



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Chapter email: compassionate.friends.tucson@gmail.com

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WALKING THIS VALLEY- Tucson Chapter Vol. 48 No.5 September-October 2026

Welcome!

All bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are welcome at our support group meetings. Here you will find comfort, caring people, and most of all-HOPE. Coming to the first meeting is hard, but you have nothing to lose and much to gain. For many it is the first real step toward healing. Although it may seem overwhelming, we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable. The hope of The Compassionate Friends is that those who need us would find us and that those that find us would be helped. TCF also provides information to help members be supportive to each other. We are not professional counselors. We are bereaved families who want to help each other.

We're sorry for the reason you're here, but we're glad you've found us-Tucson TCF
Tucson Chapter Meetings: Christ Church United Methodist 655 N. Craycroft
Second and Fourth Wednesdays, 7-9pm
September 9, 23 October 14, 28 (Candle lighting) November 11, 25

Upcoming Events:

Chapter Candle lighting on October 28 at 7pm. If you have not previously done so, please send 2 pictures of your child and how you want their name to appear if you want them to be in the slide show. Email is best but if you need to bring them to a meeting we can scan them. compassionate.friends.tucson@gmail.com

Raffle ticket sales will be available through our November 25 meeting. Remember all money stays with our chapter. Details on page 2. Thanks for your support.

Worldwide Candle Lighting on December 13 at 6pm at the Children's Memorial Park off River and Oracle.

National Conference 2027-

More information will be available early next year. If you are interested in attending, then you might want to start saving up.

It is well worth it and since it is in Phoenix you won't have the extra expense of airfare.

What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other? ~ George Eliot



OTHER TUCSON IN PERSON AND ONLINE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

- *Information & Referral Services: <http://www.211arizona.org/>
- *Homicide Survivors, Inc.: 520-740-5729
- *FOOTPRINTS-Pregnancy and Infant loss: 520-873-6590
- *Tu Nidito/Children to Children: 520-322-9155
- *Alive Alone <http://www.alivealone.org/> -for parent(s) who have lost their only child
- *Survivors of Suicide..... 520-989-0467
- *www.empactsos.org (suicide loss support group)
- *Rachel's Gift (pregnancy and infant loss-national group) www.rachelsgift.org
- *Miss Foundation <http://www.missfoundation.org/>
- *babysteps.com
- *griefwatch.com (books and products)
- *Pomc.com (families of murder victims)
- *webhealing.com
- * thegrieftoolbox.com
- *whatsyourgrief.com
- *save.org (suicide awareness)
- *taps.org (military death)

CRISIS HOTLINE INFORMATION

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-8255
Suicide Hotline	1-800-Suicide
Depression & Crisis Hotline	1-800-784-2433
The National Institute for Trauma & Loss in Children (TLC)	1-877-306-5256
Families Anonymous (Addiction/Recovery)	1-800-736-9805
Al-Anon Family Groups (Addiction/Recovery)	1-888-425-2666
Post Partum Depression	1-800-944-4773

The 2026 Jim Click Millions for Tucson Raffle



This year Jim Click is donating a 2026 Nissan Frontier Pro-4X Roush® Edition as the Grand Prize!

Second prize is two round-trip, first class airline tickets to anywhere in the world (some restrictions apply) and third prize is \$5,000 in cash! Tickets can be purchased at meetings or leave an email or phone message to meet up. Cost is \$25 each or 5 for \$100. All money stays with our organization.

September Birthdays

JAMES K. BROWN JR.
MATTHEW KAUFMAN
MARTY BEDELL
REBECCA KATZ
LISA GATZ
DANIEL HUGHES
JESSICA DE LA CRUZ
MAHLON (Jimmy) CRONK
CHRISTOPHER FAVELA
JANESSA JACLYN SMITH
RYAN HORN
ADAM REICHEG
JAYANNA LYNN JUAN
ZEMIRA BAYLA LENC
CHRISTOPHER MUELLER
JEFFREY HILL JR.
MICHAEL SCHNEIDER
MEGAN CHAPMAN
SEBASTIAN SAUCEDO
MICHAEL AUSTIN ANDERSON
PENELOPE NOELLE PADILLAS
MICHAEL STEPHEN ACOSTA
DOMINIQUE LEFAIVE NEIDIG

