



# ***The Compassionate Friends***

## ***Eastern Jackson County Chapter***

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

July-August 2025

**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**

#### ***Upcoming Event:***



**Our Annual Walk to Remember** will be held September 20, 2025 At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass Pro) In Independence, MO Registration will begin at 8:30 am The walk will begin at 9 am. Cost of registration is \$10. A limited number of shirts will be available for purchase on the morning of the event for \$15. This is an event for all family members and friends. Hope to see you there.

#### **Grieving Through the Summer: Navigating Loss During Warm-Weather Holidays**

When we think about grief and difficult times of year, our minds often jump to the winter holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. But for many grieving people, summer can be just as painful, if not more so. Memorial Day, July 4 and Labor Day often bring a different kind of emotional weight. These aren't holidays we usually associate with grief, yet they can stir up deep sadness, longing and isolation, especially when the rest of the world seems to be relaxing, celebrating or gathering with friends and family in the sunshine. Summer holidays are steeped in tradition. Backyard barbecues, fireworks, lake weekends, family road trips and long evenings outside can all carry reminders of who is missing. These traditions may have included a loved one who is no

longer here. It may be a parent who always manned the grill, a sibling who loved hosting the party or a partner you used to sit next to watching fireworks. Their absence can feel loud in these quieter, in-between moments of everyday celebration.

If you're grieving during the summer months, here are a few reminders:

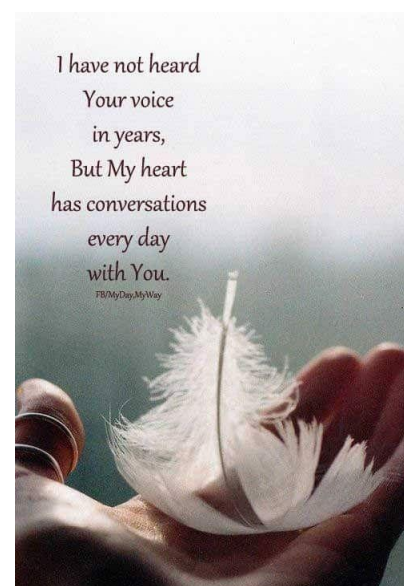
- You don't have to celebrate if it doesn't feel right. It's okay to skip the party, leave early or spend the day doing something completely different.
- Find your own way to remember. Maybe light a candle, write a letter, share a story or simply pause for a moment of reflection. You can honor your loved one in a way that feels meaningful to you.
- Let yourself feel whatever comes up. Grief doesn't follow a schedule, and it often shows up in waves. There's no need to "shake it off" or pretend everything is fine.
- Connect with someone who gets it. Whether it's a support group, a trusted friend or an online community, talking to someone who understands can ease the feeling of being alone in your grief.
- Start a new tradition. Sometimes the old way of doing things is too painful. Finding a new activity or place to spend the day can open up space for healing.

Grief during summer holidays might not get the attention it deserves, but it's very real. If you're feeling disconnected while everyone else is

celebrating, know that you're not the only one carrying loss through a season that looks light and carefree on the outside.

It's okay to laugh for one minute and cry the next. It's okay to sit out of traditions that don't serve you this year. And it's okay to hold space for both grief and gratitude, for sadness and sunshine, all in the same season. Whatever this summer brings, be gentle with yourself. You are doing the best you can and that is more than enough.

--Serenity Newsletter 2025 Quarter 2



#### ***"I Don't Want to Be Sad"***

I don't want to be sad. I wake up and tell myself to remember the good times. The laughter. Her smile. The moments when life felt full and untouched by the shadow of grief. I look at the pictures, I replay the memories. I try to hold onto joy. But somehow, it always circles back to the pit in my stomach and the ache in my heart.

Because she is gone.

No matter how beautiful the memories are, they are stained with the pain of absence. Her laughter echoes in my mind, but it's followed by silence. I see her eyes in my dreams, but they vanish with the morning light. I try to be strong—for others, for myself. But sometimes, just getting through the day feels like climbing a mountain in the dark.

People say, "Focus on the good times." And I do. But they don't understand that even the good times hurt now. Because they're over. Because I can't make more of them. Because she's not here to add to them.

