



# The Compassionate Friends

Wake County Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

November  
2022



## Inside this Issue:

Love Gifts Shared Thoughts on Thanksgiving	2
Wake 2022 TCF Candle Lighting Thanksgiving Day	3
Christmas Past, Christmas Present	4
How do you include your child, grand- child or sibling during the holidays?	5
You Are There and I Am Here Thankful	6
I Don't Care How Long It's Been: Can We Talk About My Child?	7
Suicide: How Do We Say It?	8
Healing with Courageous Kindness	9
November Birthdays	10
November Anniversaries	11

## 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 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.*

Our Wake County Chapter of TCF meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday nights of the month at 7:00pm in Room 224 at Hayes Barton Baptist Church, 1800 Glenwood Avenue (at the corner of Glenwood Ave and Whitaker Mill Road at Five Points) in Raleigh.

## October Meetings

**Tuesday  
November 8th  
7:00pm**

**Tuesday  
November 22nd  
7:00pm**

## DO THANKSGIVING DAY YOUR WAY



Who says we have to follow  
Thanksgiving the traditional way?  
With all the prescribed rituals  
of that holiday?

So what if we don't have baked ham  
or turkey?  
We're tired of that old bird  
so why not some beef jerky?

No — No cranberry sauce!  
no candied yams! no pumpkin pie!  
(She hated pumpkin pie,  
and, truly, that's no lie.)

This is our very first Thanksgiving  
without her, you know.  
We're not in the mood for all the  
fuss — it's still touch-n-go.



Mom's in the kitchen  
doing the best she can.  
She's crying her eyes out,  
flooding the no-stick pan.

So, what about it, gang?  
Let's tough it out and avoid the clutter.  
Let's go for hoagies, tuna salad,  
maybe jelly and peanut butter.

This year we don't have to  
be so doggone formal.  
Next year, hopefully,  
We'll try to be more normal.

~ Author Unknown ~





**IN MEMORY**  
**NOVEMBER LOVE GIFTS**  
 Given In Loving Memory Of Children



Judy Allen  
 In Loving Memory of My Daughter  
**Ashley Duncan**

*I love and miss you — Mom*

Please send Love Gifts to: Love Gifts—Wake County Chapter, TCF, P. O. Box 6602, Raleigh, NC 27628-6602. Send pictures & articles to Pattie Griffin at pattie.grif@gmail.com or 30 Shepherd Street, Raleigh NC 27607.

**ATTENTION: We will meet at 7:00pm in Room 224 at Hayes Barton Baptist Church (1800 Glenwood Avenue at the corner of Glenwood Avenue and Whitaker Mill Road at Five Points in Raleigh).**

**Tuesday, November 8th**  
**Tuesday November 22th**

**Shared Thoughts on Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is the beginning of our holiday season. This once joyous time can become a horrendous anticipation for us. This is the season we like all our children and siblings gathered around us. We enjoy the togetherness, for it is a time to be thankful for each of our family members. We find it difficult for such a large piece to be missing from our family circle.

We suggest you try to discuss your plans with your immediate family, your spouse and children. It not only makes them feel part of the family, but it also removes the tremendous burden of making all the decisions from your shoulders. This also sends the message you know they are hurting; by acknowledging their pain, you open up the door of communication.

You have to decide what is best for your family. You may choose to keep it traditional, or make changes. These changes can be temporary or permanent. It may help to talk about what things you were doing just for the sake of tradition. If they aren't meaningful, and are painful, you may choose to drop them.

Some find it helpful to go away; others want to be home. Some have found it very peaceful to devote time to helping others. There are many organizations who need help to serve a meal to others who have no one to spend the holiday with. It is a way of bringing the love for your child or sibling to life. For some, it is impossible to give thanks when your grief is very

fresh; this is normal for many. Allow yourself to cry, and grieve, if that is all you are capable of this year. In time you will be able to think beyond your pain; don't feel guilty for something you cannot do. Remember it helps others to feel good, when they can do small physical chores for us; if you are in need of their help, ask for it.

We can't avoid Thanksgiving, and sometimes we even feel a little guilty for not being thankful for what we have left. Our overwhelming grief crowds out our appreciation of what we have. We are human, and it is normal to lament our loss. Perhaps this is the season to enumerate, and be thankful, for friends and family who have helped us through these devastating times. We all wanted more time, but we must remember our pain is so very great because we were given someone very special to share a segment of our life with. For this we are thankful. We also are very thankful for all the friends and support we have in The Compassionate Friends. Your sharing with us has got us through many holidays and given us strength and healing from having passed through another painful event. Each passing event tells us we can survive, and doing our grief work softens our pain. We wish you peace of mind and love, as you remember your child or sibling this Thanksgiving.

