

August, 2014



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

PIKES PEAK CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Upcoming Events

August 21st - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

September 18th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

Pikes Peak Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Leader - Acting
LARAIN ASARO-ANDERSON
Son, Michael Edward Anderson

MAILINGS & DATABASE
JANE & STEVE GABRIEL
Son, Jonathan Steven Gabriel

SECRETARY
LEONIE CRAMER
Son, Julian Anthony King

TREASURER
YVETTE THOMPSON
Son, Ryan Barry Thompson

NEWSLETTER EDITOR & EMAILINGS
STEWART LEVETT
Son, Aaron Paul Levett

SC MEMBER/FACILITATOR
BOB THOMPSON
Son, Ryan Barry Thompson

SC MEMBER/FACILITATOR
CHAEA CHRISTIANSON
Son, Damon Vincent Christianson

SC MEMBER/FACILITATOR
LETA LEVETT
Son, Aaron Paul Levett

Welcome

Our support group meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Meetings are open to the parents, grandparents and older siblings of your loved one. We meet at the **First Baptist Church** downtown at 317 E. Kiowa. We understand your pain; won't you let us help you through your grief?

Our next meeting will be on August 21, 2014.

The death of your child is probably the most traumatic, life-changing event that you will ever experience. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of parents who have also lost a child to death. Each of us has experienced the deep, searing pain that you are feeling now. Each of us has turned to other parents who were farther into their grief journey for guidance, support and understanding. This is done through our monthly meetings, our newsletter, our website, our Telephone Friend program, our library and our e-mail program. Each month parents find our meeting to be a safe place where they can talk about their pain and problems with others who are uniquely qualified to understand; bereaved parents offer gentle suggestions or often simply listen. We invite you to bring a friend to your first few meetings until you feel a level of comfort with the group. Do not be surprised if we talk about the happy times with our children, the wonderful memories and the various methods we have created to keep our children close to us. It is here that many bereaved parents find hope as those who are more seasoned in their grief shine the light of experience to help illuminate each grief path. We have no dues. We are self-sustaining through donations and the generosity of so many in our community.

You Need Not Walk Alone.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Any of these members may be contacted to talk to you about your loss:

CHAPTER LEADER - ACTING

LARAIN ASARO-ANDERSON * 351-7653
Mom of Michael E. Anderson

TODDLER / YOUNG CHILD LOSS

BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON * 573-2743

ADULT CHILD / SUDDEN DEATH

CHAEA CHRISTIANSON * 687-6688

SKATEBOARD / AUTO ACCIDENT

RAYE WILSON (303) 814-9478

DRUG / ALCOHOL LOSS

STEWART & LETA LEVETT * 531-5488

LEUKEMIA

JANE & STEVE GABRIEL * 282-1924

SUICIDE

LARITA ARCHIBALD 596-2575

Please feel free to contact any of these Steering Committee members if you can not reach our Chapter Leader. *

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Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Juana Amaya
in loving memory of her son
OMAR AMAYA
8/12/1992 ~ 11/21/2013



What to Expect at a Meeting

Never been to a Compassionate Friends Meeting? Wonder what they do at the meetings? Is it sad? These are all questions many of us have had. It's not easy taking a step to join a meeting. In fact, it can be scary not knowing anyone or what to expect.

Our meetings are first and foremost meant to be a safe place. They are a place where you can comfortably talk about your loved one without judgment. We welcome hearing the details of your favorite remembered stories. We never tire of hearing their name.

We wear name tags that first identify us as someone's Mom, Dad, Brother, Sister, or Grandparent. Some of us have even decorated our name tags with hearts and butterflies or pictures of our child.

Many have a photo button. We all want to know what your child, grandchild, or brother/sister looked like. We have a short, voluntary sharing session, followed by an activity or a speaker. You may see a few tears but you'll also likely hear laughter.

We'd love to have you join us for a meeting sometime soon!

For questions, call any of our telephone friends listed on the front page or our Chapter Leader, Laraine at 719-351-7653.



How I Became A Zombie

by Daphne Floran, sister of Axel, Sibling Representative
TCF Inner Loop Chapter, Houston, TX

Zombie: an animated corpse.

Synonyms: lifeless, machine-like, inanimate, numb, asleep, senseless, anesthetized, apathetic, lethargic, insensible.

