



# *The Compassionate Friends*

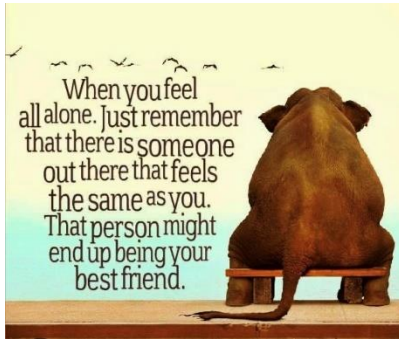
## *Eastern Jackson County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

July-August 2024

**Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips**  
**24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640**  
**Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF**  
**Website: [www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org](http://www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org)**

**TCF National Headquarters**  
**48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393**  
**Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**  
**(877)969-0010**



Last night I had dinner with a friend that I hate I have. (if you know me, I don't use that word ever). I hate that we met, I hate how our paths crossed, I hate that I have to know her, and I hate that we both are forever bonded in this so-called life. It's beyond awful. And I had dinner with this person.

This person is beautiful. This person is amazingly strong (even though we hate when people say that about us- WE WEREN'T GIVEN THE CHOICE!) This person is an inspiration and understands me. This person's eyes still sparkle somehow. I wish I could bring my sparkle back like she has. This person smiles. And she smiles with sincerity. I wish I could smile without faking it every day. This person is brilliant, and puts 1000% into her work and never skips a beat. I wish I was half as ambitious. This person is broken. As am I. This person breaks down as often, if not more than I do. Sometimes alone, and sometimes in front of others because she can't help it. As do I.

I don't know the point of this, besides to remind myself how grateful I am. It doesn't matter that I wish I didn't have to meet this person, and I know she super wishes

she never met me as well. However, those things cannot change, and I know why Tanner brought us together. We were meant to be friends. Period. And he knows that, and he only brings the most special people in to my life these days- and is teaching me to be rid of those that cause damage. And I thank you for that, Tannie. I need her, for with her it's okay to take a deep breath and just fully relax. It's okay to talk about you without making others uncomfortable. And we did talk about you. And Andrew. And Ariana. A lot. We asked questions. Questions that others would NEVER have the balls to ask. We remembered, we laughed, we gossiped, we tried to be normal like the people surrounding us. But then slapped back into the reality as to why we're friends, having dinner together.

She has the kindest soul, even though her heart has been shredded. Although her eyes sparkle, I can still see the agonizing pain behind them. And she can see mine.

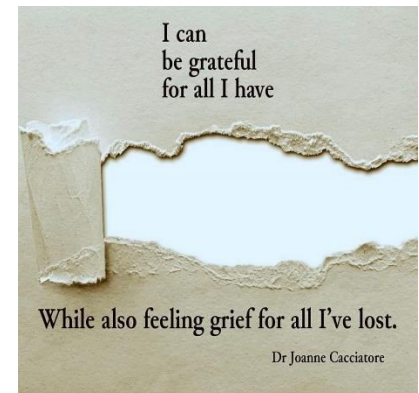
I want to believe that we would have found each other's friendship without the way we did- we'll never know. But, because of these awful, beyond rocky paths that we walk, we did cross. And I am grateful. I love this person, and I am happy to have her as a friend. It's bittersweet, but nothing we can do about it now. All we can do is thrive and watch our friendship blossom into something beautiful, knowing that that's what our kids would want for us.

Thank you Tanner. You continue to work magic, you continue to protect Sia and I, and you continue to surround us with beautiful souls.

Today is a new day. Feel refreshed and brand new, thanks to the friend I wish I never had to meet, but love her to the end.

We are on this journey together, for we will not walk alone.

--Hayley Lewis



## **August Days**

By Lora Krum

The back-to-school shopping trips would have already happened. New clothes, new shoes, new gear to be ready for a new year of school.