I don't want to live in the valley of sorrow. I want to smile without guilt. I want to feel peace without the weight of loss pressing down on my chest. But grief doesn't ask for permission. It doesn't follow a schedule or honor my desire to feel better today.

Still, I try.

I try to breathe when the wave hits. I try to remember that sadness is not a betrayal of her life, it's a reflection of my love. I try to honor her memory by not just surviving, but slowly learning to live again. I try to let joy and sorrow walk hand in hand—because in this strange, sacred grief, they often do.

And maybe, one day, the good memories will soften the pit in my stomach. Maybe the ache in my heart will feel more like a scar than an open wound. Maybe I won't always be sad—but today, I just want to be honest.

And that's okay.  
*By Kellie Cunningham Sipos*

**The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief. But the pain of grief is only a shadow when compared with the pain of never risking love**  
~ Hilary Stanton Zunin ~



Hi, Mama.  
I know your heart feels like it's been torn in half. I know every breath takes more strength than you think you have. But I need you to know - I'm still with you. Just in a different way now.  
You don't have to be strong all the time. Not for them. Not even for me. I never needed you to hold it all together - just to keep loving me, the way you always did. And you do. Every single day.  
I see you when you cry in the quiet. When you say my name out loud just to hear it. When you think the world has forgotten, but your love for me refuses to fade.  
That love?  
It reaches me.  
You're doing more than surviving, Mama - you're carrying a love that even death couldn't touch. And I am so proud of you for that.  
When you're ready, laugh again. Live again. Not because you're moving on, but because love like ours doesn't end - it becomes something else.  
It becomes strength.  
It becomes light in your darkest moments. It becomes the reason you keep going.  
And I'll be right there.  
In every sunrise you pause to watch. In the songs that make you smile through the tears. In the quiet moments when you think of me, and feel a warmth you can't explain.  
That's me.  
Still loving you.  
Still yours.  
Love always, your son  
--Missing My Son Facebook page

### Sky

As my sad eyes stared at the sky  
In silent reverie,

A puffy angel soon appeared,  
She held a heart for me.

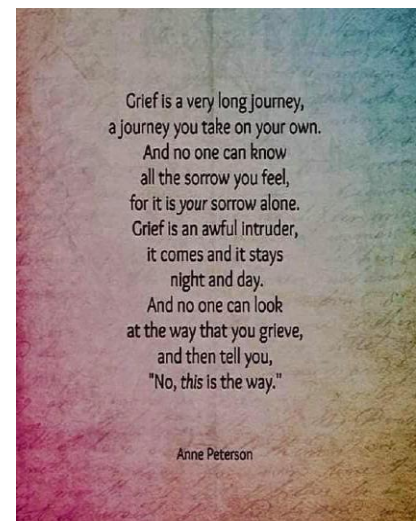
Her soft hands grasp that favorite shape,  
Her face two eyes and smile.  
It filled my soul with gladness  
As I drove another mile.

At night I sometimes gaze above,  
Mixing satellites with stars,  
Each twinkling light a wink  
Filled with both my daughters' love.

Another time the rain come down  
Like tears upon my face,  
When suddenly two rainbows formed,  
A symbol of God's grace.

When lightning flashes and thunder crashes,  
It's my daughter's favorite weather,  
Under a porch of garage roof  
They'd watch the storm together.

As we await the full eclipse  
To darken our blue sky,  
When sun again appears below,  
My angel girls will shine and fly.  
*By Barbara Batson South Kansas City TCF*



**Learning to go on with life after your child has passed away is very hard.**

**Many of us feel guilty; we feel like our child is thinking we don't love them or we don't miss them if we start to move forward in our lives.**

**I hear you; at one time I felt that same way...**

It's ok not to be ok  
Some days  
are just harder  
than others

Grief is a personal journey,  
and there's no right  
or wrong way  
through it

There are days we  
feel a sense of peace,  
while other days,  
it's a private he\*\* ...

