



**Our Mission & Purpose** is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age by any cause and to provide information to help others be supportive.

**REMINDER:**  
**Join Us At Our Next TCF Meeting:**  
**Feb 19, 2-4 pm, Renasant Bank**  
**Topic: "Ask-It Basket"**

Please contact newsletter editor Dorothea Dunham ([dorothea12@att.net](mailto:dorothea12@att.net)) if you would like to contribute articles to the newsletter.

## Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

I don't know about you, but I am glad that the holidays have come and gone for another year as it is an especially difficult time and our grief is magnified because we miss our special angels so much. I hope everyone was able to spend time with those you love and care about. Now we have to deal with all this rain and those really gloomy and cold days which seem to drag us down. Each day the sun shines I am very thankful to see it. Come on Spring!!!

It was great to see so many of you at our annual TCFHuntsville/Hope Place candlelight service in December at the Mayfair Church of Christ. We thank Roger, Gaylene, Herb, Ray, Leeta and others for their hard work in putting such a meaningful program together to allow all of us to remember our wonderful children in such a special way.

At our January meeting we watched a presentation on "What is TCF". It was a review for most of us but it was also very moving and we could

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**Our Vision** is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

**Our Meetings:** Monthly, every third Sunday, 2-4 pm  
Renasant Bank, Balmoral Drive, Huntsville, AL  
Information 256-883-0997 or 256-325-8296

## 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..... Gaylene  
(256) 325-8296 [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/>

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relate to almost all the comments made by those interviewed. It was like a "that's exactly what I felt or how I feel" moment. It is a great tool to remind us just how much The Compassionate Friends provides, linking you to people who truly understand and provide a listening ear and a hug at a time when it is most needed. We all remember that time when we didn't know what to do, where to go, and then someone suggested The Compassionate Friends – what a wonderful resource for our hurting souls.

### **IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS FOR TCF HUNTSVILLE CHAPTER:**

We warmly invite you, your family and friends, to join us at next month's meeting, **February 19 at 2:00**. The topic will be "Ask It Basket". We have done this in the past and it is very popular. It is an opportunity to write down your thoughts and ask your questions and then they are randomly selected and discussed.

Our current Chapter leaders, Roger and Gaylene Eidsaune, have announced that they will be stepping down the end of March 2012. We certainly appreciate all of their hard work and time given during the past year to the Huntsville TCF Chapter. Being a Chapter leader is a big commitment and we thank them for doing a great job. Now we need someone to step up and assume the leadership role beginning in April. This is an opportunity for someone different to give their time, energy and perspective. In order to remain a viable organization, TCF Huntsville needs volunteers to share the leadership roles so that we can be there for newly bereaved families as well as for each other. There are many resources available to help. Please consider becoming the TCF Huntsville Chapter leader.

The **35<sup>th</sup> TCF National Conference/5<sup>th</sup> International Gathering** will be held in Costa Mesa, California, **July 20-22, 2012**. Mark your calendar now as it is not too early to begin planning to attend this enriching and healing gathering of bereaved persons from all over the world who truly share an understanding of your pain and heartache. There are always wonderful workshops, speakers, programs, entertainment and sharing sessions which provide invaluable help on this journey called grief. Please consider making this a part of your summer plans.



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## **Poetry and Prose**

### **Wintersun**

There are those days in winter when your world is frozen into a vision of eternal ice, when earth and air are strangers to each other, when sound and color seem forever gone.

There are those days in winter when you feel like dying, when life itself surrenders you in anguish, total mourning and to endless grief. And then it happens; from the bitter sky, a timid sun strides to his silent battle against the gray and hostile universe – it changes ice to roses, sky to song.

And then it happens that your heart recalls some distant joy, a gladness from the past. A slender light at first, then larger, braver, until your mind returns to hope and peace.

Let memories be beauty in your life, like song and roses in the wintersun.

**The Poems of Sascha Wagner, 2008**

### **Remembering**

Spring is not far away – there is a smell of growing things about.

The snow looks somehow even more perishable now.

Spring is not far away – and memories move to another place.

Remembering: A squeaky swing in the garden, going back and forth, back and forth...

Remembering: A bicycle taken out for its first ride...

Remembering: incredibly wet boots, cold hands, Kissing-fresh face...

So many things remembered: How many lost?  
Not one, not one.  
The heart remembers always.

Spring is not far away.

**The Poems of Sascha Wagner, 2008**

## **...From the Heart**

*...a compassionate friend speaks*



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### **A LOVE LETTER TO MY CHILDREN**

You are great kids. You have always been great kids, although I haven't always been a great mom. After your brother died, I was hardly any kind of mom at all. I was so lost in my own grief, I wasn't there for you. You were bewildered, scared and hurt, but I couldn't seem to reach out to you beyond my own pain. I was like a day-old helium balloon drifting along, not sure whether my place was with you or with your brother.