GEORGIA COLEHOUR
KRYSTAL SUE MAEDL
ORION WORLEY
REYNALDO PARADA
MATTHEW DODGE
AARON NICHOLS
BRANDIE CAMPBELL
MCKENZIE HARRISON
CHRISTIAN WATSON
RICHARD MORGAN
DUSTIN YODER
CRAIG HAUGE
MARLA THYE
ZACH MORGAN
C WARNER
ANGEL LEON
ANTHONY JESUS DURON

STEFAN ENRIQUEZ
PALINA ALDECOA
JACOB EISNER
BEN-DAVID PFLUG
AMY SVOBODA
ANITA BECERRA
MAVERICK CAMPISI
RICK WILLIAMS
JOE KEELING
MIKE BALL
ANDY SAUERS
ALEAH CRUCE
CLINT SMITH
TOM BATES
SEAN SEGALL
LORRAINE GUPPY
TRAVIS TRADER

SEAN KELLY CATAUDELLA
EDITH LAURINE WHITSETT
MAKAYLA SOPHIA GUNDERSON
LYRA DANIELLE BARBER
MICHAEL SCARDAVILLE
CHRISTOPHER FRANKLIN RICHTER

September Remembrance Days

PETER JAMES "PJ" FARRELL
LUKE MICHAEL RICHARDS
KEVIN ROBINSON-BARAJAS
ROSALINA ISABELLA SAENZ
CHRISTOPHER THOMPSON
KETZIA AMAIRANY FLORES
SEAN ALEXANDER KINCAID
LUIS MIGUEL SALAZAR
RICHARD NICHOLAS UMBERGER
SABRINA KINSLEIGH WILLIAMS
JOHN CARSTENS
DAMIEN MELZER
JONATHAN D WILLIAMS
DENNY MALLORY
PRESTON WERNER
CHRISTOPHER LAWSON
JEFFREY SEWELL
GIDEON MCDONALD
BRYAN MCLAUGHLIN
KALYN MARIE GREGG
MERCER JOHNSON III
MCKENZIE HARRISON
PETER KJOLSRUD
RAUL (BUDDY) GARCIA

MARK BATES
KEVIN BOOS
RYAN KITTREDGE
DAVID RADTKE
AUBREY BULLARD
JESSICA ROSE RUSSELL
ERIC HOLMSTROM
NATHAN SPANGENBERG
ALLISON SPRINKLE
MATTHEW DODGE
CURTIS LEE EHLERS
DAVID ARAOS
JAZELLE ARMENTA
JAYANNA LYNN JUAN

CRAIG HAUGE
MELISSA HEYMERS
RICHARD MORGAN
DELLVON WATSON
MICHAEL P SHEATS
TRENT MAPELSDEN
REBECCA SIEGEL
LORI L. SMITH
JASON BAKE
JESSE GELSINGER
WENDY WHITACRE
LISA GATZ
JUSTIN ZEHNGUT
JORDAN ESTES





When Grief Becomes Invisible

Posted on August 11th, 2026

Compassionatefriends.org

It's natural for people to enter and exit our lives at different times. As Brian A. Chalker wrote, each person serves a purpose, whether it be for a brief moment, a short period, or a lifetime. I've always considered myself fortunate to have a handful of close friends whom I could count on when life got me down, but it wasn't until I faced a tragic loss that I realized my inner circle was smaller than I had believed. This left me wondering: are people inherently selfish, or can they only empathize with circumstances they have encountered firsthand?

In 2017, my son passed away from an opioid overdose after a ten year battle with drug addiction. Some may argue that I should have been somewhat prepared for that day, but I wasn't. Unlike other families dealing with addiction who lived in constant fear of receiving that dreaded call, I never did. It wasn't because I refused to accept the reality of my situation, but simply because it seemed unimaginable to me that my son would die.