Convinced it will be  
this way til the day  
we leave this earth

Give yourself space  
to feel, to mourn,  
and to remember

Finding small ways  
to honor their memory  
can also bring comfort ~  
Lighting a candle,  
sharing stories, or  
creating a special memorial  
can help keep  
their spirit alive

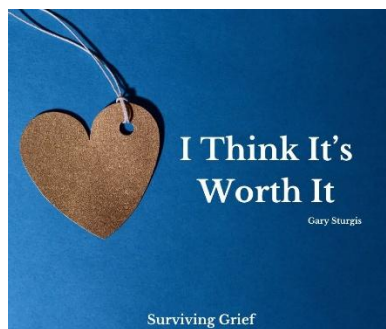
Be gentle with yourself,  
and know that, over time,  
the pain will soften,  
and moments of peace  
and even joy will  
begin to return

It's not about never falling ~  
but always getting back up

Until we meet again ...  
--Helen Lapierre  
*Hello to Heaven*



I wish more people understood that  
grief isn't just being sad and crying.  
Grief is being angry, being numb,  
being broken, and being everything  
in-between  
Grief is so different for everyone and  
you just have to go thru the motions  
and roll with the punches.  
When you're grieving the loss of  
someone you grieve for what was  
and what will never be, grief also  
takes a big toll on your mental and  
physical health.  
Grief is LOVE with nowhere to go.  
Grief is trying to remind yourself  
that "this too shall pass"  
Grief is forcing yourself out of bed  
to shower and eat.  
Grief is isolating yourself  
Grief is surrounding yourself with  
people and things to distract your  
brain from reality  
Grief is ugly and rough, so if you  
cannot understand why people grieve  
so hard for so long  
so deep consider yourself lucky to  
not understand.



### Think It's Worth It

The thing about grief is that other  
people tend to forget you're doing it.  
Or they think that after a week or  
two, you should be over it.

But you and I know it doesn't work  
that way, right?

We have to somehow strike a  
balance between the act of grieving,  
and our total lack of control over it,  
along with the will to continue living  
life and making plans.

But grief is a tricky thing. There's an  
array of thoughts and emotions I  
continue to face in my grief that's  
somehow invisible and unfamiliar to  
everyone else. So I talk about it, and  
write about it, in order to shed a little  
light on the unseen and unknown.

The only people who can understand  
this are those of us who have  
experienced a tremendous loss.

How do you explain to people who  
have no idea what you're  
experiencing that it's been several  
months and you're still crying  
yourself to sleep? That you're  
always sad? How do you show them  
what you had to witness with your  
own eyes, or explain to them why  
you still just want the person you  
love to come back?

Here's the thing...you can't!

It's not just their death that we  
struggle with, it's also the regret of  
all the things said and done during  
the time in which they were still  
alive. And it's in all the things you  
can't say or do now that they're  
gone.

It's not just about the last interaction  
you had with someone, it's about all  
of it: the birthdays, the holidays, the  
hugs, the talks, the trips together. It's  
about the lifetime of good memories.

When someone you love is taken  
from you suddenly, your brain has a  
way of doing whatever it does when  
you experience a traumatic event, it  
holds onto it tight, and constantly  
floods you with thoughts of it.

The unfortunate truth is that we're all  
susceptible to grief, because we're  
all able to love. The risk of love is  
loss, and the price of loss is grief.  
And I think it's worth it.

Maybe nothing's ever really gone? I  
don't know.

But what I do know is that I'm still  
trying to reconcile the fact that every



day is just another day without my  
loved one in it.

And...that will never change.  
--Gary Sturgis - *Surviving Grief*

### July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven  
Brilliant colors in the sky.  
Their splendor ends in seconds  
On this evening in July.  
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"  
I whisper with a sigh.  
She was born this month,  
She loved this month,  
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful  
fireworks  
Glowing briefly in the dark  
They are gone too soon, and so was  
she—  
Having been, and left her mark,  
A glorious, incandescent life.  
A catalyst, a spark...  
Her being gently lit my path  
And softened all things stark.  
The July birth, the July death  
Of my happy summer child  
Marked a life too brief that ended  
Without rancor, without guile.  
Like the fireworks that leave images  
On unprotected eyes...  
Her lustrous life engraved my  
heart...  
With love that never dies.  
--Sally Migliaccio, *Long Island, NY*

**From Sascha Wagner:**

### August

This summer runs to harvest—Do  
you ask  
How could a harvest be without my  
child?  
Friend, someday soon  
the harvest in your life  
will bring you home and wealth,  
from love remembered.

