



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Fort Worth Chapter #1354 | Phone: (682) 201-0837 | email: tceffortworth@gmail.com

Chapter Website:

www.thecompassionatefriendsfw.com

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chapter Co-Leaders

Charles & Genie Dean

Hospitality / Meeting Setup

René Willars

Chloe Willars

Donna Tusan

Janet DuPertuis

Librarian

Sharon Austray

Secretary

Becky Long

Newsletter / Website

Chloe Willars

René Willars

Treasurer

Charles Dean

Welcome Bags

Janet DuPertuis

Welcome Table

Jerry & Sharon Austray

Donna Tusan

Additional Members

Charles & Genie Dean

Lydia Moore

Steve Roberts

Regional Coordinator

Gene Caligari

(480-703-2963)

gcaligari7@gmail.com

TCF National Office:

The Compassionate Friends

48660 Pontiac Trail #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Call toll free: (877) 969-0010

9 AM-5 PM, CST, Monday-Friday.

Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Facebook: The Compassionate Friends/USA

In Spanish: Los Amigos Compasivos/USA

Twitter: Text follow TCFofUSA to 40404

Our regular chapter meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm at Arborlawn United Methodist Church, Room 271

*Please note that the doors of the church are now automatically locked. When attending a meeting you must go in at the main entrance by the office prior to 7pm.

*****New Member Recruitment*****

We'd like to give a huge thanks to David and Suzie Wilkinson involvement as Chapter Leaders of The Compassionate Friends, Fort Worth Chapter for the last 2 years. The steering committee has ushered in so many successful initiatives under their leadership, and we are excited to find the next group of members who can continue bringing good ideas to the group!

The Chapter Leadership role opens up March 1, 2024. We also have many more opportunities for involvement on the steering committee. If you have an interest to become involved and be a part of the steering committee, please reach out to a board member for more information. We welcome your interest and your participation!

A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO NEW MEMBERS

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.

Monthly Program:

Refreshments are provided each month by volunteers. Please sign up to bring snacks to share. We also ask that no one bring any snacks containing nuts.

Paper goods and drinks are provided

Join friends at the
Arborlawn United Methodist Church
Room 271
5001 Briarhaven Road
Fort Worth, TX 76109

Celebrate life



THE BIRTHDAY TABLE WILL BE AVAILABLE AT OUR MEETING THIS MONTH.

IF YOUR LOVED ONE'S BIRTHDAY IS IN THE MONTH,
YOUR WELCOME TO BRING A MEMENTO IN HONOR OF
YOUR LOVED ONE'S BIRTHDAY.
AND REFRESHMENTS TO SHARE!

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 9, 2024

Chapter Meeting at 7:00pm

Topic: Book review "It's OK that Your Not OK"
by Sharon Austray

May 14, 2024

Chapter Meeting at 7:00pm

Topic: Creative Program
by Sharon Austray

June 11, 2024

Chapter Meeting and Annual Butterfly
Release at 6:30pm with dessert potluck
immediately following

July 9, 2024

Chapter Meeting at 7:00pm

Topic: Anger and Laughter in Grief
by Becky Long

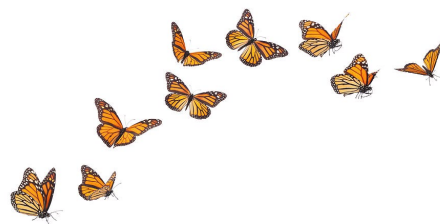
July 12-14, 2024

47th TCF National Conference
New Orleans

August 13, 2024

Chapter Meeting at 7:00pm

Mementos and recap of National Conference



TALK TO A TF FRIEND

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. *It isn't necessary to call someone who has suffered a loss identical to yours.*

Addiction

David 214-686-1901

Auto

René 817-504-896
jrbc@att.net

Grandchild/Multiple Loss

Lydia 817-829-3801

Drowning

Debi 817-602-4018

Long Term Illness

Marty 817-726-7218

Homicide/Loss of all Children

Donna 817-690-8741
drjtusan@gmail.com

Homicide/Loss of Only Child

Steve 682-583-0125
sjr1216osu@gmail.com

Siblings

Suzie 214-686-1907

Spanish Speaking (Español)

David 214-686-1901

LOVE GIFTS

A Love Gift is a donation made in honor of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died or as a memorial to a relative or friend. Donations are tax deductible and are a means to allow us to reach out to other bereaved families through books and programs, and to help us hold monthly meetings and events. If you would like, you can specify that your love gift be used for specific use, e.g., continuing education, workshops, memorial event, or books for our lending library.



You can donate through the TCF Fort Worth Website at: <https://www.thecompassionatefriendsfw.com> or you can bring a check to a monthly meeting or event made out to [The Compassionate Friends Fort Worth](#).

Recent Love Gifts In Memory of:

Sydni Pena
Chase & Graham Davidson
Kelsey Marie Roberts
Mark Stanley Austry
Devon Becker
Michael Wilkinson and Michelle Baker
Phillip Wayne Dean



P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

The mission of The Compassionate Friends: 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.

47TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

JULY 12 @ 8:00 AM - JULY 14 @ 1:00 PM



We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 47th Annual National Conference in New Orleans! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

Unique and cherished highlights of our conference include our heartfelt Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. Our weekend of

inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held at the New Orleans Marriott. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated reservation link. Our discounted room rate with the Marriott is \$144 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/47th-tcf-national-conference/>



MOTHER'S DAY: "BEFORE" AND "AFTER"

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Shifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-Mom and stick-daughter standing alongside a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lopsided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom", chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need any more "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Day after Nina died was a grief numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten.

I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I

know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is.

Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life – you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you – they are your child's gift to you.



CATHY SEEHUETTER

Cathy's 15-year-old daughter, Nina Westmoreland, was killed by an alcohol-impaired driver on Cathy's birthday while her family was vacationing in FL in May of 1995. In 2012, her police officer stepson Chris took his own life. She has been very involved as a volunteer in TCF, first as newsletter editor and then chapter leader for the St. Paul Chapter. She served for six years on the TCF National Board of Directors, and is Minnesota Regional Coordinator. Cathy was the Conference Chair for the TCF national conferences in 2011 in Minneapolis, MN, and in 2018 in St. Louis, MO.. She is very honored to have received the TCF Recognition Award from the National Board of Directors in 2015. Cathy has been published in *Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul*, and as a contributing writer to *The Tincture of Time*, *Open to Hope: Inspirational Stories of Healing After Loss*, the TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, and other grief publications and newsletters. Cathy is married, has three surviving children and five grandchildren; all of whom are the loves of her life.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.

We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.

We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

SIBLINGS WALKING TOGETHER (FORMERLY THE SIBLING CREDO)

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.

Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.

Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

