



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



THIS MONTH:

NOVEMBER 2015 ISSUE

This Month: *Small Group Discussion—The Holidays*

Newsletter Editor: Crys Kelly

A CANDLE FOR MY CHILD

By Annette Baldwin Katy, TX

Each night as darkness settles over our home, a little candle begins flickering in the east window of our stair case landing. The tiny light burns until dawn and then silently is quenched with the rising sun. This is my son's light. About a year after Todd died, the leader of our chapter suggested a candle in the window for the holidays, as I had no inclination to decorate. I placed a candle there, and I have now replaced that candle with yet another candle. This is Todd's candle.....this is Todd's light.



Todd's candle has a Victorian appearance and will burn steady or flicker. When the darkness comes forth, Todd's candle begins its nightly vigil.....a vigil that will not end until I am dead. Although this is a small gesture, it has deep meaning for me. Sometimes I awaken in the middle of the night and walk into the atrium at the foot of the steps by the light of Todd's candle. I'll grab a glass of water and watch the candle flicker. Other times in the early evening, when only a reading lamp is lit in the living room, I will look into the atrium. Todd's light shines. I feel as if he is with me

somehow, in the light of this little candle. I think about him, his life, his joys, his sorrows, his immense capacity to love and to laugh. I feel a deep closeness to my son that cannot be explained to anyone but those who have lost a child. I understand that there is much peace and solace in keeping my child in my

heart and life and in establishing my own private rituals of remembrance.

Leaving a candle in the window has been an American tradition since the Colonial Era. The candle symbolizes the warmth and security of the family home and its message is loyalty to a family member who is not present. So, it is fitting that Todd's candle shines each night.....reminding all that he is absent from our home, but not our hearts.

Each of us has a ritual of remembrance of our child.

Some of us have consciously established this. Others have unconsciously done so. But there is a ritual that brings our child close to us, only to us. Our rituals are a very personal choice. I chose not to share my ritual for 2 ½ years. Then one day a child who lives across the street asked me about the candle. I told her that it is my son's candle. She asked if he was in Iraq. "No, I said, he's in heaven."

A momentary look of fright passed over her face, and then she smiled. "I thought you had kids. You act like a mom."

Her innocent comment about me "acting like a mom" once again reinforced the fact that we will always be parents. Those of us who have children who have died will always be parents to those children. That role has shaped who we are, and intensified it more with the death of our precious child.

This is one element of losing a child that escapes the general population. If you have not lost a child, you don't understand, you can't understand the feelings and emotions that run so deeply in our psyches and our souls. (continued on page 2)

Steering Committee

CHAPTER LEADERS

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Newsletter

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Librarian

Liz Hutchison (817) 726-3999

Welcome Bags

Janet DuPertuis

Committee Members

Jeff Abodeely
Jeff & Marty Martin
Jerry & Sharon Austry
Charles & Genie Dean

Meeting Refreshments

Please sign up on our website if you would like to bring refreshments for one of our monthly meetings. We have four openings each month. Thank YOU!



Need to Talk?

Listed below are parents, grandparents and siblings who have walked where you are today.

If you are having a difficult day and just want to talk, please call.

Addiction

Helen (817) 431-6964

Auto

Jeff & Marty (817) 475-9141

Grandchild/

Multiple Loss

Lydia (817) 829-3801

Drowning

Debi (817) 270-3275

Drowning (Young Child)

Stacy (817) 656-7540

or (817) 845-3433

Long Term Illness

Marty (817) 636-5645

Homicide (Only Child)

Steve (682) 583-0125

sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

Suicide (Only Child)

Joy (817) 453-2227

Suicide

Glinda (817) 485-3772

Siblings

Cheryl (817) 624-7043

lopezgregg@aol.com

Premature Infant(s)

Amy (817) 944-1710

amytori12@hotmail.com



Middle of the night calls

Liz (817) 726-3999

(continued from page 2)

Our Compassionate Friends understand those emotions and our need to speak of our children, to deal with our overwhelming loss. Whether for a season or the rest of our lives, we have been good friends for each other. When I see Todd's candle, I think of my child, other parents, their children, their loss, my loss, the totality of the sorrow that enters our meeting room every month, and yet, I also think of the joy. There is a peaceful joy, a sense of serenity in knowing you are not alone and isolated in your unique grief. Others are walking with you on the road of life after the death of their children.

So now, when I gaze at Todd's candle, I remember his life, the security he felt within these walls, the growing up years, the love, loyalty and emotional stability he experienced as a child which enabled him to become a man of courage, self confidence and gentleness in the face of life's worst and best. I think of the other children and the parents left behind....the sons and daughters of my Compassionate Friends. These children are missed, they are loved and they, too, are kept forever in a parent's heart. Their parents share a common bond with me that will follow each of us to our last day. We have lost our precious, beautiful children. We know what pure and overwhelming grief really is. We walk this road together as Compassionate Friends. And we remember, each of us in our own way. Todd's candle is one way to tell him that I love him as only a mother can love....unconditionally and forever. And I will always remember. I'm will always be Todd's mom. I have found that being a parent is a lifetime journey....even when our children are not with us on life's road. As parents, we define ourselves as interwoven with the fabric of our children's lives. We always remember. There is comfort in that.

