



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.



**March/April**

**2021**

**Issue 154**

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**Next Meeting**

**Virtual Meetings**

**Wednesday Mar 3rd**

**Wednesday Apr 7th**

**These pages Dedicated with Love to:**



**Cynthia Lee Kessler**



**Dee Louise Hochstetler**

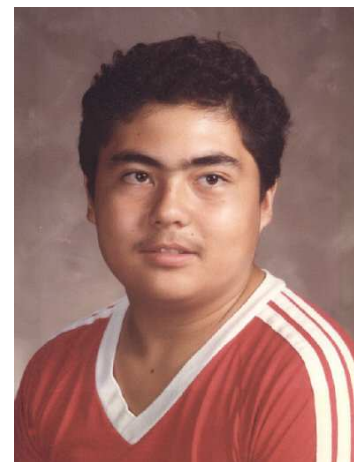


**Ramiro Zuñiga-Cedillo**

♥ **Always In Our Hearts** ♥



**Roosevelt Jerard "RJ" Carter**



**Darryl Charles Hohman**

**San Diego Chapter of TCF**  
 3555 Rosecrans St. #114-569  
 San Diego CA 92110  
 (619) 583-1555  
[www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)

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 Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696  
 Phone toll free (877) 969-0010  
 Web Site: [www.compassionatefriends.org/](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/)

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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.

- ♥ Deanie Taylor — in Loving Memory of her son “RJ”.
  - ♥ Diane & Gary Hochstetler — In loving memory of their daughter Dee Louise. “In honor of your 48<sup>th</sup> birthday in Heaven. Missing you every day.” Your Mom & Dad.
  - ♥ Gordon R. Collins — In Loving Memory of his daughter Cynthia.
  - ♥ Lisa & Del Hohman — In Loving Memory of their son Darryl.
  - ♥ Gloria C. de Zuñiga — In Loving Memory of her son Ramiro. "RAMIRO YOUR LIFE WAS CUT VERY SHORT BECAUSE WE FEEL GOD NEEDED YOU AND HAD PREPARED A PLACE FOR YOU. GENTLE SOULS ARE MUCH NEEDED IN HEAVEN. REST IN PEACE, MY SON, YOUR FAMILY MISSES YOU BUT YOU WILL STAY IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER. LOVE ALWAYS! MOM"
- 

*Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.  
 Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you before you depart.  
 Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow.  
 Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.  
 One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow,  
 or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,  
 and want more than all the world for your return. ~ Mary Jean Irion*

# 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 ILLNESS      Lynn Lyon  
(760) 639-4601
- ONLY CHILD            Wendy Jones  
(619) 371-2335
- ALCOHOL RELATED   Elizabeth Richardson  
(619) 280-1832
- PARA HABLAR EN ESPAÑOL      David Bolaños Keyser  
(760) 310-3632

# Sorry, Virtual Meetings for Mar Apr

## Meeting Place and Times

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF SAN DIEGO MEETS ON The first Wednesday of the month at:

## Nobel Recreation Center

8810 Judicial Drive  
San Diego, CA 92122

Taking I 805 north exit Nobel Drive heading west, stay in right lane for right turn to Judicial Drive; move to left lane making left turn at first Traffic Signal. Follow parking lot down to the end (2<sup>nd</sup> Bldg.) There'll be a few stair steps a few paces more, entrance to right. Walkway near. Ample parking. Nobel Drive runs east – west about one mile north of hwy. 52.

Latest on Meeting Updates: [www.sdctcf.org](http://www.sdctcf.org)

## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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. **Deadline for submission to the May / June Issue is April 15.**



