



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS of the Pikes Peak Region

October, 2009 Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

October 15th - General Meeting - "Preparing For The Holidays" - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church
 November 19th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church
 December 13th - Worldwide Candle Lighting Memorial - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

OUR TELEPHONE FRIENDS

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

CHAPTER LEADER	LARAIN ANDERSON	351-7653
INFANT LOSS	COLLEEN & ART MANNON	535-9868
TODDLER / YOUNG CHILD LOSS	BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON	573-2743
LEUKEMIA	JANE & STEVE GABRIEL	282-1924
TEEN / YOUNG ADULT LOSS	BARB REYNOLDS	599-0772
SUICIDE	LARITA ARCHIBALD	596-2575
DRUG / ALCOHOL LOSS	STEWART & LETA LEVETT	531-5488
SKATEBOARD / AUTO ACCIDENT	RAYE WILSON	(303) 814-9478

OUR MEETINGS

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? Next meetings will be October 15th and November 19th.

It is often difficult to attend your first meeting, but those who do find an atmosphere of support from other parents who understand a parent's grief. Nothing is asked of you; there are no fees; you do not have to speak a word if you do not care to. If you are more comfortable bringing a friend or relative along with you, please do.

Many find these meetings help them to heal; and together we learn to live with our loss. We learn that [we need not walk alone](#).

Welcome!

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends of the Pikes Peak Region.

We are other parents who have experienced the death of a child at any age and offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings and activities throughout the year.

Do you have a poem or a prayer, story or picture that you would like to share? We welcome your contributions to our newsletter whether original or something you may have read. If submitting something you've read or know is copyrighted material, you must obtain written permission from the author prior to us going to publication.

Please address any submissions to:

Stew Levett
 160 El Dorado Lane
 Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Or write to: Stewart@Archangelgifts.com

Submissions need to be received by the 10th of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Thank you.



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TCF CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Now is the time to be thinking about submitting your photos and dedications for our annual TCF Candlelight Memorial on December 13th.

Once again we request that you contact us to have your child's slide included in our memorial. Slides from previous years may be used again this year or you may submit new photos. Please limit your photos to (3) three and your dedication should be short so everything will be viewable on the slide. Please remember, the better the photo you submit, the better your dedication will look.

Prior years' submissions will be read as a dedication if we don't hear back from you.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5th, 2009

Submissions can be emailed to Stewart@Archangelgifts.com

or send to

Stewart Levett

160 El Dorado Lane

Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Join us for
The Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting
December 13, 2009!!



Your Name _____

Your Address _____

Your Phone _____ Email _____

Child's Name As You'd Like it to Appear _____ Cause of Death (Optional) _____

Child's Birthdate _____ Child's Memorial Date _____ Number of Pictures Included _____

Dedication _____

Please create my slide with information and pictures provided.

Please use last year's slide. Please return pictures when finished



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Remembering Our Children On Their Birthdays

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Age at Death</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Compassionate Friend</u>
Jim Agnew	Oct 4	31 years	Mar 17	Eating Disorder	Tom Agnew
Adam Herzog	Oct 5	12 years	Sep 24	Plane crash	Nancy Saltzman
Andy Cope	Oct 7	27 years	Mar 14	Drug overdose	Debbie & Kurt Adelbush
Jack C. Jefferson	Oct 8	5 years	Jul 11	Viral meningo-encephalitis	John & Dena Jefferson
Eric Sutton Skinner	Oct 9	19 years	Dec 4	Clinical depression	David & Gail Skinner
Tucker Ray Graef	Oct 10	14 years	Jun 21	Drowning	Kathy Graef
David Mueller	Oct 16	19 years	Jul 19	Drunk Driver	Sandy Eversole
Anthony Lopez	Oct 14	21 years	May 18	Car accident	Paul & Trudy Lopez
Margaret McKean	Oct 18	39 years	Sep 26		Lilo McKean
Brian Hartzell	Oct 18	33 years	Sep 27	Motorcycle accident	Fawn Batista
Jacob Sanchez	Oct 18	3 months	Jan 22	SIDS	Denise Langhorst/Janine McDonough
Richard Joseph Armstrong	Oct 19	4 years	Feb 27	Drowned	Chuck & Helen Armstrong
Michael Edward Anderson	Oct 20	20 years	Oct 4	Motorcycle accident	Laraine Anderson
Kimberly Benson	Oct 22	16 years	Nov 24	Car accident	Debbie Diekman
Tyler Joseph Budfuloski	Oct 23	2 years	Jun 28	Sudden Unexplained Death	Rob & Alice Budfuloski
Wyatt Travis Wilson	Oct 23	2 years	Sep 10	Metabolic Disorder	Elizabeth & Lance Wilson
Cody Austin Wilson	Oct 23	5 years	Oct 13	Leukemia	Elizabeth & Lance Wilson
Dawn Michelle Wiley	Oct 24	21 years	Apr 18	Auto accident	Luanne Wiley
Brian Jensen	Oct 26	28 years	Dec 29	Suicide	Deborah Jensen
Christopher Clayton Hodson	Oct 27	22 years	May 22	Auto accident	Eric and Janice Hodson
Christopher Skaggs	Oct 28	15 years	Jul 13		Carl, Annette & Felicia Cordova Ernest & Tanya Skaggs