God Bless, Marie Hofmocker  
 TCF Valley Forge, PA

***Join with us as we honor the memories of our children!***

**Our Wake County 2022 TCF  
Candle Light Memorial Service**

**White Deer Park Nature Center  
2400 Aversboro Road  
Garner, NC 27529**



**The Compassionate Friends  
Worldwide Candle Lighting....  
that their Light may always shine**

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 11th, 2022 at 7:00 pm local time, it creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone, around the world. This is a very moving service, in a season that many bereaved families find difficult (holidays). We encourage you to attend, either virtually or with a TCF chapter near you.

The Compassionate Friends Wake County chapter will hold a Candle Lighting at the White Deer Park Nature Center, [2400 Aversboro Rd.](#), in Garner, at 7pm on Sunday, December 11th. Please arrive fifteen minutes early, so we can begin promptly at 7, and bring a framed photo of your child (that will stand upright on a table). You may bring a small votive candle, or we will provide one. If you wish, you may bring a snack or dessert to share after the ceremony, perhaps something that your child enjoyed. Face masks are optional.

*The national TCF organization will also be holding a virtual candle lighting for those who would prefer to attend virtually. They will have four programs in the Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific time zones.  
Register at [compassionatefriends.org](https://compassionatefriends.org) for your time zone.*

## **Thanksgiving Day**

In the mid-19th century Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Ladies Book, led a movement to establish Thanksgiving as a national holiday. In 1863, during the American Civil War (1861-1865), President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November Thanksgiving Day in order to bolster the Union's morale. After the war, Congress established Thanksgiving as a national holiday, but widespread national observance caught on only gradually. Many Southerners saw the new holiday as an attempt to impose Northern customs on them. However, in the late 19th century Thanksgiving's emphasis on home and family appealed to many people throughout the United States.

# Christmas Past, Christmas Present

by Annette Mennen Baldwin

As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality, of holidays without our children.

This will be my fifth Christmas without my son, Todd. It will be my fourth Christmas without his children. And yet, I find that on some small level, I am looking forward to the holiday. I imagine the Christmases of the past when Todd was growing up and after he started his family. I also imagine Christmases of the future where Todd's children share in the traditions that their Dad so dearly loved. But that won't happen. I have come to accept that wives and children go on with their lives. I have come to accept that my son's children will not be a part of their father's family, his heritage or his legacy. That is the reality.

But I have also found that wonderful people can help make the holiday special. I do very little at Christmas. Some shopping—most of it on the Internet, a little in local stores. I send cash to my son's children. I don't know who or what they are these days, but cash is far better than something that has no significance to them. I do get pleasure in a few things. I buy small toiletries for nursing home residents. I buy a gift for my dad's sister who is now 88. I buy for my mom's sister, my cousin, her husband and her daughter. I buy for my best friend. That's enough buying. My husband and I decide whether we want something special for the two of us and, if so, we buy it. Otherwise, we skip the gift giving. We won't be decorating this year, but we haven't decorated for five years.



We have changed our traditions—traditions that Todd loved so much. It is simply too painful to do this alone. We spend time with my family and a few friends. We marvel at the wonder that is Christmas for children. John and my aunt cook and my cousin, her daughter and I clean up in the big country kitchen of my cousin's home. Gifts are exchanged. There is no Christmas tree, but the three acres in front of the house are decorated with all kinds of lights and lighted figures. Santa and his reindeer are in the front garden, close to the road. Angels, reindeer and more gather in the west pasture and front yard. The house is framed in lights. It's quite lovely. For me that is enough.

Christmas will never be what it once was, but I no longer dread the holidays as I once did. Some of my Compassionate Friends have returned to old traditions with their surviving children and maybe even with grandchildren. Each of us learns to deal with Christmas in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. Next year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is ever changing.

Find what is right for you. Pressures from others mean nothing.

You choose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You choose the old traditions or you choose some new ones—maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas as well.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this and every Christmas Holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose.

