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WALKING THIS VALLEY- Tucson Chapter Vol. 47 No.6 November-December 2025

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

November 12, 26

December 10, 14 (Sunday, Worldwide Candle Lighting),

No Meeting December 24

January 14, 28

A Candle for My Child

Each night as darkness settles over our home, a little candle begins flickering in the east window of our staircase landing. The tiny light burns until dawn and then silently is quenched with the rising sun. This is my son's light. About a year after Todd died, the leader of our chapter suggested a candle in the window for the holidays, as I had no inclination to decorate. I placed a candle there, and I have now replaced that candle with yet another candle. This is Todd's candle.....this is Todd's light.

Todd's candle has a Victorian appearance and will burn steady or flicker. When the darkness comes forth, Todd's candle begins its nightly vigil.....a vigil that will not end until I am dead. Although this is a small gesture, it has deep meaning for me. Sometimes I awaken in the middle of the night and walk into the atrium at the foot of the steps by the light of Todd's candle. I'll grab a glass of water and watch the candle flicker. Other times in the early evening, when only a reading lamp is lit in the living room, I will look into the atrium. Todd's light shines. I feel as if he is with me somehow, in the light of this little candle. I think about him, his life, his joys, his sorrows, his immense capacity to love and to laugh. I feel a deep closeness to my son that cannot be explained to anyone but those who have lost a child. I understand that there is much peace and solace in keeping my child in my heart and life and in establishing my own private rituals of remembrance.

Leaving a candle in the window has been an American tradition since the Colonial Era. The candle symbolizes the warmth and security of the family home and its message is loyalty to

a family member who is not present. So, it is fitting that Todd's candle shines each night.....reminding all that he is absent from our home, but not our hearts.

Each of us has a ritual of remembrance of our child. Some of us have consciously established this. Others have unconsciously done so. But there is a ritual that brings our child close to us, only to us. Our rituals are a very personal choice. I chose not to share my ritual for 2 ½ years. Then one day a child who lives across the street asked me about the candle. I told her that it is my son's candle. She asked if he was in Iraq. "No, I said, he's in heaven."

A momentary look of fright passed over her face, and then she smiled. "I thought you had kids. You act like a mom."

Her innocent comment about me "acting like a mom" once again reinforced the fact that we will always be parents. Those of us who have children who have died will always be parents to those children. That role has shaped who we are, and intensified it more with the death of our precious child.

This is one element of losing a child that escapes the general population. If you have not lost a child, you don't understand, you can't understand the feelings and emotions that run so deeply in our psyches and our souls.

Our Compassionate Friends understand those emotions and our need to speak of our children, to deal with our overwhelming loss. Whether for a season or the rest of our lives, we have been good friends for each other. When I see Todd's candle, I think of my child, other parents, their children, their loss, my loss, the totality of the sorrow that enters our meeting room every month, and yet, I also think of the joy. There is a peaceful joy, a sense of serenity in knowing you are not alone and isolated in your unique grief. Others are walking with you on the road of life after the death of their children.

So now, when I gaze at Todd's candle, I remember his life, the security he felt within these walls, the growing up years, the love, loyalty and emotional stability he experienced as a child which enabled him to become a man of courage, self confidence and gentleness in the face of life's worst and best. I think of the other children and the parents left behind.....the sons and daughters of my Compassionate Friends. These children are missed, they are loved and they, too, are kept forever in a parent's heart. Their parents share a common bond with me that will follow each of us to our last day. We have lost our precious, beautiful children. We know what pure and overwhelming grief really is. We walk this road together as Compassionate Friends. And we remember, each of us in our own way. Todd's candle is one way to tell him that I love him as only a mother can love....unconditionally and forever. And I will always remember. I'm will always be Todd's mom. I have found that being a parent is a lifetime journey....even when our children are not with us on life's road. As parents, we define ourselves as interwoven with the fabric of our children's lives. We always remember. There is comfort in that.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

*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*

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



Our Main Fundraiser:

The 2025 Jim Click Millions for Tucson Raffle
1st place Kia Carnival, 2nd place first class air
tickets, 3rd place \$5000

Last day to purchase: Meeting on November 26

The drawing will be in December.. Last year we met our goal of \$2000 (actually slightly over) by selling all 100 of our tickets. It would be great if I had to go in to pick up more tickets this year. We appreciate your support. Remember, all money stays with our organization.