Discussion of "getting back on schedule" would have continued, although nobody would have really started going to bed any earlier or waking any earlier the next morning. After all, these would be considered "the final days of summer," and must be embraced and cherished for all that they were worth.

There would still be late nights of swimming, pizza and ice cream on the patio, and carefree conversations full of laughter and love.

And then, that Sunday would come. That day right before the first day of school, when one young man would be packing up the car and heading back to a sophomore year of collegiate studies, while another would be putting drum sticks, lunch

and a notebook in his backpack, and walking across the field into his junior year of high school.

As much as we all would have thought, talked about and prepared for that first day, we would have done all that we could to hold on to each moment of that 'last day of summer.' Most likely, it would have begun with all four of us heading to church, followed by one of our regular breakfast spots. There might have been a mix of excitement, melancholy, nervousness and of course loving thoughts, as we would discuss checklists and plans. The old "what are we gonna do today?" question might still come up, and just maybe both of these young men would still truly appreciate spending the day with their folks. There might have been a walk at the lake, some miniature golfing, and maybe a quick run in to the store to pick up any last-minute items that they needed.

Then, the sun would begin to set, and the reality of summertime coming to an end would be forced upon us. I would watch my two young men gather their things and independently go about their rituals. I would probably stand back and think about the transitions through the years...from choosing their clothes, setting everything out, and getting everything ready for those two energetic little boys...to the days when they "finally learned" how to do more for themselves. There would be a lump in my throat as I recalled my tears on their first days of kindergarten, and their first days of middle school. I'd have to hold back my tears as I would silently ask, "where have all of those special years gone?" and "oh, how I wish that we could hold on to this time forever..."

As they would have stalled, and gotten distracted in a few other things, they probably would have lingered downstairs for just a little longer than they should have, they might once again talk about the new year that was about to start. And then I would have smiled and told them to get a good night's sleep. As they always had, I would imagine they would still both come over and give me a good night hug, and I would have wrapped my arms around the two boys and given them both a kiss on their cleanly shaven cheeks.

Again, I'd think..."oh my, how much they've grown and changed over these fast years." I would tell them I love them, and remind them to pray, and watch them head up the stairs, as I would remember the days of sitting on their beds and saying prayers with them before turning off their lights and pulling the door halfway shut, so they could see the hallway light shining through.

All of those moments would have been special and emotional for any mom, as she learns to adjust to the changes throughout life and the changes she sees as her children grow up in front of her. The thought that these changes don't take place make this time of year even harder to get through. Instead of that special day full of "one last time" activities, and last-minute efforts to make sure everything is ready for the new school year, we will walk aimlessly through the day, trying to be happy for all of the families who are cherishing their last hours of summer together. Instead of quickly baking a batch of brownies to be ready and on the kitchen table when they'd get home from their first day, the oven will remain cold and the counters are bare. No backpacks. No lunch bags. I will look at the kitchen table and my heart will ache, as I know that there's no breakfast that needs to be prepared in the morning...and there will be no need to remind everyone to watch the clock and be sure to be ready to leave on time.

I will hear others complaining of how tiring and frustrating all of these activities will be for them...and I will remember that I never thought of any of them as bothersome. How I never took any special moment that we all shared together for granted. How I would drop those two boys off at school and watch them walk in the doors of school. How I would drive away hoping they knew how much they meant to me...and how I couldn't wait to see them once the day was over. I will try to feel the gratitude for all of the special moments and years, fun and hard work, laughter and homework tears, that we shared together...and I will allow my tears to flow, as I whisper to my boys that I love them, and how I wish they were here.



## "DON'T STEAL MY GRIEF"

Don't try to make me feel better,  
By quipping your cute jokes.  
Don't try to rob me of my pain,  
When I need it as my cloak.  
I know you probably think,  
You're doing me a favor,  
But what you don't understand,  
Is that my sadness is my savior.  
Don't try to steal my right,  
To express my grief in my own way.  
You see, I lost my child,  
And grief is the price that I must pay.  
I need to feel the hurt and pain,  
As it beats inside my chest.  
Don't try to steal my grief,  
When it's the only feeling I have left.

