



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
PIKES PEAK CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



August 2015

Annual Memorial Balloon Release

will be held at 7 pm in the **First Baptist Church** Parking Lot

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20th

Special reading, music and time to reflect,
Watching the balloons dance as they lift into the sky.

Refreshments will be served after the balloon release in our regular meeting room downstairs.
Please join us for Fellowship and to Celebrate The Children!





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

PIKES PEAK CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



August 2015

Upcoming Events

August 20th - Balloon Release - Friendship Gathering - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church
September 17th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

STEERING COMMITTEE

CHAPTER LEADER - ACTING
LARAINÉ 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/LIBRARIAN
CHAELE CHRISTIANSON
Son, Damon Vincent Christianson

SC MEMBER/WELCOME PACKETS
LETA LEVETT
Son, Aaron Paul Levett

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

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

CHAPTER LEADER - ACTING

LARAINÉ ASARO-ANDERSON * 351-7653

DRUG / ALCOHOL LOSS
STEWART & LETA LEVETT * 531-5488

TODDLER / YOUNG CHILD LOSS

BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON * 573-2743

LEUKEMIA
JANE & STEVE GABRIEL * 282-1924

ADULT CHILD / SUDDEN DEATH

CHAELE CHRISTIANSON * 687-6688

SUICIDE
LARITA ARCHIBALD 596-2575

SKATEBOARD / AUTO ACCIDENT
RAYE WILSON (303) 814-9478

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

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



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 July 16, 2015.

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.

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!



Chaplain

**Gene Steinkirchner
CSPD**



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



EDITOR'S NOTE: *Dick and his wife Marty Maxwell were former Chapter Leaders of the Pikes Peak Compassionate Friends Chapter.*

We recently passed the 28th anniversary of our six year-old daughter Cathleen's death. At times it seems as if it's been forever since we saw her, heard her, held her; and at other times it seems as if the horror and shock are as fresh as that day. She was a terrific kid and full of life. She couldn't wait for the next thing to come along. She filled our lives with joy and laughter and the mystery that the future of all children holds for their parents.

When we first went to a TCF meeting, a month after Cathy died, the thing that I remember feeling most acutely was disbelief and anger that I belonged in such a place with people whose children had died. Something had to be wrong with that reality. It also was disconcerting to see people several years removed from their child's death who were talking cheerfully before and after the meeting, and even laughing. I couldn't imagine that normal interactions and laughter could ever be possible again, yet there was the evidence right in front of me that at least for some people, that had happened.

Years of involvement with TCF and talking with dozens of other bereaved parents at all points along the grief journey confirmed the value of those of us who had moved forward letting those in the early stages see that survival is possible.

For what it's worth, here are some of the things we've learned in our nearly three decades as bereaved parents, a designation that I would give anything to have done without. These are personal thoughts, and I would hope that others would also offer theirs through the newsletter about how the journey has evolved for them.

There's nothing easy about it. It's hard to function at first and to think clearly. There seems to be a vast, dark, empty space ahead with nothing positive to look forward to. When the first weeks pass and the funeral is over and everyone who arrived from all points to offer support has returned to wherever they came from, you are left to realize that for nearly everyone else, life simply goes on. They're going to work or school, watching TV and going to the movies; listening to music without the fear of hearing something that will drag them back into a searing memory. For me it was jarring to realize that the world hadn't ended for anyone else. It continued to spin and other lives went on, and I would be expected to jump back aboard and hang on.

I don't think there was a magic moment of the sort you might see in movies or books when I had a sudden insight or AHA! moment when I told myself that I had to shake it off and go on...to heal (!?) I took small steps just to survive and deal with the mundane details of life and family. Gradually Cathy's death and the infinite number of "what ifs" began to dominate my thoughts a little less. I could sleep more and more nights without the internal video of what it must have looked like when the car hit her suddenly appearing in my dreams.

What was happening, I think, was not some sort of healing. I don't like or accept the word. As has been said before, I don't think you can heal from the loss of a child any more than someone "heals" after having a limb amputated. Scar tissue forms, but the wound remains. Losing Cathy was the worst thing that has ever happened to me. There's a hole in my life that will never be filled.

What was happening was that I was adjusting to a different life. The adjustment happens without much effort. Survival is a built in mechanism and the brain simply drags us in that direction unless we put up a fight.