September 13, 2003 is the day I became a "zombie" for a short period of time. I have seen lately a fascination with zombie movies such as *World War Z* and *The Walking Dead* TV series. As much as I enjoyed suspense and Horror movies, watching it is always a reminder that I was once among the zombies at one point in my life.

Please let me explain. No, I was not doing what zombies traditionally do in the movies. Regardless, I was not far away from the classification of an animated corpse during my grieving journey. The first months after my brother Axel died, I was completely numb. In spite of this, I was still functional doing whatever I was supposed to do, but my mind was just not there. For example, I would go to the supermarket, get my groceries, pay for them, even smile at the cashier, but then I would leave all my grocery bags and go to my car only to go back to the supermarket embarrassed to pick up what I left. Sometimes, I was lucky and a Good Samaritan would run after me to deliver the forgotten items.

Having said that, the truth was that I was trying to act normally, but I could barely breathe. I felt a pressure on my chest, developed allergies, I was lightheaded and my stomach was upset most of the time. I felt muscular pain all over my body, and my thoughts were scrambled. I barely slept, nor could I make myself eat properly. While everybody was really friendly and offered condolences, flowers and comfort at the time, nothing really helped.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Remembering Our Children On Their Birthdays

| Child's Name | Date of Birth | Compassionate Friend |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Eric Johnson | Aug 1 | Gary Johnson |
| Genevieve Sucharski | Aug 2 | Mark & Karen Sucharski |
| Veronika Olivia Baca | Aug 2 | Sharon Baca |
| Emma Renee Younger | Aug 2 | Adam & Mindy Younger |
| Eugene Harris, Jr. | Aug 2 | Gene Harris, Stacey Burciago, Tonia Paguyo |
| Aaron Paul Levett | Aug 2 | Stewart & Leta Levett |
| Nicholas Clare Cousineau | Aug 3 | George & Chris Cousineau |
| James Russell Kempa | Aug 4 | Gayle Kempa |
| Matthew John McCallister | Aug 4 | Steve & Carol McCallister |
| Rebekah Cano Moore | Aug 6 | Janis Cano |
| Graham Stingley | Aug 7 | Mary Winter-Stingley |
| Jessica Stockwell | Aug 7 | Mark & Sally Stockwell |
| Stella Elliott | Aug 8 | Donna Elliott |
| Nicholas Ryan Nelson | Aug 10 | Marley Nelson Rhoades |
| Clayton Neal Brehm | Aug 10 | Ramona Atkinson |
| Kimberly Denise Patterson | Aug 11 | Sigrid Patterson |
| Lisa Marie O'Briant | Aug 11 | Gary & Mary O'Briant |
| Omar Amaya | Aug 12 | Oscar & Juana Amaya |
| Michael Williams, Jr. | Aug 13 | Carmen Randall |
| Christopher Calegar | Aug 15 | Kevin & Linda Calegar |
| Ayla Amaya Sanchez | Aug 15 | Jennifer Sanchez |
| Gina Marie Geffre | Aug 16 | Joann Jahraus |
| Jackson Ahrold | Aug 16 | Gretchen Blenkarn, Doug & Tina Blenkarn |
| Zack Orr | Aug 16 | Dave & Sharon Orr |
| Adam Czyz | Aug 17 | Robyn Czyz |
| Suzanne Bethany Thomas | Aug 20 | Arnie & Mary Thomas |
| Susanna Jeanette Scruggs | Aug 21 | Patricia Beard |
| James Wiezorek | Aug 21 | Mary Beringer |
| Raul Garcia | Aug 21 | Rena Gonzalez |
| Mia Allyson Gardiner | Aug 22 | Peri Gardiner |
| Abigail Ruth Smelser | Aug 23 | Robin Myers |
| Lance Alan Rigby | Aug 25 | Deborah Rigby |
| Patrick Casey Hildebrand | Aug 26 | Dr. Jan & Judi Hildebrand |
| Sheldon Pasca | Aug 26 | Norma Watkins |
| Sayge Frisco | Aug 26 | Renai Frisco |
| Mary Hope Burton | Aug 27 | Jim & Betty Burton |
| Andrew Paul Whiteman | Aug 27 | Lyle Whiteman |
| Kevin Hardman | Aug 28 | Dianne McLaughlin |
| Matthew Medina | Aug 29 | Vicki Schwindt |
| Nolan Edward Stites | Aug 31 | Richard & Marilyn Stites |



