



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
2021

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Next Meetings

In Person Meeting
 Virtual uncertain
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Wednesday
July 7th

Wednesday
August 4th

These pages Dedicated with Love to:



Kristina Michelle Bennett



John Thomas Gittelson

♥ Always In Our Hearts ♥



Joshua James Lubrich



Craig Thomas Markley

San Diego Chapter of TCF
 3555 Rosecrans St. #114-569
 San Diego CA 92110
 (619) 583-1555
www.sdtcf.org

Chapter Co-Leaders
 Lisa Hohman 619-287-4253
 Sandi Terrell 619-562-3949

The National Office of TCF
 P. O. Box 3696
 Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
 Phone toll free (877) 969-0010
 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.

- ♥ **Tom & Judy Markley — In Loving Memory of their son Craig.** "You are missed. Your memories are always with us and make us smile," Love, Judy, Sarah, Mark, Gavin & Griffin
- ♥ **George Gittelsohn — In Loving Memory of his son John.** "On what would be your 43rd 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
- ♥ **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 granddaughter Lily Mae, Andrew and Virginia with grandsons Andrew Joshua and Austin Lee, Best Friend Jason and Brittney with grandsons Dylan Amir and Jayce Benjamin and Best Friends Forever, Persio!"

When

When your mind
cannot find
an answer,
open your heart
and ask
for peace.

Sascha Wagner
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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
Jerome Allen, born 7-19
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
Brittany Star Curcio, born 7-27
Nicole Clark, born 7-27
Trevor Shane Kirby, born 7-31
Ellie Kennison, 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
Scott Ray Sturgess, born 8-29
Nick Jellison, 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
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
Katie R. Dix, died 8-11
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

A Remnant

I am a wretched seamstress, although there have been numerous attempts on my part over the years to remedy that. At this point, I am fairly content with my ability to sew on a button. I can also, with help, produce a pretty snazzy pillowcase.

During those previous attempts to acquire some skill, I did have to occasionally venture into a fabric store. In most fabric stores, there is a "remnant table." Leftover pieces from bolts of fabric. Often not in sufficient quantity to make much of anything. Always sold at a discount. Sometimes a very steep discount.

These scraps may be from fabric that never was anything more than cheap. It may be a design or color that has gone out of fashion. In some cases, it may be a small fragment of something that was once a fine, valuable fabric. But what does one do with such a leftover?

I sometimes think of myself now as a remnant, a trace of the person I used to be before my son died. Whether the fabric that was my former self was cheap cotton, gaudy polyester, sturdy woven wool, or a finely made silk is up for debate. But here I am a remnant, wondering what to make of what is left. Or, indeed, sometimes wondering if it is even worth the effort.

I guess one option is to sort of throw myself in the proverbial trash heap. But I try...most of the time? some of the time?...to find ways to be useful and productive and engaged. I try to stay off the trash heap. I try to make something out of what is left.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Piedmont, VA

Gambling

I am not a gambler. I am far from viceless, but that particular vice has never beckoned me. I like Las Vegas, but I like it for spa treatments, poolside beverages, and Cirque du Soleil, not for the casinos. I don't bet on card games, playoffs, or the lottery.

So why didn't I realize that becoming a parent was such a huge gamble?

For many people, parenting brings the greatest joy, greatest pleasure, greatest sense of pride, greatest satisfaction.

When Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was asked about her greatest accomplishment, her answer was, "my children."

To me, it has brought the greatest pain and the greatest suffering. I didn't even guess I was risking that.

In Stephanie Benbenek's searingly honest book *Keeping Clarke*, she writes, "Of all my truthful admissions, this is the hardest: the only unconditional love that exists in this world is from a parent to a child....To this day and for eternity, the loss of being able to love unconditionally will be my greatest and deepest hollow space."

In our land of plenty, parenting can reasonably be anticipated to yield pleasurable results. Parents who are attentive, invested, capable of providing shelter, security, nutrition, education, encouragement....those parents have a reasonable expectation of a "good outcome."