May we all have serenity throughout the Holiday season and in the years ahead.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin, author of this article, suddenly and unexpectedly died at her home on June 11, 2021 in Houston, TX. She was an exceptional writer who wrote from the heart. Her numerous articles on grief and loss following the loss of her son Todd Mennen in 2002 were published in TCF chapter newsletters around the nation, as well as many international TCF chapters. Annette was one of TCF's most popular and widely published authors. She was a former Regional Coordinator for the chapters in Southern Texas, as well as newsletter editor for the Houston West Chapter and TCF of Katy, TX for many years. Annette's book, *Child of My Heart: A Mother's Grief Journey*, was published in March of 2019.*

## How do you include your child, grandchild, or sibling during the holidays?

My family always plays games on Christmas. Last year my sister picked out a game where you put green solo cups glued to cardboard and put them in a triangle shape like a tree. Then you put a piece of paper with a prize written on it in the cups and glue green tissue paper over the top of the cups. We would play bingo and whoever would win can go punch a cup and get their prize. My sister passed away August 31, 2021. I thought this would be good to do and instead of prizes collect memories from the family before Christmas and put this together. We would read each memory out loud to each other and keep my sister's spirit alive.

—Daisy Mae, Tangela's Sister

My daughter Jourdain and son Dylan were taken almost 14 years ago, but every year, I still put up their stockings, and fill them with little toys. Things that I just walk by in the store and think "Oh, she/he would love that!" It's hard seeing those stockings filled up knowing that my beautiful children will never get to open them, but at the same time, it brings me the tiniest piece of joy. Knowing that they are still included, and that they are watching over me, seeing that I still make sure their stockings are filled to the brim.

—Michelle Thomas, Jourdain and Dylan's Mom

Thanksgiving was James' favorite of the winter holidays. All the family and food of Christmas, but none of the pressure of gift giving. One of his favorite parts of the Thanksgiving meal was cranberry sauce; he loved it. So, even though he was the only one who ate it, and it largely goes untouched every year, I still open a can of that jellied monstrosity, plop it onto a dish, and remember my boy.

—Tracey Parker, James' Mom (The Modesta Area Chapter of TCF)

Starting with Thanksgiving weekend, I have been getting cards representing children off the Salvation Army tree in front of a major department store. I would buy the gifts the children asked for plus some clothing. For me it represents buying for his children, the ones he hoped to have. Also, starting from Thanksgiving, I light a candle that I had found out about through Compassionate Friends. I had it engraved at a place called "Things Remembered" in the mall. It is a beautiful candle with a winter scene in the candle holder. I have special butterfly ornaments for my tree that represent Jimmy as well as some with his name. I put out the special music box with a little drummer boy that I used to put in his room. I also put out the cards he sent me as an adult. Also, one he made in school. I drape a special fancy throw over the back of the sofa bed he would sleep on when he would come to visit. I put some winter greens on his grave.

—Joan Asprakis, Jimmy's Mom

My youngest daughter passed away in April 2008. Starting that first Christmas, and every year since, I have a special Christmas tree in her honor and each year I add a special ornament. I also donate gifts to different causes, such as giving tree, Cocoa Packs gifts etc. and purchase things for a deserving child also in her honor. She also had a great love for animals and so every year since 2008, I collect dog and cat food and treats and through the generosity of my friends, I always have enough to fill my car and make a donation to the Humane Society in her name.

—Karen Drew, Jessica's Mom

Being Jewish we turn on a yahrzeit light the evening before the day he died 11/11 and keep it on until his birthday 12/28.

—Ronnie Plotkin, Raymond's Dad

I am leader of the Mt. Vernon Ohio Chapter. I put a memory tree in our downtown in a store window every year in memory of our loved ones. Everyone enjoys seeing their kid's picture. Love doing it and don't want any child forgotten.

—Sheree Carter, Chad's Mom

Most meaningful, we have the TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program. We lost our daughter Jana two weeks before Christmas 1999, so it is a hard time for us, but a time to remember how she loved Christmas.... and how much she is loved.

