

Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

Herb's Hodgepodge

Herb
Co-Leader

It has been a while since the last edition of our chapter newsletter. Putting this letter together takes some effort including researching the available articles from other journals, getting author reprint permissions from copyrighted material, trying to convince others to share some of their personal experiences, and just simply finding the time. Until we can get a volunteer to help out with the newsletter, we are going to cut back on the number of issues we publish each year.

Over the summer, our chapter has been extremely active. We moved to our new meeting facility at the Renasant bank and by far, it's the best meeting place we have had yet. If you haven't been to a meeting since we moved, I encourage you to come investigate our new "digs".

In June we had our second annual balloon launch. I took a couple of pictures against the royal blue sky and put one in this letter. I think Ray is going to put some on our web site gallery in the near future. For me, taking a picture of someone else releasing 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

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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balloon is not hard, but when I have to let go of that string myself, symbolizing letting go of Ben, I always get a lump in my throat.

July brought some mixed messages with a rollercoaster ride of highs and extreme lows. Several of us went to Nashville to attend the TCF National conference. Jane and I have been to four now and we have made a new tradition of using this time at least once a year to spend some concentrated time with Ben. With each workshop, key note speaker, sharing session, and candle light ceremony, we can think about Ben and at the same time feel loved and not judged by the 1,400 other bereaved parents that are with us. My personal favorite part of the conference is the last day walk to remember. You will find a picture of the walk inside the letter. In fact, one of our newest members actually went to Nashville prior to attending her first chapter meeting. Her thoughts are included inside.

That same weekend, our members and friends Tom and Sandra were enjoying an anniversary cruise when they got the news that their son Jason had died. Jason's brother Paul died less than 2 years ago and they found themselves right back on square one. Tom and Sandra, as well as our newest members, are in need of our love and support more than ever.

Over the next few months, we are going to talk about memory triggers, signs from our children, and the holidays. We are also anticipating having a joint candle light ceremony in December with the local Hospice Hope group at the Hospice facility. 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.

8-8-08

Many people were talking about this date and especially with the Olympics starting that date. I wonder what that date meant to you. It was a special day and somewhat sad day for us. Our daughter, April, who died 21 months ago of cancer, would have been 25 years old on 8-8-08. She always considered 8 as her special number and had told friends about her 25th birthday that would be on 8-8-08.

We talked about what we could do and how we could remember April on her special day. Our faith tells us that she was celebrating in a most wonderful way, but of course we wanted her here with us and missed her terribly. As many of you know it is difficult to know what to do for birthdays. We chose to make a special decoration commemorating her 25th birthday to take to the cemetery. We also placed balloons near her grave. We released a balloon at the cemetery and watched it as it rose very high in a bright, blue, beautiful morning sky. We also put a poster on the front porch with her picture and hung a “Happy Birthday” balloon in front of our house. In the evening before sunset, we released another balloon. We watched as it headed straight for an early rising moon. It was an emotional experience.

Another neat thing that happened that day was confirmation of the awarding of the scholarship in April's memory. We had set up a nursing scholarship at the University of Alabama in Huntsville to be given in memory of April since she was a junior nursing student at the time of her diagnosis of esophageal cancer. We received a call on 8-8-08 asking for our input into who the first recipient would be. The decision was made that day so the first scholarship in memory of April will be awarded within days of her 25th birthday.

A young couple at church, who were friends with April, had a baby born on 8-9-06, a few months before April died. They chose to name their baby

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girl after April and we were invited to her birthday party which happened to be on August 8. It was a big decision whether to go, but I decided to go. It was fun to see the young couples with small children, but it was sad to think that April should have been among them. These young people have been very supportive. But I must admit that I cried all the way home at the loss of April and her future. Yes, 8-8-08 has come and gone but our memories of our dear April will continue in our hearts forever.

April's Mom – Iris
Member TCF Huntsville Area

My First Conference

Ed Note: The following column is written by Leeta, mother of Emily and new member of TCF Huntsville. Leeta actually attended the TCF Nashville Conference before attending our local chapter meeting. The following is a letter to a dear friend describing her experience at the conference.

My dear sweet Mae Lee,

I thought I'd sit down and write you a little about my weekend.....I am glad that I went.

Two couples, living in Edinburgh, Scotland, lost their 12 year old sons on the same night in the same hospital. A young chaplain got these two couples together. Over 40 years ago, these grieving parents and two other couples, as well as the young chaplain, became the foundation for an organization that has grown over the years to become the world's largest self-help bereavement support organization, The Compassionate Friends. There are local chapters in many cities. There were about 1400 at the conference this year. There is also an international conference.

I did not take a camera as I felt I never wanted another photo to remember a time when Emily was not on earth. As I participated in the "Walk to Remember," I changed my mind, wanting Joe to see what I was seeing. I tried to take a couple of pictures using my cell phone. I was really disappointed they did not turn out. Herb was kind enough to send me some. I want to share these with you.....so many with such a hole in their heart...so many children dying too soon. I have no words....

