

TCF Huntsville meetings are held at  
2:00PM; on the third Sunday of each month at:  
Renasant Bank (Community Room)  
4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)  
Huntsville, AL 35801; (256) 883-0997

## Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

*Herb's Hodgepodge*

**Herb**  
Co-Leader

Our newsletter this month is a little light due to the holidays and the candle light program. All photos included are from my personal collection.

When the TCF web site message book was available for posting on the day of the World Wide Candle Lighting, I wrote a message to my son Ben saying that in our world of bereaved parents and siblings, the "firsts" truly never stop ending. The first year we live without our child, the first time we go through the second year, our first third year, and our first fourth year... are all "firsts". Each additional year is a new first time and the memories and pain are always very close. Even for those who have experienced multiple child loss, each time a child dies starts the emotion and pain of all our "firsts", all over. A

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## Personal Contacts

*We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to hear from you. If you can't reach a particular person, please call another and make contact.*

### We Need Not Walk Alone

Illness..... Sharon & Jerry  
(256) 882-0642  
[illness@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:illness@tcfhuntsville.org)

Accident .....Pam  
(256) 534-1873  
[accident@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:accident@tcfhuntsville.org)

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb  
(256) 883-0997  
[substance\\_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org)

Suicide ..... Ray  
(256) 650-0381  
[suicide@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:suicide@tcfhuntsville.org)

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>  
Email ..... [tcf@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:tcf@tcfhuntsville.org)

### Additional Resources:

Hospice Family Care HOPE..... Huntsville  
(256) 650-1212

TCF National Office ... (877) 969-0010  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>



2008  
Hospice Family Care  
Annual Holiday Memory  
Tree

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new year is about to begin; it will be our first 2009, and for me, in April of 2009, it will be the first time I have completed being a bereaved father for five years and the first time I started my sixth year of life without Ben.

Ever since most of us have been children, we were taught not to brag. However, I am going to take this public opportunity to toot the horn for TCF Huntsville. In the last issue of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Autumn 2008, our own Leeta had her letter published that described her experience at the TCF conference in Nashville. Her letter is printed in full and is in our Sept 08 newsletter. Additionally, in that same issue, Ray's daughter, Michelle, had her essay included portraying her reflections on the death of her brother Cory that happened over 20 years ago. For a new chapter less than 2 years old, we have had 4 articles accepted for publication and 2 front cover photos for the magazine.

Again, I want to thank Hospice Family Care here in Huntsville, and our TCF advisor Kelsia who works there for the use of their facility. We had our third joint candle light service at Hospice and the room has become too small for our program. The first two years we had about 40 in attendance, but this year, we were surprised when over 83 came. Shoulders were bumping and there was little room to walk or maneuver; we are looking for more space. I believe that there are many more bereaved parents in the Huntsville area that can be helped by TCF. Continue to invite those you know to our meetings and activities.

Our steering committee has not met to determine our program agenda for the coming months. If anyone has a topic or type of meeting they would like to see, or would like to help the committee, contact myself, Ray, Sharon, or Pam and give us your ideas. In January, we will be viewing a video about the TCF organization and its purpose. Afterwards we can discuss our own TCF experiences (good and bad) and see if we need to travel in new directions for the New Year. Send in ideas or short articles/essay for our newsletter; tell us what was meaningful and what wasn't. We solicit your help. Help us help you.

May your memories never fade - **Herb**



## ...From the Heart

...a compassionate friend speaks

"...From the Heart" is a regular feature that will give a local member the opportunity to share a tip, suggestion, or experience of what has helped or hurt in his personal grief journey. As always, remember that we all grieve differently and it's OK to accept what makes sense and reject the rest.

**Ed Note:** *There were no suggested ideas this month; hopefully, we will resume this column with our next newsletter.*

## Poetry by Sascha

**Ed Note:** *The Compassionate Friends holds the copyright to all Sascha Waggoner poetry.*

### SOLSTICE

The year has turned again  
As quickly as it came,  
It runs away again.

The year has turned. Again  
Before us waits  
Another string  
Of sparkling celebrations...

How fine and welcome are the holidays  
How sharp and painful are the holidays.

Dark with the light,  
Grief with the joy,  
Life tumbles on.