Remembering Our Children On Their Birthdays

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Compassionate Friend
Eric Johnson	Aug 1	Gary Johnson
Veronika Olivia Baca	Aug 2	Sharon Baca
Genevieve Sucharski	Aug 2	Mark & Karen Sucharski
Aaron Paul Levett	Aug 2	Stewart & Leta Levett
Eugene Harris, Jr.	Aug 2	Tonia Paguyo, Gene Harris, Stacey Burciago
Emma Renee Younger	Aug 2	Adam & Mindy Younger
Nicholas Clare Cousineau	Aug 3	George & Chris Cousineau
Matthew John McCallister	Aug 4	Steve & Carol McCallister
James Russell Kempa	Aug 4	Gayle Kempa
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
Clayton Neal Brehm	Aug 10	Ramona Atkinson
Nicholas Ryan Nelson	Aug 10	Marley Nelson Rhoads
Kimberly Denise Patterson	Aug 11	Sigrid Patterson
Lisa Marie O'Briant	Aug 11	Gary & Mary O'Briant
Eric Paul Deming	Aug 12	Denise Deming
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
Jackson Ahrold	Aug 16	Gretchen Blenkarn
Zack Orr	Aug 16	Dave & Sharon Orr
Gina Marie Geffre	Aug 16	Joann Jahraus
Adam Czyz	Aug 17	Robyn Czyz
Suzanne Bethany Thomas	Aug 20	Arnie & Mary Thomas
Susanna Jeanette Scruggs	Aug 21	Patricia Beard
James Wieszorek	Aug 21	Mary Beringer
Raul Garcia	Aug 21	Rena Gonzalez
Mia Allyson Gardiner	Aug 22	Peri Gardiner
Abigail Ruth Smelser	Aug 23	Robin Myers
JT Tills	Aug 24	Sarah Gleeson
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
Andrew Paul Whiteman	Aug 27	Lyle Whiteman
Mary Hope Burton	Aug 27	Jim & Betty Burton
Kevin Hardman	Aug 28	Dianne McLaughlin
Ryan Pappas	Aug 29	Susan Pappas
Matthew Medina	Aug 29	Vicki Schwindt
Nolan Edward Stites	Aug 31	Richard & Marilyn Stites





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

Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind-at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home. One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you.

We've said it many times: **YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE.** Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change-it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

Elizabeth Estes - TCF Augusta, GA



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

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief or comfort you.

Remember we have all been there and even though circumstances may be different we really do understand. You are not alone

TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together. Each meeting the pain will not always be this bad it really does get better with wisdom. Show others that there is hope, from someone who has found it.



Continued from Page 3

It was as if a barrier had come down that separated me from what life was before Cathy died and the new reality that I now had to live in. I remember worrying that I might somehow forget her or disrespect her memory if I managed to go an hour or two without thinking about her, or even laughed or enjoyed something. But somewhere along the line I found that I was functioning normally enough that I appeared to fit in with the non-bereaved world. Still later on I realized that once again I actually did fit in.

Certain things will be said that will hurt or bring on anger. They're different for each of us. For me, among others: "God needed another little angel;" "at least you have other children;" "she's in a better place;" "God never gives us more than we can handle." Each of us can give plenty of examples.

Lower your expectations.

We will all hear things from both strangers and those close to us that will seem incredibly insensitive. It's useful to just expect that those things will be said. We've all probably thought at one time another two contradictory things: "how can he say such a thing?" and "no one who hasn't gone through this could possibly understand what it's like." They aren't (all) idiots. They just don't and can't have a clue. Some bereaved parents feel like trying to educate while others just choose to move on. There's no right or wrong choice.

We're part of a club that we never would have joined if we'd had the option, and one of the things members receive is the knowledge of how deep and profound and lasting this pain is. There's no other way to really gain that knowledge.

The pain of birthdays and the death anniversary never go away completely, but they do diminish and become manageable. Holidays and other events over the years also can't and shouldn't be ignored. We were acutely aware when Cathy's kindergarten classmates reached high school graduation. We felt her absence when her sisters reached milestones that Cathy never did, and we celebrated her younger sister's wedding both with joy and with a clear sense of who was missing.