Faye McCord  
TCF Jackson, MS  
In Memory of my son, Lane McCord

Let warm memories  
Be as close to you  
As the warmth of summer



## In Search of Lost Joy

by Darcie Sims

Just as it happened in your life, a single moment changed everything and so here I am with you tonight. My son's death took with him all our hopes and dreams. All of us here know that loss, the emptiness, that brings us here in search of something to stop the pain, something to stop the tears, something to dream about again. We came tonight as a family to share with each other, loving each other, protecting each other during the storm. I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing right now than living.

That wasn't always true. After my son's death there were days when all I could do was think about dying, to join my son, or just to relieve my pain. Now there is a freshness about each day that I never understood before. I got to where I am today because of time and a commitment to rediscovering the joy of living. Time does help fade the fabric of our grief. As time stretches us away from the moment of our child's death, we may begin to grow away from our child. And so we cling to that which we know, even though it tears our heart again and again. Is it not possible that one day some-time in the future, we will begin to understand that joy can return as we remember our child's life, not his death?

We once feared we would never be happy again, that only helplessness and darkness would prevail in our lives, but now ten years later, I can share with you the wonderful discovery that we can do more than survive. Survival is not enough: I want to live. We cannot find words to sooth the hurt; there simply aren't any.

We can, however, build supports

and safety nets. Recovery from the death of a child is a matter of choice. Time does help heal over open wounds. Scars form and serve as reminders. Gradually, however, we must learn to live with those scars and, slowly, let them sink in place. Recovery begins to occur when we can learn to reinvest our energies, emotions and love rather than seek to replace it. When we completely understand we did not lose our child, recovery is possible. Our child died, but the love we shared between us can never be destroyed.

I cannot reach out alone. I need the love and strength of my new-found family to be a cheering section and a safety network of caring individuals who will support me if I fail, and who believe strongly enough in me to put me back on track to go on again.

The human spirit has an infinite capacity to survive, endure, and grow. It requires both laughter and tears to thrive and flourish. It requires love and faith, strength and support as well. Hurt and pain have their lessons too, and we cannot rob ourselves of the richness of the tapestry that hurt and love weave together. To eliminate one from the loom is to break the thread and steal away the fabric.

For those of you who are hurting too deeply, whose pain is too fresh, whose child's death is still too close to hear me, I want to give you the message: "HOLD ON, HOLD ON TIGHT." Right now for you, there seems to be little sunshine, little hope and no energy to choose life. So hang on tight.

And if you know parents who are struggling just to hang on, reach out to them right now. Loan them some of your strength, knowing they will loan you some of theirs when you need it. That's what TCF is all about: helping each other through the valley of the shadow, helping each other through the hurt, helping each other through the anger, the pain, the emptiness, the silence, helping each other rediscover life



## Suicide Survival

News, searing pain, disbelief, questions, sadness, what if, emptiness, darkness . . .

It can happen to someone you love, and you are suddenly plunged into darkness, an abyss that isolates you from life, and as you try to climb out of it, you find yourself on a never-ending merry-go-round in your mind, living in the dizziness of all that *was*, no longer noticing what *is*. To lose someone we love in any way is devastating, but when someone slips away from us after having made a choice to leave this earthly existence rather than to stay . . . well, the challenge to accept it can be great, indeed, and seemingly too much to bear. My purpose in this writing is to try to help you see a way out of your darkness, a way out of the confusion of your thoughts as a result of this life-changing experience that has happened to you.

I know, for it happened to me and to my family. After our daughter chose to leave this life a little over four years ago, each one of us left remaining dove into that dark place, and we made the climb out in our own time and in our own ways. The journey continues for us, as it is never quite 'finished', but, one thing is for certain, the recognition that life exists on the other side of this one has helped us get off the merry-go-round and step back into living.

