



The Compassionate Friends Fayetteville Area Chapter



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Better Than We've Ever Been



*"There's been a lot of things
said about me,
since that awful day.
I'm not the person that I used
to be,
and that I will never be the
same.
That's true—no doubt
But I know more what life is
about..."*

The above is the first verse from a song called Better Than I've Ever Been by Cindy Bullens from her CD, ***Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth***. I had the great pleasure of meeting Cindy at the TCF National Conference in Arlington, VA in July. She sang at the Friday evening banquet and held a fantastic workshop on music in grief, which I attended. Her daughter Jessie died on March 23, 1996, shortly

after her 11th birthday. Cindy is a singer/songwriter and, outside of her family, music had been her life. When Jessie died of Hodgkin's only months after her diagnosis, Cindy swore that she would never write another song. But approximately four months after Jessie's death, she picked up her guitar and began "aimlessly strumming cords just to hear the comforting sound of the instrument." Somehow without any thought on her part, a song emerged which became the title of her CD. She said that she was "at once horrified and energized"; on the one hand, she was energized by the making of music, which was so much a part of her, but horrified at the same time that she had just written a song about her child's death. She soon realized that her only inspiration would be her "absolute love for Jessie and the absolute agony of life without her."

I think we can relate to that in different ways. In the early days, months and even years of our grief, we can't begin to imagine that we could ever do anything meaningful again. We had lost our greatest gift. We had in-

vested so much love in this person to whom we gave life and who, for some incomprehensible reason, is now gone. Life, for us, had lost its purpose; what was the point? As Cindy sings in the song, "I've Got to Believe in Something" --*"Everything I planned didn't work out like I thought it would."* So many hopes and plans for the future, our dreams for our children shattered. We visualized a world for them with the thought that some day we would see and be part of the milestones of their lives; watch them go off to school and maybe college, fall in love, perhaps marry and have children, our grandchildren. We never envisioned a world that did not include these things.

How do we reinvest our lives, rethink a future very different from the one we had hoped? This is not something that happens quickly. It is a long journey with many peaks and valleys--that roller coaster ride of emotions that we so often talk about. Sometimes we wonder if we are making any progress at all.

.....Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

<i>Better Than We've Ever Been.</i>	1
<i>Meeting information</i>	1
<i>Our Credo. continued from page 1 Better Than We've Ever Been.</i>	2
<i>Siblings Walking Together. TCF 39th National Conference</i>	3
<i>Love Lives On.</i>	4
<i>Love Gifts, National Office information Regional coordinator info.</i>	5
<i>Father's Day</i>	6
<i>Roller Coaster. Mother's Day Again</i>	7
<i>Birthdays and Angel Dates</i>	8 & 9



MEETINGS



First Tuesday of each month at **7:00 pm**
January through May meetings will be held in room 224 of the General Class Building at Fayetteville Technical Community College. 2817 Ft. Bragg Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303 (across the street from the Barbeque Hut). Current meeting location and information will always be posted on our website www.tcffayetteville.org
Contact Jennifer German at (910) 245-3177 or jojegerman@outlook.com if you have any questions.

Our Credo

We need not walk alone.
 We are The Compassionate Friends.
 We reach out to each other with love,
 With understanding, and with hope.
 The 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
 Just 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 we 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 deep depression;
 While 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 the 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
 to 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.

Others may see it, but we feel we are only moving forward at a snail's pace, if at all. My friends helped by accentuating the positive steps that I had made, ones that I could not recognize. As the saying goes, we can't see the forest from the trees; in our case, because we are so consumed by our own sadness it is hard not to be blinded by it. They pointed out how I was making progress by getting through an entire day without crying; when my first thought in the morning was not that Nina was dead; when I could go down the macaroni and cheese aisle at the grocery store without having to flee, and many more. All may seem insignificant to those who have not "been there", but to us who have, are very significant indeed. Every one step forward, two steps back, we are still gaining, even if just a little. After the reality hits that we cannot control what happened, we can then decide what we are going to do with this new life we have been handed. We aren't the people that we used to be, nor will we ever be the same. We are changed in ways we would have never imagined. We have learned where our priorities should be. We sweat the small stuff less, put less importance on materialistic things, and value each other's uniqueness. We prize our family and close friends. We are more compassionate and less impatient. We know how precious and, too often, how fleeting life is. As one of the members of our group said, "I had to decide whether I was going to be bitter or better, and I chose better." What better way to honor our children than to be a better friend, a better family member, a better citizen; to reach out our hand or give a shoulder to cry on to a newly bereaved parent, in a way that only we as bereaved parents can do. I truly believe that these things make our children very proud of us.

