



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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SEPTEMBER 2009

WALKING THIS VALTCF YARD SALE HAPPENS

TUCSON CHAPTER MEETINGS

(For those who have experienced the death of a child or sibling.)

Catalina United Methodist Church

2700 E. Speedway Room H-232

7:00 — 9:00 PM

September 09

September 23

October 14

October 28 Candle-lighting Service

the day of the yard sale. Your help for a few hours or the entire day makes a big difference. We need helpers to set up merchandise beginning at 6:00 A.M.. The second most needed time is for the wrap-up from 1230 to 1430. **At the next meeting, place your name and phone # on the sign-up sheet when you can help.**

(Workers get first choice of merchandise!)

OCTOBER 28: Our Annual Family candle lighting service will be held in the Church Fellowship Hall (instead of Room H-232). Bring a picture or some special memento to place on the Sharing Table. You will have an opportunity to tell members about your child or

TCF YARD SALE HAPPENS

October 17!

A special thanks to

U-STORE-IT

7070 E. Speedway Boulevard

for the donation of a storage unit for

The Compassionate Friends

For access to the unit, call Sam Turner at 798-6088 (voice mail)

or

Carl Luikart 749-3361 to arrange a time to deliver your items.

ABOUT HELPING US

We need clean clothing in wearable condition (but no undergarments or unwashed clothing). Radios, TVs, appliances & electronics in good working order, furniture (indoor & outdoor) and beds (no mattresses), sports equipment, jewelry, work tools, pots & pans, kitchen utensils, lamps, toys & games, books & CDs (no encyclopedias or magazines), artwork, bric-a-brac, barbecue grills, shoes, briefcases, luggage, and knick knacks, bedding, towels, etc.

Volunteers are needed to sort the donations in advance of the yard sale. The greatest need, is for work-power on

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Q. How long will it take me to get over the feeling of sorrow?
A. **A lifetime.**
- Q. How long will I continue to feel guilty?
A. **As long as it takes you to realize you did nothing wrong.**
- Q. How long will it take me to get over my anger?
A. **As long as it takes you to drop the blame on yourself and others, and realize it was the combination of unpredictable things that occur in one's lifetime.**
- Q. Why do friends give me such horrid advice?
A. **To cover up their own inability to handle the situation.**
- Q. Will I ever be happy again, and be able to laugh?
A. **An emphatic YES!**
- Q. How long is long?
A. **As long as it takes for you to go through the process. Each individual has his or her own time schedule, but it is up to you to make the decision when to start healing. The Compassionate Friends will try and help you find your answers by listening, hugging, and caring, to give you support during this period and after.**

Irv Schwartzberg
TCF, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Welcome to New Friends

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief.

Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Feel free to call **(520) 721-8042**. A member will contact you. We can put you in contact with members who have experienced similar losses: auto accidents, infant death, suicide, murder, unknown, etc. VISIT our WEBSITE at: www.tucsontcf.org

Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Sal Cataudella & Kathie Davis

- Editors*.....Sam & Phyllis Turner
- Contributing Editors*.....Sara Moore & Caroline Dodge
- Outreach*.....Karen Bailey & Leslie Maier
- Corresponding Secretary*.....Pam Zarte
- Database Coordinator*.....Noelle Rohen
- New Attendee Coordinator* Maureen Luikart
- Library*..... Pam Zarte
- Treasurer*Carl and Maureen Luikart
- Facilitators:** Noelle Rohen, Scott & Kathy Parfrey; Leslie Maier, Kevin Trapp, Carl Luikart, Kathie Davis, Carol & Larry Tilton, Sam & Phyllis Turner, Audrey Kibble, Sal Cataudella

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Barb & Gene Caligari
 Chandler, AZ

Unless expressly stated, the views expressed in articles, poetry, etc. in Walking This Valley are not necessarily the views of The Compassionate Friends, the Tucson Chapter or the Editorial Team. The Editor reserves the right to edit any contribution.

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Robert W. Studinger, CPA, 7407 E. Tanque Verde Road, Tucson, AZ 85715

And to...
Dakotacom.net for our web service hosting services, 5055 E. Broadway, Suite A-110, Tucson, AZ. 85711.

TO OUR "COOKIE & TREAT PROVIDERS"

Or bring fruit or veggies:

(Two volunteers per meeting, please!)

