



***The Compassionate Friends***  
***Rochester Chapter***  
**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

May / June 2014 [www.tcfrochester.org](http://www.tcfrochester.org)

**Anticipating Mother's Day**

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the fifth Mother's Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself.... "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

While my first Mother's Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother's Days have been more subdued.

The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just "go with the flow." Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth.

Mother's Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

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



## Men Do Cry

I heard quite often “men don’t cry”  
Though no one ever told me why  
So when I fell and skinned a knee  
No one came to comfort me.

And when some bully boy at school  
Would pull a prank so mean or cruel  
I’d quickly learn to turn and quip  
“It doesn’t hurt” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years  
I learned to stifle any tears.  
Though “Be a big boy” it began  
Quite soon I learned to “Be a man.”

And I could play that stoic role  
While storm and tempest wracked my soul.  
No pain nor setback could there be  
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby  
And helplessly watched my son die  
And quickly found to my surprise  
That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame  
I cannot play that “big boy” game.  
And openly without remorse  
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can’t abide  
A man you’ve seen who’s often cried  
Reach out to him with all your heart  
As one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see  
Their loss of immortality.  
And tears will come in endless streams  
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

**Ken Falk**  
**TCF, NW Connecticut Chapter**



## **Making the best out of the worst situation**

I am married to a wonderful husband, Brian, and have been blessed with four beautiful children. At the time of the accident, Trevor was seven, Delaney was five, Drake was four and Tiernan was two. On Saturday June 23, 2012, our whole lives changed. In the afternoon, my four children were swimming with two adults in the pool. I had just walked into the house as everyone was getting out of the pool, when my daughter Delaney started to yell that Drake was going to the bottom of the pool. My son Trevor dove in and got him out immediately. I started CPR and 911 was called. En route to Strong Memorial Emergency Department, Drake reestablished a pulse and blood pressure. It was at that time that we noticed a large bump developing on his head. Upon arriving at Strong, Drake was transferred to the PICU and put in the hypothermic protocol. Five days later on Wednesday, we were aware of the full effects of the accident and had a prognosis around 10 pm. We had the best medical care possible and every live-saving measure available. Sometimes it just does not work. Drake's fate had been determined. So we worked to help someone else's fate: to make the best out of the worst situation.

On Thursday at 6 pm, my husband and I decided to withdraw care and I signed consent for full donation. We were told that they had a patient to receive my son's kidneys. During this time, our emotions were on a roller coaster. You are in shock because you realize this tragedy will forever change your life. It will rock your foundation and being. Things as you know them are over. You have to decide what you will make of the situation. We decided to allow our tragedy to be someone else's miracle. Drake, at four, was learning, "sharing is caring", and what better way is there to demonstrate that than the donation of his kidneys? I find some peace in knowing that out of this horrible situation, we were able to create something positive.

As we are approaching the two year anniversary of Drake's passing, we are still working to make the best out of the worst situation. In an effort to bring something positive out of this tragedy, my sister, Haverly Erskine, and I co-founded "Dreams from Drake", a 501©(3) not-for-profit volunteer charitable organization. The mission of Dreams from Drake is to provide local children and teens with various forms of support needed to move forward while experiencing the confusion and grief associated with the loss of a sibling or parent. We offer many great services, including Healing Circles of Hope, a monthly support group specifically for children and teens who have lost a sibling or parent/guardian. Each event centers on a social activity which provides children the opportunity to engage in healthy activities and discussions about their lost loved one. Other services provided by Dreams from Drake include the Birthday Bonus program, Make-a-Meal, Happy Hearts for the Holidays, The Next Page Program, and Caring Card Club. We are in the process of establishing a one day bereavement camp in June 2014.

The foundation's hope is to make an incredibly difficult and painful time somewhat more bearable by providing these children and their families with resources needed to ensure that they go on to live healthy, happy, and productive lives. Please visit [DreamsfromDrake.org](http://DreamsfromDrake.org) for more information.

**Jaime Pettit**  
**In loving memory of son, Drake**  
**TCF, Rochester NY**



**Heaven**

As I sit in heaven,  
And watch you every day,  
I try to let you know with signs,  
That I never went away.

I hear you when you're laughing,  
And watch you as you sleep,  
I even place my arms around you,  
To calm you as you weep.

I see you wish the days away,  
Begging to have me home,  
So I try to send you signs,  
So you know you are not alone.

Don't feel guilty that you have  
Life that was denied to me,  
Heaven is truly beautiful,  
Just you wait and see.

So live your life, laugh again  
Enjoy yourself, be free  
Then I know with every breath you take  
You'll be taking one for me.

Emma Jane Rae

**In loving memory of our son, brother, & uncle Michael VanValkenburgh  
Shared by Jim, Barb, Kevin, Jill, & Chase VanValkenburgh  
TCF, Rochester NY**

**Grandparents Remembrance**

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey TCF, Rutland VT

**Shared by MaryAnn Dobbins,  
In loving memory of granddaughter Colleen Josephine Dobbins**

**Upcoming Events:**

We're planning social "Get-Togethers" and would like everyone who is interested to please attend! Our first official get-together is going to be a **casual dinner on Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at Keenan's** Restaurant located at 1010 East Ridge Road in Irondequoit. Please drop a note to Becky Price ([rprice01@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rprice01@rochester.rr.com)) if you would like to come (we would like to let Keenan's know how many to expect).

**Our annual balloon release will be on Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at the JCC, 1200 Edgewood Avenue,** beginning at 6:00 pm (bring your dinner and a dish to pass – if you wish). At 6:30 we begin filling balloons and at 7:00 the remembrance ceremony will start. Please reply to me if you want to submit a poem or song in memory of your loved one.