I didn't drift for long. You grabbed my string and yanked me back! The yowls and shrieks still ring in my ears. "Mom, all my underwear is dirty!" or "Mom, I'm starved!" or "Mom, he punched me!" Your brother was being cared for by his heavenly Father, but you needed your earthly mother. It was your need for me that saved my life. I'm sorry that your brother's death robbed you of your childhood. While other kids fretted about what to wear or which movie to see, you wondered when the tears and sadness would ever end and if we would be a family again. If I could have shielded you from such great sorrow, I would have; but I couldn't.

Your lives were changed forever and the future was uncertain but you kept going. You supported and inspired me as we traveled that rocky road of grief together. You talked about your brother when no one else would say his name. You kept his picture in your rooms and proudly pointed out to friends, "This is my brother." You used his things, but gently. You reminded me of the cute, funny things he said and did. You included him in your bedtime prayers. You still do. Some day, I believe you will tell your own children about your brother. Thank you for keeping his memory alive.

Because of the tragedy you experienced, you are more mature than other kids your age. You possess strength and courage beyond your years. You are resilient; little things don't get you down.

Best of all, you are kind, sensitive and compassionate to others, I adore you. You are my life.

Pat Dyson  
TCF, Beaumont, TX

### **Grief Tip – A Fresh Start .....**

The New Year can bring a feeling of fresh start after loss. It's a time to make an effort to heal your grief going forward. Think about the kind of life you want to be living and the kind of people you want to be around you. Make an effort to surround yourself with hope by joining a support or education group. Engage in activity. It can change you from being lonely to being willing to become social again.

**Now is the time to begin again.**

**From the Southern Piedmont/  
Charlotte Chapter, TCF  
Newsletter, Jan-Feb 2012**

## **Five things a Firefighter/Medic Wants you to Know**

*by Aaron Espy, firefighter/paramedic*

Moms and Dads, can I talk to you for a minute? I was too busy during the emergency, and afterward—well, you both had more important matters to attend to. It doesn't matter whether you live in the Pacific Northwest or Florida, Maine or Kansas City. If your child was taken from you suddenly, there was probably someone like me in attendance who fights fire and delivers medical aid for a living. Chances are they've struggled with the same feelings I struggle with. Here are five things I'd like to tell you. It's my hope that something I say will make your struggle through grief a little easier to manage.

### **#1 - Your Child Was Not "Just Another Patient"**

Perhaps you assume that because I've seen thousands of patients in my career, I wouldn't remember your son or daughter. Not true! Only the loss of a fellow firefighter affects us more profoundly than a child's death. When I lose a child in the line of duty, I don't leave the experience at the station. Your child's face comes home with me. I see him when I'm fishing, working in my garage, or just drifting off to sleep. I can still recall vividly the hour I spent with a little girl from a car accident almost fourteen years ago. She has a permanent place in my memory, just like your little one.

(It's the inability to come to terms with these memories that drives many a firefighter from his or her career. Those of us who are old-timers in emergency medicine have learned to deal with the tragic cruelties of life we must face. Some exercise vigorously. Others, like me, write about our experiences. Sadly, there are some who are unable to cope with the pain and turn to drugs or alcohol.)

### **#2 - I Did More Than Provide Medical Care**

When I am fighting to save a child, I talk to them. It doesn't make any difference whether they're responding or not. I reassure and attempt to comfort them. If they're awake and very young, I give them a stuffed animal to hold. I do one other thing. I tell them that their mom and dad love them very much. I do this because several years ago, a mother told me "I would've given anything to tell my son I loved him just one last time." Since then, I try to tell every child that you, their parents, love them very much.

### **#3- I Struggle With Feelings of Failure and Inadequacy**

When a firefighter/paramedic loses a child, he or she may struggle with personal feelings of failure. So often we repeatedly ask ourselves "what if" questions. "What if I'd been at a closer station? What if I'd arrived five minutes sooner? What if I'd tried another course of treatment?" It's these feelings of inadequacy that often keep a medic from approaching the parents of his patient. If a firefighter seems to be avoiding eye contact, he likely is not only struggling with his emotions, but possibly struggling with the feeling that he has failed. It's a common occurrence, despite the fact the medic may have performed flawlessly.

### **#4 - I Grieve With You**

Macho as we'd like to portray ourselves, we are by nature a group of men and women sincerely touched by the sorrow and suffering of others. That's one of the reasons we are drawn to the fire service in the first place. We have a deep, burning drive to make a difference, to alter tragedy in the making if we possibly can. Maybe it's because we feel we have an image to uphold. Whatever the reason, we firefighters tend to be good at holding our grief in check until we are alone. We present a tough-as-steel facade and inevitably do our crying in the station's hose tower or the compressor room where no one can hear us.