WHO DIES

The death of a child is a fire in the mind. The mind burns with alternatives that never come to pass, with fantasies of remarkable recuperations, with dreams of adult accomplishment. If we let this fire burn compassionately within us, the grief of the mind, the fantasies, the burning of the spirit, begin slowly to melt away and the child comes more into our heart. Our anguish can be used to open more fully, to enter as completely as we can into this final sharing. And then, as Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the final lines of his poem, *The End*, "Dear Auntie will come with presents and will ask, 'Where is our baby, Sister?' And Mother, you will tell her softly, 'He is in the pupils of my eyes. He is in my bones and in my soul.'"



Steven Levine
From *Who Dies*

A BEAR WEDGED

"In a tape called, 'To Touch a Grieving Heart' there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help 'a bear wedged in great tightness.'

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being 'a bear wedged in great tightness.' And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that 'we need not walk alone.'

Richard Edler's keynote speech at the
1996 TCF National Conference

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Fax: (630) 990-0246 Call toll-free: (877) 969-0010 9 A.M. - 5 P.M., CST, Monday-Friday.

Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org **Website:** www.compassionatefriends.org The website contains links to TCF's national and regional conferences, brochures, e-newsletter, online support community, *We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine, "Healing the Grieving Heart" and "The Open to Hope Show" radio program archives, webinars, chapter websites, and other resources. **Regional Coordinator:** Bill Campbell 972-935-0673 jobill@sbcglobal.net

Facebook: The Compassionate Friends/USA **In Spanish:** Los Amigos Compasivos/USA **Twitter:** Text follow TCFofUSA to 40404

HOLIDAY MEMORIAL AND WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

The *Holiday Memorial* and *Worldwide Candle Lighting*, will be a combined event this year.

The **Fort Worth Chapter Memorial** will be a time to take a break from the world and come together as kindred spirits on during the Holiday season and remember that our children, our grandchildren, our brothers and our sisters are no longer physically here on earth, but they are ALL still with us in

spirit and always will be. We remind ourselves that we are richer because they LIVED and there is a vast measure of love, of tenderness, of fulfillment and a sense of

purpose that we could not have enjoyed had it not been for them. They opened a new dimension of love to us. How grateful we are for that gift!

The memorial will begin promptly at 6:30pm and dinner will be served immediately following the memorial event. This memorial is for the entire family of all ages, so feel free to bring guests to share this evening with. If you would like, please bring a favorite dessert to share.

The memorial will begin with the **Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting**, which unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to

time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States.

Arborlawn United Methodist Church
5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth



HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Bring One Picture to Display:

Please bring an 8x10 or smaller picture of your loved one to place a candle in front of at least 20 minutes prior to the event. Each family will receive a copy of the program with each loved one's picture, as well as a rose and ornament.

Send One Picture to be in the Program:

Please notify Mike Bills by **November 15th** if you want your loved one's picture to be included in the program, **even if you just want to use the same picture as last year.**

E-mail a picture to mbills@locallyowned.org. Please list the "**NOVEMBER MEMORIAL**" in the subject line of your e-mail. Mike will reply to all e-mails that he receives, so if you do not receive a return e-mail from him within 24 hours, please e-mail the picture again or call or text Mike at (817) 371-5120. If you do not have e-mail, you may also mail a picture to Mike at 2301 N. Sylvania Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76111. Mailed pictures will be returned.

If your party will be larger than four (4) — please RSVP to Mike at (817) 371-5120 or email: mbills@locallyowned.org by December 7th.

Please bring a favorite dessert to share.

LOVE GIFTS



In Memory of

Leigh Taylor

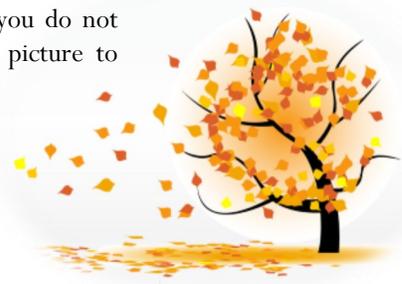
By Valerie Mitchell

Love Gifts are a thoughtful way to remember our precious children and can be made **ONLINE** on our website or by sending your donation to: Steve Roberts
P.O. Box 734
Eules, 76039

Autumn

In the fall
When amber leaves
are shed,
Softly—silently
Like tears that wait to
flow,
I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in
the fall;
'Tis then I miss you
most of all.

Lily de Lauder
TCF Van Nuys, CA



Visit our website for
more Online Grief
Resources





**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Fort Worth Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

2301 N. Sylvania Ave.

Fort Worth, TX 76111

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

WWW.THECOMPASSIONATEFRIENDSFW.COM



November 2015

Fort Worth Chapter Meeting

**We meet the 2nd Tuesday
of every month.**

Meeting Time: 7 P.M.—9 P.M.

This Month's Program

Small Group Discussion—The Holidays

Refreshments

Please sign up on our website and you are always welcome to bring something to share.

~ Paper Goods and Drinks are provided ~

ARBORLAWN UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH - ROOM 271
5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth

A Special Message

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering.

Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced

the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special feeling at meetings of **The Compassionate Friends**.