The last verse says: *"There's a curious feeling rising up from the dark, some kind of strength I've never had. But I'd trade it in a second to have you back, I've got to make some good out of the bad."* Yes, we'd trade it in a second to have them back...doesn't that just say it all?

"I laugh louder, cry harder, take less time to make up my mind, and I love deeper, go slower, I know what I want and what I don't. Maybe I'll be better than I've ever been...better than I've ever been." (Refrain from "Better Than I've Ever Been".)

Though not the life we had hoped, wished and dreamed of, at some point each of us will know that with the help of other Compassionate Friends, the love of family and our children, (and lots of patience with ourselves) perhaps we too will choose to be better than we've ever been.

Cathy L. Seehuetter
 TCF St. Paul, MN

We quickly find there are no words to describe the experience of losing a child. For those who have not lost a child, no explanation will do. For those who have, no explanation is necessary.

~ Mary Lingle

*Sibling Walking
Together*

(Formerly The Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the death of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us. But have patience with us. Sometimes we need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we feel we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.

Yet, we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving children of The Compassionate Friends.

*Death leaves a heartache
no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory
no one can steal.*

~ found on a headstone in
Ireland



The Compassionate Friends 39th National Conference on July 8-10, 2016 will be in Scottsdale, Arizona, "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love" is the theme of this year's event. The 2016 Conference will be held at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. Keep updated with details on the national website www.compassionatefriends.org as well as on [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#).

TO MY SISTER

You touched us all, you loved us all,

Forever giving, forever caring,

Forever forgiving.

Never wanting in return.

Blessed are those who shared your life

Rich are those who carry your memories.

Please rest now; your chores we will finish.

'Til we meet again . . .

Cindy Keltz
Arlington Heights, IL

Love Lives On

Every second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day ... I think of you!
Why you left? What I could have done? ... And now, what do I do?

For the first eight months you left me ... my heart knew it was true,
But my mind kept saying "you're not gone" ... the pain made me the fool!

For the second eight months, I told myself ... that you were just away.
I knew that you were coming home ... and I waited for that day.

These last few months I've seen the truth ... you will not be coming home!
For God has called you to his side ... and left me on my own.

If I'd have known you'd be gone this long ... I'd have tried to face my fears.
That only my dreams would hold the door ... where I see you through the years.

We're not meant to bury our babies ... it's life's most tragic flaw.
For it takes a piece of each of us ... and the wounds ... so deep ... so raw.

It's been two years since you chose to leave ... I pray God holds you near.
I hope he knows the man you are ... gentle and sincere!

I'm not sure what to do with my life ... now that you are gone.
Each day is filled with emptiness ... and the pain continues on.

The sleepless nights are much the same ... as the numbness brought by day.
I walk the walk ... talk the talk ... let life bring what it may.

The two years that you've been away ... I've searched my heart and soul.
I've learned that I must carry on ... to keep your memory whole.

So I pray to God he keeps you safe ... until he brings me home.
For I promise, Son, in life or death ... you will never stand alone.

Moving on is unimaginable ... but it's what I have to do.
I know that God will hold my hand ... and, in time, bring me home to you.

It truly is a walk for one ... one that none else can share.
Just promise me, when my time comes ... you'll be waiting for me there.

I love you Brice, more than words can say ... and this I know is true.
That when my journey comes to end ... I'll be standing there with you!

Betsy P. Rush Kron
TCF Anchorage, AK
In Memory of my son, Brice Bobby Kron

Each new life,
no matter how brief,
FOREVER changes the world.

—author unknown



Love Gifts



A Love Gift is a donation to honor a child who has died, or as a memorial for a relative or friend.

