If this is your first Newsletter

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, it is because someone has told us it might be helpful for you. We hope it is. We also invite you to our monthly meetings at Hayes Barton Baptist Church. At these meetings you may talk or choose not to say a word. There are no fees or dues. We are sorry you have had to experience the death of a child (or children) but we are here for you. We, too, are on this journey of grief and extend our hearts and arms to you.

Attention: The Compassionate Friends meet in Room 224 on the 2nd Floor of the Church Building. Go left past Information Desk and at the end of the long hallway turn right. Then half way down this hallway take elevator on the right to 2nd floor. Meeting room is across from the elevator.

The Wake County Chapter meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at Hayes Barton Baptist Church, 1800 Glenwood Avenue, at the corner of Glenwood Avenue and Whitaker Mill Road at Five Points in Raleigh. Enter from Whitaker Mill Road into Main Entrance of the Family Life Center which is attached to and behind the church. Ask directions to TCF meeting room at desk just inside the entrance door.

Tuesday, February 14th — The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.
Tuesday, February 28th — The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Love Makes the World Go 'Round

Love makes the world go "round", or so the song goes. We parents who have lost a child feel that our world has come to a stand still, even though everyone around us is going about their life with "business as usual".

"February is the month we’re reminded by Hallmark to express our love to someone dear to us. Maybe you have a Valentine more special than Hallmark’s made from red paper and white lacey doilies created by the hands of your little one. We struggle for ways to celebrate the love we had for that child who is no longer with us.

Early in my grief I was reading the "love" chapter, I Corinthians 13, in the Living Bible. In the final verse it states that three things remain: faith, hope and love; but only love is eternal. I realized that even though the body of my daughter, Shera, was buried in a cemetery in West Virginia, the love I have for her and that she had for me did not end in death. That love is still vibrant and alive and cannot be taken away.

I realize, for some of you, your loss is so recent. Your arms are still aching to hold your child again. Perhaps you lost your child in a premature birth or stillbirth and your arms never got to hold that precious baby. All of the love that you felt when you realized you were to have a baby, the love that grew as your baby grew within you, is not dead, but alive and active. I have now gone through eight Valentine Days since the car accident that claimed Shera’s life at age 19 during her second year in college.

Let TCF share your grief and your love for your child. You will find support to help you through those difficult days.

Written by Judy and Dick Wolfe, TCF Cape Fear Chapter NC Feb 2006
How hard it must be to physically lose your brother or sister and emotionally lose one or both of your parents. Yet the surviving child deals with this most of the time. We, as parents, speak of how a part of us died and will never be the same. Who is more aware of this than our children, no matter what the age—even as an infant we can sense a difference in someone’s touch or voice. Our children have spent most of their lives trying to "figure out" and "deal with" us. Now all of a sudden, they find they have lost all knowledge as to how we will show our emotions, interact with others, and most important, relate to them. We cannot even be sure of our stability when grief strikes us; yet the surviving child must learn to adapt quickly.

Here are a few suggestions to help the surviving sibling cope with a world that has been changed sometimes in a matter of a few seconds. Acknowledge the need for honesty—do not try to hide your grief from them. Avoid the non-supportive who rob both adults and children of their right to grieve. Provide a time when age appropriate release of grief can be experienced; such as drawing, writing, playing with others, or simply acting out their emotions. Provide good role models for them—other bereaved siblings.

One of the hardest things I have done in my life is to bury a child, but the next hardest thing has been to parent surviving siblings. I wish you patience and understanding while you are faced with this enormous job.

Andrea Simoni
TCF, Cumberland County NJ
COMPASSIONATE VALENTINE

We remember Valentine’s Day when we were happy There was so much love to give in our heart But now our hearts are broken in two when a child that we loved so much had to part The holidays never seem the same anymore as they did before in the past We will always remember the good times we had and all of the beautiful memories that will last

It's like a piece of our heart was taken away and it is a part that never mends But the group that helped me out the most is the love and understanding from Compassionate Friends For all of our hearts were broken one day and we all have our own story to tell We help each other out the best way we can Every time I go there a little more of me gets well

It is so hard to believe there are so many broken hearts that had loved their children so much A child who had meant so much in our lives who was always so gentle to our touch I believe that God is taking care of our children for a while They have a new place to play, and that someday we will all be together again Who knows, it may be on Valentine’s Day.