Sharing a Private Grief

The other day someone said to me, "My grief is too private to share." I think we all feel that way sometimes. We are saying two things when we say that. First, "You could not possibly know how I feel." And, second, we are saying, "I hurt so much, I'm not about to tell you of my anguish and leave myself open to your judgment of my feelings." We have to protect ourselves, but, in protecting our privacy, are we forgetting anything? Is it possible that our friends are not judging us and that in not giving voice to our sorrow we are closing the door of the healing love that may be in store for us?

It is possible that our friends don't know what to say to us. People have no trouble wishing us, "Happy Birthday," and, "Get well soon," and, "Have a good day," and meaning it. But it is hard for people to express their sorrow, often because they are afraid of hurting us. That they don't express their grief isolates us. Sometimes we have to encourage others to address the issues closest to our hearts – for our own protection.

Pat Ryan
TCF Silverdale, WA



The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: *For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—as is \$450. Call.*

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away—all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things—even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring
TCF Penn-Maryland Line Chapter, MD

November Birthdays

SEBASTIAN ALDECOA
NICK BARNETT
BOB BRUMMETT
ELIZABETH DAVIS
JORDAN FAULK
KATE STANKO
CINDY HARTRANFT
THOMAS KILPATRICK
NICOLE LUBINSKI
ALEX ANDRU MENDOZA
JESSE PLOENSE
JANNELLE ROSNESS
EMILY RENEE SORKIN
ANTONIO TORRES
KRISTEN YODER
TABATHA VEAZEY
MICAELA ELINAH BENITEZ
KATERI LAURA JOANN FRANCISCO
CHARLES "BUDDY" HOLLEY
CHRISTOPHER SCOTT CURTIS
EDWARD SAMUEL WEISS
DIEGO ANTONIO GADEA

DAVID ARAOS
CHRISTOPHER BAYZE
TORRE LYNN CARLS
TOMMY DILLON
CALEB FOSSLAND
JIMMIE GANIS
RICK IVIE
LYSANDRA LAINÉ
ISAIAH MARTINEZ
JUSTIN MOHN
TOMMY DILLON
ALEX SANOV
NICHOLE STAMPER
CHRISTOPHER VIVIAN
NOAH ZACARIAS
KAI CAMBERN
RACHEL MICHELLE BENNETT
MICAYLA JASMINE FULLER
MICHELLE RENEE QUIHUIS
THOMAS FRANCIS TAAFFE II
DANIELLE WELLS BORQUEZ



November Remembrance Days

MARC APPLETON
KRISTIN BAILEY
ANTHONY BUSS
AIDON COPFER
RICKY M. GRIJALVA JR.
KELLY HUYSER
MORGAN LOR
SCOTT RUSSELL
DANIEL MERENS
KASEY PIKE
SUSANN SALMON
JEAN E. STONE
LINDA VARGAS
EMILY BOOTH
CHRISTIAN KNOTT
LYRA DANIELLE BARBER
EMBER WILLIAM SANDOVAL
ERIC ALEXANDER RUBOYIANES
PAUL (ALAN, JOY) THOMPSON
CHADWICK "CHAD" SPALDING

BEN ARRELLIN
TOM BATES
RICK CASEJALUR
DESTRI CORONADO
RICK HAMILTON
CODY KLING
DEVIN MARTINEZ
NICHOLAS QUETS
LIYA MONASMITH
ARIANA PORTUGAL
MICHAEL SCHNEIDER
EMILY TRENT
CARL WALDENSTROM
KAI CAMBERN
CRYSTAL MORRISON
DOMINIQUE LEFAIVE NEIDIG
MICHELLE VICTORIA PADILLA
RAMON EDWARDO TAVERAS
DAK SCOT FREDERICK VANTSANT
MELISSA QUINN MADONNA

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: Denise (Dean) Amore

Remembrance Cards To receive remembrance cards for your loved ones 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

Upcoming Events:

Dia De Los Muertos Weekend November 1-3 Check online for details.

Walk Out of Darkness November 8, 2025

Suicide Prevention and awareness event. You can register online or at the event. Reid Park 9am.