A tragic event such as this naturally becomes a time of great introspection. We examine our past words, past actions, our past history with our loved one, and in doing so, we can become absorbed in the weight of guilt, our life focused on what was. We all do and say things in our relationships that have the potential to deeply affect those close to us; but, ultimately, each one of us makes his or her decisions as to our actions based upon our individual needs. We cannot truly know what is



going on in someone else's mind, or in their heart, or what the journey of their spirit must be. How could we? And, we needn't know what it is, for it becomes that soul's journey to take. We live our own journey, no one else's. We cannot prevent what another does, but we can decide what we can do in response to their actions.

We have so many questions . . . perhaps, the one to ask is not why our loved one chose to do what they did, but what is it that we must learn from this experience that we are having in regard to it, for that is our part in the higher scheme of things. And, if we honestly ask ourselves that question, and truthfully answer it, our discovery will become a catalyst for deep personal growth that can bring about acceptance and finally peace.

No matter what the circumstance of our loved one's passing, the truth is that we can never know just why this tragedy has happened. All the questions, they can haunt us forever within each day of the rest of our lives if we chose to let them. The real truth is that we can never know why, can never change the past, what we said, what we did, and even if we could, does that guarantee that things would have been different? Who knows the answer to that, but what we do know is that we are left with now, our now.

We can't stop someone else from ending their life here if that is their soul's desire, but we can make choices that prevent *us* from falling into an earthly kind of giving *our* life away. Now, think about it . . . if your loved one who has passed on to the next life sees you somehow from where they are, would they sense happiness at your continued pain? Would they feel joy at how you were living the days since they left? Perhaps, we can show them how much their life meant to us by how we live ours here, now.

That's the risk we take remaining on that merry-go-round . . . the risk of losing ourselves in the days of our earthly life, a different kind of loss, but, just as real as the one our loved one chose, still purposeful, for we have a choice in it. Although it may seem difficult, it is possible to stop the circling

of your mind and to step into a place where you can start finding yourself living once again, living your life with the freshness of the personal knowledge that your loved one has caused you to gain, living in the now, remembering the past, but not living in the past, being grateful for what you now know. It is an opportunity to be what you weren't when your loved one was here on the earth, your chance to show what you have learned by the sacrifice of them. Give them peace by experiencing your peace. Let them be free, release them to their destiny. It is your choice.  
Love & Light,  
Corinne



**Knowing**  
When death will come  
Life keeps on coming.  
How you may cope  
No way of knowing.

The future laughs  
The children's smile

Our life ahead  
Mile after mile.

Our family plans  
We've always had,  
A family dog,  
A mom, a dad.

Then sickness comes  
To both your two.  
Where do we turn  
To keep life new?

Through thick and thin,  
From state to state,  
You blindly follow  
Before that date.

When final hope  
Then slips away.  
Your babies' hurt  
Day after day.

Their laughter, grins  
And sounds aren't here.  
Replaced with loss  
Our hearts now tear.

Their lives like light,  
They slipped away.  
Then all we do  
Is hate and pray.

Their lives now gone  
You keep on moving.  
Our hearts must heal  
You turn to grieving.

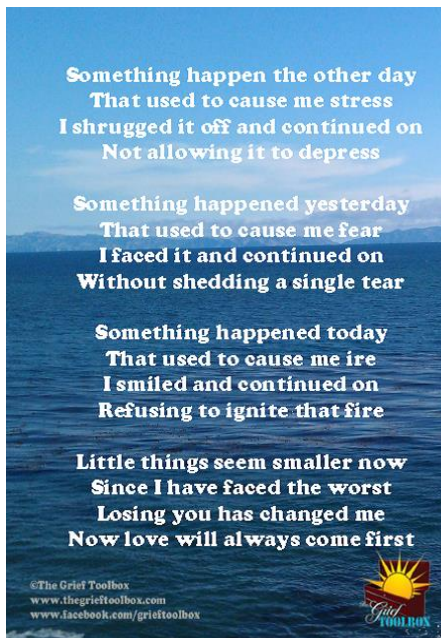
But death has come,  
And life keeps moving.  
Now we will cope,  
Our hearts now knowing.  
--Don Batson, South Kansas City TCF