All of our tears come from the heart and the pain just never seems to end You don’t realize that there are so many like you who understand and want to be your friend So don’t ever think that you are alone there are so many that want to help And pray and remember that our children are watching so try and have a nice Valentine’s Day

To Compassionate Friends all over the World From Jack Heil (Copyright©1992)

In Memory of
Christian Alexander Williams

A Letter to My Son"

My Dear Sweet Christian, Where do I begin? Your life was a blessing from beginning to end. You were such an inquisitive and thoughtful child with tons of emotion, love and a smile. You made everyone feel special, which gave them a lift. As that was your purpose, that was your gift. I will always love you and carry you in my heart just as I did at your birth from the start.

Christian Alexander Williams was born on May. He is forever 22 as he passed away unexpectedly in his sleep due to a cystic tumor of the AV Node on his heart (CTAVN). This is a rare benign cystic tumor that is often clinically silent and diagnosed at autopsy following sudden unexplained death.

Christian was 3 months shy of graduating from Queens University of Charlotte with a Bachelor of Arts in New Media Design.

Christian was a graphic designer, movie producer, artist, musician, writer, and lover of life. He was full of compassion and insightfulness and tried to bring out the best in everyone that he met. At his memorial services at home and at Queens University, the phrase “He touched my life and made me a better person” was repeated many times by his peers and teachers and professors.

It was revealed to me after his death that he was brought into our lives to teach our family how to laugh and not take everything so seriously.

Whenever I feel overwhelmed by the daily demands and stresses of life, I smile and think of my son as that is what he would want me to do.

Written by Charlene Peacock Christian’s Mom
Webster’s defines “compassionate” as:

“Active sympathetic concern for the suffering of another; mercy.”

Lovingly known as TCF, The Compassionate Friends embodies this as the center of what we stand for: there is compassion for the families who are in the darkest and most frightening stage of grief; compassion for friends who are journeying this path at our side.

We stand at the center of our grief—it surrounds us, penetrates us and engulfs us for a very long time. TCF offers a safe place to express our pain without judgment. We understand and share the loss that echoes in our lives. Each path is unique, but we stand shoulder-to-shoulder in support and friendship as we help each other along.

But what about the compassion we express towards others in our lives? We often discuss things others say as they try to “comfort” us:

At least you still have other children...
God has His reasons...
Maybe it was for the best...
I know how you feel, my ____ just died, too...
You’ll get over it, give it time...

As a bereaved parent, these simple phrases can set off emotional waves of anger and frustration because the deepest and most profound pain that lies in our heart is not being acknowledged. But how can one acknowledge what one does not know?

A lesson I’ve learned since Tony died seven years ago: Grief is isolating. One cannot truly understand the depths of despair and loss unless they have walked in our shoes. Often they want to help fix a situation that cannot be “fixed.”

What if we look past the words and see that they care about us? They feel helpless because it cannot be fixed and yet see us suffering beyond imagination. What if we were compassionate towards them?

Compassion for ourselves is a good thing, too. Be gentle. Go slowly. It’s a whole new world living without the love, the dreams, the hugs from our child. When we open our hearts to compassion and include ourselves, it is easier to be compassionate towards others—remember they are feeling helpless, too.

As our hearts grow stronger, we begin to remember more the life and love of our child rather than their death. It is this love that carries us forward—for we will always endure their loss.

As we nurture and grow the seeds of love our children planted deep in our hearts, and as we reach out to family and friends, we appreciate the beauty of life and spring peeks into our hearts. Compassion grows.

D. Barta, TCF Portland OR
Abraham Lincoln has always been my most admired and respected figure in the history of our country. After standing in front of his statue at the Lincoln Memorial, no one could ever forget the terrible, marked sadness in his face, his forlorn and melancholy attitude.

I have been picking up, from other chapter newsletters, the many pieces of prose and poetry attributed to Lincoln which speak so poignantly of grief, and I have researched the Lincoln life. It is for his wife, Mary, for whom I cringe now when I read how life dealt with her. Washington gossip circles referred to her “mental state,” saying that she was “deranged” and “eccentric.”

The Lincolns had four sons. Edward, their second son, died in February 1850 when nearly four. Their third son, Willie, was born in December of that year and died in February 1862 at the age of 11. Then, the tragedy of tragedies... In April 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated in front of his wife’s eyes. Her grief must have been worse than inconsolable.