The Compassionate Friends depends entirely on voluntary contributions from individuals and organizations to meet chapter expenses. TCF is a 504(c)(3) non-profit organization: all donations are tax deductible. 100% of every dollar donated goes toward chapter expenses.

We thank the following for their kind generosity, love and sharing. There are no dues. We have already paid the ultimate price to be a member.

Inga Hondros in memory of her son Christopher "Chris" Hondros

Mike and Petra Syfrett in memory of their son Archie Kagy

Effie & Donald McPhail in memory of her daughter Erica Graham

Sherry Couey in memory of her son Mark Draughon

If you wish to make a donation or a love gift, please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends, and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394. Please include the name of the child, love one, or friend that you wish the donation to be made in memory or honor of.



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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Compassionate Friends**

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Donna & Ralph Goodrich

704-822-4503 or iluvu2lauren@gmail.com

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husband's this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on June 18, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes
TCF Cincinnati, OH
In Memory of my son, Alex

A million times

I needed you,

A million times

I cried.

If *love alone*

could have *saved you,*

You *never would have died...*

~ Author unknown





The Roller Coaster

As a child I enjoyed the thrill of the roller coaster: gliding up the giant track, reaching the top with a momentary anticipation and the thrill of the quick dropping roll to the bottom of the track. The deep turns, first to the right and then to the left were designed to heighten the anticipation of the next climb and drop. In my childhood mind, these curves, climbs and drops were an isolated experience, temporary and fun. The ride would end.

A few months after my son's death, I dreamed of the roller coaster. But this time it wasn't fun. It was a nightmare of fear, anxiety and pain; I was so paralyzed that I couldn't breathe. That dream was the simple symbolism of life since my son died.

Now I ride a different sort of roller coaster. The climb to the top is a slow, difficult rise to normalcy. The rapid descent to the bottom is yet another terrible setback. I hang onto the bar of sanity on the curves, first one way, then another. I really want to stop this ride, but it is forever. This ride won't end.

Today I recalled that roller coaster dream, in all its vivid detail, and I compare it to the roller coaster that is my life now. Are the highs lower and the lows higher? Are the curves softening? Yes, I believe they are. It's been two years and two months since Todd died. I still weep. Tiny tears still fall unexpectedly. I still have anxiety. I still feel as if the earth has dropped from under me. I still miss talking with my son. I miss seeing him. I ache for that special hug that only my child can give. Yes, I miss my only child very much. My heart has been shattered, my definition of myself has been altered and my loneliness is incomprehensible. But something has changed on the roller coaster of this life.

That something is, of course, me. I work through my grief in many, many ways. I have consciously shifted the paradigms of my life. I have learned to evaluate people from a different perspective. I have become so sensitive to the pain of other parents that I feel it as if it were my own. I have stopped anticipating how I will handle stressful events, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays. I have learned to live without being a part of my grandchildren's lives. I have learned

to keep negative energy and negative people at a far distance. I have learned that a routine provides necessary structure. I have learned to live in the moment, to take joy in simple things, to talk openly about my child's life and to acknowledge the things I cannot change.

As time moves forward, I will continue to accept what is given and give what I can. I know the roller coaster will level out eventually. For as long as I live, I will keep my child with me, in my heart. That's all I can do as I ride this changing roller coaster that is now my life.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Mother's Day Again

It is Mother's Day again.
The day that my first born son became an angel.
Time for remembering Mothers
Time to remember their love for their children
For me it is a reminder of the day you became
an angel
And a piece of my heart went with you
Yes it is Mother's Day again.

It is Mother's Day again.
Time for me to put on my happy face
Time to celebrate me
Time to enjoy my daughter
Tell her how much I love her
Also time for me to remember
My beautiful son who has gone too soon
Pray he knows how much I love him
Yes it is Mother's Day again.