So, when the outcome is tragic, it's as though the "house" cheated. No wonder I feel like I'm in some sort of exile. All around me, people are reaping the rewards of their investment, celebrating their proceeds. I made a similar investment....or rolled similar dice. I bet on a similar hand of cards...and here I am...with empty pockets. I gather that somehow I owe the house.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Arlington, VA



TCF's 44th National Conference will be presented virtually July 16-18, 2021. Although we would love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through our virtual event.

COMMENTS FROM THE 2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

"The Conference meant so much to me. It was beautifully presented. I will always be grateful that I was able to attend." – 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

"I am very grateful for all your hard work putting together such an amazing 3 day event. I am newly bereaved and this conference was that ray of sunshine that I needed. The Compassionate Friends conference has given me tools that I didn't even know I needed to help me ease some of this pain in my heart." – 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Early Bird Registration (register by June 25) – \$80

Regular Registration (after June 25) – \$95

REGISTER NOW

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE SPEAKERS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Scarlett Lewis founded the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement, which helps people build a culture of love, resilience, forgiveness, and connection in our communities. Scarlett is the mother of Jesse Lewis, who was killed in his classroom during the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. She has been interviewed by BBC, Fox News, CBS, and the Today Show, and has been featured in Fortune, Strive, and the Huffington Post. Scarlett will share how to thoughtfully respond with love in any situation by using the Choose Love Formula.



Dennis Apple is a pastor, author, and long-time workshop presenter at TCF national conferences. His 18-year-old son, Denny, died suddenly in his sleep from complications of mononucleosis. The pastor of a mega church, Dennis felt he was exempt from the tragedies that others experienced. Sixteen years later, after a crisis of faith and deep despair, he wrote about his struggle in a book, "Life After the Death of My Son." Dennis co-leads the TCF of Johnson County chapter in Leawood, Kansas.



Peggi Johnson is an avid writer and frequent contributor to We Need Not Walk Alone, TCF's magazine. Her son, Jordan, died by suicide at the age of 19, in 2009. After Jordan's death, she learned about and received support from TCF. She then served as editor for six chapters in the Washington, DC and Northern Virginia area, as well as a chapter leader in Piedmont, VA. Since 2013, Peggi has presented workshops for TCF national conferences.



Zander Sprague is an author, speaker, and licensed counselor. In 1996, his sister was murdered, and, ten years later, his sister-in-law died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 35. Zander is the author of "Making Lemonade: Choosing a Positive Pathway After Losing Your Sibling." His latest book, "Why Don't They Cry? Understanding Your Living Child's Grief" is going to press later this year. Zander is a certified From Heartbreak to Happiness® grief coach.



A BEAR HUG FOR FATHER'S DAY

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their children, is to support their wives and surviving children. But their pain is deep.

Men, by their nature and in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk as candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the rock, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are fragile. Or so we are told.

Yet, as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed, the words that are never spoken, the anger, guilt and agony....all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father.

What can a father do? Talk with other bereaved fathers. Read books written

by bereaved fathers. Talk with spouses, private counselors and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles. Try to attend three meetings of Compassionate Friends. You don't have to talk. But you might decide to express a single thought or idea, logically presented, to the small group. You might find peace in this place, and then again, you might not. But, as my own dad often said, "Step up to the plate and see what happens." He was a pretty wise man.....a child of the depression, a football player, Greatest Generation, WW II Marine, a fighter, a provider, a protector.....a man's man. He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times.

But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried.

Happy Father's Day....May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always.

~Annette Mennen Baldwin, in memory of my son, Todd Mennen and my father, James M. Mennen

Her first book, Child Of My Heart: A Mother's Grief Journey, was recently published.

Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings,

unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Sascha Wagner

Reopening of School and No Child!

Summer ends, and across our nation, from the middle of August to the week after Labor Day, schools open for another year. For those parents surviving a child of school age, be that from nursery school to college or university, this can be as trying a time as the holidays.

School buses travel again the busy highways of our cities and the quiet lanes of our countryside. Anxious parents stand with children about to make the first ride to school. Gaggles of youngsters play at countless stops across our land. America's most precious and costly activity is renewed. The children are off to school.