### LISTEN

A new year does arrive again at midnight.  
Your mind is heavy with remembering.  
Your heart must ache before another chance  
to quarrel with the emptiness of time.

Yes, New Year does walk in again at midnight.  
And can you hear it speak of comfort waiting,  
of open doors and brighter rooms to enter-  
of deeper meaning and of greater hope?

The new year will arrive and begs you  
LISTEN

## Our Crystal Christmas Tree

A six foot tree, tons of colored lights, and hanging from each branch a collection of ornaments collected over 23 years. The kids made some in grade school with their names and pictures and hand prints, we bought personalized ones of all colors and shapes, and every year the day after Christmas, we would get up early and go shopping for the half priced Hallmark ornaments. This shopping spree resulted in our new stash of decorations for the next year. 23 years of tradition and seasonal ritual evolved from decorating our tree. For 23 years we couldn't wait to put up the tree. For 23 years we would carefully repack the decorations to be safe for the next year. Then before the 24<sup>th</sup> holiday, our son Ben died.

That family tradition and ritual came to a screaming, neck-breaking halt. The holiday season in general and Christmas in particular became an instant painful non-event. Our first two Christmases after Ben died we did not even think of a tree; the traditional stash was left packed away so as not to bring back those painful memories.

We were pretty sure that if we ever gave Christmas any attention, it would have to be completely different than before. The third Christmas I started to miss the tree, but Jane was not quite ready. As we walked through the malls we saw different colored artificial trees, white, silver, pink, and even black; we didn't bother looking at green trees. For a while we thought about a black tree to match our feelings but we finally wound up buying a tree on-line and we put up a 4 ft artificial pink tree for Christmas.

Talk about change, WOW! It was still too hard, though, to unpack those ornaments collected over those 23 years. Everything brought back a memory, and they were all accompanied by pain. We had a pink tree but no decorations; there didn't seem to be an answer that we could both live with. The answer came in gradual intertwined steps.

Over the years I had become infatuated with the concept of stars. I found multiple grief quotes about stars; I used a star background for our Candle Light program; I wrote an essay about the stars that was published in *We Need Not Walk Alone*; I helped make a picture board of our children on a star background to display at the TCF conference in Michigan; and I even put some glow in the dark stars on the ceiling over my bed in the shape of Orion. I could not get stars out of my mind.

Meanwhile, with our bare pink tree in our living room, I was browsing through the Sunday ads and saw an ornament in the shape of a star that surrounded a globe. The star had little studs of crystal imbedded in it. Off we rushed to the store. I loved it. I wanted to buy several but Jane convinced me to wait till they went on sale to get more than one. Of course the ornament was a big hit and they sold out almost immediately. We still laugh today about waiting till something goes on sale.

The tiny crystal pieces in the ornament were from a company called Swarovski. Researching this firm, I discovered a world I was never exposed to, crystal collectibles. To make it even more exciting, they design a crystal star ornament each year. Immediately, I bought the current 2006 edition. Soon afterward, I started to wonder about the 2004 ornament since that was the year Ben died. To my surprise the 2004 design was a star surrounded by smaller stars - E-bay to the rescue.

A Christmas tree is back in our house, the tree is decorated with stars and white lights (not colored) and annually we look forward to a new ornament. Each year we carefully repack the stars. We will probably never go back to the traditional green tree with colored lights and that's OK. Our new world tradition is evolving. It's all the same, just different, and that is something we are learning to live with.

**Ben's Dad - Herb**  
TCF Huntsville Co-Leader



## A Sibling's Perspective

### Ask Dr. Paulson

*Ed Note: Mary A. Paulson, Ph.D., is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist. She writes a monthly question and answer column published in We Need Not Walk Alone by the Compassionate Friends. This discussion is from the Autumn 2007 issue.*

*Q. I am 35 years old and my only brother passed away at the age of 27. It was a sudden death-he wasn't physically sick-he was found by my mom in his room on the floor. I haven't had any bereavement counseling for the loss of my brother; but I have been reading lots of books. I have lost others close to me-grandparents, friends-but the loss of my brother has just crushed my whole world. I have good days when I can talk about him without breaking down, but on other days I think of him and can't control my*

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tears. The loss of my brother was very devastating to all of us, my parents as well as me. Since I'm the oldest and now the only child, I feel it is my duty to take care of my parents, and if I don't, then I'm a bad daughter. However, I've been scolded by my best friend that I need to take care of myself as well. How do I continue to do that without feeling selfish and disloyal to my parents or brother?