It is Mother's Day again
I will remember the good times with Kevin
I will remember his smiles
I will remember his hugs
I will remember his firsts
but I will remember most of all
His love for me, his sister and his daddy.
So yes it is Mother's Day again.
Kathie Kelly
TCF Fredericksburg, VA
In Memory of my son Kevin

Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Birthday's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:

April

- Joey Jackson April 1
- Christine Gable Powell April 8
- Anthony "Brian" Smith April 10
- Ralph Lanier April 14
- Christopher Eggleston April 15
- Amy Zinsser April 21
- Izhia Kraut April 23
- Scott Tyree April 26
- Andrew Beutelspacher April 28

May

- Gregory Lovings May 7
- Thomas Payne Hollers May 22
- Michael Cline May 28

June

- Michael Pizzarella June 5
- Amy Elizabeth German June 8
- Christopher Hrvoj June 8
- Melissa Thornton June 16
- Christopher Ortega June 20
- James "Randy" Smith June 25



Bereaved Birthdays

Birthdays are a time for celebration
Not a time for tears
But what happens when the birthdays
No longer mark the years?

A birthday marks the moment
A spirit enters earthly life
To share it's special love and joy
And learn from earthly strife.

Before a spirit comes to us
It knows when and how it must depart
It chose it's path carefully
We are honored from the start.

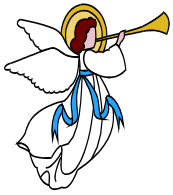
The sadness we now feel
On such a joyous day
Is longing for our loved one's touch
It's natural to feel this way.

For even though the birthdays
No longer mark a spirit's stay
Love continues on forever
To touch us everyday.

So hug your precious memories
Closer to your heart
And honor your beloved spirit child
Who chose you from the start.

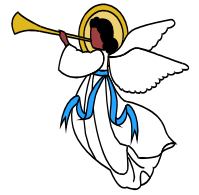
Unknown author





Our Children & Siblings Remembered on Their Angel Date's

Each month some of our members face special but very painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents, grandparents, and siblings of the following children's:



April

Christine Gable Powell April 5

Spencer Walden April 5

Michael Cline April 9

Manzonian Hall April 9

Glenda Hudson April 16

Ian Redshaw April 18

Christopher "Chris" Hondros April 20

Izhia Kraut April 23

Lamont Saffore April 24

May

Hope Parker May 15

Derrell Lee Dean May 17

Thomas Payne Hollers May 22

Lexi Minyon May 25

Christine Bailey May 25

Amber Marie Hall May 26

Robert Stevens May 28

June

Christopher Eggleston June 2

Querokee Vélez June 4

Randy Lee Dalton June 22

Keith Parker June 22



Timothy Bowman June 22

Wayne Tyner, Jr. June 26

Joey Jackson June 29

ANNIVERSARY DATE IN HEAVEN

Your Anniversary date in Heaven is growing near,
And I miss you so much with each passing year.

I think of you and my heart constricts in pain,
And I question whether I'll ever be whole again.

I wonder if you count the time as I do.
Since you left us for Heaven - is it still new to you?

Or does time count in Heaven like it does for us here?

Do we seem far away to you? - or do we feel near?

So many questions arise in my mind.

Questions like:

"Do you miss us since you left us behind?
Is it possible for you to be sad? - for you to feel pain?"

Do you question why this happened?

Do you feel the same?

The answers to my questions will be mine some-day,

As I cross to where you are
through Heaven's pearly gates.

Then I will know the joy that you experience there,

And we will be together, forever in Heaven so fair!

Oh, how I wished God had made a plan,
Where loved ones in Heaven could reach down to man.

Just one simple word - just one gentle touch -
But who am I fooling? Once would never be enough!

There are no words to describe the unspeakable pain,

Of losing a child - Our loss is God's gain!

So, Happy anniversary in Heaven,
my precious child, so dear.

I'm so glad you're there with God ---
if I can't have you here.

-By Faye McCord

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Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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We're on the Web
www.tcffayetteville.org

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Love Gifts

There is no charge for our newsletter, meetings, or lending library, and we depend solely on your contributions. Love gifts can be made in memory of your child, grandchild, or sibling. Your love gift will insure that all who need our newsletter, will receive it.

I wish to make a donation in memory of _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Donated by _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

If you would like to make a donation please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends,
and mail to TCF Fayetteville Area Chapter, 703 Rosebud Court, Vass, NC 28394
Please send form with check. **A donation is not required to submit items for the newsletter.**