



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March-April 2023

Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips

24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640

Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF

Website: www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org

TCF National Headquarters

48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

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(877)969-0010

Love Never Goes Away

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

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child died, even though we wish we could have, so...we are stuck with this pain, this grief. What do we do with it? Surely, we can’t live like THIS forever! There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable...someday.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car....Now we don’t have that measure anymore. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse. So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy,” TIME to remember.

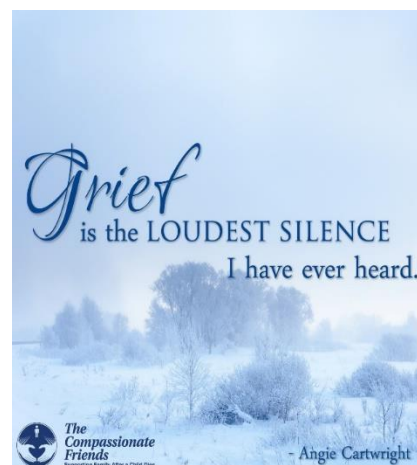
Be nice to yourself! Don’t measure your progress through grief against anyone else’s. Be your own timekeeper. Don’t

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

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

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

--Darcie D. Sims



TIME does not touch the firmament of stars with a simplicity of days and nights and years. The rhythm of this smallness we call earth is only a whisper among galaxies? Beyond the measured years which rise and fall beyond the calendars of human time and place, the meaning of this smallness we call life will find us somewhere in eternity.

“For You from Sascha” by Sascha Wagner

Sorrow

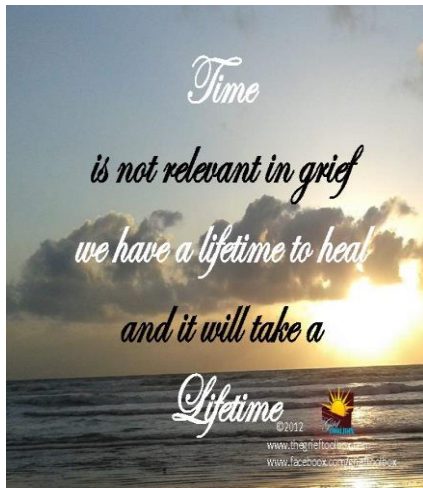
It hurts deep down inside. One feels diminished, less than we have been. Empty, bereft – forlorn and incomplete. Sorrow is a painful word, but if someone is there to share the feeling, it becomes endurable and in the scheme of things a time of being that includes great emotion and thus, a time of closeness, growing and becoming someone more than we have been before.

--Shirley Holzer Jeffrey, “Louie” chapter, in *Death: The Final Stage of Growth* by Elisabeth Kubler Ross

Healing...Unobserved

I used to wonder why I always felt like crying when leaving a support group. Then one night I left, and it felt as though a great load had been lifted from my inner being. For the first time in several years my surroundings came alive. I observed the twinkling of stars and brightness of the moon. I heard the crunching of snow beneath my boots and paused to watch a rabbit darting to and fro in the twilight. Is this the beginning of healing or has it been there—slowly and desperately with great persistence—trying to emerge from beneath the greatest of sorrows and pain? Maybe tomorrow...I will make a snow angel!

--Nancy A Gleim, "From the Heart of Samantha"



Not An Easy Word

Hope is not an easy word for grievers—

but we, more than most others, need to understand what hope can mean for us.

Hope means finding the strength to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace the joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing with tenderness and pride our own life and the gifts left to us by those we have lost.

--Sascha Wagner

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

--Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Waiting for Answer

Years ago, I left my first meeting of TCF and drove home in tears. My son Max had died a few short weeks before, and I had been anxious, awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do any-thing to ease the ache in my soul. But when I walked out into the spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever.

Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way—a flash of pain aligned with every memory? During the months and years that followed, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, talked about & cried about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true; yes, I will grieve forever. And yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed.