### **#5 - I'm Available to Answer Questions**

So often there are procedures or treatments you may not understand. They are almost always done for a very good reason, and with your child's best interest in mind. Almost without exception, the firefighters and medics who fought to save your child would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We also need to be informed when we unknowingly make comments that hurt or offend.

I won't make the mistake of telling you I know how you feel. I can try to imagine your pain, but I'm sure I could never know how it really feels unless I'd lost one of my children. I can tell you that I, and all my fellow fighters, do care. It is the chance that we will save the next victim of tragedy that keeps us doing what we're doing in the face of so much sorrow. We wish for you strength and peace on your journey.

***Aaron Espy is a Firefighter/Paramedic in Kitsap County, Washington. A professional firefighter since 1980 he is also a freelance writer and poet.***

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national publication of The Compassionate Friends.

## On suicide

### WHEN A LIFE BREAKS .....

After suicide, the first commandment is kindness, both toward the life that has broken and toward ourselves. We need to beware of using against ourselves some preconceived notions about suicide.

If our child has taken his or her own life, many people feel compelled to comment that the dead sufferer should not have hurt THAT much. Moreover, the religious community removes grace, the social community judges character, the medical community pronounces insanity. If the concept of unbearable pain is admitted at all, we are told that either (1) the suicide's faith was weak, or (2) her/his expectations were immodest, or (3) she/he was mean and selfish. It must have been a weakling who said: Every person has his or her breaking point: - right? WRONG!

The truth is that most of us have wondered about ending it all – because life does SEEM unmanageable at times. And we acknowledge the possibility that life IS unmanageable for long stretches. Who is to say that we are always obliged or able to meet an overwhelming darkness with the strength and/or the will of a heroic supersaint? We are all vulnerable, we can all feel lost and frightened and without hope. It is arrogant to assume that everyone is equipped to overcome even the most extreme challenge (whether real or imaginary) with fortitude, mastery and success.

Some of us are angry after suicide has happened close to us. Most of us are incredibly hurt and helpless. We feel betrayed, we feel abandoned, even punished. We often blame ourselves for some carelessness, some omission, some selfishness, some cruelty, which caused that fatal break of life..... It can be a long time before there comes a small and unexpected comfort when reality reminds us that the suicide was, as it were, bigger than life.

Western society has little love for those who take their own life, nor for those who are left behind. But we CAN cross the boundaries of misguided opinion, and we can try to see beyond the camouflage of traditional superstitions.

Yes, the first (through not the easiest) commandment is kindness. Be good to yourself. Give love and honor to the memory of that broken life.

Sascha Wagner, from The Sorrow and The Light (Sascha's daughter, Eve, died of suicide)

## THRESHOLD

Every year I am shocked by spring.  
Here it comes suddenly, like a  
curtain  
Made of colorful print material,  
dropping, transforming the land.

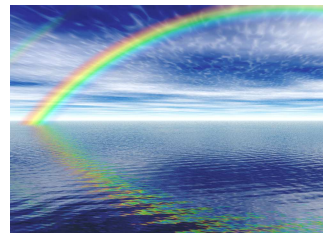
Each year  
I feel like I haven't been paying  
attention.  
One morning I wake  
And my world is gaudy with color  
Giddy - like someone shook the  
champagne  
And it spilled, it's effervescence  
Waking the flowers early, drunk  
and in love.

There is no memory of the neon  
leaves of fall  
Winter's wind has pushed on.  
I'm glad it's gone.  
It had become a guest who stayed  
too long,  
A bore that drove me to my room.

Each year when the azaleas bloom,  
I remember another spring.  
That one wore a pall.  
The rain would not stop. It  
poured  
Into the open grave of my son.  
It poured deep into my heart.  
I was sure it would never,  
Ever,  
Stop.

It did,  
Though I sometimes wished it  
hadn't.  
I was stuck between forgetting  
And remembering.  
Remembering won.  
Now I see his face in the azaleas  
That bloomed that spring while he  
died.

I no longer hold it against them.  
Fay Harden, TCF Calhoun County Michigan



Microsoft Clip Art

## Coping with Grief: Winter Blues

When the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, we often find ourselves feeling low. Some people call this the Winter Blues. When you are grieving, those blues can feel overwhelming. Grief itself is hard to cope with and cold winds and longer nights can make those feelings seem more intense. Here are a few ideas that may help you cope with the Winter Blues:

- Winter only lasts a few months. Use this time to reflect on your relationship with the person who died. Sometimes in our efforts to deny our loss, we rob ourselves of precious memories.
- Reach out to friends or family when you can. Often our isolation is worse because we do not allow ourselves time with others. You are not alone. There are many other people going through a similar experience. Although your relationship with your loved one is special, other people can understand. Take the risk to ask someone over for coffee or tea. Share with them.
- Take time to look through picture albums. Gather family to share stories. Make a new tradition during the dreary months of winter for family to gather for an evening of remembering. The holidays are over and the pressure is off. Maybe other people are feeling the same way and are afraid to talk about it.
- Try a grief support group. Sometimes all we need is to know other people hear us and understand. A group can help you to know you are normal.
- Read ... favorite stories, comedies, novels, or information about grief to understand your own reactions better. Somehow reading about such topics helps us know we are not alone. You can look for grief materials in your local library, church, or local TCF chapter.
- Take good care of yourself. Eat right, rest and pamper your body. This goes for any season. Your body is under a tremendous amount of stress in adjusting to your loss.
- Since grief affects us physically, paying attention to our bodies is important. Whether you prefer to do things alone or with others, physical activity helps. Taking a walk, doing simple aerobics, indoor swimming, playing racquetball or other activities can help you keep your body ready for the continued adjustment to loss. Feeling better physically can make a difference.
- If you feel sad and need to cry, know that is a normal reaction. You are not weak if you need to show your emotions.
- Write a letter to your loved one. Sometimes we need to communicate with them. Going to the cemetery is okay and normal. If the weather prevents that, a letter can be very helpful.
- Remember that you will survive this loss. The pain and ache can seem like it will last forever. The intensity will lessen in time, although you will always remember your loved one. Time does not necessarily "heal" all wounds, but it can help us adjust to the change. Take it minute by minute ... then day by day. From TCF Newsletter, Pittsburgh, PA

## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

*Birthdays and anniversaries are difficult for bereaved parents, but as long as we live, our children shall also live for they are a part of us in our memories. The children listed below are lovingly remembered and we send our love and support to their families:*

January	
Sandy	Chance
Paul J.	McKinney
Paul J.	McKinney
Zach	Guidry

February	
Rebecca L.	Craig
Ricky	Rousseau

April	
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Adam E.	Loggins
Dennis	Springer

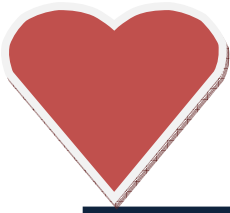
March	
Brian	Dunham
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Daniel J.	Rhoades
Evan G	Riddle
Ricky	Rousseau

May	
William J.	Gibbons
Dylan	Newman
Julius	Torres

## **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>In loving memory of <b><i>April Warren Page</i></b></p> <p>Murray and Iris - Parents</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Anastasia Stefadouros</i></b></p> <p>George and Becky - Parents</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Aubrey Livingston</i></b></p> <p>Matt and Christina - Parents</p>
<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Brian Dunham</i></b></p> <p>Stephen and Dorothea - Parents</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Bridget Meenan</i></b></p> <p>Lon and Deborah McDaniel</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Aubrey Livingston</i></b></p> <p>Gunter and Anne Livingston - Grandparents</p>
<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Dylan Newman</i></b></p> <p>Amber Reichardt and Nana</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Ben Larnerd</i></b></p> <p>Herb and Jane Larnerd - Parents</p>	<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Jason McKinney</i></b> <b><i>Paul McKinney</i></b></p> <p>Tom and Sandra McKinney - Parents</p>
<p>In loving memory of <b><i>Ben Larnerd and Cory Woodson</i></b></p> <p>Robert and Nancy Sharp - Grandparents</p>		



### Valentine Message

*I send this message to my child who no longer walks this plane,  
A message filled with love yet also filled with pain.*

*My heart continues to skip a beat when I ponder your early  
death*

*As I think of times we'll never share I must stop to catch my  
breath.*

*Valentine's Day is for those who love and for those who receive  
love, too*

*For a parent the perfect love in life is the love I've given you.*

*I'm thinking of you this day, my child, with a sadness that is  
unspoken*

*As I mark another Valentine's Day with a heart that is forever  
broken.*

**Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX**



**Microsoft Clip Art**

## Upcoming Programs

<b>February</b>	<i>Feb 19 – “Ask It Basket”</i>
<b>March</b>	<i>Mar 18 – “Tell Your Story” - Small Group Discussions</i>
<b>April</b>	<i>Apr 15 – “The New Normal”</i>
<b>May</b>	<i>May 20 – “How Grief Affects Family Relationships”</i>
<b>June</b>	<i>June 17 – “Anger &amp; Guilt – The Gifts that Keep on Giving”</i>

**I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge;  
That myth is more potent than history;  
That dreams are more powerful than facts;  
That hope always triumphs over experience;  
That laughter is the only cure for grief;  
And I believe that love is stronger than death.**

Robert Fulghum from All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, Montgomery Area Chapter TCF, Feb 2010

**TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:**

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We do understand.

**TO OUR OLD MEMBERS:**

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick.

TCF is here to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you.



*Clip Art Microsoft*

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

This Newsletter is published by the Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to [newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org).