Remembering Our Children On Their Anniversaries

<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Age at Death</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Compassionate Friend</u>
John Walther	Dec 8	31 years	Oct 1		Joseph Walther
Suzanne Bethany Thomas	Aug 20	4 years	Oct 3	Leukemia	Arnie & Mary Thomas
Michael Edward Anderson	Oct 20	20 years	Oct 4	Motorcycle accident	Laraine Anderson
Angel Leah Kelley	Apr 7	5 months	Oct 4	Mis-diagnosed illness	James L. Kelley
Chris Hatfield	Sep 30	28 years	Oct 6	ATV accident	Cathy Hatfield / Catherine Thompson
Fermin A. Vialpando	Sep 12	17 years	Oct 6	Heart defect	Sundae F. Vialpando
Sheri Cavin	Dec 27	21 years	Oct 9	Car accident	Susan & Alan Cavin
Jessica Stockwell	Aug 7	24 years	Oct 12	Rare disease	Mark & Sally Stockwell
Cody Austin Wilson	Oct 23	5 years	Oct 13	Leukemia	Elizabeth & Lance Wilson
Rebecca Ann Reynolds	Nov 1	17 years	Oct 16	Car accident	Ken and Barbara Reynolds
Aaron Paul Levett	Aug 2	26 years	Oct 18	Drug overdose	Stewart & Leta Levett
Alan Russell Spletstoesser	Feb 15	17 years	Oct 19	Cancer	Joan Spletstoesser
Denise Elaine Bear	May 16	20 years	Oct 24	Auto accident	Dona & Tanya Flores
Trevor "T.J." Franks	Dec 24	17 years	Oct 24	Car accident	Penny Franks
Owen William Howard	Mar 10	34 years	Oct 25	Complications - Crohn disease	Mike & Carol Parker
Cody Darby	May 1	20 years	Oct 27	Accident	Lori & Steve Darby
Scotty Strader	Dec 11	24 years	Oct 28	Car accident	Kathrine Strader
Matthew Dale Wilson	Sep 23	14 years	Oct 28	Skateboard/car accident	Raye & Rick Wilson
Steven Ellis Erickson	Dec 5	19 years	Oct 28	Car accident	Jaque Baldwin
Michael Christopher Rushmore	Nov 28	29 years	Oct 29	Suicide / mental illness	Bob & Carol Rushmore
Cris Cruz	Jul 19	23 years	Oct 29	Car accident	Henrietta Madrid
Kimberly Denise Patterson	Aug 11	16 years	Oct 30	Auto accident	Sigrd Patterson



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Love Gift Donations

Our chapter exists entirely through your donations which are tax deductible. Love Gifts enable us to continue our outreach to bereaved parents through our many chapter activities. 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.

These items must be received by the 10th of the month preceding the issue in which you would like them to appear. Love Gift donations should be sent directly to our treasurer, Frank Schager whose address is listed on the Love Gift Donation Form.

LOVE GIFT DONATION

Your Name _____

Child's Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Anniversary Date _____

Dedication _____

Picture Enclosed: YES NO

Mail to:
Frank Schager
2235 McArthur Ave.
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

SHARED THOUGHTS ON CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain is with us every moment.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our whole family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Not being honest can give false messages and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members frequently think they know what is always best for us. Their advice may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can. It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of up coming holidays and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. Ask friends to accept your decision. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to our seasonal celebrations. Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings.

Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion" and have learned to reach out to those who need us. We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourselves to grieve and cry; it is very healing. There are no shortcuts to get through our grief. But it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel and hope you will also have this blessing one day. God Bless,
Marie Hofmocker, TCF Valley Forge



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Take Your Time

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called "time table." You are told you should be feeling one way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be "over it." "Get on with your life." "Count your blessings."

All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (a) you don't WANT to get over it," (b) you are "getting on" with your life in the best way you know how, and (c) your "blessings" have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss! Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting "normally." There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months. You may not feel anything except numbness for awhile. That's OK!

The best advice is, take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don't clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally. Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can.

Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child's name to anyone who will listen...take time...to heal.

Sandra Young – TCF, Knoxville, TN

Photographs by Carolyn Wallace, TCF Bluegrass, October 1988

Photographs surround me.

A picture of you, forever held in time.

