

Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

Herb's Hodgepodge

Herb

Co-Leader

Ray and I have been following the adventures of Alan Pederson and his wife Brenda (from his web site, <http://www.everashleymusic.com/news.html>) as they travel the country performing in memory of his daughter Ashley. For those that missed the concert here in Huntsville, he played several familiar songs from his original two CD's; introduced us to his new CD, "More Songs from the Journey"; and concluded with his famous and moving song, "Tonight I Hold This Candle". Unfortunately, Alan has committed to a hectic schedule and will not be able to attend the national conference this year.

TCF Huntsville is moving to Renasant Bank starting **June 15th** with a new meeting time of **4:00 pm**. It's located at 4245 Balmoral Drive (off Airport Rd) in Huntsville. Check the web site or call myself or Ray for details.

The Huntsville Madison County Mental Health Center, on south Parkway, has constructed a labyrinth that is open free of charge to the public. A labyrinth is

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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

AccidentPam
(256) 534-1873
accident@tcfhuntsville.org

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb
(256) 883-0997
substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org

Suicide Ray
(256) 650-0381
suicide@tcfhuntsville.org

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>
Email tcf@tcfhuntsville.org

Additional Area Resources:

Hospice HOPE Huntsville
(256) 650-1212

TCF National Office
(877) 969-0010



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not a maze, but a circular path with one way in to the center and one way out. Many exist today in churches and parks and are used to help achieve a contemplative state. Walking among the turns, one loses track of direction and of the outside world, and thus quiets his mind. Jane and a close friend walked the local labyrinth on Mother's day weekend; I have asked her to write about her experience for our newsletter.

I went to the local botanical garden's nature center on opening day this spring and managed to get several new pictures of butterflies. A couple of them are included in this edition; I hope you like them.

In 2005 I met a man named Rob Anderson at the national conference in Boston. We have kept in touch over the years and he has graciously given us permission to reprint his story about the murder of his son, Brendon, through a father's eyes.

At TCF, we are anxiously awaiting July for the National Conference to begin in Nashville. Conference registration is open both on-line and by paper application; reserve your hotel now too. Locally, we solicit your help. Send in your ideas, suggestions, topics, material, likes and dislikes. 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.

Jane L.

Member TCF Huntsville Area

The Mother's Day commercials had begun. Some tug at painful memories; most I just ignore. I don't celebrate Mother's Day though I do remind myself that the founder never had any children.

My workplace sent an e-mail of a different sort, acknowledging that for some of us the day can be filled with conflicting emotions. (That's for sure!) The e-mail invited us to a Mother's Day labyrinth walk.

The idea of an ancient and spiritual experience appealed to me at this time. (Who knows about next year?) While walking the labyrinth, I tried to concentrate on the connections between the heavens and the earth or between the physical and spiritual. I

did find it to be a relaxing even emotionally soothing experience.

On Monday morning I heard several of my co-workers being asked how their Mother's Day was. I realized that this year, I had an answer. I would say, "I walked the labyrinth." We were invited to walk for our Mothers, but I walked it for my child, my son Ben.

Ben's Mom – Jane

Ed Note: The labyrinth is not a maze, but a circular path with only one way into the center and one way out. The illustration below is one of several different labyrinth designs.



Memorial Day

For each grave
Where a soldier lies at his rest

For each prayer
That is said today out of love

For each sigh
For remembering someone who died

Let us also give thought to
The mothers and fathers
The brothers and sisters
The friends and the lovers
Whom death has left behind.

Sascha Wagner



To Lose a Child

by Rob Anderson, Special to the Beacon News

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Ed Note: The following column is written by the father of Brendon Anderson, whose murder - now a decade old - remains unsolved. Brendon, 21, and another man, 21-year-old Elias "Junior" Calcano, were shot to death March 16, 1998; their bodies were then burned and left in an alley.

The anniversary of Bren's death is today. Ten years ago on March 16 at 4:15 p.m. I got (my wife) Kath's call -- "Brendon's gone, Brendon's gone." A depth of suffering I never knew existed entered my life. That call still on occasion pounds me into submission and I surrender to its reality.

This year, more than most, weighs heavily on me. Ten years is a calendar milestone. A decade, a threshold of sorts and a reminder of the time I've spent without Bren in my arms. It has to do with memories. Just as I can't, and don't want to, get away from the many good ones, I also can't, but often want to, get away from the really tough ones.