—Kathryn Wick, Jana's Mom (TCF of Tri-County Area Chapter)



*You Are There  
and I Am Here*

*You are there and I am here*

*And I ask the question;*

*How do I keep going when the memories are too  
painful and the melody has stopped?*

*How can I dance when the music has been muted?*

*There are moments— silent moments, unusual  
moments— that I find myself watching life, not  
participating, but a spectator watching a hard  
fought competitive match. I watch, rooting for  
no one.*

*I watch from a distance, where everything is blurry  
and small.*

*How do I welcome the memories, where are the  
melodies?*

*I am told to start somewhere— so I look at one  
picture today, I reflect upon one memory today.*

*I am told; in time I will navigate the rough, choppy  
currents with increased strength.*

*I am told; that Love is not lost, and the melody of  
Hope will write new lyrics upon my heart.*

*I am cautioned that the loss will always be, but the  
memories of Love will rescue and sustain me;*

*I am reminded that the melody of Hope will sing  
again, for they are connected; the memories, the  
love, the melody, the hope.*

*So I am determined that I will find my way.*

*I will step out on the dance floor of life once again.*

*I will find my way, with the encouraged whispers of  
those who impart wisdom and patience.*

*I am determined— so I trust that hope will invite me  
to slow dance to the music in my soul.*

*I am determined— so I trust that the Memories of  
Love will lead me to Melodies of Hope.*

*—Pamela Hagens, Samuel's Mom*

## **Thankful**

*I railed against a cruel  
God*

*Who took my son from me.*

*I closed my heart in  
bitterness,*

*I let my tears flow free.*

*I sat there with a sullen  
face*

*While words of comfort  
came.*

*They splintered on my  
stony heart,*

*They sounded all the same.*

*Yet, if my sorrow is so  
great,*

*How great had been my joy?*

*Could I forget the fifteen  
years*

*I had the baby and the  
boy?*

*Why should I waste with  
bitterness,*

*And wash with futile tears,*

*The joy of life and love and  
growth*

*I had those fifteen years.*

*There'll be no wasted  
future,*

*But rather, a glorious past.*

*Let me be thankful for  
what I had,*

*And my heart find peace at  
last.*

*Jean Yaksich*

# I Don't Care How Long It's Been

## Can We Talk About My Child?

Since your child died, you found that your friends and relatives do not understand much of what you are going through. As the months and years have gone by, have they come to expect you to either be "somewhat better," "much better" or even "over it"? Worse yet, have the people in your life decided it's best not to mention the name of your child or even acknowledge that he or she lived?

As you well know, the best way to help with the bereavement process is to talk about your grief, the life of your child, and what your life has now become.

What follows are some suggested steps to encourage people in your life to talk about your child:

1. Think of the people you are willing to contact to ask if they will talk about your child.
2. Decide how the contact will be made. In some cases, a text, an email, or phone call out of the blue will work. You don't need to have a reason. Or you may want to contact some people in person. Whatever way you make your contact, the content of your request will basically be the same.
3. Your first words should go something like, "I was thinking of you the other day (you are thinking about this person now, right?) and I wanted to say a couple of things." This introduction is a great way to get a person's attention and to make it clear that you have a message to deliver.
4. Once you have their attention say something like, "I have two requests. Here's my first. Sometimes when we connect, I would love it if you would mention something about my child, OK? Also, ask me how am I doing with my grief? Doing this will not make me feel worse. Believe it or not, it will help me in my healing.

Yes, I might cry, but do not be afraid of my tears. They are steps on my long (yes, long) journey of bereavement. I will never "get over" this loss. I will miss my child the rest of my life and that is OK. But you can help me on this journey. You can.

5. Then say, "My second request is that you tell me a story about my child."

Many people have difficulty coming up with stories on the spot. To help with this, ask them to tell you a story about any of the following topics that may be related to your child's life:

**Locations:** vacations, shopping, school

**Outings:** parties, picnics, concerts, sporting events

**Food:** restaurants, particular foods, smells

**Organizations/groups/clubs:** scouts, sports, hobbies

**Emotional:** embarrassing moments, funniest moments

**Media:** online social media, books, television, movies

**Work experiences**

**Spiritual Beliefs:** church experiences, readings, prayers

**Relationships with others:** children, parents, spouse, siblings, friends

**Values observed in your child:** honesty, commitment, joy of living

**Support given to or received from your child**

**Possessions:** pets, toys, clothing, games, car

**Music:** favorite songs, instruments

**Talents**

**Holidays**

In addition to stories, there is a chance that people have pictures and/or videos of your child that you never knew about. Ask. You might be surprised at what gets sent to you.

I must offer you a note of caution. Be prepared for times when you do not get the intended results. Remember, most non-bereaved people are surprised to discover that

bereaved parents yearn and ache to hear stories of their child, no matter how long it has been. When I lecture on loss to my college students, I ask them, "How many of you have had a friend die when you were growing up?" Most raise their hand. I then say, "I want you to consider contacting your friend's parents." You should see the shocked look on their faces. I finish with, "I want you to trust me. They will love you for this. Whenever I ask a group of parents if they would like to hear a story from a friend of their child, their hands don't just raise, they shoot up in the air. Now, do it."