### **Bereaved Parents**

Different ages  
Different stages  
Different issues  
Same pain  
Daily strain  
Occasional tissues  
Our children have died  
Often is all we know  
A fact we fear to hide  
Despite our ever-present woe  
We live with pride  
Though broken-hearted  
To love, remember, and grow

--Victor Montemurro

TCF Medford, NY



### Reflections in Sand and Time

I looked across the lake, then onto the sand,  
Wishing I was still standing there  
Holding your small hand.  
Sand castles, buckets and shovels  
Flashed into my mind,  
As I remembered all those precious  
memories you left behind.  
Tiny footprints took me many,  
many years back in time,  
But of those I looked at—  
yours I couldn't find.  
But as I stood there  
going so far back in the sand,  
I almost could feel you holding my hand.  
--Linda Trimmer, TCF, York, PA

Accept me as I am  
grieving, pained.  
empty, lonely

Just love me  
and allow me to feel  
what I must feel.

One day I will begin to heal--  
I know not when.  
Don't be afraid of me—  
It is still me.

Struggling to find  
myself—outside  
of this pain. Please  
just be my friend.

--Marilyn Henderson,  
TCF Pacific Northwest

### Silent Tears

Inwardly my eyes have cried  
a sea of silent tears  
and only see the misery  
of unshared waning years.  
Each unpaired heartbeat echoes  
an empty dark despair,  
reflections of a lifetime passed  
whose future ended there.  
The springtime sweetness that was  
life  
now bleak and barren sleeps.  
The part of him that died with him  
remains entrapped and keeps.  
I am the living death that walks,  
each footprint bears my pain  
and tells my heart and mind and  
soul  
I must see him again.  
I hope, I pray, I need to know  
this wrong is not forever,  
and must believe beyond this life  
in love we'll laugh together.

--Chuck Guice

### The Promise

Your birth brought me starshine,  
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 girl-child  
bringing 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;  
never would your death erase  
the years 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,  
it would 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.

--Genesse Boudrea Gentry,  
*Stars in the Deepest Night: After the  
Death of a Child*

### The Gift of Someone Who Listens

Those of us who have traveled a  
while

Along this path called grief  
Need to stop and remember that  
mile—

The first mile of no relief.

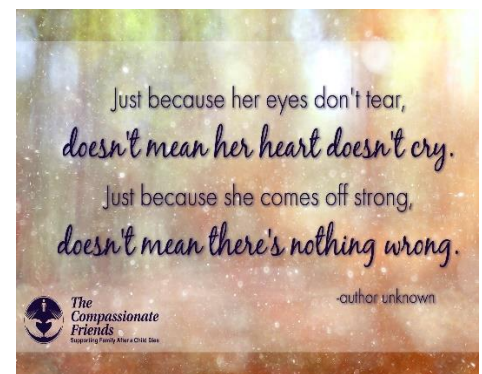
It wasn't the person with answers  
Who told us of ways to deal  
It wasn't the one who talked and  
talked

That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat  
And held our hands in theirs.  
The ones who let us talk and talk  
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember  
That more than the words we  
speak,  
It's the gift of someone who listens\  
That most of us desperately  
seek.