I vividly recall the hours after Kath's call. Driving home from Chicago at rush hour on a Monday afternoon. Getting off the expressway thinking the side streets would be quicker; they weren't. Deny, deny, deny and struggling desperately not to pull over and weep myself into a coma. I remember staring at my hands wondering if I'd be able to make them function and get me home. My body felt separated from my mind.

Finally getting home and collapsing into Kath's arms, numb and fighting a truth we refused to believe. The trip to the morgue, stomach boiling, heart pounding at what I didn't want to see. And when I did, not recognizing my son because of the fire.

"It's not him, that's not my boy." Was it the fire or was it me holding on to my denial for a few more seconds? "Show me his stomach." Trembling I left the room as they rearranged the sheets. I returned to have all hope of the mistake I'd hoped for disappear as I saw Bren's initials tattooed on his sweet, soft skin. His left hand was sticking out from under the sheet as if to say, "See ya Dad, sorry for the trouble I've caused."

Kneeling, tears staining my shirt, I took his cold hand in mine, kissed it and held it to my cheek. "Goodbye Bren, goodbye Bren; I love you so much."

There are two words that now encompass my life in relation to Brendon. They are sorrow and joy. Sorrow like no other from his death; joy like no other from his life. This year the scale tilts more intensely toward sorrow than most. Bren's death destroyed a part of

me never to return. Part of me was amputated. An amputee without any physical challenges. Mine are challenges of the heart; inward, yet no less daunting. But through it all I've managed to adapt and can now proudly say, "I am a grief survivor."

I survive because of Brendon's life. When I was able to understand what caused my sorrow, which is my love, I transitioned from a grief-stricken dad to a grateful dad. Grateful for 7,912 days of the physical life of one terrific son. Grateful for the power of love that heals me. I did not become a victim and let death win. I refused to let death take all of Bren. It got his body, which is huge, but it got no more and never will. Bren's life gives me my memories, his life force and my love. Those never die, those will always live. Death's not as powerful as it thinks it is if we don't let it be.

This time of year death and sorrow are formidable foes armed with countless ways to attack my joy. I don't mind being sad because my sadness no longer dominates; it only visits temporarily. What's comforting is knowing, yes I now know this, that I will once again be victorious over death after today passes and Bren's life surges into mine. The key to recovery is battling grief until the memories and love bring joy more often than they bring sorrow. All bereaved parents must decide which way the scale will tilt.

Not having our son to touch, smell, see and hear will forever be painful -- sorrowfully painful. That's my reality and I accepted it years ago. But my reality also encompasses laughter, good times, tenderness, joy beyond joy and memories that comfort me and make me feel good. I feel good about Brendon. I will always feel good about Brendon.

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A Sibling Perspective

Brothers and sisters speak

SIBLINGS

Happy Birthday Pete

by Sara Kaylor

Ed Note: Sara is the daughter of Shari and Jerry, members of TCF Huntsville. She writes in memory of her brother, Pete, on his birthday.

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Peter was always an independent child. However, his type of independence was one that was always secretly envied by all his peers, because Pete was not afraid to express his creativeness and individuality. In his preschool years, Pete felt

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completely comfortable going to the grocery store wearing his Batman cape with his cowboy boots, and saw the world as being full of opportunity to get rid of "bad guys". In fact, most of his childhood was spent as either Batman, a cowboy chasing Indians and exploring never before seen parts of the Wild, Wild West, or as a special agent police officer similar to Dick Tracy. Pete's imagination was overflowing with curiosity, and when it came to exploring various outlets for that curiosity, the world had no boundaries!

This month, on May 20, Pete would have celebrated his 21st birthday, which is no doubt a significant "mile marker" birthday in and of itself. As a college student, turning 21 represents the final stage between adolescence and adulthood, and student's relationships with their parents begin to change into more of a friendship. Even right up to his illness, occurring at the age of 19, Pete continued to express his creativity through song writing, music, poetry, guitar playing, and a deep love of history.

A student at the University of Alabama, Pete was struggling to decide what he wanted to do with his life as an adult, and wavered between majoring in political science (with the intent to someday go to law school) and mathematics. Indeed, his relationships with his parents and me, his sister, began to grow and mature, and I remember viewing Pete for the first time as an adult.