How could life deal such a terrible fate to one woman? How could any one of us deal with such multiple tragedies? We know how easy it is to feel as if we are “going crazy,” and how common that feeling is. To share that feeling in Compassionate Friends is more than wonderful ... to be assured that it is common, to learn and understand from other bereaved parents why we feel that way, and that it will pass, helps immeasurably.

But tragedy stalked Mary Lincoln’s footsteps, for not quite six years later Tad was killed at age 18 in January 1871. History books do not say, but I pray that Mrs. Lincoln had one compassionate friend who understood her grief over the death of her three sons and her husband. One friend wrote of her: “Poor Mrs. Lincoln. She’s been a deranged person.”

Yes, of that I am sure ... and, I thank God for The Compassionate Friends!

Love Never Goes Away

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so... we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable... some day.

TIME... the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child... the first word, first tooth, first date, first car... now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME... to hurt, to grieve, and to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments... but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief... it only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child... HE [SHE] DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between us... it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

[TCF Waccamaw SC Chapter Newsletter]  by Darcie Sims, Ph.D.
Coping with Grief: Winter Blues

When the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, we often find ourselves feeling low. Some people call this the Winter Blues. When you are grieving, those blues can feel overwhelming.

Grief itself is hard to cope with and cold winds and longer nights can make those feelings seem more intense. Here are a few ideas that may help you cope with the Winter Blues:

~ Winter only lasts a few months. Use this time to reflect on your relationship with the person who died. Sometimes in our efforts to deny our loss, we rob ourselves of precious memories.

~ Reach out to friends or family when you can. Often our isolation is worse because we do not allow ourselves time with others. You are not alone. There are many other people going through a similar experience. Although your relationship with your loved one is special, other people can understand. Take the risk to ask someone over for coffee or tea. Share with them.

~ Take time to look through picture albums. Gather family to share stories. Make a new tradition during the dreary months of winter for family to gather for an evening of remembering. The holidays are over and the pressure is off. Maybe other people are feeling the same way and are afraid to talk about it.

~ Try a grief support group. Sometimes all we need is to know other people hear us and understand. A group can help you to know you are normal.

~ Read ... favorite stories, comedies, novels, or information about grief to understand your own reactions better. Somehow reading about such topics helps us know we are not alone. You can look for grief materials in your local library, church, or local TCF chapter.

~ Take good care of yourself. Eat right, rest and pamper your body. This goes for any season. Your body is under a tremendous amount of stress in adjusting to your loss.

~ Since grief affects us physically, paying attention to our bodies is important. Whether you prefer to do things alone or with others, physical activity helps. Taking a walk, doing simple aerobics, indoor swimming, playing racquetball or other activities can help you keep your body ready for the continued adjustment to loss. Feeling better physically can make a difference.

~ If you feel sad and need to cry, know that is a normal reaction. You are not weak if you need to show your emotions.

~ Write a letter to your loved one. Sometimes we need to communicate with them. Going to the cemetery is okay and normal. If the weather prevents that, a letter can be very helpful.

~ Remember that you will survive this loss. The pain and ache can seem like it will last forever. The intensity will lessen in time, although you will always remember your loved one. Time does not necessarily "heal" all wounds, but it can help us adjust to the change. Take it minute by minute ... then day by day.

From TCF Newsletter, Pittsburgh, PA
How I Found Hope . . .
At my first ever TCF meeting, I was amazed to hear a bereaved mom talk not just about her son's death, but about her son's LIFE. Years of sharing the journey with so many incredible TCF members has proven it can and does happen.

Joan Campbell, Lesley's stepmom

How I Found Hope . . .
I have been sustained by people who choose to be present, people who look my pain and my brokenness right in the face and say, "I am not afraid. I am here. Let me help you carry this." Those people give me hope.

Peggi Johnson, Jordan's mom

How I Found Hope . . .
The death of my son Kelly, I thought I would not survive. The only thing that gave me hope was that small inkling that he was near, that on some level he had survived death... I started speaking his name in the present tense. Our child dies a second time when no one speaks their name.

Mitch Carmody, Kelly's dad

How I Found Hope . . .
After my 10-year-old son David died suddenly, my first instinct was not about me or my wife, but to protect his younger sister Abby, and do all I could to make sure his death would not ruin her life. My life was about daily survival and caring for her soul. Little did I realize it was her love, her joys, and her laughter that slowly allowed hope back into my life, and opened my heart up again to a joyful future.