Don't let people's non-compliance stop you from continuing to ask others to help you with your requests. This is a vulnerable time in your life. Only take risks like this if you think you can handle rejection. But remember, hearing the beautiful sound of your child's name and reliving stories and pictures of his or her life can be well worth the possibility of rejection. Your precious child's life, no matter how long or short, touched many people.

As a bereaved parent, you have the right to hear from others the wonderful stories that have yet to be told. Keep asking and you may receive some precious gifts as a result of your efforts. Your child lived a life and left you with many stories. Take the risk to discover even more stories. You'll be happy you did!

Regards.... Dr. Bob

*Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychologist and certified death educator who teaches at Highline College in Des Moines, WA. He is the professional adviser for the South King County Chapter of TCF. Bob is the author of grief-related books and several articles on coping with bereavement. For the past 25 years, he has been invited to present workshops at most TCF national conferences*

# Suicide: How Do We Say It ?

by Joyce Andrews

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had "taken her own life" or that "SHE DIED OF SUICIDE." An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable "COMMITTED SUICIDE," with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today's enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say,

"completed suicide," but as a parent who witnessed my child's 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don't care much for that, either "DIED OF SUICIDE" or "DIED BY SUICIDE" are accurate, emotionally-neutral ways to explain my child's death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30s, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hardworking, highly respected individuals who died this way. I've facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn't handle the group's reactions to the dreaded "S" word. I've known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity*, *Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (Oct. 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle first hand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted

desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father's suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. "We are as sick as our secrets," he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

*Joyce and her husband Basil's beloved daughter Rhonda was a gifted anthropologist who died by suicide. She and Basil were very active volunteers for The Compassionate Friends (TCF). They started the chapter in Sugarland, TX and led the chapter for several years: Joyce was also its newsletter editor. Additionally, Joyce served as a Texas Regional Coordinator and on the TCF Board of Directors. TCF's very first national website was created by Joyce. She and Basil were part of the original instructors for presenting chapter leadership training programs.*

Suicide, its causes, awareness around it, and its prevention are observed on National Suicide Prevention Month each year during the month of September. Too many have been touched by suicide and the loss of a loved one, family member or friend in this way. Recently, 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors who will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.



# Healing with Courageous Kindness

by Mindy Corporon



Our son Reat, and my father, William L. Corporon, MD were two of three innocent victims murdered in a hate crime in Overland Park, Kansas on April 13, 2014. Reat was 14, a freshman in high school and his brother Lukas was 12, in his sixth grade of middle school. Our family shattered into more pieces than there are words to explain. I have done my best to provide healing to our family, myself and anyone who might want to listen by authoring a memoir, *Healing a Shattered Soul*, published May 3, 2021.

This past Father's Day, my husband, Len and I spoke about his fathering of our boys, he spoke gently when remembering Reat. He spoke with reverence for Reat's high intellect and his talents in singing, performing and debate. We chuckled, recalling a memory of Reat's tenacity in finding a dog he wanted us to bring home. Lucy is sitting next to me as I type this now. Lucy is 10 years old and Reat has been in Heaven for eight years.

There are no words to take away the pain of a grieving parent. None. Losing a child feels like losing a piece of my heart and soul.

Every "holiday" brings its own unique thoughts, remembrances, and pain into my life. Specifically, on Father's Day, I grieve the loss of my own father, whose life was taken only seconds before the weapon that killed him was aimed at our oldest son. I grieve for Len, who relished parenting Reat and Lukas, together as brothers. I grieve the memories we never got to make with both boys.

To those parents who are newly grieving, we don't have an elixir that will ease your pain.

From the moment I felt the impact of loss my soul changed, morphing into something I found unfamiliar. My world stopped as suddenly as my breath. And then, innately I could feel the world, our earth, our lives on their axis, beginning to move again. The physicality of my body produced the breath needed for survival. Yet, my soul was so completely damaged, the color of life had transformed.

It didn't simply take days or time for my soul, so mortally injured, to come out of hiding. With careful attention to

each new pain in my body, each painful deliberate step seeking reason to live, I searched for my soul, eventually finding it and began to nurture it.

