

You're Just a Thought Away

Distance takes us far apart
 And darkens my today,
 I have to keep remembering -
 You're just a thought away.
 When the world is too confusing,
 And times are hard to bear,
 I pull your precious meaning,
 Your bright spirit, from the air.
 And if I sometimes drift
 Into a lonely state of mind,
 I gather up the memories
 Of the days now left behind.
 And though you're not beside me,
 I can tap into my heart
 And draw upon the warmth and love
 That now lives while we're apart.
 And with these fond reflections
 On the times when you were near,
 I sense a little bit of what
 it's like to have you here...

Bruce B. Wilmer
TCF, Brisbane Australia

Like the Butterfly

It fluttered above my head
 Weightless in the soft breeze.
 I reached up my hand
 It lit on my finger.

Waving glistening wings gently,
 It looked at me for timeless moments.
 I smiled, reaching deep and
 Finding all those cherished memories.

As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
 I knew we had said hello once more.

Leslie Langford
TCF, North Platte NE



Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday,
 It'd been a while you see.
 And there, without a warning,
 the pain washed over me.

I drove the old way yesterday
 and sadness came on strong,
 taken back by so much feeling,
 since you've been gone so long.

Places seem to lie in wait
 to summon up the tears,
 to say remember yesterday,
 those days when you were here.

Places where you laughed and played
 are places where I cry.
 These places hold the memories
 that will live as long as I.

Genesee Gentry
TCF, Marin County CA
In memory of Lori Gentry

I Am David's Father

I am David Carafos' father, this is his mother.
We are proud to be called David's father and mother, and always will.
David died Sept. 7, 2004 – nine years ago, and we miss him every day.
His life ended too quick, too short.
He had so much more to do, so much more to accomplish.
Don't think you can't mention his name.
We love to talk about David.
When you mention his name, we know he is remembered.
That is wonderful and so important to us.
David was a good boy, not perfect, but who is?
He was caring and friendly, and filled with love.
Often teaching his parents things, that we either forgot or had stopped doing.
As his father, I still try to follow his teachings, and his examples.
David lives on in our hearts, memories, and actions.
I think he has me eat all the chocolate, for him, that he loved.
Not to mention cheering for his Syracuse Orangemen.
A lesson we have been learning, since his death, is how to deal
with the loss, the grief.
Each day is difficult. Different triggers bringing up different emotions.
Each day brings challenges. Each day there are heart aches.
Each day we keep his memory in our hearts.
Talking with others about David, helps keep his memory alive.
Sharing parts of our lives, our story.
Sharing our son with others.
You can call us David's father and mother any time.

**George Carafos
TCF, Rochester NY**



Welcome New Friends

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief. Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable.

A Grieving Parent

A grieving parent is someone who:
never forgets their child no matter how painful the memories are.
A grieving parent is someone who:
yearns to be with their child, but cannot conceive leaving their living ones.
A grieving parent is someone who:
has a part of a heart because the rest is buried with their child.
A grieving parent is someone who:
begs for relief from the memories which plagues them, and then feels guilty when they get it.
A grieving parent is someone who:
pretends to be happy and enjoying life when they are really dying inside.
A grieving parent is someone who:
can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they remember their beloved child.
A grieving parent is someone who:
feels as though they just lost their child yesterday, no matter how much time has passed.
A grieving parent is someone who:
fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to have any more losses.
A grieving parent is someone who:
Sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their heart.
A grieving parent is someone who:
wants to help others who have lost their loved ones
because somehow that loss is theirs all over again..

By Susie Cross

Shared at TCF Rochester NY Candle Lighting, December 2007

No Vacation

There is no vacation from your absence,
Every morning I awake I am a bereaved parent.
Every noon I feel the hole in my heart.
Every evening my arms are empty.
My life is busy now, but not quite full.
My heart is mended now, but not quite healed.
For the rest of my life,
Every moment will be lived without you.
There is no vacation from your absence.

**Kathy Boyette
TCF, Gulf Coast MS**

Love Gifts

Jerome and Susan Kaye



Meeting Location:

Lifetime Care

3111 Winton Road South

(across from Valley Cadillac)

Meeting Days :

Tuesday the 10th & Tuesday the 24th (Sept.)

