAKERS](#) [REGISTRATION FEES](#) [MORE](#)
[DETAILS](#) [SPONSORSHIPS](#) [VOLUNTEER](#)

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

This year's conference will be held at the Marriott Marquis Houston. Reservations can now be made [online](#) at TCF's dedicated reservation link. TCF's discounted room rate with Marriott is \$149 per night plus tax. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. Since the conference begins early on Friday and pre-conference activities are offered on Thursday evening, attendees usually find it beneficial to arrive on Thursday.

[HOTEL RESERVATIONS](#)

For those not able to make your reservations online, call the Marriott Reservation line at 877.688.4323. When calling be sure to mention *The Compassionate Friends National Conference* to receive your room rate.

[+ GOOGLE CALENDAR+ ADD TO ICALENDAR](#)

For all the information about the National Conference email: www.compassionatefriends.org/

(Same email address as the National Office listed on the bottom of our newsletter Front Cover.)



THE WARINESS OF GRIEF

I am from the South. My parents were both Southerners. I have never lived outside the South, in spite of the fact that some would claim Northern Virginia, where I lived for almost 40 years, is not really “part of the South.” I maintain that it is.

Friendliness is an entrenched southern virtue. I was indoctrinated in friendliness from a young age. It also happened to be an easy fit with my natural personality and disposition. My husband alleges I can “talk to a post.” He’s probably right about that.

For my whole life, I have had many friends in many places; friends from childhood, friends from college, friends from work, friends who were neighbors. I made friends walking my dog; I made friends riding the subway. Once my children were born, I made friends with the parents of their friends, made friends with their teachers, made friends with other PTA parents and so on. Many, many friends. Obviously, I was closer to some than others. I

maintained more regular contact with some than others

I did have some experience with betrayal and rejection, but it was not so intense or so painful as to make me abandon my natural open friendliness. It took losing my son to do that.

I am different now. I think I am still friendly in neutral situations, but it is a guarded friendliness. When I walk the dog, I still greet everyone I meet on the street. I have conversations with many, but these are short, superficial conversations. (These are not to be confused with conversations I may have had with strangers on the street in my most acute days of grief. In those days, I occasionally wept on the shoulders of strangers.)

I have become wary of people.

I am wary of new people. It takes a certain set of circumstances, sometimes forced, for me to even confess to new people that I have lost a child. When contractors come to my house, I take down lots of photos and hide them so I’m not asked questions about any of the shrines to my son. It is rare for me to have such a feeling of safety with someone new that I choose to let them in on my secret.

Sadly, experience has taught me to be wary even of people I’ve known a long time. I have been surprised by those I was formerly close to who have hurt me or disappointed me. Or who have

disappeared. So, I wear my mask and conduct myself carefully.

Recently, I came across this quote:

“Oh, the comfort — the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person — having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.” -Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

So, under what circumstances do I feel this comfort? I feel it with my sister, with a few old friends, but mostly, I feel it with the other bereaved parents I've come to know through The Compassionate Friends.

~Peggi Johnson

Piedmont, VA TCF

PEGGI JOHNSON

After adopting two children, Peggi resigned from her corporate career in telecommunications and devoted herself to full time motherhood. When her son, Jordan, died by suicide at the age of 19, Peggi, her husband Jeff, and her daughter Claire were devastated and dumbfounded. They joined the Arlington, VA Chapter of TCF and Peggi edited the newsletter for six chapters in the Washington, DC area for two years. After her husband's retirement, they relocated to Charlottesville, VA where they joined the Piedmont, VA TCF Chapter. Peggi previously served as chapter co-leader and edited the chapter newsletter. She is a volunteer for hospice and writes articles for TCF.

LESSONS FROM MY SON

After you were born
my life became a challenge
Seeing your poised big sister
who did everything right
you escaped out of your crib
knocked the houseplants over
decorated a closet wall
with a bright blue marker.
You didn't hesitate to scare me
at eight months pregnant
waddling like a beached whale
with a trip to get stitches
when you fell in the bathtub
telling jokes and laughing
as the doctor sewed your chin
naming the stitches 'my itches'.

I can still see those bright eyes
the excitement over a frog,
picking green tomatoes,
covered in birthday cake,
drinking pool water,
climbing a pecan tree,
kissing a neighbor's puppy
and running naked down the cul-de-sac.

From you I learned the art of patience,
the joy of mothering a son,
that there are never enough
hours for cuddling and reading.
You taught me well
although you were so young.
And within my heart,
I will always hold my gratitude for you.

Alice J. Wisler
TCF Wake County, NC
In Memory of Daniel Wisler

SUMMER

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

When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my

honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

Nita Aasen

In memory of my sons, Erik and David
Aasen

St. Peter, Minnesota

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

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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 September / October

**Issue of
The Compassionate Friends is
August 15, 2022**

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

3805 Garden Lane, San Diego CA 92106

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

July / August 2022

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, 3805 Garden Lane, San Diego CA 92106 (619) 583-1555

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.