Throughout those ten years, I existed in a state of detachment from the world around me. To outsiders, it may have seemed like my life mirrored that of my friends, but it was far from it. I felt isolated and unable to relate to the routine of their lives. While they attended their sons' basketball games and cheered them on, I spent my days monitoring my son's activities and researching treatment centers. This relentless activity took a toll on me emotionally and I'd often daydream about what it would be like to have just one day of a "normal" life. I longed to share stories about my son's achievements rather than dodge questions when asked what he was doing and where he was applying to college. Despite the turbulence that encumbered my life I had always held on to the belief that one day my son would turn a corner, and those dark days would be behind us. But sadly, that day never came and at the age of twenty eight his life was cut short.

I suppose it was a mix of shock and refusal to accept the reality of my son's death, but what stands out in my memory the night my son passed is sweeping my living room floor. It's strange to think about now, but perhaps in some odd way I was trying to make sense out of something which was completely out of my control. I suppose I was trying to impose a sense of order amidst the chaos.

A week after my son's funeral I left my NYC apartment to go for a walk. As I stepped outside, I remember feeling as though I was punched in the gut as if I were a spectator watching from above, unable to recognize that it was me putting one foot in front of the other. Overnight the city that I loved felt strange and unfamiliar. I no longer belonged there. Even the air felt different. I turned around and went home, and for the next three years I drifted aimlessly. Thoughts or tasks could only hold my attention for five minutes before I'd lose interest. I spent my days replaying conversations in my head, reading my son's text messages and listening to his voice mails. How could he be gone when he felt so present?

Although I had experienced depression many times in my life, this was different. It was the one time in my life I couldn't give myself a pep talk and tell myself things would get better. I was now faced with the impossible task of finding a new identity. For far too long my life had been consumed by my son's addiction, leaving little room for anything else. But now, as I grieved the loss of my child and accepted that happiness might never be within reach again, I had to confront the daunting question: Who am I

now? I turned to my friends for support, but their conversations only made me feel even more distant and alone. They couldn't understand the intense emotions I was facing. Their usual words of comfort now seemed shallow and unhelpful, leaving me with a sense of emptiness.

Then in the midst of my grief the pandemic struck. Overnight my feelings of loneliness and despair were suddenly shared by the entire world. Surprisingly, as the death toll rose and society crumbled, I felt a sense of relief. I no longer had to justify my absence from society and no longer did I feel obligated to attend social functions or holiday dinners. Finally, I could breathe a bit easier. The pressure had been lifted, and I could melt into my solitude without appearing as though I had escaped voluntarily.

During that period, I came to a harsh realization about how people handle grief. I used to believe that those closest to me would always be there for support, but after my son's death, they slowly drifted away. Unlike other forms of loss that we encounter in life, such as losing grandparents, parents, or friends, the death of someone's child defies all understanding. It disrupts the natural course of life and leaves others struggling to understand and relate to. The truth is people simply navigate towards happiness and anything that challenges their comfort zone is often pushed aside.

The death of a child is a heartbreaking tragedy that most people prefer not to think about. It forces them to confront the possibility that it could happen to them or someone they love. The loss of my son was a devastating event that taught me the difficulty of giving sincere support during times of immense grief. It's only through facing our own tragedies that we can truly understand how to help others in their darkest moments. That's why it's important to keep in mind that when those closest to us distance themselves during our time of need, it is not a personal attack and in time we may even find it in our hearts to forgive them for their absence.

Andrea Magder

Andrea is a NYC-based writer and the founder of The Artist Lives Gallery, a nonprofit dedicated to showcasing the work of artists who passed without recognition. Previously, she worked as a writer and producer of independent films, as well as in film development. After losing her son in 2017, she shifted her focus toward writing and advocacy, using her work to explore themes of grief, resilience, and purpose.

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. ~ Albert Schweitzer

Tucson Chapter Steering Committee:

Leader/Facebook: Kirsten Bice Co-Leader: Sharon Farrell
Treasurer: Nancy Richards New Attendee Coordinator: Cat Morrow
Editor: Diane Allison Contributing Editors: All members- contributions wanted!
Outreach/ Correspondence: Kirsten Bice, Nancy Richards, Kenny Allison
Website: Julie Shulick Library: Debbie Russell
Regional Coordinator: Susan Wadsworth

Remembrance Cards To receive remembrance cards for your loved one's birthday month and the death anniversary month, sign-up with your complete information, for the memorial book (<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/to-the-newly-bereaved/>).