Without knowing I had a choice, I simply started saying 'yes' when offered what looked like a rope dropped down into the cave of my frightened and scarred soul. Stepping into saying 'yes', is a step toward courageous kindness.

Immediately after the murders our friends stayed close by, feeding us, caring for our home as if it were theirs and ensuring we found nutrition. They offered their own courageous kindness by allowing us to repeat memories over a thousand times hoping this retelling and retelling would emblazon them in our hearts and minds. Because now those memories are all we have.

When the phone call came from a young Scout, working on his own Eagle project, asking to complete Reat's Eagle project in memory of his friend, I said 'yes'. Reat's kindness to others in his Scout troop had planted a seed and watered the roots. Over 100 Cub and Boy Scouts joined together from different troops to fill a food pantry, past its own capacity such that an overflow storage unit was needed to accommodate for the number of donations in Reat's memory. Today, thousands have seen the photo of our beautiful boy and read his story, graced upon the door of the food pantry at Operation Breakthrough, a leading childcare agency in the nation and found in Kansas City, MO.

Only minutes after opening our front door to a mother and her young daughter, age 14, did I find out that a star could be named after someone. Offering her a seat at his lunch table, Reat had shown kindness to her on her first day of school. In turn, she remembered him by naming a star after him and offered light to my own soul with this gesture. By providing and accepting courageous kindness these young people were deeply impacting their own lives and others.

I am different because of the murders that took my father and son. My thoughts on life in general, plans for the future, my level of patience, and my desire to seek healing for myself

and others. Certain that I would never feel happiness or find joy, I learned the importance of both emotions.

We found joy when Lukas started reaching milestones Reat would not. And our new companion, sorrow, would visit, forcing us to reconcile how to hold joy and sadness in our hearts simultaneously.

My advice to bereaved parents and family members is to allow the feelings to settle in you, long enough but not too long. As humans, we are meant to feel the excitement of joy and the pain of sadness. Numbing your feelings with vices, such as alcohol, will delay your ability to heal and could harm you or others along the way. Yet finding a way out of your darkness could be found with professional care and proper medications. Be mindful that you can find a path to healing, nurturing your own heart and others along the way.

The sun will rise, even when you find it difficult to do so. The heaving cries and aches will slow long enough for you to learn to breathe again. Your tears that come more often than you ever thought possible will cleanse your heart time and time again. And the qualities you cherish about your child, well, they will place a smile, you knew you had lost, across your exhausted face.

There are angels on our earth, allowing them to help you with their efforts of courageous kindness, to lift you on their wings and carry you while you grieve, will provide you some respite in the middle of your chaos. These angels, your friends, coworkers, and other parents you have met along the way, cannot take away your pain or mine, but they will help you carry the burden.

One day, you will be the angel another parent is seeking. This is how life is meant to be.

**Mindy K. Corporon** is mom to Reat and Lukas and wife to Len. She is the author of *Healing a Shattered Soul*. Co-Founder, SevenDays Inc., a 501c3 overcoming hate with kindness, and Co-Founder, Workplace Healing innovator of the Human Recovery Plan—software platform. Mindy was the Friday Luncheon keynote speaker for The Compassionate Friends' 45th National Conference in Houston, TX.



LOVED & ALWAYS REMEMBERED  
OUR NOVEMBER CHILDREN  
Birthdays



Jacqueline Helmke	Daughter	B Sue Helmke
Midder Mines	Son	Katie & Pete Mines
Aaron Lentz	Son	Sheri Lentz
Jon Paul Baker	Son	Paul Baker
Ginny Buckner	Daughter	Mike & Meredith Buckner
Trae Spencer	Son	Varnar & Kenneth Spencer
David Briggs Martin	Son	Dennis & Jean Martin
Brian Avery Burdette	Son	Rick & Karen Burdette
Ashley Duncan	Daughter	Judy Allen
Andre Eric Houseman, Jr.	Son	Sharon Houseman
Anthena Williams	Daughter	Karen & Greg Williams
Carin Johnson	Sister	Tiffany Johnson
Robert Dower	Son	John & Barbara Dower
Zachary Lyon	Son	Courtney & Ric Chavez
LaTonya Ellis-Hoffman II	Daughter	LaTonya Ellis
John Dickson Cobb	Son	Dickson & Carolyn Cobb
Jeannie Crusen	Daughter	Jean Pritchard & George Boley
Valerie Anne Chalmers	Daughter	Leah Chalmers & Linda Lomax
William "Will" Hayes	Son	Wanda Hayes
Johnny Luciano	Son	Debbie Houston
Lincoln King	Son	Glenna Lastinger & Travis Cline
Ryan Hamilton	Son	Harold & Sandra Hamilton
Kevin Allen	Son	Phyllis & Keith Allen
Chase Rodgers	Son	Kimberly (Kim) & Darryl Rodgers
Kittrell Travis "Kitt" Blake	Son	Sallie Summers & Keith Blake
Riley King	Son	Ellen King
David Thompson	Son	Susan Thompson
Sandor Szabo	Son	Donna & Robert Kent
Warrick Fister	Son	Lorraine Romiti
Lindsey Michelle Blythe	Daughter	Jonnie Diane Poole

