



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



September /
 October
 2017

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Next Meeting

Wednesday
 September 6th

Wednesday
 October 4th

These pages Dedicated with Love to:



Cynthia Lee Kessler



Kristina Michelle Bennett

♥ **Always In Our Hearts** ♥



Alexander Nicholas Model

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 El Cajon, CA 92019
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 Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
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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.

- ♥ Gordon R. Collins — In Loving Memory of his daughter Cynthia Lee.
- ♥ Thelma & Gerald Model — In Loving Memory of their grandson Alexander.
- ♥ Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang — In Loving Memory of their daughter Kristina. It has been seventeen years since that fatal day when your life was cut short. There is never a day you are not in our hearts and minds, remembering all that you were to us. Happy Birthday dear daughter. We love you forever. Love, Mom and Dad



Ruth & David Keyser, Kathy Shott; Attendees of the July National conference, displaying the Banner which accompanied them. Banner created by David.

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

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.



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**Our Children – Loved, Missed and Remembered
September & October**

We remember the families of:



Birthdays

Ronald Paul Jones, born 9-1
Creta (CJ) Smith, born 9-4
Dan Gerald Bruce, born 9-6
Klay Budz, born 9-7
Megan Ashley Landis, born 9-8
Lindsey Faye Whelchel, born 9-8
Blake Christopher Whelchel, born 9-10
George Brers IV, born 9-13
Guy Charles Green, born 9-14
Duane Charles Alley, born 9-16
Brian Michael Bennett, born 9-19
Vinny Palermo, born 9-21
Aubrey Apodaca, born 9-24
Brent Foster Whelchel, born 9-24
Lucas Daniel Giaconelli, born 9-30
Michelle Weihe, born 10-1
Kristina Michelle Bennett, born 10-07
Mark Metz, born 10-7
Joshua Michael Jensen, born 10-10
Brian James Gillis, born 10-11
Kathleen Bohanon, born 10-12
Jennifer Ann Donnell, born 10-12
Nathaniel Poteat, born 10-12
Skip Anaya-Summers, born 10-16
Renee Eleonor Dawson, born 10-17
Jennifer Ann Greenwald, born 10-24
Pamela Broderick, born 10-24
David Sullivan, born 10-25
Brad Huska, , born 10-26
Michael Dylkiewicz, , born 10-28
Leonard Valadez, born 10-31

Anniversaries

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



Ruth & David Keyser relaxing at the July National Conference.



Here including Kathy Shott

Walking anyone?

Photos courtesy of the Keyser's



Florida offers more than oranges!



The Compassionate Friends
San Diego, CA Chapter
Supporting families after a child dies.

Annual Memorial Balloon Release Picnic

Sunday, September 24, 2017

11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Lunch 12:00 Noon, Balloon Release 1:00 PM



Admiral Baker Field

2400 Admiral Baker Rd.

San Diego, CA 92120

Bring your family for a day of memories and friendship
Please bring your child's favorite side dish to share
The Compassionate Friends will provide the meat dish and drinks
No Pets Please



Directions: I-15 to Friars Road. Head East for about one mile

Make a left turn onto Santo Road

Take immediate right onto Admiral Baker Road

Go downhill into the parking lot

Inside These Walls: TCF National Conference (Arlington/Washington, D.C. 2001)

Outside my window,
the rush of life goes on.
Airplanes glide effortlessly on the runway,
Pyrotechnic stars of red, white and blue
blaze over the Potomac.
The Capitol dome beams on the horizon.
Yes, outside my window
life roars on for those untouched,
unaware of the sadness looming
inside these walls.

Inside these walls,
where parents at times catatonically walk,
their lives tainted by the sting of death.
Mothers, hollow eyes etched with sorrow.
Fathers, whose shoulders' quake
attempting to stifle their choking sobs.
Brothers and sisters, looking for answers to their
emptiness.
Grandparents, questioning the broken chain,
"Why them and not me?"

Yet..inside these walls,
lies a protective and supportive cocoon,
part of "The Club" we'd prayed never to belong,
where others share our grief and loss,
for they also have been there.
They say, "I know how you feel" and truly do.
Always ready with a reassuring hug
given by a stranger,
yet not a stranger,
for they too have walked in our shoes.

Inside these walls, our children are remembered
as paramount in our lives, as they are and should
be.
And I will return to these walls
year after year,
taking my precious child with me,
as I reach out to those,
here for the first time,
inside these walls...

The above were my observations looking
out my hotel window toward Washington,
D.C. while attending the TCF National Conference
in Arlington on the 4th of July, 2001. Little did I
know that in barely over two months the

"pyrotechnics" I spoke of would not be the fireworks
I observed that rainy 4th of July evening, but the
fire in the sky after a hijacked plane slammed into
the Pentagon. What was written innocently back
then took on new meaning after September 11th;
that fateful day thousands around the country
would also become members of "The Club" as well.