- Remember to sign the COOKIE SHEET.
- September 09: Carol Tilton Kahleen Mapelsden
- September 23: Karen C. HELP!
- October 14: Cindy W. Kathleen Mapelson
- October 28:** Candle light Service. **Everyone bring finger foods to share!**

Love Gifts

Love Gifts are a way of remembering your child on Easter, Mother's Day, their birthday, angel date or just because... **Thank you** to all who contribute and support our local chapter. Checks should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends, Tucson Chapter, and mailed to **TCF, P.O. Box 30733, Tucson, AZ 85751. (Please designate how you want the money used.)**

Check with your employer on how you can donate to The Compassionate Friends through payroll deduction.

Mark Bustamante, Krina Carrasco, Paul Dietzel, Carla Reeve-Wise, in memory of all of our children.

BRING FUNERAL HOME, INC. Special prayers for all of our children.

If you would like someone to receive a copy of this newsletter, call (520) 721-8042.

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By
Phyllis and Sam Turner

“Will I ever stop being angry?”

Maybe. Maybe not, especially if you are dealing with an unexpected, violent death. Anger at the murderer; at the drunk driver; at a hospital staff member; at a doctor; at your spouse (sometimes for no reason!), at the disease that killed your loved one; at God; at yourself for allowing your daughter to go for that drive with her friends, or for buying the motorcycle for your son. Some of our members tell us that, even after two or three years, a spark of memory will cause a surge of anger and grief that will stop them in their tracks.

“But my anger and grief is affecting my whole life, my marriage, my work.”

Yes. It can. However, there are some things you can do that might help. First, you must recognize that your anger is normal and, like an ER experience, you must allow yourself to recuperate and heal. Private counseling may help. Compassionate Friends meetings may help. Talking and listening to others who “have been there” can help release your internal pressure.

At some point you may just want to be alone with your thoughts. Take your laptop, or your notebook and go to a park, or a restaurant, or a hotel lobby —someplace where you won't be bothered — and write.

“Will writing help?” Maybe. Maybe not. But is what you are currently doing helping?

“How do I start?”

Start by writing about you. Tell who you are and how you came to be writing at this very moment. Plan on crying. Don't worry: you'll have “blank spots” but you will eventually mention your child or sibling. Let yourself go. Write anything. No one has to read it but you. (See Pat Akery's column on page 4.)

For an even more illuminating experience you can enroll in a day-long writing retreat:

WRITING THROUGH EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGING TIMES

with poet, author and publisher

Sheila Bender, M.A.

Friday, September 25

The Windmill Inn, 4250 N. Campbell Ave.

Join her for a day of writing based on poems, memoir and personal essays. She will use a gentle, empowering response method to help each writer along the way.

Call The Learning Curve, (520) 777-5817 to register. Or email at info@thelearningcurvetucson.com

Sheila's son was killed in a skiing accident. She currently lives in Port Townsend, Washington. She regularly presents workshops throughout the United States.

This just might help.

WHAT COMES AFTER DEATH?

In the bottom of an old pond lived some grubs who could not understand why none of their group ever came back after crawling up the stems of the lilies to the top of the water. They promised each other that the next one who was called to make the upward climb would return and tell what happened to him. Soon one of them felt an urgent impulse to seek the surface; he rested himself on the top of a lily pad and went through a glorious transformation which made him a dragonfly with beautiful wings. In vain he tried to keep his promise. Flying back and forth over the pond, he peered down at his friends below. Then he realized that, even if they could see him, they wouldn't recognize such a radiant creature as one of their number.

The fact that we cannot see our friends or communicate with them after the transformation, which we call death, is no proof that they cease to exist.

Reprinted from Staten Island, New York TCF Newsletter.

Writing Your Story or Journal

Recently, several new TCF members have asked me for suggestions about what they can do at the early stages of grief and what helped me in my experience in those earlier days of grief when my son, Bobby, died. In thinking about that, I remember my *journal and what a meaningful and effective way of venting that was for me. As you may know, very often our close friends think we should be "moving on with life" or "letting go," etc. Unfortunately, for me, they just didn't get it. So, I looked back through some past newsletter issues and found an article on ideas for writing your story or journal – I hope you find it helpful:*

Bereaved parents who have written about their loss unanimously agree that writing unleashes enormous stress and pain. In my own experience, I recall one night when I locked myself in the bathroom and wrote a long letter to my son, Bobby. It was my chance to express my feelings without having them diminished by well meaning and caring people around me trying to be helpful. I will never forget the pressure that letter released for me. Although the letter was not saved, the positive result was everlasting. Have you ever thought of writing your story or keeping a journal? You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your child by recording your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to your child, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following:

- *A special memory that I have about you.*
- *What I miss the most about you and our relationship.*
- *What I wish I'd said or hadn't said.*
- *What I'd like to ask you.*
- *What I wish we'd done or hadn't done.*
- *What I've had the hardest time dealing with.*
- *Ways in which you will continue to live on in me.*
- *Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive.*

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for

you or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas, specific to your situation and relationship. Give yourself this exercise as a gift. If you would like to share your writing at a TCF meeting, please do. You never know how many other parents will be touched and benefit from your experience.