My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet

with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. I would always miss him. I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise? As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said. "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen too." Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

--Mary Clark, TCF, Sugar Land-Southwest Houston

A Rose

Sunlight dancing in the branches of the birch tree at my door.
Meadow stretching smug and lazy,
darker, greener than before.
Wind as calm as hugging children,
clouds so round and very close,
And on one small grave their trembles
lovingly, an early rose.

--Sascha Wagner

Spring, Soon

Is this our season
more than some other time of the
year?
Is it?
With winter dancing out and in,
freezing the melted snow one
more time?
Is this the season between death
and life?
Is it?
With sorrow struggling in and
out,
finding the touch of hope one
more time?

--Sascha Wagner

Forgive Until Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately, forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness, through its expression in our lives. Whether through thought, word, or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with the strength inside ourselves, and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment, and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so softly in the maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive and forgive until forever; let love enfold our anguish, helping us to grow and to give beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

--Don Hackett, TCF, Hingham, MA

It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn't heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore's stick house. Inside the house was Eeyore. "Hello Eeyore," said Pooh.

"Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet" said Eeyore, in a glum sounding voice.

"We just thought we'd check in on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay." Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather sad, and alone, and not much fun to be around at all, which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time hanging out with someone who is sad, and alone, and not much fun to be around at all, would you now?"

Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house.

Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"We're sitting here with you," said Pooh, "because we are your friends. And true friends don't care if someone is feeling sad, or alone, or not much fun to be around at all. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are."

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better.

Because Pooh and Piglet were there.

No more; no less.

A.A.Milne
E.H.Shepard
(Parody)



Easter and Passover— The Seasons of Grief

The seasons take on new meanings when a child dies. The snow of winter melts into the first breath of spring. How well I remember the first spring of my grief. I looked forward eagerly to its coming...surely when the long dark days of winter are past...surely spring will be better!!

How surprised I was at tears springing forth with the discovery of each new crocus and every bursting bud and spring flower. Yes, spring **was** beautiful, but oh, so sad, that first year without my son to share it. For suddenly I realized that **he** was the one who gave me my first bedding plants for Mother's Day each year.

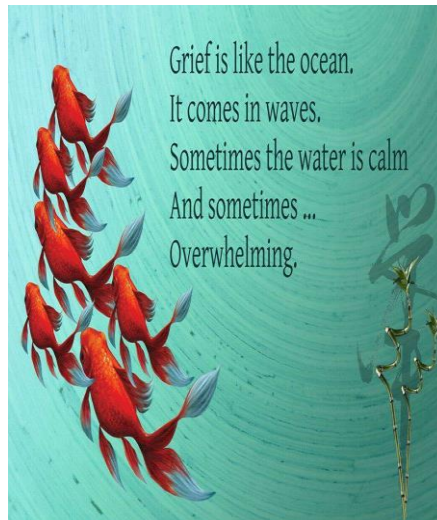
And now, the Lenten Season unfolds once more, and I'm aware of other bereaved parents who will withdraw to the privacy of their personal and painful world of memories with this new season for them. Ash Wednesday...Easter... Passover...these are a totally new experience in the first years of grief. The liturgical words are a thousand years old, yet tears blur the painful newfound meaning.

To walk through grief is not easy; when the shock and numbness have gone, we are left with reality, the reality that life includes pain and loss. Easter is a season of many feelings...a time of pain and loss. It is also a time of rebirth, and of real personal growth. So, also, are the Seasons of Grief.