--Nancy Myerholts,  
Waterville/Toledo TCF



### **In My Pocket**

I have memories in my pocket.  
They rattle just like change.  
My memories of you are treasures  
I carry wherever I go.  
They are stored in bits and pieces,  
parts of a beautiful whole.  
They give me comfort  
when I think I am alone.  
Yes, I have memories in my pocket,  
like so much other stuff I keep  
there.  
But of all the treasure I have,  
it's the memories of you  
that are the most precious.  
*--Martin Baer, TCF North Shore-  
Boston*

### **The Miracle of You**

Who could have known the exquisite  
difference  
Your brief life would make upon  
mine?  
Who could have known a tiny baby  
would  
Show me the beauty of a  
sunrise,  
Or the wonder of a rainbow,  
or the pain of a tear?  
Who would have known that an  
innocent little child  
Would take away my fear of death  
and point me in the direction of  
Heaven?  
Who could have known that you  
would succeed where so many  
others  
have failed?  
*--Dana Gensler, TCF, South Center  
KY*

### **I Still Love**

She brought me red roses tonight, the  
ones she knew I loved. I thanked her  
silently and watched as she sat  
against the nearest tree. She looked  
past me up toward the twilight sky.  
Her mouth was slightly smiling. Yet  
she had tears in her eyes. Her one  
hand tucked her auburn hair behind  
her ear and her other hand was  
twirling the grass between her  
fingers. She shivered a little and I  
wished I had my jacket to give her, a  
hand to comfort her. I wanted to tell  
her I loved her again, but it was as  
futile as trying to make roses grow in  
the dark. I wanted to kiss away the  
tears that were now streaming down  
her upturned face. I wanted things  
like before, when the world could

make her laugh. She held one more  
rose, the most beautiful one, the one  
that had bloomed in her hand. She  
walked through the vacant space  
between her and me. I smiled in  
wonder as she tried to wipe away her  
tears. With a shaking hand she let  
down the final rose upon my grave  
and made her way toward the setting  
sun.

*--Alysa Mayer in memory of Keith*

### **Now**

Your presence now fills me  
with that which I never had before,  
a knowing that love is what remains  
when all else is gone;  
a sureness that death is not an end  
but a beginning in another time  
and place, yet still connected  
by what holds you to me.  
Like sparks afire we go on,  
both of us filling our pinpoints of  
light,  
our souls, with what we need  
to be bigger than we are  
next time we fly away,  
together, to NOW.

*--Sandy Goodman,  
Living with Loss*

### **Memories**

Time can never erase,  
The memory of your face;  
Nor the passage of the years,  
Stem the volume of my tears.

You are with me for always,  
In my heart throughout all days;  
Then in my dreams nightly,  
Your star shines ever so brightly.

I want your spirit to remain,  
Inside of me, despite the pain.  
To forget you would be a curse,  
Because no memories would be  
much worse.

You were born a part of me,  
Now you live within the heart of  
me;  
Forever precious, forever young,  
My beautiful, darling little ones.

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
In Memory of my angels, Michelle,  
Jerry and Danny*



**Our Annual Walk to Remember**  
will be held September 21, 2024  
At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass  
Pro) In Independence, MO  
Registration will begin at 8:30 am  
Walk will begin at 9 am  
Please watch for future emails and/or  
check the website  
[www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org](http://www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org)  
for preregistration and t-shirt order  
information.  
**Please help us help others. Make a  
LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible  
Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O  
Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Ave,  
Raytown, MO 64133**

**Remember when you came to your  
first meeting, and someone was  
there who was a little farther down  
the road and gave you a hug or  
shared something that made you  
feel like you are not crazy. Well, if  
you are a little bit farther down the  
road, please feel free to come back  
to our meetings and help families  
that are just starting their grief  
journey.**

*Please visit our website at ,  
[www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org](http://www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org)  
Find us on Facebook at  
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/  
1582699755290182](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182)*

*We have several volunteers who  
write remembrance cards to families  
on birthdays and death dates. Just a  
reminder if you have an address  
change, please email  
[phillipsplace@aol.com](mailto:phillipsplace@aol.com) or mail a  
6200 Kentucky Raytown, MO 64133  
so the roster can be updated.  
Please remember that you can give  
to The Compassionate Friends  
through your United Way pledge at  
work or as a single gift, but you  
MUST WRITE IT IN.*