The Compassionate Friends National: Online Support information is available on the National Compassionate Friends Website at www.compassionatefriends.org. (NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org) The Compassionate Friends offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so they can confirm your request.

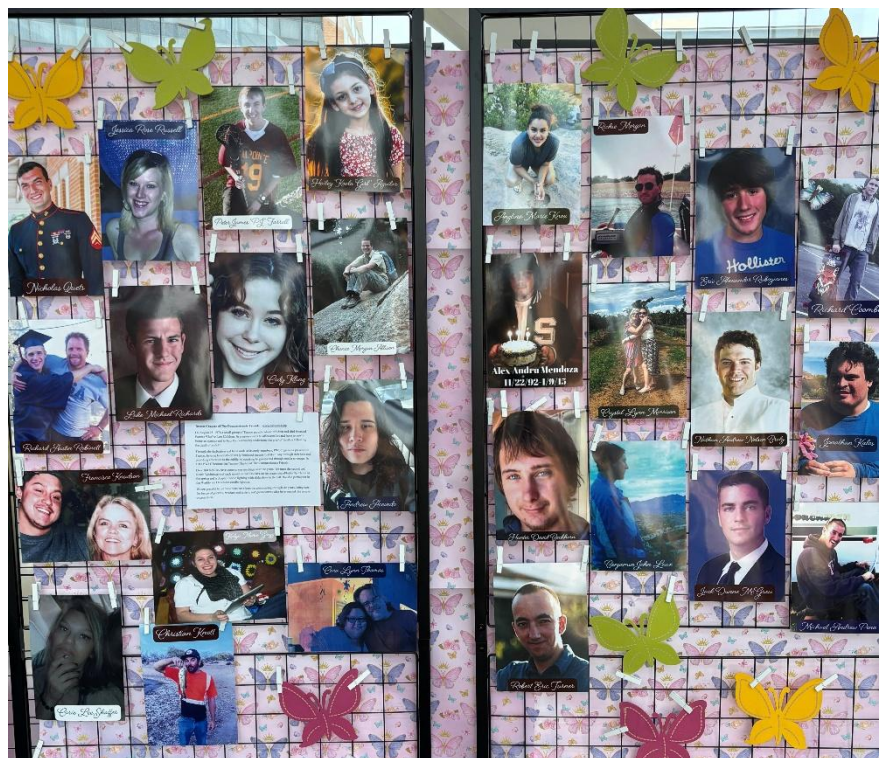
Name Badges: If you would like a name badge to wear on a lanyard at meetings, please send your name, your child's, grandchild's, or sibling's name, and a photo of your loved one to our email at compassionate.friends.tucson@gmail.com



*Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are.
Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you
before you depart.
Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect
tomorrow.
Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.
One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my
face in the pillow,
or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky,
and want more than all the world for your return.
~ Mary Jean Irion*



**49TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE IN
BALTIMORE JULY 2026**



THE EXPERIENCE OF GRIEF

Posted on May 11th, 2026 compassionatefriends.org

Grief is often described in hushed tones, as if it were a foreign country people hesitate to visit. But for those of us who have lost a child, spouse, or loved one, grief is not foreign—it becomes the very air we breathe. It is not an event to “get through,” nor a series of tidy stages. It is a lived reality, shaping every thought, feeling, and interaction.

When my daughter, Maria-Victoria, was killed in a car accident, I quickly learned that grief was not an abstract idea. It invaded my body, my mind, and my spirit. It affected how I moved through the world. What I share here is not a theory, but the lived experience of grief—how it feels, what it does to a person, and what those who want to help should understand.

The Shock That Protects

Immediately after loss, shock descends like a fog. In some ways, it is merciful. Without shock, I could not have walked into the hospital, faced the police officers, or endured the agonizing words: “Your daughter is deceased.”

Shock dulls the unbearable. You find yourself operating on instinct, doing what must be done. I planned a funeral, wrote an obituary, and stood before mourners with a composure that startled even me. But this is not strength—it is survival. Shock is the body and mind’s way of protecting us until we can begin to process the enormity of what has happened.

Professionals who work with the bereaved need to recognize this. In those early days, people may look “together,” but appearances deceive. Shock is not healing. It is only the scaffolding that keeps you upright until the collapse comes later.