Bart Sumner, David's dad

How I Found Hope . . .
Going to The Compassionate Friends and making connections with others who understood what I was going through gave me the feeling of hope.

Joan Dauphinee, Caitlin's stepmorn

Tidal Waves and Tsunamis
by Susan Jerovsek

In 52 years, I've never seen a Tidal Wave or Tsunami. But they have become a part of everyday life. For these particular storms, there is no warning, no time for preparation, no chance of evacuation or no shelter.

The storms began on a picture-perfect late summer day in Michigan when our only son, Robby, died in a horrific boating accident. He was just 15.

The Tidal Wave variety sneaks up quickly. They come from nowhere. They strike without warning, hit hard and knock me to my knees. Then they recede about as swiftly as they arrive. I'm left battered, awestruck, dazed and confused. From these, I can usually recover and get back on my feet without prolonged agony—mind over matter.

Tsunamis also strike with little warning. Sometimes rough waves rush through me first, like little warning shots over the bow. The buildup can take mere minutes, hours or days, but the result is always the same. My Tsunamis are fierce and intense. They sweep me off my feet and leave me completely defenseless as the water continues to rise higher and higher, and every breath feels like it could be the last. With Tsunamis, I have no choice but to ride it out, and wait and wait and wait until the water finally recedes and I'm left in a puddle of pure exhaustion. Tsunamis require the endurance of a marathon runner and the patience of a Saint. Eventually, they do subside. But recovery is definitely slower.

Tidal Waves and Tsunamis are a phenomenon our entire family experiences. Sometimes they hit each of us at the same time, even if we are in different places.

Shelter in the arms of others who have experienced your grief and sorrow can provide temporary relief. Sometimes it is enough. But sometimes it is nothing more than a grass hut that gets washed away.

Thankfully, after seven years, the storms are finally letting up. The skies are clearing. At times, the stars even shine through the darkness.

In my lifetime, I doubt that I will see a real Tidal Wave or Tsunami, but you don't have to see them to experience them.

Sue Jerovsek lives in Grand Haven, Michigan, with husband Jack. She has worked in the field of marketing/communications for many years as a writer and project manager. Sue is mom to Lauren (25), and Robby (forever 15). Robby lost his life in a tragic boating accident in 2009.
The Wisdom of Darcie Sims

I Sent You a Kiss Today

The late Darcie Sims wrote hundreds of articles over the years on grief and loss which have been extremely popular and shared in hundreds of TCF publications. We Need Not Walk Alone is proud to honor her by featuring selections of her work in a column titled "The Wisdom of Darcie Sims."

I sent you a kiss today. Did you get it? I sent it by air mail. I kissed my fingers and then opened them to the breeze and watched it go. I tucked in some hugs and well wishes, too. Did you get them?

I thought of you today. Did you know that? Could you feel my arms around you? My thoughts caressing your shoulders, my mind trying to reach yours?

I spoke to you today. Did you hear me? I spoke to you of everyday things. I talked about how the clouds moved across the sky, sending shadows whisking over the lawn that I had just raked. I told you how pretty it looked as the leaves swirlled gently in the breeze. Do you remember the times we lay together in the grass and just watched the clouds make shapes in the sky? I told you about my remembering that today, too.

I talked to you about how the sun sparkles on the water in the pond and how the wind chime has the loveliest tones. I wonder if you can hear them? I told you about my day, the mundane little things that kept me busy. I ironed and dusted and vacuumed and moved some things around ... mostly just re-arranging things. I cleaned the blinds and polished the silver ... just regular things—nothing special, except I thought of you as I did them.

I told you about my Big Project and how far it seems to the end. I keep thinking of new ways to get it finished and that just makes the whole thing take longer ... but of course, you know that about me, don't you?

I watched you today. Did you see me, too? I watched a puppy scamper across the yard, tugging its young owner. I watched a brand new driver trying to fit into a parallel parking space and I laughed, remembering.

Do you remember things?

I saw an old lady and an even older man holding hands as they crossed the street and the look they shared reminded me of us. That secret sharing of something just between them ... I missed you today. Do you miss me?

I planned the menu for the family dinner today and I asked you what you wanted. Do you still like mashed potatoes and butter, green bean casserole and cranberry relish? I baked two pies and saved some dough for you, so you could pat it out and fill it with strawberry jam and then bake it, making a little "patty pan pie" just for you. Do you still do that, sometimes?