Iris is my friend who originally invited me to go to the conference. I may have told you that her husband, Murray, had surgery last week. Two-thirds of his stomach was removed and the cancer does not seem to have spread. He is recovering faster than anticipated. I am so very thankful for that. Iris is such a dear and has given much of herself and many hours providing a compassionate listening ear and

sound counsel. Her precious daughter, April, died in November, 2006, of cancer of the esophagus. I took April's picture to put on the remembrance board right next to Emily. What amazing smiles!

I am definitely tired physically and emotionally. The speakers and workshops lasted a very solid 2 ½ days. I could have chosen not to do everything but I wanted to take full advantage of the opportunity. Someone made the comment that they were glad I was going on a "retreat." Well, I could never describe it as a retreat or as fun or restful. The nearest word would be "rehab." Also, I can not say I experienced a significant change, but I do seem to have a little glimmer of hope that possibly, eventually, I will be in a more manageable pain. The speakers and workshop presenters were all excellent. The panel discussions were carried out in a very fine way. There were two banquets and the food was very good. There was a candlelight ceremony as well as the "walk to remember." Both were moving beyond words.

I guess the part I could have done without is the music. The words sung were overwhelmingly sad to me and I did not see any benefit. Kind of funny, a lady next to me said that was her favorite part. It just goes to show that although we were all suffering an indescribable loss, we all grieve differently.

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A Grandparent's Perspective

Your Silence is Deafening

by Donna Ash

Ed Note: Donna is the mother of Bambi, a member of TCF Huntsville. She writes in memory of her grandson, Daniel. Copyright ©September 2008

You were my earthly sunshine and song
Dressed in laughter, light and joy.
Being near your cheerful spirit
Made my heart soar with delight.

Your love filled me with happiness,
Wrapped me in warmth,
Touched my very essence
With youth and bless'ed serenity.

Your energy and enchantment
Captivated my time and thoughts
With a promise of adventure today,
Expectation for tomorrow.

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Your laughter was contagious
Everyone enjoyed your endearing ways
Talents, inspirations and dreams were yours
Until that fateful night..

Without warning or a tiny good bye,
Our precious angel took flight,
Beginning a brand new journey,
Leaving friends behind.

Foggy comprehension moved us through agonizing,
Months of blackness, grief and despair.
The abrupt empty silence
Raw, violent and overwhelming!

Torrents of tears spill incessantly,
Hungering for Daniel, day and night,
Rivers of salty pain
Flow toward his presence

Gratefully, God gives cherished peace in knowing
Our special one is living in heaven,
Frolicking with the angels
Loved by our Lord Jesus

Still, my dear angel, you are constantly missed
There is no end to my yearning.
Until we meet again
Grandson, your silence is deafening.

Donna Ash



Grief Quotes:

May the wings of the butterfly kiss the sun
And find your shoulder to light on,
To bring you luck, happiness and riches
Today, tomorrow and beyond.
~Irish Blessing

There is no grief like the grief that does not speak
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; American Poet (1807-1882)

Suppressed grief suffocates, it rages within the
breast, and is forced to multiply its strength.
Ovid; Ancient Roman Poet (43 B.C-A.D. 17)

He that conceals his grief finds no remedy for it
Turkish Proverb

Every one can master a grief but he that has it
William Shakespeare

Indian Summer

This may well be the softest time of all.
Does mild September still surprise your mind
With memories you thought you would not have?

Believe me, friend, that (after many tears)
This may be the softest time of all.

Legacy

Memories are a legacy of hope and courage
Left to help us go on when the giver is gone.

Untitled

The past is part of us
And our future.
He who tells us to forget
Does not understand
The past
Or
The future.

*Ed Note: These poems are by Sascha Waggoner. The
Compassionate Friends holds the copyright to her collection*

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	Brian Son of Steve & Dorothy Nov. 25 - Mar.12	Daniel J. Son of Larry & Bambi Sep.14 - Mar. 29	Nathan A. Son of Vickie Dec.22 - Sep.17
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	David H. Son of Dave & Jeanette Oct.30 – Oct.30	Emily D Son of Joe&Leeta Oct.24 – Dec.07	Cory Son of Ray & Diane Aug 24 – Nov. 13



TCF
Walk to Remember
Nashville, TN
July 20, 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.

In loving memory of David Chris & Jeanne - Parents	In loving memory of Ricky Virginia - Mother	In loving memory of Paul & Jason Tom & Sandra - Parents
In loving memory of Adam Danny & Becky – Parents	In loving memory of David Chris & Jeanne - Parents	In loving memory of Cory Nancy & Robert - Grandparents
In loving memory of Ben Herb & Jane – Parents Nancy & Robert - Grandparents		In loving memory of Brian Steve & Dorothy - Parents

Donations and Remembrance Gifts are tax deductible and may be sent to:
 TCF Huntsville Area – See page 7 or 8 for mailing address