Worldwide Candle Lighting December 14, 2025

Beginning at 6pm at the Children's Memorial Park

Holiday Get Together December 2025

Check Facebook and our Website for details as they are TBD at this point

December Birthdays

MATTHEW ALTLAND	MARC APPLETON	W. JARED BLAIR
KEVIN BOOS	GORDON BRYAN	NICOLAS JOURDAIN BURCH
DEVANTE CARRANZA	JOHN JOSEPH CEPIN IV	KATIE CLARK
JASMINE COOMBS	DESTRI CORONADO	JOE CRAWFORD
JENNIFER ELDRIDGE	SARAH ESPINOZA	LILY FAIRCHILD
JULEE FRASER	GABRIEL GALLEGOS	CESAR TIZOK GONZALEZ
TYLER GROVE	RAAD HALABY	LEWIS "CHIP" HARPER
MORDECAI HARRELSON	DANIEL GENE HILL	CODY HOOVER
DEVIN JACKSON	AMAN JONES	TIMOTHY ALLAN KENYON JR.
CHRISTIAN LAWSON	STEPHEN MAHAFFEY	DAMION MATTHEWS
TRINA MCQUEEN	SHAWN NOBLE	ZACHARY ORMAN
MICHEAL PESQUEIRA	JESSICA ROSE RUSSELL	MAURICIO B. SALAZAR
DOUGIE SALSBURY	MISTY SCHILLING	DREDAN SEGUNDO
LORI L. SMITH	PAIGE JAYDEN STOUT	TAYLOR NICOLE THOMPSON
DAVID THORSON	MICHAEL TWOHILL	MATHEW VYBORNY
JONATHAN D WILLIAMS	LIANE WILSON	MORGAN WISE
JUSTIN ZEHNGUT	KALEB SHIPMAN	GABRIEL FIGUEROA
JASON FROST	DIEGO ZELL	DESTINY YORK
MAREYA BULLARD		
CHRISTINA ESCHENBURG		
ASHLEY ANGELIQUE HUBER CAMACHO		
HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ III		



December Remembrance Days

ANDREW ACEVEDO	TRISTAN BAKER	ANITA BECERRA
ZACHARY BOSSELER	MARK CALHOUN, JR.	EMORY CONWAY
JOHN DALLIES	ELIZABETH DAVIS	JULIAN DOMBROWSKI
KATHRYN EIDE	ZACH EIDE	JOEL ESPINOSA
IAN BEAL	WENDY FORD	BRIAN FRAZIN
JOHN GEHLEN	DANIEL LEE GEIS	ALEX GRADIAS
MISSY HALL	RICK IVIE	ELIJAH HOOVER
TRAVIS KATHREIN	ANDREW KEATON	DAVID LESSER
DANIEL LOWE	NICOLE LUBINSKI	KRYSTAL SUE MAEDL
CLAYTON MATHESON	JODI MONNARD	SHAUN MOORE
JAMIE MULLINS, III	AARON NICHOLS	MICHAEL PENA
JAMISON PESSIN	JESSE PLOENSE	JESUS RENE
CHRISTOPHER	FRANKLIN RICHTER	BRET RUSSELL
SUSAN WAYNE	BRIAN WILSON	TONY WINFIELD
RICHARD HISLOP	ANDY SAUERS	MISTY SCHILLING
ERIC SCHULTZ	JOSHUA SHAME	NICHOLAS SIMS
KRISTIN SMITH	ERIC TAYLOR	MATTHEW TESCHNER
JULIE ANN VONDERSAAR		EDITH LAURAIN WHITSETT
GLENN HARRISON WILLIAMS		RACHEL MICHELLE BENNETT
RYAN GRIFFIN GAMBLE		CHARLES A. (CJ) GRAHAM
ZACHARY TAYLOR JONES		SWAIN TAYLOR KOENIG
BENJAMIN JOHN LAUX		ALYSSA GUNN MULDONADO
CASIMIRO MARTIN PALAFOX		ZAARON SANTA CRUZ

A Tree Full of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with Yule adornment. Not a corner of the house was safe from this self-proclaimed Christmas Freak! One year we even hung assorted ornaments on a fake palm tree, lovingly dubbing it the “Bahama-Mama” tree, because in our family one Christmas tree was never enough. The kids even had small tabletop trees in their rooms. Our upstairs tree was the decorator tree, the one with the fancy, color-coordinated ornaments, to be handled by no one but me. The downstairs tree was the family favorite and trimmed by the children. Hanging from its branches were the ornaments that I had purchased every year for each of them from the time they were born. I always looked forward to finding just the right one that would represent their individual interests at that particular time in their lives. But as each of us knows, the holidays, as we knew them, forever changed after our precious children died. And so it was for us the Christmas of 1995, our first without Nina’s shining presence. I was quite positive that I would never decorate again. It was far too painful.