Glimpses of the past,

Another time...

baby, childhood, birthday parties, first day of school, family gatherings, holidays, Christmas cards, football, prom, vacations, naval academy, parades, graduation, wedding, honeymoon...

Photographs in every room,

A collage in the kitchen,

Groups in the living room,

In our bedroom....

so they are the first thing I see in the morning,
and the last thing I see at night

At my desk,

All reminders of you ... so handsome, healthy and happy.

Photographs are not enough, I want more.

I want you back with us as before.

But photographs are all I have.

"In loving memory of Mike"

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



Thankful vs Thankless by Mary Cleckey, TCF Atlanta

This is the time of year when many bereaved parents start saying out loud what newly bereaved parents have been thinking about for weeks and weeks - "I'm really dreading the holidays."

And why not? When your grief is so new, you haven't had the necessary time to accept life as it is for you now.

On the other hand, there are those of us who have had the necessary time and the proper support who are able to observe the holidays in a less painful way. We have kept some of the old traditions that warm our hearts and thrown out those that are either too painful or meaningless now. We're different now, doing different things because losing a child forces you into that position if you are to survive in an emotionally healthy way.

The words thankful and thankless follow one another in my dictionary: so close together in a book yet so far apart in meaning. When you think about it, the differences between the two words are full and less. Though those of us who have had more time do, like the more newly bereaved, have less in the way of family, our lives still do have a fullness because we have learned to be thankful and appreciate that which we have left in the way of people and memories - more so than we ever thought possible.

As you approach this Thanksgiving, if you haven't yet been able to make your adjustment, I hope you feel what you must now because whatever you are feeling is okay. It isn't until you have reached the place in your grief where the ability to make good choices returns to your life that you can make some important changes in how you approach the holidays.

I hope the transition from thankless to thankful will be soon in coming for you, for that will mean some peace has returned to your life.

Above all I do wish you peace during this holiday season. I wish you more of the same in the new year.



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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: National - www.compassionatefriends.org
Colorado Springs - www.tfccolorado.org/coloradosprings

The Compassionate Friends is for Sharing

Many people may think that meetings of The Compassionate Friends consist of bereaved people who sit and cry most of the evening, but that is certainly a misconception. It is normal to shed tears as we talk about our child's death, and we would expect a newly bereaved person to cry. We understand that completely. But we don't just sit and cry. Would you believe that most of the time we spend in our sharing group circle we may enjoy hearing others' stories about their children, or even sharing our own? Our meetings are usually about our memories, our questions and also telling what has helped us to cope with it all. We all have ideas that we share with others in the hope that they may reach a point of "good memories" instead of bad memories of the child's death. A support group should be very comforting and welcoming to those who attend and should always have non-judgmental members. We are less concerned at how the child died (even though we do care) and we are more concerned that we be there for the parents, siblings or grandparents who need us. They have a desire to talk and share about their loved one. We want to let them lean on us in their time of pain, just as we had others before us who let us lean on them. It does come full circle.

Jackie Wesley ~ TCF, East Central Indiana & Miami-Whitewater Chapters

SUIDS Family Support Group



Time: 6:30-8:30pm
Day: 3rd Monday of each month beginning 3/16/09
Location: St. Francis
825 E. Pikes Peak
5th Floor
Summit Room

This group offers grief support for parents, families, friends & caregivers who have been affected by the sudden, unexpected loss of an infant or toddler.

Angel Eyes: (888) 285-7437

Tena@angeleyes.com

St. Francis: Leslie Schwender (719) 776-5855

The meeting will be facilitated by Susan Backus Ph.D. This meeting is for adults only. No child care will be provided.

Birthday Celebration

Each month at our support group meeting we would like to invite you to let us help celebrate the life of your child. We invite you to bring your child's favorite cake (or snack) to share, and after we sing "Happy Birthday" you may show pictures, a slide show or anything that you'd like to share with the group to help you celebrate your child's special day. Please contact our chair person in advance so we can plan enough time for your celebration.



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Caring for Surviving Children

The death of a child strikes at the very heart of a family. Bereaved parents often feel helpless to provide guidance and comfort to their surviving children, yet must parent at a time when their emotional and physical resources are severely stressed. Children are frequently referred to as the "forgotten mourners" because the attention of family members and friends is directed toward the parents.

Although surviving children have feelings of grief similar to those of an adult, they often express those feelings differently because they are young and do not have the same coping abilities as adults. They may seem outwardly confused and defensive, and unwilling to share their grief with their parents, preferring to depend upon their peer group or others for support.

A surviving child is reacting to the loss of a sibling and to the changed behavior and interaction of parents and others who are close. Reassure your children that the depth of grief you are feeling does not lessen your love for them.

The following suggestions come from bereaved parents, surviving children, and professionals to assist bereaved parents in understanding and meeting the needs of their surviving children.