I remember well the silences of the September mornings of those first years. The bus no longer stopped at our home. It simply drove casually by, the people within never realizing it once carried the focus of my love, the repository of my dreams. The drone of its wheels marked anew the mind-numbing dullness of my fragmented senses as it moved its way down the tree lined lane once alive with my son's comings and goings.

It was always possible to avoid "back to school" sales. Seeing young people and their

wearied parents gather school supplies and clothing was just too much in those earliest years. Somehow, the perfect notebook, the brilliant sweater, the odd-shaped erasers were simply unendurable. The stream of vehicles heading for Cape Cod for that final Labor Day weekend, the last family outing to end the summer, was another scene to avoid. It was a ritual from which we seemed excluded. Could we still be a family without him?

Those years are gone now. Having returned to education, I now have "back to school" buying to do myself. I see the buses arrive to unload their treasured passengers, no longer feeling the emptiness of a bus that drives on, barren of hopes and dreams. But I do and will forever remember the pain of those unhappy years and sometimes I reflect on the many parents who now feel as I did.

If you are such a parent, if you mourn a child who leaves a school desk somewhere unfilled, I promise that you are not alone in that pain. But even though you are not alone, you know that you are forever marked, that the death of your child or children has altered you in some basic manner.

Perhaps time and much grief work remain before your spirit can yield up the agony and permit a new self to emerge. That time and work was necessary for me, as it actually is for all of us. For me, grief resolution finally recalled me to my original work. I teach. I no longer administer or direct. The need for that fled before bereavement's assault.

I teach math, science, and social studies to sixth grade children, ages 11 to 12 over the course of a year. In wondrous ways they have restored love to my living. There is nothing of an intellectual character with enough value to equal that, so I have given them the love and caring that was mine, evoked by and for Olin.

Thus do Olin's gifts live on, called forth and given new lift through the innocent and selfless love of school children.

All who walk this road realize this is not substitution. Such is not possible. But it does reflect qualities of successful reinvestment, something each of us sorely needs.

Today as schools prepare for another year, I look forward to a new group of children. But cautions arise within as well, the legacy of that time over 12 years ago, when the world came to a sudden halt, when the laughter of lifetimes ceased, when dreams evaporated with a morning mist.

For those of us who dare live and love again, for those fortunate enough to have found a reinvestment encouraging the same, there is always risk. After all, tragedy can strike again. Our present or past pain grants no immunity. Students, the children within the school, invited me, albeit unknowingly, to take that risk again, although certainly not at the rich and deep level of father and son. Nevertheless, it feels right, and though I will never again know the depth of love which belonged to Olin and me, I welcome the chance to live once more on its margins.

So schools, which were once just another manifestation of hurt, have helped me to restore purpose and balance to daily living. There is surely such a reinvestment awaiting all of us, but we must seek the circumstances and create the opportunities for it to occur. I pray that all of us who have not yet had such good fortune may soon do so. All of our children would want this for us as well. With that thought in mind, it is indeed worth striving for that dimension in life once more.

Don Hackett
TCF Kingston, MA
In Memory of my son, Olin

**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS
SAN DIEGO CHAPTER
STEERING COMMITTEE**

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS Lisa Hohman
(619)-287-4253
Sandi Terrell
(619) 562-3949

TREASURER Long Kha
long.kha@gmail.com

SECRETARY Teresa de La Barrera
(619)-733-1383

NEWS-LETTER EDITORS Del Hohman
us030424@cox.net

OUTREACH Diane Hochstetler
dianerhoch@gmail.com

REFRESH-MENTS Debbi Montisano
(858) 274-5724

LIBRARIAN Grace Saputo
Gmsaputo@gmail.com

SUPPORT:

John Rooks
(619)654-0141
Elene Bratton
Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang
ybennettniang@yahoo.com

Web Master	Jason Kha webmaster@sdtcf.org
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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
jamiesjoy@simplynet.com
www.jamiesjoy.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 July / August 2021

Issue of The Compassionate Friends is

August 15, 2021

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 2021

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.