**A.** Once a tragedy strikes, the family unit begins to function differently. Although you have always been the oldest child, your world has now made a big shift to being an only child. Your tears demonstrate the depth of relationship you shared with your brother, and that relationship doesn't end. As time passes, you'll notice you have more "good" days, when you think of the good times and smile at your memories. You can't share the day-to-day experiences with him, but he will always be your brother. You will always be the person who grew up as his older sister-the person you became by knowing him, caring for him, playing with him, and loving him. That doesn't ever stop or end. You are not being disloyal to him for having good days. I believe he would still want you to have as much comfort, joy, and laughter in your life as possible-even though he cannot be the source now. Part of caring for yourself, is allowing yourself to experience the good days as well as those days you realize how much you miss him. At the same time, it sounds like you have a desire to share time with your parents too. This doesn't mean you need to become responsible for their moods or emotional well-being. Instead, take the opportunity to share yourself, your love, and your family connections with your parents. Establish a new stronger, more supportive, and loving relationship with the family that has loved you and grown with you through all the ups and downs thus far in your life.



### Grief Quotes:

When the time comes for lighting festive candles,  
Let them remind you not only of what was lost but  
also of what you had.

*Sascha Waggoner*

The guilt and anger began to disappear the moment  
I found the person who was a good listener.

*Simon Stephens-Founder of TCF on his personal grieving after  
his parents and brother all died in a fiery car crash.*

Mourning, properly understood, is not a process of  
severing ties with those we love. Rather it is  
centrally a transition from loving in presence to  
loving in absence.

*Tom Attig, We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2008*

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### A New Year

A time for looking ahead and not behind;  
A time for faith and not despair;  
A time for long, great gulps  
of hopeful expectation.

Drink deeply, my friend,  
So that fortified with the promises it brings,  
This year will keep you near fresh springs  
of healing love where you may come  
to weave old and loving memories  
with new understandings and acceptance  
and find peace.

*Shirley C. Ottman, BP/USA North Tex*

### Ending

I wanted a perfect ending.  
Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems  
don't  
rhyme,  
and some stories don't have a clear beginning,  
middle and  
end.

Life is about not knowing;  
having to change,  
taking the moment and making the best of it,  
without knowing what's going to happen next.

*Taken from the TCF Tucson Newsletter, Jan 09*

**Gilda Radner** (1946-1989)  
*comedienne and cancer victim*

Note: Our Huntsville newsletters are available online at <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org/Newsletters.html>

## We Remember Them

*...on their Birth Dates, on their Death Dates, and always...*

December	
Emily D	Clark
Nathan A.	Day
William J.	Gibbons

January	
Peter T.	Duke
Paul J.	McKinney
Paul J.	McKinney

February	
Rebecca L.	Craig
Ricky	Rousseau

March	
Brian	Dunham
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Daniel J.	Rhoades
Evan G	Riddle
Ricky	Rousseau



**TCF Huntsville &  
Hospice Family Care**

**Joint Candle Light  
Program**

**December 14, 2008**

## Gifts of Love and Remembrance

*The following donations will help The Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.*

<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>Ian Scott</b> Jerry &amp; Sharon - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>Ricky</b> Virginia - Mother</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>Paul &amp; Jason</b> Tom &amp; Sandra - Parents</p>
<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>Ben</b> Herb &amp; Jane – Parents Nancy &amp; Robert - Grandparents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>April</b> Murray &amp; Iris - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of</b> <b>Cory</b> Nancy &amp; Robert - Grandparents</p>

Donations and Remembrance Gifts are tax deductible and may be sent to:  
TCF Huntsville Area – See page 7 for mailing address

## Exploring The "F" Words

This column is the first of a trilogy in which we will probe some of the myths and mis-information about three words that are very important in the process of Grief Recovery. The words are FORGIVENESS, FEAR, and FAMILIARITY. **FORGIVENESS** is the subject of this article.