I have attended the past three National
Conferences, first in Portland, then Chicago,
and the above last summer. I have met many
bereaved parents from all around the country, who,
like I, have experienced some incredible
"happenings" while there. For example, in Portland,
in the Reflecting Room, a quiet place away from the
crowds, parents can spend time to peacefully
reflect on their child. In this room, a recorded voice
continually spoke the names of the children whose
parents were present at the conference. There
were approximately 900 names said repeatedly
over that weekend. Somewhere near the end of the
first day, I decided to stop there, feeling a need for
quiet time. Just as I entered the room, the very first
name I heard spoken was "Nina Westmoreland"! I
remember gasping...I just couldn't believe that at
that exact moment, when I decided to walk into that
room, of the 900 names being read, my daughter's
name was said! After I regained my composure, I
thought about what had just happened. Previously,
I had questioned whether I should have made that
trip at all. After all, it was the first trip I had taken
since Nina died and I felt apprehensive (it was on
that trip that my Nina died) and even guilty about it.
But because of what had just happened, I felt that
she was making her presence known to me; to tell
me that even though I could not see her, she was
very much with me in spirit and glad that I had
made the trip to the TCF National Conference that
year.

Another happening in Portland was told to
me by a lady from New York, who has become a
friend. She and her husband were on a plane
seated next to a small baby who was fussing. She
didn't really like plane rides as it was and also
questioned why she had chosen to come all this
way. She even thought about going right back
home. The mother of the child asked my friend if
she would mind holding her baby for a minute while
she went to the restroom. Not wanting to be rude,
she agreed. The baby smiled up at her. She then
asked her mother what the baby's name was, to
which the mother replied, "Julia." My friend could
not believe her ears...Julia was also the name of
her daughter who died! From that moment, she felt
that her own daughter, Julia, was telling her she

was doing exactly what she should be and brought a sense of peace to the rest of the trip.

I would urge anyone who is able to attend one of the National or Regional TCF Conferences. Even though you may not experience a “happening” as those mentioned above, you will derive much benefit from the many workshops, the inspirational speakers, and, more than anything, being around others who “have walked in our shoes.” It is always difficult for me to leave that protective cocoon. There, I didn’t have to explain my tears. I could speak of my daughter and others would listen. I felt safe; I felt understood. I promise to keep you apprised of upcoming conferences so that maybe someday you too might experience the peace and acceptance of being “inside these walls.”

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Gretchen); in years to come we will remember her with love and wonderful memories; she will never be forgotten.

But it is not the same. I know this because I have lost a child. Only one who has walked this road can know that no other loss, no matter how profound, can compare with the death of a child. If I had not had this experience, I, too, might be tempted to say “I know how you feel—my dog died.”

We must endeavor to understand that these words are spoken from the heart—from someone whose pain is intense and who knows no better point of reference. And we must pray that those who speak those words will never know...

My pain is assuaged somewhat by my firm belief that Gretchen is now in the loving care of my beloved Robert, who will enjoy and love her as we did. She is in good hands. I know they are having a wonderful time.

Carole Ragland
TCF West Houston Chapter, TX
In Memory of my son, Robert

My Dog Died

“I know how you feel—my dog died.”

These words can bring murderous rage to the hearts of bereaved parents when spoken by well-meaning, but errant friends. I never actually had this experience, but several of my friends did and the result was always the same—a compelling desire to strangle the person with one’s bare hands.

On the morning of December 21, my husband and I said a tearful final goodbye to Gretchen, our beautiful Doberman, who had been a constant companion, loving friend, protector, and source of great joy for nearly eight years. She was, in a word, magnificent.

The pain and feelings of sadness are tremendous. As I look around at the empty bed, the dish in the kitchen, the favorite toy, I am overwhelmed with an intense sense of loss and sorrow. Memories of happy times, daily rituals and the unconditional love that only a pet can give assail from all directions. Tears flow uncontrollably. I really hurt.

No, it can’t compare with the loss of my son. This pain will pass before long; we will get another dog (although there can never be another

Don’t forget our: Annual Holiday Program And Candle Lighting Ceremony

The Annual Worldwide event on
December 10, 2017

Our children’s photos will be shared in a video presentation. If your child’s picture is not on our picture board and you wish it to be in the video presentation, please try to have it available by the November TCF meeting. Or e-mail picture to: Norval Lyon 2zimba2@gmail.com or send by regular mail to: **SDTCF, 11582 Fury Ln. #118, El Cajon, CA. 92019.** Please, no later than November 15.

My Secret

Within days of my son's tragic death helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet, and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to do with his clothes, his video tapes—even his toothbrush—made my head swim.

Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends and family, and to "Goodwill," I kept the "special" things for myself—school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the footlocker with my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine.

Then I would take the unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant, and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just moment that he wasn't really so far away. "What a perverse thing to do!" I thought. I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing—they would surely think I'd gone off the deep end. So I never told anyone about this strange behavior—and the odd comfort it gave to me.

Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose son had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all."

Since this experience I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, or the tenderness of a kiss.

There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child and there is comfort to be found in them.

Carole Ragland
TCF Houston-West Chapter, TX

My First Five Years as an Only Child

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career. Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass. In these past five years, I have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.

Kristin Steiner
TCF Staten Island, NY
In Memory of my brother, George

Communicating with My Child

Eighteen months ago, I dedicated a bench to Philip. It's in a space Philip would like, out in the natural world, with abundant wildlife and wonderful views across hills and sea.

I go there often to spend time alone with my beloved son. I sit on the bench, look at the vistas, and remember our family as it used to be. I talk to Philip. I make him promises; I ask for his guidance. I muse on what his life would be like now. I tell him how deeply I love him, how missing him gets harder with each passing year. I tell him about his brothers, about his sister-in-law and his little nephew, both of whom he never met. I tell him how important he is to us. I tell him that we will never forget him, that though our lives are five years past his death, we still think of him all the time and want him with us. I tell him that I am having a terribly hard time accepting that he has died, and that I am doing the best I can.

I have no idea if I am communicating with a Philip who has survived death or with myself, who hopes he has. Sometimes I think I feel an impatient nudge, a sort of, "Get on with it, Mom, it's not what you think" message. Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compassionate understanding. Sometimes I don't feel any response at all.

I am grateful for these private times with my child. Whether he lives on in some other sphere—and how I hope he does!—or whether he resides only in our deepest hearts, there is an honoring of him in these conversations, a recognition of his existence and its importance, that matters very much to me.

I believe that we all need to find our individual ways of keeping the channels to our children open. My conversations with Philip may seem odd to some people, but they are right for me. I encourage you to honor your own private ways of communicating with your beautiful child, whatever they are. If you are searching for the channel that will work for you, consider what some other bereaved parents have found helpful: poetry, painting, journal writing, hiking in the natural world, daydreaming, music, meditation, lighting candles, wearing a deceased child's clothing, sitting in his/her room, playing a sport she/he loved, among many, many others. May the time spent in private dialogue with your child bring you peace-filled moments, a renewed

sense of connection, and strength to continue the difficult journey we are all on.

Kitty Reeve

TCF Marin County and San Francisco Chapters,
CA

In Memory of my son, Philip

But Your Son WANTED to Die – Mine Didn't

I cringed as once again I heard this remark, repeated so often since Warren took his life 3½ years ago. Even now, when I thought I had steered myself to the harsh meaning of the words, they still left me hurt and demolished. Is it all that simple? Could anyone 'feeling good' just choose to die like that . . . if they knew the pain and suffering that then engulfs their surviving family?

How can I explain why he died when I do not really know myself? How can I make anyone understand his emotional pain, increasingly obvious to us, so skillfully masked from others? Our son was so handsome, intelligent and sensitive. It is still incredible that he shot himself one morning after returning from the hospital 'cured' of his terrible depression. Our beautiful first-born baby grew into a perfect son, but somewhere, somehow, our masterpiece had a flaw as cruel and as tenacious as any disease that strikes any other young person.

So, until research proves otherwise, we have to go along with the words of Professor Erwin Ringel that "SUICIDE CANNOT REALLY BE CHOSEN – since an intense and overwhelming inner compulsion renders any free choice null and void."

Our loss is as great as any other parent. We grieve just as deeply. Remember this and do not judge, we beg. We, and all the Survivors of Suicide suffer too much already from a horrendous tragedy that can, and does, happen to anyone.

Our Kids Loved Us – And We Love Them!

Maureen Hargreaves

TCF Melbourne, Australia

In Memory of my son, Warren

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FRIENDS
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① OUR LOCAL WEB SITE

Visit the San Diego Chapter homepage:

www.sdtcf.org

Email: leaders@sdtcf.org

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

TCF Regional Coordinator

① OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES

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

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

Bereaved Parents of the USA
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

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

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

① INFORMATION ON THE NET

Visit the TCF national homepage:
www.compassionatefriends.org

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

Chat Room schedule:

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

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TCF INFORMATION PACKAGE

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

Be a compassionate friend

Our Lost Children's Photos for Newsletter

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

WE WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS



Deadline for submission to the
November / December 2017

Issue of
The Compassionate Friend is

October 15, 2017

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

11582 Fury Lane #118, El Cajon, CA 92019

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September / October 2017

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:

The Compassionate Friends, San Diego Chapter, 11582 Fury Ln. #118. El Cajon, CA. 92019

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.