In the two weeks between his illness and death, Pete made some very mature and adult decisions about his life and his death that made me realize just how strong and independent my brother had become. It was difficult to look at him, lying in his hospital bed, making those adult decisions about his life, and to avoid picturing the adorable blonde headed little boy dressed as a Batman cowboy.

Birthdays can be difficult when you have recently lost a loved one. They serve as a time for reflecting on the memories of your loved one, but can also at times be unpleasant reminders of your loss. I truly believe that we can honor and celebrate one's life by focusing on the years we have spent with them, rather than the years since they have been gone. This year for his birthday, I am choosing to remember Peter's childhood, and to reflect on all the laughs, smiles, tears and memories that our family shared together over the years. So perhaps this year I will make a Batman cake and eat cowboy-baked beans in honor of the beautiful, creative, and independent life that Peter lived!

Sara

Grief Quote:

There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief.

*Aeschylus; Ancient Greek Playwright
(525BC-456BC)*

Almost a Whisper

There was almost a whisper that solemn night
All happenings frozen in time
For a woman who had so long dreamed
All shattered as crystal on cement
For this was to be the most magical of days;

A daughter to be born unto her

A daughter to love

A daughter to watch grow

A daughter to nurture

A daughter to hold

On this day a daughter was born unto her

This woman was given a chance

She had her daughter to hold

If only for a few short moments

She had her daughter to love

This love will be forever in her heart

This love will never die

This little girl was given the time to say her final
goodbyes

At the same time as she said her first hellos

The life-filled, long awaited scream of virgin lungs

Was not heard

Instead there was almost silence

Almost because this little girl could not leave
unheard

There was a whisper, or almost a
whisper on those tiny lips

That night

A whisper louder than any crack
of thunder to the ears of the

Loving Mother

A whisper that said, "I am here,
acknowledge me, and don't forget me,
for I must go, I must say goodbye."

In a whisper was said what many
cannot achieve in a lifetime

In a whisper a little girl's life was lived.

Jennifer Wessner -TCF, Regina, SK, Canada



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...

Evan

Son of Pam
Jun. 04 – Nov. 17

Adam E.

Son of Danny & Becky
Jun. 11 – Apr. 26

David C.

Son of Chris & Jeanne
Jun. 18 – Aug. 08

Becky L.

Daughter of Lillian
Feb. 05 – Jun. 19

Candace A.

Daughter of Mark & Sheila
Oct. 11 – Jun. 29

Shelby

Daughter of Mark & Gigi
Nov. 29 – Jul. 01

Ian Scott

Son of Jerry & Sharon
Oct. 21 – Jul. 07

Gregory L.

Son of Greg & Tammy
Aug. 05 – Oct. 21

April A.

Daughter of Murray & Iris
Aug. 08 – Nov. 07

Cory

Son of Ray & Diane
Aug. 24 – Nov. 13

Our Stars of HOPE

Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in Heaven where the love of our children shines down to let us know they are with us



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.

In loving memory of

David

Chris & Jeanne - Parents

In loving memory of

Ricky

Virginia - Mother

In loving memory of

Peter

Jerry & Shari - Parents

In loving memory of

Ben

Herb & Jane – Parents
Nancy & Robert - Grandparents

In loving memory of

Cory

Nancy & Robert - Grandparents

Donations and Remembrance Gifts are tax deductible and may be sent to:
TCF Huntsville Area – See page 6 for mailing address

Calendar of Events

2008

June	June 15 – Monthly meeting: Balloon Release: Open Discussion
July	July 18-20 National Conference Nashville, TN July 20 – Monthly Meeting: Ask it Basket
August	August 17 – Monthly Meeting: Conference Review, Open Discussion
September	September 21 – Monthly Meeting: Memory Triggers

Note Change: TCF Huntsville meetings are held at 4:00PM on the third Sunday of each month at:
Renasant Bank (Community Room)
4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)
Huntsville, AL 35801

Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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

“While walking the labyrinth, I tried to concentrate on the connections between the heavens and the earth or between the physical and spiritual. I did find it to be a relaxing even emotionally soothing experience.”

Quote

Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.
~Nathaniel Hawthorne



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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.