It is almost a pleasure to write about forgiveness rather than talking about it. There is no subject that provokes more argument, more rigidity, or more pain than the idea of forgiveness. In fact, if forgiveness were not such an important stepping stone to successful Grief Recovery, we would not bring it up at all.

Forgiveness is one of the least understood concepts in the world, and is especially problematic in English speaking countries. Most people seem to convert the word forgive into the word condone. The definitions in our Webster's Dictionary illustrate the problem.

**FORGIVE** ....to cease to feel resentment against [an offender].

**CONDONE**.... to pardon or overlook voluntarily; esp.: to treat as if trivial, harmless, or of no importance.

If we believe the two words to be synonymous, it would be virtually impossible to forgive. The implication that we might trivialize a horrible event is clearly unacceptable. However, if we used the top definition of forgive we would be on the right track.

For example, a griever might harbor a tremendous amount of resentment against the person who murdered his/her child. That resentment might create and consume a lot of energy which in turn might mask the pain and sadness about the death of the child. As long as the griever stays focused on the murderer they may find it impossible to grieve and complete their relationship with the child who died. The resentment, or lack of forgiveness of the murderer gives more importance and energy to the murderer than to the child. Successful recovery from the pain caused by loss requires that we focus our energy on completing our relationship with our loved one who died. By not forgiving the murderer we almost guarantee staying incomplete with the child.

Grief is the normal and natural emotional response to loss. It is essential to correctly identify the loss-the death of the child-so a process of completion can begin. The example about the murderer and the child can be applied to the perpetrator and the victim of any kind of event.

If the death of a loved one was a suicide, you might need to forgive them for taking their own life, so that you could

then complete what was emotionally incomplete for you when they died.

Forgiveness is not our objective. Forgiveness is one of the tools we may need to employ in order to complete the relationship that ended or changed, due to death or divorce or other life circumstance. The subject of forgiveness is massive and carries with it many, many beliefs, passed on from generation to generation. We offer this column and the following questions and answers to help you determine if the definitions that were taught to you are helpful to you or if they need some updating.

**QUESTION:** What if I have built up a resistance to the word "forgive," is there any other way of approaching the issue?

**ANSWER:** We recently helped someone who couldn't even say forgive. She called it the "F" word, which inspired this column. We gave her the following phrase: I acknowledge the things that you did that hurt me, and I am not going to let them hurt me anymore.

**QUESTION:** Is it appropriate to forgive people in person?

**ANSWER:** An unsolicited forgiveness will almost always be perceived as an attack, therefore it is almost always inadvisable. It will usually provoke a new issue that will create even more incompleteness. The person being forgiven need never know that it has happened.

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I don't want this life after death life...

I want no parts of Grief.

I don't want this new staring down the night...

I want the old easy peaceful slumber.

I don't want this new broiling anger...

I want the old even temper.

I don't want this new empty lost feeling...

I want the old sure footing.

I don't want this new listening to music to muffle my thoughts...

I want the old unplugged awareness.

I don't want this new estranged person living in my body...

I want the old connected person I used to be.

I don't want this new unfettered schedule...

I want the old familiar routine.

I don't want this new depth of emotions...

I want the old false sense of security.

I don't want this new need to understand...

I want the old ignorant acceptance.

I don't want this new road map...

I want the old place of knowing.

I don't want these new people in my life...

I want my children back in their places where they were before death took them away.

Source: Frannie & Suzanne's Mom TCF Baltimore, MD

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## Calendar of Events

**2009**

<b>January</b>	January 18 – TCF Video & “What did I Learn in 2008”
<b>February</b>	February 15 – My Story; Open Discussion
<b>March</b>	March 15 – Topic To Be Determined
<b>April</b>	April 19- Topic To Be Determined

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4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)  
Huntsville, AL 35801

### Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address

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C/O H. Larnerd  
7801 Chadwell Dr. SW  
Huntsville, AL 35802

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Mailing Address  
Street Number and Name  
City, State 98765-4321

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*Mourning, properly understood, is not a process of severing ties with those we love. Rather it is centrally a transition from loving in presence to loving in absence.”*

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