I counted the chairs and called a neighbor because I have to borrow 2 more. Or I guess two people could stand or maybe they won't come. I washed 3 loads of laundry and ironed the tablecloth and put the napkin rings out. I wished you were here to help, like you used to. You always put the napkins in the rings just so and made them look so special.

I wore your sweater today. I hope you don't mind. It turned cool and the breeze turned into a wind and I had to take the wind chime in. The last bits of summer are gone now, packed away until the next time around.

I found your blanket today, tucked way down in the cedar chest. I was looking for the afghan to put over the back of the rocking chair and there it was ... waiting for me. So I hugged it and wrapped myself in it like you used to do. It was only for a moment, but I thought I heard you in the next room so I went to look. It was only the timer on the dryer downstairs. But, for a moment, I thought it was you.

I saw you today ... in a hundred places in the house, the yard, across the street, waiting in line at the bank and walking just ahead of me at the grocery store. Why didn't you turn around? Didn't you know I was there?

I sang to you today. I'm still not very good, but the choirmaster says I am "enthusiastic". Maybe it will be my ticket of admission ... enthusiasm should be worth something somewhere.

I dreamed of you today and for just a little while, we were one again. Hand in hand, arm in arm, head to head, heart to heart, lives wrapped around and through each other, like two peas in a pod, two puppies in a basket, two people in love. I haven't stopped loving you ... have you stopped loving me? I hope not.

I'll be ok. I am ok. It's just that sometimes, I want you here, right here with me, not just in my thoughts, my dreams, my prayers, my me. I want you here ... And then, you are. I only have to touch my heart to feel yours beating. I only have to whisper your name to hear mine spoken. I only have to count my blessings, count the moments we had, to know I am rich beyond any man's measure. We were and still are and that's all I need. It wasn't enough and it will never be enough, but it was something, and for that, I am forever thankful ... today, tomorrow and always.

I sent you a kiss today ... and you sent one back. Forever thankful ... today, tomorrow and always.

Davidina, I'm forever thankful for our love. It meant so much to me that you were mine. It was so wonderful to count my moments with you. I will never stop counting them.
I Will Cry With You
by Pamela Hagens

I will listen closely
hold your hand or just sit with you
as long as it brings comfort
I will be near
I will be silent
I WILL CRY WITH YOU.

I will silently pray for you
I will quietly listen as you share
your unspoken thoughts
I will not fill the space with questions,
words of wisdom,
well intentioned resolutions,
or small conversations
There are no words for missing
The heart kisses the thoughts
and dares to remember happier moments
In time, tender memories will guide us
through difficult seasons—occasions
In time, tender memories will
be flowers abloom in spring,
a summer sun set at dusk,
the crisp leaves of fall,
the first snow of winter,
But for now, I WILL CRY WITH YOU.

I will not tell you how to feel, how to be
I will not tell you stories
of others who have lost
I will honor your moment
I will honor your loss
Please share your tears with me
I will not rush them away,
turn away, emotionally walk away
I will be near
I will hear your heart
I will hear your unspoken words
I will not offer answers, but I will offer love
I will help you
I will hope for tender moments,
But for now—I WILL CRY WITH YOU.

Pamela and her husband, Christopher of 26 years, live in Tennessee. On July 5, 2013, their eldest son (19) transitioned in a sudden, tragic accident. Two months after their son’s passing Pamela attended her first TCF Chapter meeting in Nashville. Pamela has been very active in the local Chapter; participating in book share panels, national conference review panels, poetry readings at Candle Lightening Memorials, numerous newsletter entries, as well as reaching out to newly bereaved, and sharing encouragement to bereaved families through her writings titled “Reflections.” Christopher and Pamela have two other sons and one granddaughter. Pamela is a running enthusiast, group fitness instructor, avid reader and writer.

The Promise

Your birth brought me star-shine,
the moon and the sun;
my wishes, dreams gathered ‘round my little one.

My life became sacred,
full of promise and light,
all wrapped in the child who brought love at first sight.

The years of your living
filled with laughter and tears,
excitement, adventure,
some boredom, some fears.

But ended too quickly,
ahead of its time.
The loss so horrendous,
such heartbreak was mine.

But from the beginning,
one thought rose so clear:
ever would your death erase
the years that you were here.