My First Conference - Continued from Page 3

When I arrived, I met Herb, the leader of the Huntsville chapter of The Compassionate Friends. In talking with me, he told me that as time goes, it generally took two years just to recover "function." I thought that night that if I didn't hear another thing, that statement was worth the trip. Even though I have told many people that I am "functioning," I had said to Joe earlier in the week that I might as well just plan on doing things for half a day because that is all I can manage. As the conference progressed, I did hear things that I believe will be helpful. I took lots of notes and came home with lots of books. I also met many people. Every speaker and every workshop, every banquet, and during all other meals, I sat by different people and heard a little of their story and shared Emily with them. I saw that I possibly can make it to a local group meeting. It seems very selfish but as I am in almost unbearable pain, I just didn't think I could stand to hear the pain of other parents. When anyone I was talking to heard that Emily had just died this past December, they just grabbed me and hugged me tight. They realized how raw and fresh my grief is. A survey was reported in some national magazine that people generally expect me to be "over it" in about six weeks! That is so very ridiculous. I grieved longer than that over Pork Chop, our dog! One very well meaning fellow Christian told me it would take about six months! Lonnie, my counselor, has told me over and over that I do not need to expect too much of myself. I can not rush it and it will take a very long time...years. Somehow having that validated was beneficial

To give you an idea of the type speakers: Darrell Scott, whose daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, was the first victim of the Columbine High School tragedy in 1999 and Bruce Murakami whose wife and daughter died in a car wreck in 2003 after a teenage driver street-raced down a major city thoroughfare and slammed into their van. His is a story of forgiveness and he and the young man have created a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching young drivers about responsibility – on the road and in life. There is a Hallmark movie about this that was shown a couple of times last month. These are just two of so many.

I attended many workshops: The Dawn of Our Grief: Early Years of Bereavement, Sudden Death, Coping with "If Onlys" and "I Should Haves," Coping Strategies for Surviving Parents of Only/All Children, and more. All were conducted by parents who have lost children. There were panel discussions and sharing sessions. I participated in one class entitled "As if I Don't Have Enough Grief Already" involving dealing with other people and

conducted by a professor and doctor of psychology. I also was able to talk a little bit one-on-one with him.

As I sat next to various parents in grief, I heard all the ways their children had died....Melissa, age 17, and Emily, age 14, sisters and their parents only children, died together in a car accident, several from ages 11 to 21 who took their own life, Rebecca, a pretty five year old who had a heart attack, a 2 ½ year old who choked on a grape...the skin became stuck in his throat too deeply to reach by going through his mouth and not deep enough for the Heimlich maneuver to work, a college student in dance class went through a window and fell three stories to her death, Matthew killed on his bicycle, Dean died from carbon monoxide due to an improperly installed muffler, some after long illnesses and others suddenly after brief illness....I could go on and on... Most of these people lost their children three to 18 years ago. They all looked at pictures I had, listened and seemed to want to hear about my sweet Emily. All hugged me and told me various things. They did not believe they would ever "get over it." They knew they would always be sad but it had gotten better, not easy, but easier, never pain free, but manageable. All said it took a long time. Many said the second year was in fact worse than the first. Several said they felt that as long as they were alive, their child would be remembered. No one wants their child forgotten and hearing their name is the sweetest sound for a surviving parent. That is one of the hardest things about not having other children or grandchildren. Who will remember? What will happen to Emily's "treasures?" I try to keep in mind that all these things, her Belize photos and writings, her school scrapbooks and memorabilia, her wedding dress and pictures are all earthly and will vanish anyway. Having 100 other children would not make up for not having Emily, but it would answer the question of who gets our treasured Emily pictures. I want Emily. I want Emily's babies. I have lost my precious Emily. I have lost all my grandchildren.

I have thought so many times that I have such faith and confidence that I will be with Emily again so why am I so very devastated. I have come to realize that having faith can not keep my heart from breaking and missing my precious Emily. I do know I have no choice but to stay and I do know that Joe and I need each other. Every morning I wake up and think, "I am still here." I could not go through the day without the deep abiding assurance I have that Emily is in God's care and one day, I will wake up and that will be my last day here. Every day, I am one day closer to Emily.

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My First Conference - Continued from Page 6

Words can not tell you of our appreciation for loving us and praying for us. You are so very precious and so very dear.

Will my tears forever flow? John answers while in exile on the island called Patmos. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4

With much love from the depths of my heart,

Leeta

Ed Note: Leeta is a new member of the TCF Huntsville Area Chapter and lost her daughter Emily in December 2007



TCF
Candle Lighting
Ceremony
Nashville, TN
July 19, 2008

As the holidays approach, consider giving a donation to TCF Huntsville Area Chapter in memory of your child, sibling, or grandchild. We will be holding a candle light ceremony on Sunday, December 14th, with the local Hospice Hope group. It has been a very moving event in the past and is meant to be a dedicated time for us to remember our children.

All donations are tax deductible. Use this form or include the following information and mail to:

Please include your child's name _____

Your name and address _____

TCF Huntsville
c/o H. Larnerd
7801 Chadwell Rd
Huntsville, AL 35802

Calendar of Events

2008

September	September 21 – Monthly Meeting: Memory Triggers
October	October 19 – Handling the Holidays
November	November 16 – Signs from our Children
December	December 14- Candle Light Service (Place TBD) December 21- No TCF Meeting

*May the wings of the butterfly kiss the sun
And find your shoulder to light on,
To bring you luck, happiness and riches
Today, tomorrow and beyond."*



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

Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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

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.