The Physical Pain of Grief

One of the least understood aspects of grief is the way it manifests in the body. After Maria-Victoria’s death, I felt pain in my chest so sharp I thought I might be dying too. At times it radiated across my body, an ache that no medicine could soothe. Many grieving parents describe this same sensation—an excruciating weight pressing on the heart.

Science confirms what mourners know instinctively: grief is not just emotional, it is physiological. Stress hormones surge, sleep evaporates, and the immune system falters. The body carries the sorrow. For me, the pain lasted for two months, a constant reminder of the wound I carried. And then, just as suddenly as it arrived, it lifted. It did not mean my grief was gone. Only that my body had adjusted to carry it differently.

When you encounter someone grieving, remember: they may not just be sad—they may be hurting in ways you cannot see. Compassion means recognizing grief as both an emotional and physical trial.

Out of Your Mind

Grief also scrambles the mind. In the first year, I was constantly distracted, my memory fractured. I would walk into a room and forget why I was there. I misplaced everyday objects. Once, I opened the refrigerator to find the iron sitting on the shelf.

At the time, I feared I was losing my sanity. Only later did I learn this was normal. The brain under grief is preoccupied—looping endlessly through memories, regrets, what-ifs, and the shocking reality of loss. There is little energy left for concentration or short-term recall.

Employers, teachers, and even family members must understand this. A grieving person may not function at their previous level for months, even years. Telling them to “focus” or “try harder” is futile and cruel. Support means giving grace for forgetfulness, mistakes, and exhaustion. Simply surviving the day is an accomplishment.

Time and the Myth of Normalcy

In grief, time bends. Days drag endlessly, yet months disappear in a blur. People around you may grow impatient: “It’s been three months—aren’t you better yet?” Such words wound deeply. There is no “normal” timeline. There is no “better.” There is only change.

After Maria-Victoria died, someone asked me bluntly if I had “gotten over it.” My response was immediate: “I will never get over it.” And I won’t. I am not who I was before her death, and I never will be again. Grief does not restore the old normal; it creates a new self, one forever shaped by loss.

What Helps—and What Doesn’t

In the fog of grief, small gestures carry enormous weight. A neighbor dropping off food. A friend who simply sits in silence. A handwritten card with the words, “I was thinking about Maria-Victoria today.” These acts are not trivial. They are lifelines.

Equally powerful, though damaging, are careless words. Telling a parent they will “find closure” is like telling them to abandon their child. Asking if they are “over it yet” suggests the love itself should be set aside. Such remarks deepen isolation.

What helps is presence. What helps is saying the name of the one who has died. To hear “Maria-Victoria” spoken aloud lightens my heart. It tells me she is remembered. The greatest fear of the bereaved is not the pain—it is that their loved one will be forgotten.

Everyday Survival

For months, daily life felt impossible. I woke each morning with the same thought: she is gone. The weight of it pressed down before my feet touched the floor. Even small tasks—washing dishes, answering the phone, showing up at work—felt monumental.

Grief demanded every ounce of energy. And yet, somehow, I kept going. I returned to my practice, supported by a staff who carried me when I could not carry myself. Others are not so fortunate; many are forced back to work within days, expected to perform as if nothing has changed. This is not just unrealistic—it is inhumane.

If you want to support the grieving, understand that every day lived is a victory. Acknowledge the courage it takes just to keep breathing.

The Long Journey

Over time, grief shifts. The searing pain softens into a dull ache. The constant mental fog clears enough for laughter to slip back in. But this does not mean grief ends.

Five years after my daughter’s death, I thought of her five hundred times a day instead of a million. Some would call that progress. I call it evolution. Grief doesn’t fade—it changes shape, weaving itself into who we are.

Closing Thoughts

The experience of grief is total—it reshapes the body, the mind, and the spirit. It cannot be managed with tidy stages or erased with closure. It must be honored, lived, and shared.

If you walk alongside someone who is grieving, do not try to fix them. Do not measure their progress against a calendar. Instead, be present. Say their loved one’s name. Accept their forgetfulness, their sadness, their rituals of remembrance. And above all, remember that their grief is a reflection of their love.

For me, grief will always mean Maria-Victoria. She is not gone from my life, only from my sight. Her name, her memory, her love remain, shaping the person I continue to become.