Spring Holidays

Many special days soon are
coming our way
Called Easter, Passover, Mother's
and Father's Day
How do we react when non-
bereaved people ask?
"How was your holiday?" as the
weekend passed.
We nod, we smile, we say "Okay,
just fine."
But you and I know it's just a
good line.
No holidays are happy, for our
sweet child has gone.
Our family togetherness plan is
definitely all wrong.
So, what do we do, how do we
pay
Homage to those who celebrate
that day.
Our voices stay quiet, and our
stories are sad.
We just have to get through the
days that are bad.
Eventually we do come up with
plans A and B
Spending time with kind people
who really do see.
We're desperately trying to give
it our best.
Our mourning style differs from
all of the rest.
As survivors we reinvent our
careers and our goals
Patching new ideas with our
bodies and souls.
We look for quiet places, safe
harbor, retreat.
Sometimes we reach out,
sometimes take a back seat.
But somehow through it all
Springtime will renew.
A strong sense of hope that we
will get through.
With the blooming of flowers, the
greening of trees
Our strength returns and the harsh
pain does ease.
Let out your feelings, continue to
grieve.
Soon you will see life's tapestry
reweave.

--Lionel & Sandy Chaiken
Co-Leaders, Potomac TCF



Putting the Winter Behind Us

[By the time you read this, we may or may not still be looking at a winter landscape, with the earth cold, the land sharply defined.]
Underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb—a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories easily recollect those early days. Yet as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too find places of warmth, change, love and growth deep within. Let our hearts & minds dwell in these places and be...renewed by them. Let us have the courage to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, new acceptance, new understanding, or new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

--Marie Andres, TCF South
Maryland

Daffodils

Daffodils are heartwarmingly beautiful, spring-like, colorful. Yet they must break through the dark, dry ground to blossom and share their beauty with us. Bereaved

parents are much like these daffodils. This spring, you might not be in full glory, but we promise you a future spring, in full bloom once more!

--Betty Stieglmeyer, TCF Pike's

Peak, CO

I Am Spring

I am the beginning
I am budding promise
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single-cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.
I am new green growth.
I softly flow
from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly
--embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing
winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms
to playful stream
I whisper truth—life is change.
I am spring,
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies in deepest night
lighting solitary paths
from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns
'round and 'round.
--Carol Clum, TCF website

"In honor of Kelley Michelle Cavin, who died on St. Patrick's Day 1990, Carol Cavin (Kelley's mother and our former newsletter editor) suggested we reprint the letter she wrote to Kelley which appeared in our March 2010 newsletter."

Dear Kelley,

In earth time, you will have been gone 20 years on St. Patrick's Day. It is still painful to think about all the things you should have been here for all the things you didn't get to do. I would love to know what all those events—our lives—look like from your perspective. Do you suppose we'll ever get to have that conversation?

Did you know that your favorite horse laid down in his stall and died the week after you left us? I hope you were with him.

We dedicated a tree at church in your memory on Earth Day the month after you died. It's a big,

beautiful flowering crabapple now, and (as Terry McConnell said) everyone knows "That's Kelley's tree!" Later Jennie and Jill's mom made a beautiful stained-glass picture of a butterfly which still hangs in the window of the foyer.

The whole family came to our house on your 15th birthday to have a picnic and dedicate your tree in the back yard. It was a wonderful day; you would have loved it. Each family took home a copy of your last school portrait, and the kids (some of the adults too) picked out one of your stuffed animals to take home.

We had a big dinner at the top of Crown Center for Chris' 21st birthday—a wonderful celebration. Chad was really impressed when we paid off the balance on Chris' motorcycle for his birthday present.

You would have loved Chris' apartment in Rolla, and the party we helped him have after his graduation. Then a few weeks later, on your 21st birthday, Chris toasted you with a beer and a grilled steak. I was at David Ben Gurion's grave in the Negev Desert, and Dad was back-packing in Colorado.

I missed you so much at Chris and Shannon's wedding. Jill and Tracy came, and Chris found out that Jill is married to one of his old biking buddies. Dad and Bobby took possession of their house the day of the wedding. Chris and Shannon soon found a cute little 1920's bungalow in Englewood, & I moved into a condo. I still miss the home we all shared for 26 years.

I visited you at the cemetery on December 17, 2004—the day you had been gone from this earth as long as you were with us. Were you there?