Chaela Christianson
in loving memory of her son
Damon Vincent Christianson
5/30/1977 ~ 7/3/2010



Chaplain
Gene Steinkirchner



Remembering Our Children On Their Anniversaries

| Child's Name | Age | Date of Death | Compassionate Friend |
|--------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Tyrone Elliott Bautista | 19 years | Aug 1 | Rosemary Devney |
| Jason Bradford Pfeif | 18 years | Aug 1 | Chris & Brad Pfeif |
| Chelsey Ann Kear | 15 years | Aug 5 | Tami Kear |
| Kevin Hardman | 21 years | Aug 6 | Dianne McLaughlin |
| Sam Skaggs | 10 years | Aug 7 | Jennifer Skaggs |
| Keith Andrew Barrett | 24 years | Aug 9 | Ree Barrett |
| Brent Eads | 20 years | Aug 12 | Lucy Butcher |
| Laura Dean | 30 years | Aug 16 | Barbara Dean |
| Andrew Paul Weaver | 20 years | Aug 17 | Valerie Lightbody |
| Nikolas Chunn | 5 years | Aug 18 | Monica Chunn |
| Derrick Shane Moore | 11 years | Aug 20 | Ray & Deanna Moore |
| Nathaniel Hughes | 18 years | Aug 21 | Jim Hughes |
| Scott Martinson | 6 years | Aug 21 | JoAnn Martinson |
| Michael Ramirez | 59 years | Aug 22 | Jennie Ramirez |
| Clayton Champion | 29 years | Aug 22 | Jessie & Phyllis Roark |
| Jose N. Camacho | 9 years | Aug 24 | William & Veronica Camacho |
| Addie Marie Vande Stouwe | 23 years | Aug 25 | Shawn Roberson |
| Sayge Frisco | 1 day | Aug 26 | Renai Frisco |
| Kimberly Elizabeth Pratt | 17 years | Aug 27 | Pam Bilberry |
| Jake Holm | 19 years | Aug 27 | Eric & Kalyne Holm |
| Nolan Edward Stites | 19 years | Aug 29 | Richard & Marilyn Stites |

How I Became A Zombie - Continued

I did not want to bother anyone, including my parents, so I did some research to deal with the "zombie" situation.

During my research, I found Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross who describes the process of grieving in five stages: Shock (denial), Anger, Bargaining, depression and acceptance.

I found some comfort on learning that I was just grieving and essentially in shock. I was not a "zombie," I was just in denial. At the same time, I understood that my grief was not going away any time soon. While Dr. Kübler-Ross's model of the grief process was useful to understand my journey, it did not quite describe what I was experiencing at the time. I started looking for books written by surviving siblings such as "Surviving The Death Of A Sibling" by T. j. Wray and "The Empty Room" by Elizabeth De Vita-Raeburn. Reading about other siblings' experiences helped me to understand how to cope with my own grief. I found useful their stories and their advice on how to survive the "zombie apocalypse" and become human again.

Stay tuned; this story is to be continued.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3656

Oak Brook, IL 60522

630-990-0010 or toll free 877-969-0010



EMAIL: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

WEBSITES:

Pikes Peak - www.TCFPikesPeakChapter.org

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/TCFPikesPeak>

National - www.compassionatefriends.org

Online Support

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship.

The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. Please check the schedule for dates and times of the sessions.

Note: Times posted on the schedule are based upon Eastern Time.

www.compassionatefriends.org

Love Gift Donations

A "Love Gift" is a wonderful way to remember your child, while also helping our TCF chapter "reach out" to bereaved families. There is no charge to attend meetings, use the library, or receive the newsletter. We depend solely upon these gifts, monetary or gifts-in-kind, to support our chapter. You may choose to donate a tax deductible "Love Gift" at any time. Let us be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

Our chapter exists entirely through your donations which are tax deductible. A Love Gift is money donated to the chapter in memory of your child who has died. If you feel a Love Gift is an appropriate way to honor the memory of your child, please consider a donation, large or small. Please fill out the form located in this newsletter and mail it to the address listed. All pictures submitted will be returned unless you specify for us to keep them and place them on our Child Remembered board displayed at monthly meetings.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

\$50 or more - Newsletter Sponsor. May include a full page for printing. Please remember to send your page "Copy Ready" as you would like to see it printed in the newsletter.