I would not be defeated
or diminished by your death;
I would hang on,
learn to conquer,
if it took my every breath.

For if your death
destroyed my life,
made both our lives a waste,
twould deny your life’s meaning
and all the love you gave.

I vowed that years of sadness
would change,
with work and grace,
to years of happiness, even joy,
in which you’d have a place.

Memories of you,
like shining stars
in the patterns of my soul,
are beacons
flashing light and love,
and with them I am whole.

In your honor, I live my life,
now living it for two.
Through all my life,
you too will live.
You lived, you live, you do.

~ Author Unknown ~
Reprinted from Cape Fear TCF Chapter, Wilmington NC
Darkness arrives without her knowing as she sits quietly mourning her thoughts. The shadows in the room fade into memories of the past, the place she often hesitates as she attempts again to push away the anguish in search of the joy she desires.

Avoiding all awareness of the mirror, she rejects the image before her, no longer recognizing who she has become, as the tears come calling again. Tired of stumbling regularly, she leans into the hurt that betrayed her, longing for a breakthrough not cloaked in sadness.

Fractured recollections are carved deep within, cutting through the skin in a tattoo, scars engrained on your heart, casting a wound with images engrained in her soul. Shaking her head, as if this will dislodge the sadness, she recalls the tear as it slid down his face, devastating her further.

He died before her, in her arms as she cradled him, saying goodbye while the shock clung to her breath. There were no words to console her; his life was ending and all that swirled within her was an invitation to join him.

There was no time to question our lives in search of a remedy. No time to call in a team of experts for help. When loss occurs everything is stripped away. Nothing arrives, just in time, no remedy to fix him, no lifeline to save her, the life they once shared flutters into a memory, and time continues slipping away.

A shell of her former self, she is empty, and the act of going on is too overwhelming to bear, so she sleeps. But sleep is just another ruse in the mysteries of grief, waking in a fog, feeling happiness until the crash of reality sends you back to the puddle you left behind earlier, back into the sorrow that echoes from the emptiness.

Using compassion to embrace this place of grief she begins her pursuit, seeking more love, true happiness and pure joy. But joy does not just appear, it must be discovered, unearthed beneath the debris that sadness has dragged in, blanketing the life she once knew, as it masks all the dreams she previously held.

This new beginning was hers to catch, the time to uncover the obscurity and allow in the light. Exploring her motivation, she unravels the softness that she has cultivated through grief. This kindness fills her heart, captivated by the beauty she had to be taught when stumbling through heartache.

The prospect of joy continues to intrigue her, commanding her attention to pursue the changes she needs to explore. She wants joy; she wants to believe in joy again, allowing it into her heart without the fear that lingers so closely behind it.

For so long she has muddled through her life, forcing the faded smile to appear, broken and set to burst as she attempts to get through one more day. Unwrapping sad stories and heartbreak that go on unnoticed, with the tears of what was, she has to learn to move forward.

I don't remember how long it took or if there was a day that I started living again. I had fought against the current for so long, I did not notice when it changed directions. I did not feel the embrace of joy when it first arrived, or the compassion around me when I let it in. It was a slow melting of the iceberg, revealing a bitter taste of joy with its mixture of happiness and guilt, but it was a beginning.

While searching for a reason to go on after losing their five-year old son Ryan, she discovered that giving back could actually save her. Tina Zarlenga is married with two children, sharing stories of inspiration and hope, as well as her journey through grief with emotional essays of life on her website Unraveling My Heart the Write Way, http://www.unravelingmyheartthewriteway.com.

Since our 17-year-old son Zack died without warning by suicide two years ago, I’ve learned that grief will simmer under the surface of all that we do for many years to come. We must continue to make a life on top of that undercurrent of loss. I think I will look back on these years and be so grateful for time we spent as a family, making intentional memories and attempts at joy despite the pain of losing our Zack. Even when joy is impossible to find, we grow in the attempt. So far, I only regret the times that we didn’t try.

Leanna Leyes, Zack’s Mom
Bend, OR
## Birthday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Father/Spouse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claibourne Smith Woods IV</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Judy E. Matthews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas R. &quot;Tommy&quot; Goldberg</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Jean Goldberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gregory Ellis Williams</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Darrell &amp; Linda Williams</td>
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<td>Riley Martin</td>
<td>Son</td>
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## Anniversary

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