### Summer Soon...

Sunlight dancing on the branches  
Of the birch tree at my door.  
Meadow stretching smug and lazy,  
Darker, greener than before.  
Wind as warm as hugging children,  
Clouds so round and very close--  
And on one small grave their  
trembles  
Lovingly an early rose.

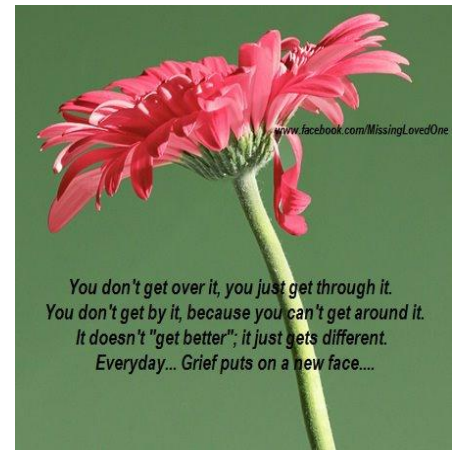
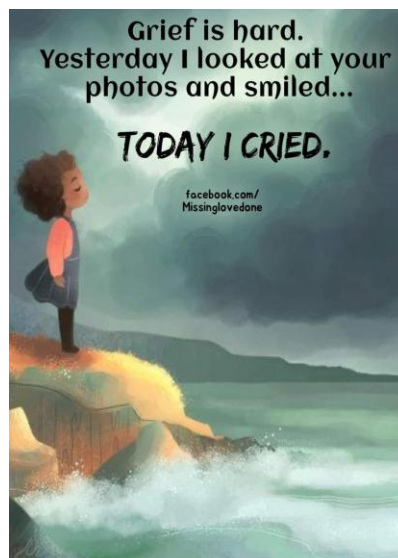
### Summer wind

*The one who owns this summer  
is not here,  
not here to know the tender  
summer wind,  
not here to share the glowing  
and the song.*  
*The one who owns this summer  
did not live  
to touch the richness of this  
day,  
this day in summer when you  
are alone.*  
*Weep to the summer wind,  
weep and love again  
the one you remember.*

### Summer Breezes

There's a hint of girlish laughter  
Wafting past the porch.  
For a moment, I pause to listen.  
In the warmth of summer sun  
Memories are to bask in.  
Trees you climbed, kites you flew,  
Bikes you raced,  
Waves you splashed in.  
At night we wrapped time around us  
As we blanketed the grass  
And gazed toward heaven.  
The stars were full of wonder then,  
And lazy days seemed endless.  
Life spread before you,  
Laughter filling the wind with  
happiness.  
Just now I thought I heard you  
once again.  
How pleasant this breath of summer,  
The breezes hold such memories  
Of life, of you.

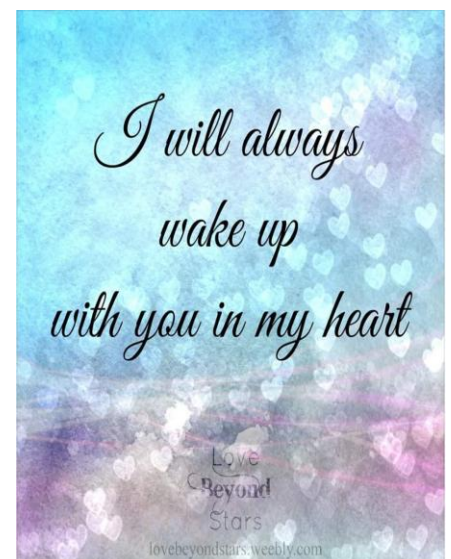
--Karen Nelson, *Box Elder County, UT*



### Dandelions and Grass

Dandelions and grass  
Clasped in a chubby hand,  
Starry eyed, so pleased with  
himself,  
Never a bouquet so grand;  
Slightly wilted, with drooping  
leaves,  
Received as the rarest of blooms.  
In my best vase on a cloth of lace  
They proudly graced my rooms.