\$0 to \$50 - A picture, if available, and dedication to be listed in the newsletter. Love Gift donations should be sent directly to our treasurer, Yvette Thompson whose address is listed on the Love Gift Donation Form. *Wouldn't you like to make a dedication to your child and help our chapter?*

⇒ **Send Love Gifts to Yvette Thompson, 5012 Rocking R Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80915** ⇒

Thank you for contributing and supporting the work of our local chapter!

LOVE GIFT DONATION



Costs are rising. We need your Love Gift to support our chapter & newsletter! If you can, please help.

I would like to make a donation ☐ in Memory of

☐ a Chapter Gift

In loving memory of: _____

Love Gift Donation: \$ _____ Please make check payable to: The Compassionate Friends

Cut and mail this form with your Love Gift to: Yvette Thompson – 5012 Rocking R Dr. – Colorado Springs, CO 80915

Contributor Name & Address: _____

Relationship: ☐ Son ☐ Daughter ☐ Grandson ☐ Granddaughter ☐ Friend ☐ Other

Photo Enclosed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Photo To Be Returned: ☐ Yes ☐ No



Support Resources

TCF Online Chat Groups:

www.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online_Support.aspx

- For questions, please contact Diana Jorden, 925-432-3854, who moderates the general grief and suicide loss rooms on Friday nights and Sunday. TCF online offers several specialized chat rooms, all moderated by moms who have been in chat for at least 2 years or more. We offer a sibling-only chat, loss under 1 year, loss over 2 years, loss of only child, suicide survivor, infant/pregnancy loss, and every night (and Monday mornings) there is a general loss room open to parents, step and grand, and siblings.
- You can sign up for the online TCF National newsletter at www.compassionatefriends.org
- You can reach our TCF National Facebook page through the link on the same home page of our national website. You will be asked to join Facebook if you are not already a member, and we hope you'll find our Facebook page as interesting as do the more than 11,000 fans who have already found us!



The Gate to Tomorrow

There is a gate that each of us has unknowingly passed through. This gate opens only one way.....once we have passed through this gate we cannot return to the other side. Each of us stepped through the gate at a different time and in a different way. This gate opens to the world of parents whose children have died; it is their gate to every tomorrow.

There is no other place that compares with life in this world beyond the gate; there is no sorrow like the sorrow inside the gate. The numbing pain and perpetual agony we experience when first stepping through this gate are so overwhelming that we often don't immediately realize that there will be no return. But we will never return to life before the gate.

The new world inside the gate is populated with friends who are strangers and strangers who are friends.

Our perspective on life has changed forever. Few of our friends from life before the gate will linger with us now; these people are now the strangers. Our pain is all encompassing; they have lives to live, things to do, plans to make, happiness to capture. We are no longer part of their picture. Rare is the friend who stands by us inside the gate.....stands by us until one of us dies and leaves the world inside the gate.

The strangers who are now friends live inside the gate with us. Some have just come through the gate; others have been here a long, long time. But these strangers who are now friends share our experience; they understand our need to talk about our children, each life and each death. They applaud our tiny advances toward acceptance and serenity and peace. Although we can never go back to life before the gate, we now have our compassionate friends.....once strangers but now kindred souls who share our lives and our world.

Life will not be the same again, yet life can be good again. Inside the gate we will each find ourselves with the help of our compassionate friends. They listen carefully to stories about our child. They know our child's name better than they know our name. And that's how we want it to be....remember our children. Remember with us.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX



HEALING WORDS

Sorrow, Anger and Guilt

by Paula Grossman, mother of Mitch, TCF Inner Loop Chapter, Houston, TX

As I pass the three-year anniversary of Mitch's death, I find that I am without rhymes - without words. I haven't been thinking of any songs or rhymes for a couple of months now. What more could I possibly write that would convey the grief I've already expressed? As I write this now, all I can think is, "I can't believe he has been gone for three years." The finality of his life hits me like a wet sponge in the face every day. He should have graduated from college this summer. He should have gone to New Orleans with us for the family reunions. He should be starting his life as "an adult."