Tuesday the 8th & Tuesday the 22nd (Oct.)

7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social

7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. - meeting

Contacts:

Brenda Schmidt 585-370-6095

Becky Price 585-346-2441

TCF Regional Coordinator:

Jacquie Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814

TCF National :

877-969-0010 or www.compassionatefriends.org

Send newsletter inputs or web comments to:

Joan Carafos, jcarafos@photikon.com

If you would like to contribute to our Compassionate Friends Chapter, please forward your Love Gifts and Donations to: The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, 130 Portview Circle Rochester, NY 14617

Please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, New York

Sincere Thanks!

To receive this newsletter via e-mail please contact Steve Haupt at shaupt1@rochester.rr.com

See Brenda for TCF Bracelets (\$2.00) and Memorial votive candle holders (\$5.00)

Rochester Chapter TCF Mission:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. Adopted 2-25-12

Honoring Our Stories

A few weeks after our son Nicholas passed away my husband and I attended our very first Compassionate friends meeting. I had read a few books about grief and each of them had mentioned The Compassionate Friends. I went on the national website and found our local chapter. I mentioned this group to my husband and asked if he might be willing to try it out. Fortunately he was.

Before my son's death, I wasn't even aware that such a group existed. The idea of an entire group of people who had all experienced the death of a child sounded painfully intriguing. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be with others who understood what we were going through. Maybe they could give us some answers!

The evening we attended our first meeting was something like stepping into a time warp...we were greeted by two very sweet and soft spoken women. They had us fill out a short questionnaire to briefly tell about us and they asked us to make a nametag with our names and our son's name. Then they showed us into a large meeting room. I couldn't really glance at faces, but I was looking at the other name tags...the first one I saw was oddly one that I had heard before. A little 5 year old girl, Lauren had died just 10 days before Nicholas. She had died just a few doors down from us in the PICU at the hospital. Her parents were there for the first time. Continuing down the table of names, I recognized another...Juliana. She had passed away just over a year ago, she had just turned 3. Her parents had reached out to us during Nicholas' treatment and though we had never met their name jumped out at me immediately.

The moment we stepped through the door, time seemed to slow down and as the minutes ticked passed during the meeting they seemed much gentler than the minutes that had been ticking by since my son's death. Let me try to explain that better- what I mean to say is that since his death, every minute of living was agonizing. It hurt to breathe; it hurt to walk; and to move, to talk, to eat, to sleep (or not sleep). I could feel the weight of every minute of every hour burrowing into my already heavy heart. So the time warp came when I was sitting in a circle of strangers, who had also experienced the most painful thing on earth- the death of their child. They found a way to successfully suspend us all in time for just a few hours. Our daily struggles became lighter. Not, however, because miraculously our troubles were solved or our pain gone, but because we were in a place where it was okay to focus on our child, our grief, our loss, our missing them so. No one or nothing was trying to propel us forward against our will or before we were ready. No guilt, no explaining, just being...

I wouldn't have been able to articulate those thoughts and feelings that evening, but looking back, I now understand the peace that I somehow felt at the end of that meeting.

“The thoughts and feelings that bubble up when someone loved dies often feel heavy and overpowering. Expressing what this experience is like for you-telling the story of your love and your grief-is one way to release the pain that has pierced your heart. Expressing yourself can bring some light into the midst of the dark because it will allow you to feel heard, understood, and loved.” (Dr. Alan Wolfelt, author of “Loving From the Outside In, Mourning From the Inside Out”). That is how that first meeting began for us and how every meeting begins. We are given the opportunity to introduce ourselves and share our child’s story.

When it was our turn, my husband turned to me and said I should start because he can’t talk when he gets choked up. To begin, I introduced myself. Usually, I can start with a little joke about my being a talker, but I couldn’t muster any sarcasm or light-heartedness then. I started Nicholas’ story from the very beginning, the day he was diagnosed. I trudged through month after month of his illness until the day of his very last breath. I didn’t share EVERY detail- the meeting was only 2 hours!!