I wish you could know your niece and nephew, Quinn and Maddie. I hope to tell them lots of stories about you when they're old enough to remember their Aunt Kelley. I could barely stand being away from them the 17 months they were in England. Now we have celebrated all their birthdays since they returned, even Chris' 40th!

Thank you for being with me for my breast cancer surgery last March. The Illinois license plate (with "Kelley" and a bright red cardinal) in

the Cancer Center parking lot made my day—heck, it made my year!

I thought of you when Patrick Swayze died last year. You so loved him in "Dirty Dancing." I thought my heart would break when Demi Moore felt him holding her in "Ghost," and when he said, "It's wonderful! You take the love with you!" Oh, how I long to feel your love and hold you in my arms one more time.

There is so much more to talk about, but it will have to wait until we are finally together again. All my love, Mom

--Carol Cavin, *Independence MO TCF*

IN SEARCH OF JOY

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS

Do you know how long it took me to allow laughter and joy to return to my life? Do you know how far it is from this side of the page to your side? Do you know how difficult it is to write about death? It was a long journey. It took me 30 years to get from your side of this page to mine...a loooong time...actually a WHOLE LIFETIME!

I liked my other life. In fact, I LOVED it! I hadn't intended to be here—in your life. But, then, just as it happened in your life, a single moment changed EVERYTHING, and here I am ... with you now and forever. Thirty years ago, our son slipped away from his mom and dad and big sister. At peace after a lifelong battle with a malignant brain tumor, he took with him all our hopes and dreams of being an AVERAGE AMERICAN FAMILY. We had two children so that no one would have to share the window, or ride on the hump in the middle of the backseat. We had two children because I had hundreds of recipes that served four. We had two children because we couldn't figure out how to have the 1.6 children which is the national average. But something happened along the way to that dream, and in a moment our dreams were lost, and the sounds of joy and laughter left our lives - perhaps as they seem to have left yours....

All of us know the quietness that comes when we realize we are the only source of sound in our house

now. We all know that loss--that emptiness--that brings us here, to these pages, in search of something to ease the pain; in search of something to stop the tears; in search of something to dream about again. I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing right now than living. But that wasn't always true, especially after our child's death when there were days when all I could do was think about dying - to join him or to relieve my pain. BUT I LIVED THROUGH THAT, JUST AS YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, BY GRASPING EVERY DAY AND CLAIMING IT AS MY OWN.

Each of us will, one day, rediscover whatever we cherish about life. Each of us will find the laughter that echoed throughout our life with our loved one ... If we will look for it.

I'm here on this side of the page, not to tell you HOW to be happy, but to tell you that you DESERVE TO BE HAPPY AGAIN. It's a different kind of happy, however. It's a happiness robbed of innocence, born out of fire, forged by a flame that has the power to destroy everything in its path--but only if we let it!

How did I do it? How did I get to now? I got to where I am today because of healing-time and a commitment to rediscovering the joy in living.

Must we dwell in the darkness forever? Can we begin to understand that our loved one's death was but a moment--a split second of horror? Or can we remember, instead, our loved one's LIFE? Is it possible that one day, we will begin to understand that joy CAN return? We cannot find words to soothe the hurt...there aren't any! We cannot shield ourselves from the twists and turns of living. We cannot protect ourselves from experiencing life. We can, however, build supports and safety nets. We can create cushions and pockets of comfort--places where we can rest, momentarily, gathering strength to re-enter the crashing tides. We can learn to smile again--maybe even giggle and return laughter to our lives. Cry all you want but remember to laugh when you can. Your life with your loved one was filled with moments of laughter--remember them, enjoy them again and again. Between the