Years ago life on this side of the wall that arose in 1987 between my two lives became fairly normal. I read, I play golf and the trombone, we go to movies and watch television. We travel and converse and laugh and enjoy the life that we have. It happened without my raising a fist in the air and declaring that it was time. Slowly and seemingly inevitably the new life became tolerable and then enjoyable. I don't hide the fact that I had a child who died, and in fact I welcome the opportunity to say her name and talk about her with new acquaintances.

If it makes someone uncomfortable, that's not my problem.

Cathy was and is an important part of my life and I miss her every day.

Dick Maxwell, Pikes Peak TCF





Who Was That Person?

An eight year retrospective...

Who was that person?

He looked like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person?

He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person?

He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person?

He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply "before" and "after."

Who was that person?

He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person?

He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person?

He used to measure his goals in terms of where he is going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often, "Why did he live?"

Who was that person?

He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself. Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.



HEALING WORDS

Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt—we feel regret.

Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN ~ Survivors of Suicide Group
Lovingly lifted from the Tyler, TX newsletter

Summertime and the livin' is easy... The lazy, hazy days of summer...

What does summertime bring to your mind? I think of the beach with the waves softly washing ashore. Walking along with the sand between my toes. Finding "treasure" along the shoreline. The sound of the ocean is calming. The sun is warm on my face. Life seems good.

And then I realize that being at the beach is forever changed for me. The memories of times past at the beach with my family come flooding back. Lots of good memories.

I stare at the ocean and think...the ocean is like my grief. Sometimes it seems wild and black with rage and almost impossible to manage. Riptides, currents and storm surges.

Sometimes it's like rough waves hitting the shore, continually pounding. And sometimes the waves are smaller and are enjoyable to play in. Then sometimes it is unusually calm and I can wade in and let the cool water surround me.

So now I go to the beach to remember. And let the sun warm my heart. Let the sound of the waves calm my soul. And get sand between my toes.

~Carol Tomaszewski, Annapolis Chapter, BP/USA

There is an old story that says when God created the world, He made everything small so that it could grow up with time. The grain into the wheat, the baby into the man, the bud into the flowers. Only sorrow was created full grown so that it might decrease with time and Man might be able to live with it.



THOUGHTFUL POEMS

Send Back The Noise

It's way too quiet here, since our son is not around.
I'd pay any price to again hear the sound of a basketball
rhythmically hitting the ground; or to answer the question,
"Dad, can you make this shot? Pass the ball, probably not!"

His bedroom looks more like a sporting goods store.
But those balls, gloves and cleats aren't used anymore.
Soccer, basketball, football or lacrosse;
just one more game, win, tie or a loss.

I'd buy one more ticket, regardless of the cost.
It's too quiet around here; things aren't the same,
I'd settle for a sound of a video game.

I know it's not possible to get back our boys;
so please God could you just send back the noise?

Peter Graves ~ TCF, San Diego, CA

An Accident

It was just an accident,
A senseless stupid accident.
But I need someone to blame,
Somewhere to direct my anger,
Somewhere where it won't
Bounce right back to me.
Someone to take all of my attention,
Someone to hold accountable,
Someone else to think about,
So I don't think about you dying,
About you being dead, when all it was
Was a senseless stupid accident
That took you from me.

~Deb Kostner, TCF, Oshkosh, WI~

MEMORIES

Memories are flowers growing in the heart.
Flowers picked on happy days
that time arranges in bouquets
to warm the heart in tender ways
by feelings they impart.
Memories are pictures taken through the years,
pictures of a smiling face, a happy time, a favorite place.
These pleasures, time cannot erase,
they are kept as souvenirs.

~Laura Rogers, TCF Northfield, NJ

Drifting.....

Drifting through life is how I feel
The death of my son,
doesn't seem real.
I catch myself laughing
the next moment I cry.
I try to quote reason,
but my mouth spills out "Why?"
I stare at his photo,
now spotted with tears.
More distance from him
is one of my fears.
My beautiful boy –
his life became shorter.
Why couldn't I go first? –
That's the right order!
So I'll continue to drift
along life's falling rain,
until the day when
our hearts meet again.

~ Kelly Boerger, TCF Cincinnati

Time heals a broken heart, but people heal a broken spirit.

TCF is not just about death, but about life. About ways to go on
living for the other people in our lives ...
spouses, children, relatives, and mostly for ourselves. It is such
a relief to be able to talk and laugh about children with people
who truly understand.

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