Yet, something happened three Christmases ago. One night I lay in Nina’s daybed, staring at the ceiling thinking Scrooge-like thoughts, wishing it was January 2nd and I could put the holidays behind me for another year. Suddenly, I found myself rise from her bed and walk to the closet where all the holiday paraphernalia was stored. I searched furiously until I found what I was looking for--a box marked “Nina’s Xmas Ornaments.” I brushed away the collected dust and carried it up the stairs to the corner of the living room where a forlorn and neglected-appearing 2-foot tree stood. I recall sitting on the floor in front of the tree, sighing deeply, and gingerly opening the box, I was afraid what the depth of my emotions would be when I saw those long untouched ornaments of Christmases past; afraid of the feelings that I had learned to hide so well from the rest of the world; afraid the floodgates would open and the tears would never stop.

I carefully lifted the cover and tenderly held each one in my hands. I found myself recalling the beautiful memories of previous Christmases when my beloved daughter was alive. There was the pink and white checked fabric baby buggy with pipe-cleaner handles of her first Xmas, followed by Teddy bears with Santa hats, and crocheted Sesame Street characters from her toddler days. There were the priceless picture ornaments taken by her nursery school teacher showing 4-year old Nina with the then-blond, wispy hair and blunt cut bangs grinning back at me. There were the handmade ones from early grade school that she affectionately created with felt and glitter; the violin and piano ornaments symbolizing her musical attempts; the self-explanatory Shop-til-You-Drop ornament; the more sophisticated ornaments for a teenage Nina, and finally the last one before her death at 15-years-old commemorating her reign as our city’s Miss Teen. I gently held them, reliving the stories behind each one and savoring the precious memories they brought with them as I placed them on the tiny tree. I then unearthed from hiding the ornaments bought after her death. Even then, I couldn’t bear to stop buying them for her. There I found dark-haired angels and butterflies of every shape and color, now symbolizing her new and eternal life, and appropriately hung them alongside the others.

Though tears fell as I cautiously placed them on the bare branches of the tiny tree, I felt familiar warmth radiate throughout my body, thawing the coldness in my heart and soul. I smiled, knowing in my heart that this was a Christmas gift coming directly from Nina. I felt it was her way of telling me that perhaps it was time to find some peace and hope again in the holiday season. Not that it would or could ever be the same as it was before 1995, or that I would ever stop missing her presence, but perhaps now begin to remember some of the joy found in priceless memories of holiday's past.

If you are in the early years of your grief, you believe you will never again feel any amount of enjoyment in the holidays. However, allow myself and other seasoned grievers to be the bearers of hope. At one time we felt just like you. When you feel ready for even a spark of pleasure in the holidays, let it return to your heart again. I sincerely believe our children want us, in time, to accept their spirit gifts of renewed joy, peace, and hope sent to us from them with love.

With peace and gentle thoughts through this holiday season and always,

-Cathy L. Seehuettter TCF St. Paul, MN In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Open Letter to Our Siblings

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably know - since you knew me better than anyone. No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives and the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents. That we'd share our joys and setbacks, and adore each other's children.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could imagined I'd survive. Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions. There is no replacing you and there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day to live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you and to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

Mary Lamourex TCF Marin County, CA



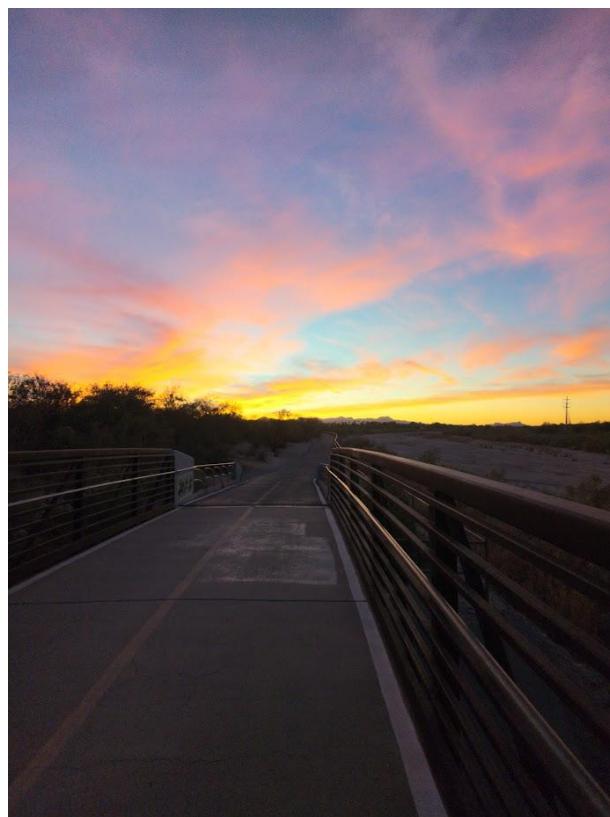
**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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

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November-December 2025