In the years to come, that same  
hand Wrote a lovely poem,  
Built a model airplane  
And played the saxophone,  
But ever in this mother's heart  
In all the years that passed,  
The loveliest thing that David  
gave  
Was dandelions and grass.  
--Joy C. Worland



## Man's Grief

In a world that whispers "be strong,"  
He stands, a silent sentinel against  
the storm,  
Tears hidden like pearls in the  
ocean's depths,  
A heartache so profound, it echoes in  
his form.

"Men don't cry, "they say, but oh,  
how they weep,  
In the quiet corners where no one  
can see,  
For the loss of a love so deep, so  
true,  
Is a wound that bleeds invisibly.

Yet there is courage in his silent  
battle,  
A strength in the vulnerability he  
dares not show,  
For every tear he swallows, every  
memory he cradles,  
Is a testament to the love he'll  
forever know.

So let us rewrite this unwritten code,  
That tells men to shroud their grief in  
night,  
Let's shine a light on their unspoken  
sorrow,  
And acknowledge their pain in the  
broad daylight.

For grief, like love, knows no  
bounds,  
It does not discriminate, does not  
judge,  
It simply is—a tide that pulls us  
under,  
And in understanding, we may give  
it a nudge.

To the man who mourns in the  
shadows,  
Know this: your tears are not a sign  
of defeat,  
They are precious droplets of your  
undying love,  
And in them, your heart's rhythm  
continues to beat. —AMP



Losing a child - Do you want to know  
what it is like to lose a child? Sit  
down, this could take quite a while.  
At first you are in shock, and then  
you are in denial. And pretty soon  
reality puts your emotions on trial.  
You lose so much, but the first you  
lose is your smile. To others you  
seem okay, but you really are not.

The grief that you feel is only the  
start. Because your child now lives  
only in your heart. You treasure each  
picture that is all you have got. You  
cling to memories that you thought  
you forgot. You know your life will  
never again be the same. You  
pretend things are okay, and you  
hide your pain. You just want  
someone to mention his name. So  
you can imagine that he is beside  
you again. Sometimes you feel like  
you are going insane.

You still feel all alone, even when in a  
crowd. Others can speak of their  
children of whom they are proud.  
But to talk about your child,  
somehow isn't allowed. So your  
child's memories are hidden under  
grief's cloud. You just want to  
mention his name out loud. With  
each day you are reminded of all you  
have lost.

And how much your loss has  
ultimately cost. Your child's hopes  
and dreams have been tossed.

So, before you judge, keep your  
fingers crossed  
That you never know the pain of a  
child's loss.  
You hold back tears, because they  
would be a stream. You cry every  
day, but you really want to scream.  
My child mattered, how can people  
be so mean?

You pray for a visit, or vision in the  
form of a dream. So before you tell  
me some over used silly cliché. Like  
"He is in a better place" or "things  
are better this way". Think about  
what you are about to say. I really  
mean it when I tell you, that I hope  
and pray - that you never know how I  
feel each and every day.



## THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF SIBLING GRIEF

From the shadows we come, the  
surviving siblings. We are all ages:  
younger, older, twins and  
subsequent children. We have our  
own story to tell, one that is often  
brushed aside in the concern for our  
parents, the spouse, and even the  
children of our sibling. We are  
grieving, experiencing the same  
intensity of pain, but not always  
acknowledged by others. When a  
child dies, a future is lost; when a  
parent dies, it is the past which is  
buried. The death of a sibling is the  
death of a friend, a rival, an  
antagonist, a confidant, and perhaps  
a co-conspirator. It is important to  
help give siblings a voice as we  
struggle in the shadows, searching  
to find light in the darkness.