Throughout the course of the evening I was given the freedom and the opportunity to retell some of the very important aspects of his cancer journey. The chance to do that gave me such a warm and wonderful feeling in and among my sadness. Many of these people did not know my son while he was alive, but my sharing his story allowed them to feel as if they did! My son no longer has the opportunity to go out and share himself with the world- his personality, his talents, his sense of humor, his love of life, but I CAN! I can share his name and his story with everyone I come across every day of my life. I am the one to create his legacy now. By continuing to share him and his story with others, I am creating his legacy and his life lessons can still be taught! I still have a job and responsibility as Nicholas’ mother! Realizing that concept, again not that first night, but over time has played a huge role in my grief journey.

In the beginning of my grief and mourning journey, it was necessary for me to thoroughly tell Nick’s cancer story. I needed to talk about the shock of his diagnosis, the urgency and need for so many procedures, many of the setbacks and side effects. For some reason, that’s who Nicholas became for so long. At support meetings, many parents might have that same need, especially parents who are attending in the beginning of their grief or those that may have tried to out run their grief.

I’m grateful for the growth I’m making alone and through sharing with others, because today when I talk about Nicholas, I talk about the person- the wonderfully intelligent, handsome, athletic, kind, caring, funny boy, who was my son. Not a disease.

Now I am a better listener. I want to hear the stories of the other children that we have said goodbye to. Their stories are just as important for me to hear as they are for their parents to have the opportunity to tell.

Again, without time for reflection, soul-searching, plenty of tears, and beginning to walk through the wilderness of my grief, I wouldn't be able to find these reassuring and positive viewpoints that I can now see. I still have days where I feel defeated and crumbling. My heart still has a huge hole and its continuous ache, but on my strong days my head does know there is some good coming from the tragedy of my son's death.

"After someone you love dies, the creation of renewed meaning and purpose in your life requires that you "re-story" your life. As you know, your grief experience is unique and personal. Although even the most compassionate person cannot completely comprehend what this is like for you, you will find comfort and support when you surround yourself with people who will honor your story of love and loss." "Find people who make you feel safe and will truly listen-who let you share without trying to fix, take away or distract you from what you are feeling," (Dr. Alan Wolfelt, author of "Loving From the Outside In, Mourning From the Inside Out").

This is the unconditional understanding and feeling of TCF. "We need not walk alone." If you need a safe place to share your story where you know that you will always be accepted, there is no better place than The Compassionate Friends. Wolfelt also says, "Honoring your one-of-a-kind story invites you to slow down, turn inward and create the sacred space to do so. Having a place to have your story honored allows you to embrace what needs to be embraced and come to understand that you can and will come out of the dark and into the light. You heal yourself as you tell the tale." ("Loving From the Outside In, Mourning From the Inside Out")

If I hadn't found my local TCF chapter, I'm not sure where I'd be right now. In a world where life is so hard and unpredictable, I love knowing that no matter what, our TCF family will be there whenever I need them.

"This moment, this day, this relationship, this life are exquisite, unique, and unrepeatabe." –Daphne Rose

by Kelly Kovaleski
TCF Rochester NY



Our Children Remembered September, 2013



Birthdays and Remembrance Days

Birthdays

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Amanda Kate Fagan</i> | <i>September 2</i> |
| <i>Brian Nathaniel Vitale</i> | <i>September 4</i> |
| <i>Brian Keith Nelson</i> | <i>September 7</i> |
| <i>Carrie Jean Kubarycz</i> | <i>September 8</i> |
| <i>Michael B. Coons</i> | <i>September 12</i> |
| <i>Peter R. Loewenguth</i> | <i>September 13</i> |
| <i>Rolf Gerard Hallinan</i> | <i>September 13</i> |
| <i>Matthew Gabe Fogarassy</i> | <i>September 14</i> |
| <i>Steven John Fantozzi</i> | <i>September 14</i> |
| <i>Lauren Marie Vassello</i> | <i>September 22</i> |
| <i>Kevin Spoor</i> | <i>September 23</i> |
| <i>Lydia Jeanne Allore</i> | <i>September 25</i> |
| <i>Paul McManus Jr.</i> | <i>September 26</i> |