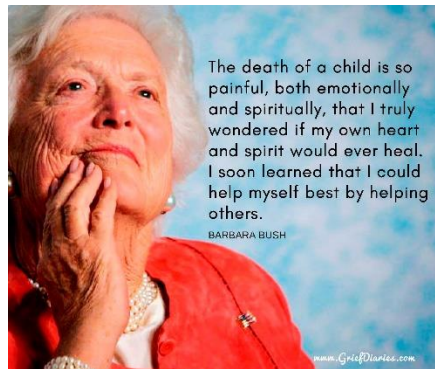
tears, allow the joy to return. What I will try to bring to you in each article is a message with hope, a gift of remembrance, a love letter of laughter. Read these articles as if we were sitting together, across the kitchen table, trying to help each other through the valley. Whether you are a bereaved parent, a widow or widower, a sibling, an adult bereaved child, a grandparent, friend or simply someone who wants to know how to help, I hope you will find information, education and support in these words. They are written from my heart to yours, each word carved out of experience as well as professional education.

I am a psychotherapist and a grief management specialist by trade, a mother by choice and a grieving person by chance. We have never met, yet our hearts speak the same language, the language of grief. We hold the same fear of never getting over this and forever having to live with the terrible pain of having someone we love dearly die. Come with me, across the stepping-stones of grief, finding your way through the darkness, reaching for each touchstone as you can.

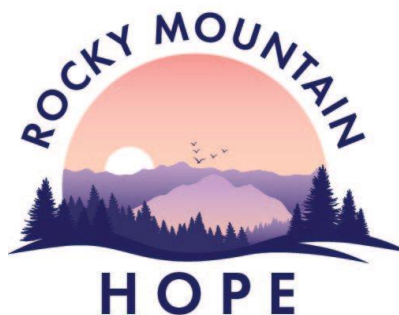
There are no timetables for grief and no one right way to grieve. There are as many ways to grieve as there are people grieving. Know your pain is real and that you have the right to hurt and to ache and to continue loving your loved one. No one can tell you how to grieve or when to heal. I just want to let you know you can find hope and healing and you can find joy once again. Our loved ones lived, and we loved them. We still do. But sometimes we cannot wait for fun and joy to be presented to us. **WE MUST MAKE IT HAPPEN!** Insist on joyfulness and silliness being a part of **EACH DAY**. What the world needs now is a paper airplane that carries our message of **LOVE AND HOPE AND LAUGHTER** to friends, family-to everyone!

Be a **PIONEER** right now and run your own flying circus. Make your own "Happy Planes" to send everywhere--to your mother who is trying to understand (or just "trying"), to your best friend who hasn't spoken to you since the funeral, to the neighbor who didn't bring a TUNA casserole (bless her!),

to a child who needs some fun, and to yourself - just **BECAUSE!** Sail these messages through the air mentally, verbally and physically. Fold the paper airplane right now and let the joy of your loved one's life begin to take the place of the hurt and anger of his death.



Mark your calendar for these upcoming events:



TCF 46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023
■ DENVER, CO ■

Registration is open for the 46th TCF National Conference July 7-9, 2023 in Denver!
REGISTER NOW:
<https://tinyurl.com/bdeamf3y>
Early bird Discount Registration is available until March 31, 2023.

The April 13, meeting of the Johnson County Chapter of TCF will feature Alan Pederson. (He is Ashley's dad, a singer, and song writer who has toured across America with his "Angels Across the USA" as he shares his story and music, offering hope and encouragement. You can learn more about him here: ><http://www.eastoftheriver.org/a-little-bit-about-alan-pederson/>.

[er.org/a-little-bit-about-alan-pederson/](http://www.eastoftheriver.org/a-little-bit-about-alan-pederson/). **Church of the Resurrection, 13720 Roe Ave., Leawood, KS 66224 at 6:30 p.m.** If you are unable to attend in person you may join the meeting via the Zoom link below:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89368925906?pwd=THpKdHBVT2dCUtHSm1GT3pLak11UT09>

Walk to Remember

September 23, 2023, at Waterfall Park, Independence, MO. More details to follow.

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
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 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..** at