Flyers for both are attached – please don't forget to mark your calendars!

**July 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> - 37<sup>th</sup> National Conference** Chicago, IL "Miles of Compassion through the Winds of Hope"

**Love Gifts**

**Mary Ann & Tom Dobbins, in loving memory of Colleen Josephine Dobbins**  
**Joanne & Ronald Mix, in loving memory of Paula Mix Spangenburg**  
**Cynthia & Nicholas Oliva, in loving memory of Stephanie Anne Oliva**  
**Kathy & Dave Parkison, in loving memory of Evan Parkison**  
**Barb & Shel Silverstein, in loving memory of John P. Myskow**  
**Maureen & Joe Stuhler, in loving memory of Devin Kusse and Joel Stuhler**  
**Barb & Jim VanValkenburgh, in loving memory of Michael VanValkenburgh**

**Support for the meetings in the month of February were donated by**  
**Steve Colangelo, in loving memory of Daniel Colangelo**

**Support for the meetings in the month of March were donated by**  
**Susan Kaye, in loving memory of Kevin Pratt**  
**Sue & Pat Vitek, in loving memory of Jeff Vitek**

**Support for the meetings in the month of April were donated by**  
**Bonnie Corbett, in loving memory of Kelly Lynne Forrest**  
**Judy & Carl Levy, in loving memory of Eric Levy**



*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.*

**NEW Meeting Location:**

**Jewish Community Center**  
**1200 Edgewood Avenue Rochester, NY**

**Meeting Days :**

**Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> (May)**

**Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> (June)**

**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:**

**Jacque Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814**

**TCF National :**

**877-969-0010 or [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**

**Send newsletter inputs or web comments to:**

**Joan Carafos, [jcarafos@photikon.com](mailto: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  
 Alice Torres at [alice3970@gmail.com](mailto:alice3970@gmail.com)**

*See Brenda for TCF Bracelets (\$2.00) and Memorial votive candle holders (\$3.00)*

***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



***Our Children Remembered***  
***May, 2014***  
***Birthdays and Remembrance Days***



**Birthdays**

Kenneth Vincent Rocco	May 1
Mark P. Metzger	May 4
Andrew Dwight Parmeter	May 4
Frank "Anthony" DeSarno IV	May 5
Conor LeVan Driscoll	May 5
Debra Colleen Willmes	May 6
Jeffrey Louis Russ	May 9
Ryan Patrick Todisco	May 10
Zachary J. Mariner	May 10
Jeffrey James Yates	May 14
Shaun Michael Bohrer	May 14
Peter Zielinski	May 14
Reynold Armand	May 16
Floyd Zachary Frey	May 16
William F. Beyerbach II	May 19
Ryan Mathew	May 21
Kristy Lynn Marmo	May 23
Brad E. Lynn	May 23
Katherine Magar	May 26
Slade Gerstner	May 31

**Remembrance Days**

Lydia Jeanne Allore	May 2
Tina Rheinwald	May 8
Kendra Marie Nelson	May 8
Michael Clark Van Valkenburgh	May 9
Brenton Tyler Jacob	May 11
Eric D. Wunderlich	May 15
Elias Masanka Charles Kabongo	May 15
Matthew James Gnage	May 16
David Alan Willmes	May 19
Peter Zielinski	May 20
Ryan Mathew	May 21
Greg Paul Wilson Crawford	May 25







***Our Children Remembered***  
***June, 2014***  
***Birthdays and Remembrance Days***



**Birthdays**

Drake Ross Pettit	June 1
Rachael Marie Toombs-Lassiter	June 3
Sara Michelle Oberhofer	June 8
Adam Vincent Marano	June 9
Benjamin T. King	June 9
David Joseph Groff	June 9
Ryan James Frank	June 9
Patrick D. Cooley	June 12
Brigid Alice Herlihy	June 14
Loretta Dix	June 16
Mike C. Wormuth	June 17
Michael Clark Van Valkenburgh	June 18
Kevin F. Schantz	June 25
Thomas William Costello IV	June 26
Diannel Ferris	June 29

**Remembrance Days**

Brendan T. Barry	June 3
Brian Nathaniel Vitale	June 3
Paul L. Valint III	June 8
Rolf Gerard Hallinan	June 9
Amy Marie Iwasko	June 10
Adam Michael Miller	June 12
Paul M. Spinelli	June 13
Jaden Michael Fournier	June 15
Zachary Lawrence Yates	June 16
John Eric Yelle	June 17
Lauren Paige Olander	June 19
Kalei Dawn Dulaney	June 20
Laura Collins	June 21
Brad E. Lynn	June 23
Ann Marie Ericson	June 24
Benjamin T. King	June 27
Kevin F. Schantz	June 28
Nicholas Jay Kovalski	June 29
Drake Ross Pettit	June 29







*The Compassionate Friends*

*Rochester Chapter*

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

# Annual Balloon Release

June 10, 2014

## Schedule of Events

6:00 p.m. **S**ocial Hour

6:30 p.m. **B**egin Filling Balloons

7:00 p.m. **B**egin Ceremony

If you would like to submit a writing, poetry or music please email Alice at [alice3970@gmail.com](mailto:alice3970@gmail.com) no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Location:**  
Jewish Community Center  
1200 Edgewood Ave  
Rochester, NY

TCF Rochester Social Get-Together  
Join Us for Dinner .....



*Email [rprice01@rochester.rr.com](mailto:rprice01@rochester.rr.com) to sign up*