My mother would tell you that  
when my brother, Big A died, *"the  
world went dark and silent. No  
longer did life seem worth living. The  
sun grew cold and the music died.  
There were no happy sounds in our  
house anymore and the sun cast  
only shadows of sadness."* When  
Austin died, we all thought the sun  
had left forever. But much to our  
dismay, the sun kept coming up and  
we had to keep going, even though  
we didn't always know where we  
were going! My mom used to tell  
people that the only reason she got  
up after my brother died was  
because I needed cereal. There is a  
little more to the story.

It is true, I was hungry. But what  
she didn't tell you is that at first, she  
moved the cereal down to a lower  
cabinet, to make it easier for me to  
reach. And then she put the milk in a  
smaller container, so I didn't need  
help pouring it. Then the TV was

moved to a shorter shelf so I could turn on my own cartoons. By now, all the possible accommodations had been made for me to be “self-sufficient,” — mind you, I was 4. But every day I came back, needing something else. Finally, my mom, exhausted and looking to grieve in peace, asked me what more could I possibly need?

I told her that I needed my brother back. We cried together while she explained patiently to her 4-year-old daughter for the thousandth time that he could not come back. Then I asked her when our family would be fixed, “unbroken.” I didn’t have the words then that I do now, to say that I was hungry for more than cereal. I had lost my brother...and we were at risk of losing so much more...

It was then, in the early hours of a Saturday morning, that we came to realize that in our own unique struggles to find a way to breathe in those early days, we had lost each other. We didn’t lose my brother, he died. But we were at risk of losing the support of our little family. This was the spark for us, the start of our commitment to find a way to reach through our differences in our losses to find some common ground. Our story is not unique. One of the most difficult parts of being a bereaved sibling is the loss of the family we knew. Our parents are consumed by their own grief and while we certainly understand why our experience is that none of our supports are the same. Siblings are the people who have known us and our family the longest. Our friends may not know how to help and may shy away. Extended family is primarily concerned with our parents, and the family that we knew is shattered seemingly beyond repair.

*How can you help a bereaved sibling?*

Acknowledge that Sibling loss is devastating – often sibs feel we are the “Forgotten Mourners.” We may be asked how their parents are handling the loss. Many times, we feel that our loss is not given as much weight by supportive others.

Take the time to ask surviving siblings how we are doing. Encourage us to seek and accept emotional support for ourselves – sometimes we feel driven to support our parents. Many siblings report putting their own grief on hold to care for parents or out of fear that their grieving will make things worse for their grieving parents who “have enough to deal with.” It can result in siblings feeling isolated and alone within their own families. We may need reminders and permission to grieve and to accept our own support.

Allow us to grapple with our guilt – the truth is that all sibling relationships are not perfect and even great ones come with some not-so-hot moments of rivalry or ugly words. Grief has a unique quality of playing back newsreels of the worst moments between us and our siblings when we are feeling down. Remind us of memories where we were kind to our sibling. Help us put into perspective our normal sibling relationships. It would be weird if every moment we had with them was actually perfect. We may need you to help us to remember this.

We are surviving siblings. We face many challenges, sometimes alone. But with support and a lot of grief work, we can emerge from the shadows. We can claim our roles, and live the legacies we have chosen of our loved ones with pride (colored with sadness). Am I Still a Sister? You bet I am! And just as my little family learned in the wee hours of a Saturday morning, crying over breakfast cereal, I hope our TCF family can find that we are all bereaved, we are all hurting, we are many things, BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE. Together we can become a family circle, broken by death, but mended by love.

ALICIA SIMS FRANKLIN

## HOW TO HOPE AGAIN

My philosophy is to always choose to hope when the alternative is hopelessness.

If you have difficulty understanding a purpose for hope after loss, you are not

alone. Consider that through hope, you can find paths to peace and healing in your life, and perhaps the lives of others.

How will you continue forward with your own life after the loss of a loved one? It can seem quite impossible, but somehow, we make our way wearily through the days, weeks, months and beyond. And hope can help us to live a life that honors the legacy of loved ones and would make them proud.

There is very often an ongoing flurry of questions in our minds and hearts about the purpose of life and death after a devastating loss. Hope can be the catalyst for spiritual growth that gives more purpose and meaning to life and its challenges and hardships.

*John Pete*

**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>

*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 note to TCF, C/O Theresa Phillips 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.*