The Age of Surviving Children

Be aware of your child's level of understanding as it relates to the death of a sibling: 0-6 months old—has no conception of death, but may respond to parental reactions to the loss; 6-18 months old—possesses the early beginnings of grief and mourning, but perceives death as temporary; 18 months to 5 years old—continues to see grief as temporary, with difficulty understanding the permanence—needs concrete explanations of what death means; 6-8 years old—understands the sibling will not return and death is universal (it could happen to me); 9-12 years old—understands the reality of death and is curious about biological aspects of death and details of the burial; 13 years and older—fully understands the concept of death.

Explain truthfully to your children, on a level they can understand, what caused the

death of a sibling. Answer questions simply and directly, giving answers to build on later as the child ages.

Explaining the Concept of Death

To avoid fear in a younger sibling that he or she may also die, explain that there are three reasons why a person will die: That person is very, very, very sick; that person is very, very, very hurt; that person is very, very, very old.

Avoid euphemisms that can be easily misunderstood by children: The sibling who died is not asleep; God did not come to take the sibling to heaven; The child was not "called home." Oftentimes religious sentiments intended to comfort children can be misinterpreted, causing confusion.

The Sibling Relationship

Your surviving children had a close relationship with their dead sibling, but there were times of great love and there were times of great anger. Children often feel guilty about these times of anger and may even feel that in some way this caused their sibling's death. Reassure your children that they were loved by their sibling and did not cause the death.

Parental Role Modeling

Children learn how to express grief by observing their parents' mourning process. Therefore, it is important that parents acknowledge their child's death, display appropriate emotions, and give their surviving children permission to do so as well. While you should not be afraid to show an appropriate level of emotion in front of and with your surviving children, you need to reassure them that although you are grieving, you will still be able to take care of them. If they can see the extent of your grief, this will confirm their own feelings, that it is okay for them to cry, be sad, show anger, and even laugh.

Parents often idealize their dead child, causing siblings to feel they can never live up to the standard of love lavished upon their sibling's memory. Parents should take care not to make comparisons with surviving children that could lead to feelings of unworthiness, even to the point where surviving children might feel the parents wish they had died instead. Reinforce the positive things

your surviving children do. Spend quality time with them.

While it is difficult, parents must tread a fine line not to be overprotective or overpermissive. Routines should be continued whenever possible.

Many children find it difficult to talk openly about their feelings with their parents. This does not mean they do not want your input. When your children do open up to you, if even briefly, listen carefully to what is said and the concerns that are voiced. Do not yell, criticize, or judge if they say something you consider off base or out of line. This may be your only chance to gain their confidence.

Children often find it easier to "mourn at a distance"—to show little emotion at a sibling's death, only to mourn in private away from other people. Tears may still appear at the most unexpected times. Use these openings to support them in their grief and acknowledge how difficult it must be for them to lose their sibling.

Plan a memorial celebration in which your surviving children can participate, making them feel a part of the family's grieving process.

Some Typical Reactions

Younger children may at first make jokes or continue normal play as a distraction. This is not abnormal nor reason for concern. Don't chastise them.

For those a little older, it's okay:

- To cry and feel depressed. They've lost a great deal.
- To copy some of their brother's or sister's habits and interests, while still being themselves.
- To live "in the past" for a while to keep alive the memories.
- To forgive themselves for fights, arguments, and mean things they said or did to their brother or sister.

- To go on living.

However, watch for destructive reactions:

- Use of drugs or alcohol.

- Acting out of frustrations through reckless driving or skipping school.

- Doing things out of anger to hurt others because of the pain they themselves are feeling.

- Experimenting with sex just to feel close to someone.

- Discontinuing activities that meant so much to them.

- References to suicide.

Children of all ages sometimes temporarily regress emotionally and developmentally. They may throw tantrums, have difficulty concentrating, develop a sudden dependency, or exhibit aggressive behaviors. BE PATIENT AND LOVING, NOT PUNISHING.

Suggestions for Helping Your Children

Children need parental support and opportunities to be heard, acknowledged, and understood if they are going to successfully work through the grief process.

Share the belongings of the child who died, perhaps giving each surviving sibling something "for the moment" and something to put away for adulthood like a photograph, favorite book, CD, or piece of jewelry.

Help your children to channel their grief into positive activities such as drawing, writing in a journal or diary, and reading. Seek their advice in ways they may want to memorialize their sibling such as creating a memorial fund, and help them accomplish these goals.

If you find, after a time, that your children don't seem to be adjusting to their new lives, don't be afraid to encourage them to talk with a qualified school counselor, or a psychologist or psychiatrist who specializes in bereavement.

Articles like the above are made available in brochures along with a host of other topics through The Compassionate Friends local chapter or may be found on the national website at www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends
Pikes Peak Chapter
P.O. Box 26239
Colorado Springs, CO 80936



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Pikes Peak Region