## ***Our Children – Loved, Missed and Remembered March & April***

### **We remember the families of:**



#### **Birthdays**

***Emil Ian de la Barrera, born 3-1***  
***Alexis Morgan Dale, born 3--5***  
***Nicholas James Reynolds, born 3-9***  
***Cynthia Lee Kessler, born 3-10***  
***Jason Lee Hansen, 3-13***  
***Michael Lopez, born 3-14***  
***Amy Sara Bowden, born 3-16***  
***Dee Louise Hochstetler, born 3-21***  
***Joseph Roy Elkins, born 3-24***  
***Alan H. Balsam, born 4-2***  
***Alexander Joseph Niazi, born 4-8***  
***Mary Ann Valdez, born 4-8***  
***Matthew Beaver, born 4-13***  
***Lisa Marie Stoefen, born 4-14***  
***David John Merritt, born 4-15***  
***Matthew Raimer, born 4-15***  
***Angela Scarbrough, born 4- 14***  
***Jana A. Warda Schott, born 4-15***  
***Spencer Keni Watts, born 4-19***  
***Christopher Andrew Fulston, born 4-20***  
***Christopher L Mariano, born 4-20***  
***Teresa Bowers, born 4-22***  
***Dominique Ynette Young, born 4-23***  
***Matthew Aiden Baxley, born 4-27***  
***Stephanie Johanna Westrich, born 4-30***

#### **Anniversaries**

***Ramiro Zuñiga-Cedillo, died 3-2***  
***Nathaniel Poteat, died 3-3***  
***Kelli R. Smith, died 3-4***  
***Jameson Connor Segel, died 3-6***  
***Cooper Jancic, died 3-9-***  
***Julie Hamilton, died 3-12***  
***Ronald Paul Jones, died 3-14***  
***Jennifer Ann Greenwald, died 3-16***  
***Malini Elizabeth Sathyadev, died 3-16***  
***Leonard Valadez, died 3-17***  
***Gregg Garon, died 3-17***  
***Kristin Elizabeth Hawkinson, died 3-18***  
***Trevor Shane Kirby, died 3-20***  
***Joshua Linzy Fogel, died 3-27***  
***Dylan Libby, died 3-28***  
***Rick Nolin, died 3-30***  
***Jasmine Bellofatto, died 4-3***  
***Roosevelt Jerard "RJ" Carter. Died 4-3***  
***Paul Albert Alferos Jr., died 4-4***  
***Brian James Gillis, died 4-4***  
***Mary Ann Valdez, died 4-8***  
***Josh Forness, died 4-5***  
***Christopher Andrew Fulston, died 4-8***  
***Mikael Larson, died 4-8***  
***Darryl Charles Hohman, died 4-9***  
***Michael Dylkiewicz, died 4-9***  
***Brian Michael Bennett, died 4-11***  
***Joshua Michael Jensen, died 4-11***  
***Emily Quinlan, died 4-15***  
***Ronald Jack Drew, died 4-20***  
***Spencer Keni Watts, died 4-22***  
***Jamie Morgan Mychael Bratton-McNeeley,  
left his body 4-24***  
***Brittany Star Curcio, died 4-24***  
***Francisco "Frankie" Morales, died 4-27***  
***Andrew K. Scott, died 4-28***  
***George Brers IV, died 4-28***

# *TOGETHER WE'LL WALK THE STEPPING STONES*

*Come, take my hand, the road is long.*

*We must travel by stepping stones.*

*No, you're not alone, I'll go with you.*

*I know the road well, I've been there.*

*Don't fear the darkness. I'll be with you.*

*We must take one step at a time.*

*But remember, we may have to stop awhile.*

*It is a long way to the other side.*

*And there are many obstacles.*

*We have many stones to cross, some are bigger than others.*

*Shock, denial, and anger to start.*

*Then comes guilt, despair and loneliness.*

*It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.*

*It's the only way, to reach the other side.*

*Come slip your hand in mine.*

*What? Oh, yes, it's strong I've held so many hands like yours.*

*Yes mine was one time small and weak like yours.*

*Once you see, I had to take someone's hand in order to take the first step.*

*Oops! You've stumbled, go ahead and cry.*

*Don't be ashamed, I understand*

*Let's wait here awhile and get your breath.*

*When you're stronger, we'll go on, one step at a time.*

*There's no need to hurry*

*Say, it's nice to hear you laugh. Yes I agree.*

*The memories you shared are good.*

*Look, we're half way there now. I can see the other side.*

*It looks so warm and sunny.*

*Oh, have you noticed, we're nearing the last stone and you're standing alone.*

*And look, your hand, you've let go of mine*

*We've reached the other side.*

*But wait, look back, someone is standing there.*

*They are all alone and want to cross the stepping stones.*

*I'd better go, they need my help.*

*What? Are you sure?*

*Why yes, go ahead I'll wait, you know the way, you've been there.*

*Yes I agree, it's your turn my friend...*

*To help someone else cross the stepping stones.*





## THE HOLIDAYS ARE BEHIND US

*Posted on January 15th, 2021*

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throat tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we, too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deeper way.