Remembrance Days

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>David James Cassell</i> | <i>September 1</i> |
| <i>Abigail Leigh Buzard</i> | <i>September 4</i> |
| <i>Joey Giardina</i> | <i>September 5</i> |
| <i>Noel Dorothy</i> | <i>September 5</i> |
| <i>Debra Colleen Willmes</i> | <i>September 6</i> |
| <i>Jill Elizabeth Sittner</i> | <i>September 6</i> |
| <i>David George Carafos</i> | <i>September 7</i> |
| <i>Rachael Marie Toombs-Lassiter</i> | <i>September 15</i> |
| <i>Mark F. Buckenmeyer</i> | <i>September 17</i> |
| <i>Joshua Daniel Price</i> | <i>September 18</i> |
| <i>Christopher Lynn Salisbury</i> | <i>September 18</i> |
| <i>Daniel Francis Colangelo</i> | <i>September 18</i> |
| <i>Brian Charles Oster</i> | <i>September 21</i> |
| <i>Jeffrey Paul Anderson</i> | <i>September 22</i> |
| <i>Clarence L. Ross, II</i> | <i>September 22</i> |
| <i>Kristy Lynn Marmo</i> | <i>September 24</i> |
| <i>Paula Cristina Perez</i> | <i>September 24</i> |
| <i>Isaac Courtney Towne</i> | <i>September 26</i> |
| <i>Johanna Lynne Falk</i> | <i>September 26</i> |





Our Children Remembered *October, 2013*



Birthdays and Remembrance Days

Birthdays

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Jeffrey Paul Anderson</i> | <i>October 2</i> |
| <i>Jill Elizabeth Sittner</i> | <i>October 4</i> |
| <i>Colleen Josephine Dobbins</i> | <i>October 5</i> |
| <i>Zackary Monroe McCarthy</i> | <i>October 5</i> |
| <i>Keith Martin Wilson</i> | <i>October 7</i> |
| <i>Jason S. Grizzanto</i> | <i>October 8</i> |
| <i>Jay Alan Starman</i> | <i>October 14</i> |
| <i>Keith R. Lewis</i> | <i>October 14</i> |
| <i>Duane Alphonso Lopez</i> | <i>October 15</i> |
| <i>Aaron R. Vogel</i> | <i>October 16</i> |
| <i>Matthew J. Hall</i> | <i>October 16</i> |
| <i>William Peter Cook</i> | <i>October 19</i> |
| <i>Daniel Francis Colangelo</i> | <i>October 19</i> |
| <i>John M. Driscoll</i> | <i>October 24</i> |
| <i>Seth Daniel Bachman</i> | <i>October 26</i> |
| <i>Kelly Lynne Forrest</i> | <i>October 29</i> |
| <i>Sean Cristo</i> | <i>October 30</i> |
| <i>Kurt William Simmons</i> | <i>October 30</i> |

Remembrance Days

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Patrick D. Cooley</i> | <i>October 2</i> |
| <i>James Emmett Quinlan</i> | <i>October 3</i> |
| <i>Thomas Joseph Drasch</i> | <i>October 3</i> |
| <i>Peter R. Loewenguth</i> | <i>October 5</i> |
| <i>Zachary J. Mariner</i> | <i>October 8</i> |
| <i>Daniel G. Slater</i> | <i>October 9</i> |
| <i>Brandon Loyd Campbell</i> | <i>October 13</i> |
| <i>Sabrina L. Joy</i> | <i>October 16</i> |
| <i>Duane Alfonso Lopez</i> | <i>October 20</i> |
| <i>Seth Daniel Bachman</i> | <i>October 30</i> |



Remembering Cathy...



On Friday October 21st, 2011, Catherine Spoto passed away. On that day The Compassionate Friends of Rochester lost a very dear friend and mentor. Those of you who knew Cathy know that she was the heart and soul of our organization. Many of us have known her for a very long time and some of us barely had a chance to get to know her. In every instance, everyone recognized the special gifts that she brought to our group.