This has been a very difficult anniversary. As I hear about Mitch's friends' developing lives, an overwhelming sadness for my baby's lost life envelopes me. I wonder what path he might have chosen for his work, and I think of all the adventures of life that will never be experienced. I remember a picture he had taken on the top of a mountain when he was in Israel; arms outstretched, his whole life in front of him- King of the World! He was "cheated" out of a full life. I was cheated out of the joy of watching him lead a full life.

As you can see, I can't quite get over the "anger" stage of my grief process. Yes, I do get to other stages, but I always revert to the anger stage. Anger and Guilt. Guilt is embedded in my DNA. I'm the mother. I should have known he was in trouble and making poor decisions. I am guilty of not stopping this horrific tragedy. I actually wrote a poem about guilt a long time ago that I haven't shared because nobody who has read it has "liked" it. Here it is:

I Didn't Do My Job

I didn't do my job.
The most important thing a mother can do
Protect her children and keep them safe
I didn't do this for you.
The guilt I feel for failing this duty
Is almost more than I can bear.
I wanted you to always be safe
And for you to always take care.
I didn't keep you safe that night
You were out there on your own.
I wish I could have been there for you.
If only I had known.
You went out without a care in the world.
You were young and had no fear.
And because I didn't do my job,
You are no longer here.

Those were an awful lot of words for someone who is "without words," huh? And rhymes, to boot! Now that y'all have allowed me to vent, I will put away the sorrow, anger and guilt and go out and face the world, smiling mask in place. Thank you all for allowing me to take my mask off with you, because sometimes, I just don't want to wear it!



THOUGHTFUL POEMS

NOT A GOODBYE

I sit here alone thinking of you
And wondering why we do what we do.
Life is so fragile, like delicate glass.
It flies by in an instant, and then it is past.
I ponder and wish and hope it's not so.
Then I look up and think, why did you go?
My heart is so heavy; it's too much to bear.
I hang my head low in an effort at prayer.
I ask Him to help me be strong and to fight
That feeling that comes to me late in the night.
I live through the day with the next not yet here,
Wishing and wanting your presence be near.
Please give me a sign that you're not far away,
A whisper, a touch, a kiss while I pray.
On the wings of an angel I hope you do fly.
Remember, my son, this is not a goodbye.
You will always be with me from morning till nigh.

Michele A. Cerrigione,
Ryan's Mom
Northeastern CT TCF Chapter

DON'T STEAL MY GRIEF

By Faye McCord, TCF / Jackson, MS

Don't try to make me feel better,
By quipping your cute jokes.
Don't try to rob me of my pain,
When I need it as my cloak.
I know you probably think,
You're doing me a favor,
But what you don't understand,
Is that my sadness is my savior.
Don't try to steal my right,
To express my grief in my own way.
You see, I lost my child,
And grief is the price that I must pay.
I need to feel the hurt and pain,
As it beats inside my chest.
Don't try to steal my grief,
When it's the only feeling I have left.

YOU WERE ON MY MIND . . .

When I woke up this morning... You were on my mind.
You were on my mind.
You with that genuine enthusiasm,
like a kid with his first bicycle.
You with the curiosity and excitement
that dads love to be there for.
There's so much of you still with me. Still with us!
It's not fair that we feel cheated
or that we won't share your ways anymore.
But in reality, after all the tears and inner feelings
of pain and sadness pass
We will have joy and great happiness because
we shared your days.
Your laughter.
You.
And when I wake up each morning
It will be OK that you were on my mind...
You are on my mind.
That's a special place for you to be,
because it will be forever.
Michael Tyler, TCF Lighthouse Chapter
Lewes, Delaware

First Encounter

~ by Sascha

When grief first enters our life,
it tends to invade us –
completely and relentlessly.
We are without comfort, we do not feel pleasure,
we find no joy.
We ache in mind and body.
We feel weak and numb.
in the deepest core of our being,
we are ready to accept
that we will never know happiness again.
What's more, we feel that this state
is entirely appropriate, natural and irreversible.
Nothing can convince us that,
given time,
we can learn to live again.
But we will.



The Compassionate Friends
Pikes Peak Chapter
PO Box 51345
Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1345

August 2014

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