**MARIE ANDREWS**

TCF Southern Maryland



## THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

*Posted on January 15th, 2021*

Those of us who have traveled a while  
Along this path called grief  
Need to stop and remember that mile,  
That first mile of no relief.

It wasn't the person with answers  
Who told us of ways to deal.  
It wasn't the one who talked and talked  
That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat  
And held our hands in theirs.  
The ones who let us talk and talk  
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember  
That more than the words we speak,  
It's the gift of someone who listens  
That most of us desperately seek.

**NANCY MYERHOLTZ**  
TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH

## In honor of their daughter Dee

The Planting of the Tree

After the tree is planted: a prayer.

We thank you, O God,

for the life of Dee:

for the love that she shared so abundantly

for the warmth of her laughter,

for the joy of her presence,

for the easy conversation we knew,

for her clear articulation of thought and

for her openness and direct way,

for her compassion for others,

for the spontaneity of her heart,

for the generosity of her soul,

for the companionship she gave,

for the time we spent together,

for her friendship and love,

for the wondrous beauty of her life.

For these and all the blessings

that Dee gave to us,

we thank you, O God of Love.

Amen.

Submitted by Dee's parents, Diane & Gary  
Hochstetler



## CHEERIOS

*Posted on January 12th, 2021*

Sometimes opportunity sleeps in catastrophic calamities. Sometimes there is hope for the heart in a little bowl of Cheerios. Whether or not we actually see this opportunity, or use it in some sort of positive fashion, is a choice. What motivates mending lives ravaged by the death of a child that died too soon? Swim through the grief or sink into oblivion seems like the only choices of necessity as the mother of invention proclaims that no other options exist. Or it might be a little box of Cheerios that had never contained anything but a simple, round breakfast cereal.

Moments of time have drifted by the stationary heart as the relentless river of tears has decreased or maybe even ceased altogether. The persistent push of that heavy weight of an imaginary knee on the chest that prevented a full breath still happens but not as often. The anniversary dates are obvious, but experience has taught that anticipation is sometimes worse than the actual day commemorating the event. The calendar moves from one day to another, returning again in a seamless, sad circle that often softens as we struggle to survive. The details that framed the death of a child may eventually surrender to a curious fuzzy blur of time and circumstance. We are healing as the woeful, debilitating waves of pain eventually may have more distance between them, allowing a breath or securing a deep sigh now and then.

Moms and Dads try to get ready for that first year of life without their precious child in familiar ways

that they utilized in the past for other notable normal events. Sometimes the best-laid plans just don't work. You are not going crazy as you arrange then rearrange, organize then reorganize the days of significance that occur throughout the year. To be lost in a familiar world is the rule, not the exception, for the agonizing bereaved parent. Some of the efforts work while many of them do not. The day that parenthood was first announced, the actual birth, or the date that life changed forever demand recognition and at times cannot be willed away, though the attempt to do so may be applauded. Experience helps parents adjust expectations for the special days. As the Mom or Dad moves further away from their saddest reality, they may then feel the tiny hopeful signs of a kind of profound healing or just getting a little better drifting over them, embracing a little peace. We don't get over it as we never get over 'it', but rather we go through it. We survive.

Then the unexpected occurs and the sighting of a little box of Cheerios, as innocent as your child, brings you to your knees with oh, so fond memories of happy times that are startling, visible and real, and gone. Cheerio moments that jump off a grocery shelf shouting memories of yesterday and stomps your heart with arrogant immunity reminding the sad soul there are no tomorrows the way we want, the way it used to be. First came your smile as the remembrance was fond and takes you to pretty thoughts, then in the same motion cruelly crushes the spirit with the inescapable thought of finality. My child is gone from here forever.