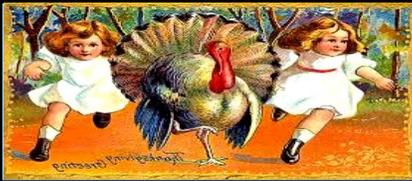


**TO OUR CHILDREN IN HEAVEN:**

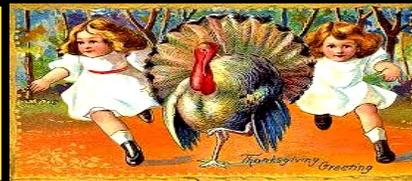
*I thought of you today, but that is nothing new.  
I thought about you yesterday, and the day before that too.  
I think of you in silence, I often speak your name.  
All I have are memories and a picture in a frame.  
Your memory is a keepsake, from which I'll never part.  
God has you in His arms. I have you in my heart.*

*~ Author Unknown ~*





LOVED & ALWAYS REMEMBERED  
 NOVEMBER CHILDREN  
 Anniversaries



Carin Johnson	Sister	Tiffany Johnson
Amark Patra	Son	Shuva Patra
Joshua Riggs	Son	Dennis & Ora Riggs
Aiden Williams	Son	Lisa & Bruce Jones
Scott Shorter	Son	Jeanne & Ken Shorter
Jonathan Beaulieu	Son	Gemma Beaulieu
Marcellus Robert Lennon	Son	Morgan & Michael Lennon
Billy Elmo Brantley, Jr.	Son	Inez Brantley
Casey Edens	Daughter	Kimberly Edens
Darryl Badgett	Son	Marye & Glenn Badgett
Kevin Edmond	Son	John & Rita Edmond
Anthony Molden	Grandson	Marsha Molden
Michael Iaropoli	Son	Joyce & Michael Iaropoli
Larry E Stafford	Son	Alvah & Rachel Ward
Jonathan	Son	Tonya Boykin
Garrilyn J.I. Horton	Daughter	Shewan Lynette Horton
Mila Taylor	Daughter	Alyssa & Zachary Taylor
Curtis "Curt" Gardener	Son	David & Helen Gardener
Brian Aronson	Son	Josie & Art Aronson
Annette White-Williams	Daughter	Aimee White
Casey Snead	Daughter	Tenita Mail
Collin Silva	Son	Carol Silva
Caleb Woodlief	Son	Sandra Woodlief
Lily Jane Thorton	Daughter	Elizabeth Jeffress
Riley King	Son	Ellen King
Justin Moore	Son	Barbi Moore
Crystal Bryant	Daughter	Bill Bryant
Paul Terrelonge	Son	Linda & F. Ray Strother
Kolin Robbins	Grandson	Cynthia Kay Moore
Todd Gray	Son	Nora & Larry Washington
Blake Tolley	Son	Rita Tolley
Tyler Henken	Brother	Courtney Henken

## Today

**Today, 13,661 days from your death, your pictures are turning yellow.**

**Today, 37 years, 4 months and 25 days from your death, my heart still yearns for you.**

**Today, 448 months and 25 days from your death, I still want to sing and dance with you.**

**Today, 1,951 weeks and 4 days from your death, feels sometimes like yesterday.**

**Today, 1,180,310,400 seconds from your death, and I still feel like I died too.**

— Karen Stephens, in memory of her daughter Jacqueline Limbert



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Wake County Chapter*  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**The Compassionate Friends, Inc.  
Wake County Chapter  
PO Box 6602  
Raleigh, NC 27628-6602**



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**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.  
Wake County Chapter  
PO Box 6602  
Raleigh, NC 27628-6602**

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