-LYNDA BOUCUGNANI-WHITEHEAD

October Birthdays

AMY LOGAN
KATIE DECKER
MARTHA HARRINGTON
LIYA MONASMITH
BRODIE SCHMICH
RON WHEELER
JENNIFER BAIN
PAUL GOGUEN
JACQUES MARGODT
KAREN PRICE
KRISTIN SMITH
ALLISON SPRINKLE
KELLI BONN
JOSHUA GREEN
ANGEL MARTINEZ
ASHLEY REDPATH
BETH STERN
HANNAH ELIZABETH PAIRRETT
RAMON EDUARDO TAVERAS
PHILLIP JOHN WATTERS
EMBER WILLIAM SANDOVAL

JONATHAN BECK
JOHN GEHLEN
GAGE LA FONTAINE
BRANDEN PEASE
MATTHEW SCOTT
BROOKE FUNSECA
SELENA BURNEY
SHANE HARVEY
PAUL METZGER
JANET ROSS
KENNETH WALTER
DEVON MARTINEZ
JOHN PATRICK CLINE
RYAN KITTREDGE
BRIAN MINK
ZAARON SANTA CRUZ
AARON THOMAS ATHERTON
KEVIN ROBINSON-BARAJAS
CARTER GARRICK HERNE
RANDY ZIMMERMAN
WRIGHT SAMUEL JOHNSON

JOHN BREMOND
DREW GYORKE
GIDEON MCDONALD
PAUL ROBOLD
AMANDA VIVIAN
MADISYN BERTSCH
JOY FEULING ERB
DENNY MALLORY
JODI MONNARD
DANIEL SCHNEIDER
WENDY WHITACRE
NANCY BATES DIETZ
ASHLEY FRANCO
TRENT MAPELSDEN
COLBY NIGHTINGALE
ERIC SCHULTZ



October Remembrance Days

COLLIN WILLIAM FORBES
JASMIN GAXIOLA
JONATHAN BECK
HAVEN CROSS
RICK WILLIAMS
JOSHUA GREEN
MEGHAN JONES
SCOTT MULLEN
NATHAN TYLER ROBERTS
DANIELLE WELLS-BORQUEZ
OSWALDO BAKER
BRADLEY CHARLES MAPLES
ALBERT CORONA JR (AL)
PAUL GOGUEN
JOSE EDY LEYVA
NICHOLAS PUTNAM
MICHAEL TWOHILL
JAMESON GILES PERSONIUS
MONIQUE CELIA
JONATHAN ZINSLI
DAVID KETTUNEN
COLBY NIGHTINGALE
ROCKY STEWART
MEGAN CHAPMAN
KELSEY ELIZABETH BEITEL
EDWARD VINCENT ANDREW RAMOS

KALEB SHIPMAN
MATTHEW ALTLAND
JOHN BREMOND
JENNIFER ELDRIDGE
TIM GOAR
AMARI BETH CUTLIP
KEITH KRAGE
KAREN PRICE
MATTHEW UNTERRINER
JARED MEANS
CLIFFORD WALTEIN
TRUDIE CALE
JOY FEULING ERB
RICKY HAMRICK
ERIC OGDEN
GRANT J. PIONTEK
LINDSAY WAKEFIELD
CHRISTIAN LOZANO
ROGER PAUL EAGLE
LEAH GOODMAN
ANGEL MARTINEZ
FERNANDO ORTIZ, III
MARTIN VALENZUELA
SEBASTIAN SAUCEDO

BRIAN MINK
JOSHUA PARMETER
ALEXANDER FIGUEREDO
TRAVIS TRADER
HUNTER BECKHORN
JENNIFER DUTTON
PHILIP WORKMAN
SABRINA JOY
TIMOTHY PARFREY
ALEX SANOV
ROBBIE MEINDL
RENEE BLANCHARD
C WARNER
JOSHUA HOLDEN
CHRISTOPHER MUELLER
DOUGIE SALSBURY
MAHLON (Jimmy) CRONK
TYLER CRISCIONE



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A National self-help, non-profit organization for families who have experienced the death of a child

THE TUCSON CHAPTER
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Tucson, AZ 85751-0733

Return Service Requested



September-October 2026