*by Pat Akery, Chapter Leader,
TCF, Medford, Oregon*

sibling. There will be music and poems.

As Kathie Davis says: "You may not have a good time, but you can expect to have a meaningful, healing, heart-felt experience."

Bring cookies or finger foods to share. Sal tells us that, on this evening, all finger foods will be calorie free!



Pictures and mementoes on the Memory Table.

TCF Now on Facebook! The Compassionate Friends national organization now has a Facebook page. You can find us by going to TCF's national website home page at:

www.compassionatefriends.org

and clicking on the Facebook link on the left side. Or, you can go to Facebook and do a search for "The Compassionate Friends/USA." The new Facebook page will provide an additional means of communication with not only our members, but also others who may not be aware of The Compassionate Friends. It is designed to be informative and supportive. We hope all members will join in and contribute to the conversations.



Holding their candles high, TCF members participate in the 2009 National Conference in Portland, Oregon.

AFTER THE FIRST YEAR:

1. The pain changes from a crushing weight to a wickedly cutting edge. Time speeds up from a grinding plodding to a more normal routine. And sometimes you can forget (for only a moment) that your whole life was destroyed just last year.

2. You start to remember the good times and you can tell a funny story about your child and save crying for later. But sometimes it seems like you're the only one left who mourns. "What's the matter with you anyway?" "It's been a whole year."

3. Your child seems closer and yet still so far away. Miracles of miracles, you haven't forgotten how he walks, his voice, the shape of his head or the solid warmth of his fingers curving around yours. Those memories ambush you at many unlikely moments and tear you apart.

4. Your heart begins to thaw; you remember that you once loved your surviving children and you love again. You remember that life used to hold joy, and you rediscover some small enjoyment in living. You learn to piece your life back together in a different pattern.

5. You pick up your burdens and go on. Amazingly you have survived a blow more painful than anything you ever imagined. Even though you wish you could have died too, it slowly dawns on you that you must still live because after the first year ... comes the second year.

*Liz Ford, TCF, Madison, Wisconsin in memory of her son,
Alexander B. Ford.*

From time to time you will see one of Sascha Wagner's poems. Her book is now in our library. Our thanks to Karl and Sue Snapp for their efforts on behalf of this project. She lost two children: one by drowning; one by suicide.

At first

At first
my very name was grief.
My eyes saw only grief,
my thought were grief.
And everything I touched
was turned to grief.

But now
I own the light of memories.
My eyes can see you,
and my thoughts can know you
for what you really are:
more than a young life lost,
more than a radiance
gone into night.

Today you have become
a gift beyond my grief,
a treasure to my world—
though you have left my world
and me behind. ~ Sascha ~

AS I REMEMBER HIM

Whenever I answer an e-mail from a newly bereaved sibling, I say, "My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25, 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him." The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40.

As the 9th anniversary approached last year, I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better, and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August (our birthday month) but last year was worse.

As my birthday neared, I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me, it would be easier than being with all of the family (all except Alan). I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan for 9 years, I now realized that I couldn't continue without help. Twice a week for the two weeks before my birthday, I received counseling. I had decided I would have a birthday party if I could make the guest list. It turns out everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan, but they could see his picture button while speaking to me. Thoughts of Alan were never far and as I walked the last friend to his car, I realized that it had been an enjoyable day. Each milestone would be an adjustment.

As I approach my 41st birthday, the 10th without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car's license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal. Each new state I visit, I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone, and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, and created an AIDS quilt, a web page, and a backyard garden. I devoted a room ("Alan's Room"), with posters and article by and about him. I donate items for AIDS and TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan's memory. As long as I live, I will continue to find ways to honor his memory as I remember him.

Daniel Yoffe

Written in 2002, when he was Sibling Representative on the TCF National Board of Directors

The Summer I Will Never Forget

It was August 24th, 6 o'clock in the morning. My mother informed me that my brother had died. I was confused, speechless and upset. Because not only did I lose my brother; I lost my "father", too.