The Cheerios have such power to bring back a beautiful, now special fun memory eternally captured in a parents' mind and soul. How he loved this simple circular cereal. He formed the round bit of food in his mouth then giggled as he discovered he could breathe with his mouth shut if he held that little Cheerio between his tiny angelic lips. Everyday there was something new, but the Cheerio scene replayed itself as the 'Hey, Dad look at this' seemed cuter than the day before. A child and a parent were sharing fun. Whoever thought how priceless that moment could be? Whoever thought it would ever end? Whoever thought....



“Don’t choke on your food’ and the classic perfunctory ‘don’t play with your cereal’ uttered not as an order so much as responsible parental adult speak attached to an obvious grin comes to mind as my only comment. We did chuckle as my little guy urged me to try it. Surrendering to his request, I tried, inspiring his comment, ‘the Cheerio has a mustache hat’ he could barely get that comment out between laughs. Giggles all around.

Little kid fun just being what he was supposed to be, innocent, perfection. That memory will never eliminate the fact that he is not here, but today, at this moment, it softens the other not-so-good memories. To focus on the good little boy playing with his Cheerios is the memory of choice, and today it surpassed and suppressed all the others. Thank you, my little one, and please save some Cheerios for me.

Pat O’Donnell, Brian’s Dad, Bereaved mustached Dad



### 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](mailto:billyodee@yahoo.com).

## One

It was only 1 second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this *one*. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don’t remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being – I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity – for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this *one* decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that *one* moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that 1 second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that *one* moment be the only *one*.

Michele Mallory  
From TCF Database

## What helped you the most when you were newly bereaved?

*The summer of 2015 was when my life changed forever. My oldest child and only daughter died in a horrific car accident along with three of her children (my grandchildren). Honestly, I will tell you that it has taken several years, a multitude of grief books, hours with a therapist, hundreds of journal pages, and countless hours of talking to friends and family to get where I am today. It is hard to pinpoint any one thing that got me through the last 67 months. I would say it had to be a combination of the above that has brought me to this stage in my grief. Sometime during that first year, my sister suggested I look into The Compassionate Friends. I looked at the website, read a few articles, and even called the local group that met in my area. However, I did not attend any meetings due to the feeling that I just did not fit in (multiple loss is a beast in and of itself). I continued to read articles on the TCF website and came across information that led to the online private Facebook groups. I joined both the Loss of a Child and Loss of a Grandchild groups. It was here that I felt safe and found some kindred spirits that understood me. Specifically, I connected with the moderator of the Loss of a Grandchild group. From there, I went on to volunteer as a moderator for that group and after a few years became a moderator for another group, Daughterless Mothers. Helping others through these two groups has brought me where I am today. Still grieving, but not alone.*

Mary Fisk, Stephanie's Mom and Taylor, P.J., and Jesse's Grandmother

We Need Not Walk Alone

### Letting Go

Recently I received an award for volunteering in the community. I was honored to receive it. Some of the people in my life mentioned that it looked like I had "let go" of the pain of losing my child. "Let go?" Of course, they don't understand.

But when the award was mentioned at our monthly Compassionate Friends meeting, a bereaved mother made an interesting observation that touched my heart and reminded me why I need this special group to keep me centered and balanced.

"I remember that article you read to us last Mother's Day....the one your son wrote about how proud he was of you," she said. "Wouldn't it be great to put that article in our memory book with the newspaper article about your award? He was right about you. He was proud of you."

What a great idea! What a wonderful way to bring my son into my life even though he is no longer on this plane. That's what Compassionate Friends do.....they help to bring our children into our lives even though our children are no longer alive. For a few hours each month, our children return to us. We're proud parents who can share our children's stories and keep our children in our lives.....without explaining why we won't be "letting go."

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

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

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**① OUR LOCAL WEB SITE**

Visit the San Diego Chapter homepage:

[www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)

Email: [leaders@sdtcf.org](mailto: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](mailto:info@SOSLsd.org)

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

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

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

**① INFORMATION ON THE NET**

Visit the TCF national homepage:  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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](mailto:caricat83@hotmail.com)

Elene Bratton  
[jamiesjoy@simplynet.com](mailto:jamiesjoy@simplynet.com)  
[www.jamiesjoy.org](http://www.jamiesjoy.org)

Tami Carter [haley1@san.rr.com](mailto: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 May / June 2021

**Issue of The Compassionate Friend is**

**April 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

March / April 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.