Every day during the summer I would catch the train to southwest Philadelphia to visit Kyle at the hospital. Every time I went down there to visit him, every second was so precious because I didn't know if I would ever see him again. I didn't know if it would be the last time that I would hear his voice. He seemed relaxed about the situation, even if my family and I didn't.

He was waiting patiently for a new heart to come in so he could replace the one he had. Fortunately, three hearts did come in, but none of them matched his blood type. He knew he was facing death, but he wasn't afraid. He even had his will completed. Imagine being 19 years of age and someone approached you with your will. How do you handle something like that?

I remember being in the room when the doctor told him to his face that it would be a miracle if he were to make it through the night - he would be surprised if he would wake up again after he fell asleep. So what did my brother do? He didn't go to sleep at all. He stayed up for 22 hours straight, contemplating, asking himself questions, and preparing himself to step inside a world that people are afraid of.

He was all I knew. He is all I really want to know. There are not too many people in this world who interest me, so when I lost him I was devastated. People offended me, at first by asking me questions like, "Did I cry at the funeral?" What type of questions is that to ask someone? But I really couldn't get upset at the people who asked questions like that because they just don't know any better. A lot of people came up to me and my family saying they were sorry, but if they were sorry, why didn't they visit him in the hospital? Why didn't they call him in the hospital? People are weird, aren't they? It seemed like people were just saying it just to say it.

This is the first time I have ever written about my brother's death and it feels like my pen is bleeding with more than ink - it is bleeding with my emotions. I often look at my emotions. I often look at myself in the mirror with no shirt on and I see scars all over my body wondering if they will ever heal. I am 18 years old and I feel like I am 100 years old. But I wouldn't trade my life for anything. People ask me questions about what I want to do after high school and I say I want to live the way my brother lived ... like a gladiator.

*Craig Grasty,
brother of Kyle Grasty, Abington, PA TCF*

Our Children Remembered

Please join the members have requested to have their child/sibling's name placed on the permanent Memorial Page. Once it is set on our Memorial Page, it is easily accessed and you may view all the names just like you would at the Children's Memorial Park (except our names will be alphabetical).

We can *only list your child's name if you request it*, either on the registration sheet at the meeting or by accessing the following site:

www.tucsontcf.org

Then, click on **ADD A NAME**

Many families have designed a memorial site for their child. By clicking on their highlighted site, you will be taken to that special site for more information. Examples would be:

<http://www.korylaos.com/> or <http://www.benjaminsbugs.com/> Don't be intimidated by the intricate, technicalities of setting up your website. Find a sixth grader to help you!

BUTTON LADY & NAME-TAG MAN

Here's how to get your **FREE** picture buttons and name tags (with your child's picture on the tag): Make a copy (on regular computer paper) of your child's picture. Give it to Shirley Beene - **The Button Lady** - and she will mount it for you. See her for the details about size and quantity, etc. **Or call her 520-885-8398 Pick up a template and directions at the next meeting.**

For your name tag, you need a similar, but smaller copy of your child's picture including the birth date and death date (and your name, of course!). Kevin Trapp - **Name-Tag Man** - will produce the tag for you - FREE. Email your picture and information to him at: kjtrapp2001@yahoo.com

Why the name tag? As you continue your journey through this valley, you will get to know many of the members and, often times, you recognize them by their child's name. Your child is the important connection with the faces. What a comfortable way to remember.

THE TCF CREDO: We Need Not Walk Alone

We are *The Compassionate Friends*. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and hope. Our 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 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 a deep depression; 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 our children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together. We reach out to each other in love and 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!**

TCF MISSION

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

OTHER TUCSON SUPPORT GROUPS

Listed are some local support groups besides *The Compassionate Friends*. In addition to these organizations, Tucson has a number of general grief support groups.

- Information & Referral Services.....881-1794**
- Arizona SIDS Alliance.....800-597-SIDS**
- Survivors Of Suicide.....323-9373**
- Homicide Survivors, Inc740-5729**
- FOOTPRINTS - Pregnancy/Infant loss 873-6590**
- AGAST (Alliance of Grandparents,) .888-774-7437**
- Tu Nidito/Children to Children322-9155**
- Alive Alone for (now) childless parents,
www.alivealone.org**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A national self-help, non-profit organization for families who have experienced the death of a child.

-THE TUCSON CHAPTER
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