



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



Welcome to our
Holiday Candlelighting Ceremony

Date: Sunday
December 10, 2006

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

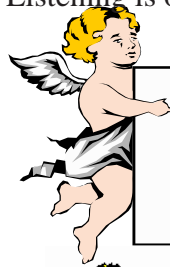
Place:
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1000 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas

Board Of Directors:
Chairman: Susan Crews
542-0908
Sec/Treasurer: Lou Cain
Newsletter, Copies & Mailing:
The Winkelmans

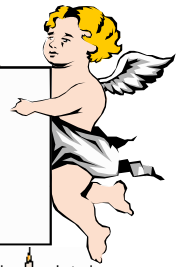
Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

January 31: Regular Meeting
February 28: Regular Meeting
March 28: Regular Meeting
April 27: Regular Meeting

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purpose of TCF is to aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of their child and to foster the physical and emotional health of bereaved parents and surviving children. The El Paso chapter meets in donated church facilities, but no religious creed or affiliation is involved. There are no dues and no one is required to talk at any meeting. Listening is okay! Please join us, together we can make it.



Editor's Notes



HAPPY HOLIDAYS



We want this newsletter to be *your* newsletter. To do that, we need your help. You are invited – actually, you are strongly encouraged – to contribute to this publication. I'm hoping that one of your New Year's resolutions might be to send in something for the newsletter at least once this coming year. Please write and share your stories of your child or your sibling. Some of us get to know each other's children through the monthly chapter meetings. But, this newsletter also can be a forum for us to share. Writing is a form of therapy. It will help us get to know each other a little better and it will help us to heal a bit, too. We all have favorite memories that we can share – things that have helped us over the days, months or years. I hope you'll share them with us. It doesn't even have to be a full article. Sometimes, brief paragraphs of memories or thoughts are perfect.

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Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(630) 990-0010 or (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit Our New Website: elpasotcf.org

Worldwide Candle Lighting

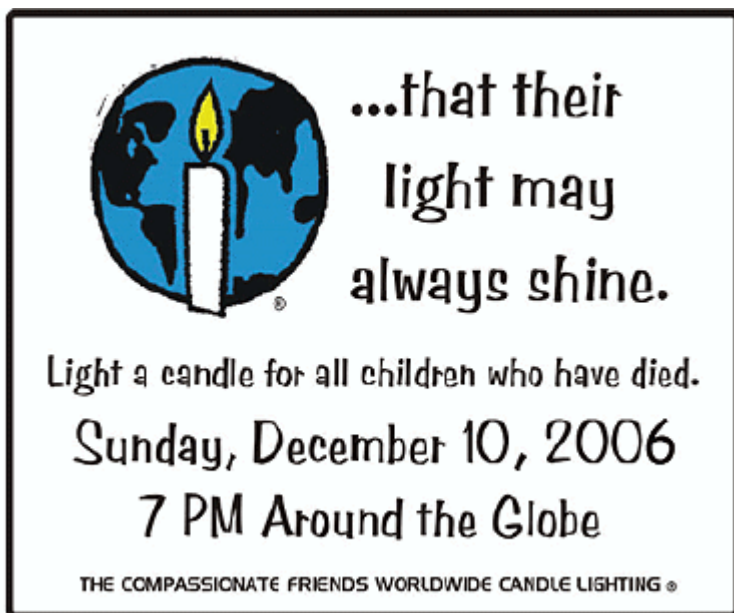
There is an air of anticipation as the tenth anniversary of the Worldwide Candle Lighting December 10, approaches. The Compassionate Friends invites all to participate in this very special day, a day devoted to the memory of all children who have died too soon.

The WCL, a TCF initiative, has grown from a small Internet observance to what today may be the largest mass candle lighting in the world. The observance is a way of remembering all children who have died through the simple act of lighting a candle at 7 p.m. local time for one hour, creating a virtual wave of light.

Observed on the second Sunday in December each year, the Worldwide Candle Lighting continues to grow. Last year there were nearly 350 memorial services in the United States listed on the TCF national website and services in 12 countries abroad. The Compassionate Friends welcomes the many allied bereavement organizations, churches, and funeral homes that have joined in this unified tribute to, and remembrance of, all children gone too soon.

Those persons unable to attend a formal candle lighting are invited to light a candle in their homes with family and friends.

As we pay tribute to all children who died too soon, all are invited to visit the TCF national website December 10 and submit a memory, thought, or tribute to a special child for the TCF Remembrance Book. While you can only place submissions throughout the day December 10, all those posted will remain available a few weeks to be viewed.



Please **bring a candle** for each member of your family, a **memorable picture** of your child and your **favorite holiday dish or dessert** to share after the ceremony.

El Paso Chapter Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service

Special Invitation

Sunday, December 10, 2006 arrive at 6:30 p.m. to commence ceremony precisely at 7:00 p.m.
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1000 Montana

Our Candlelight Remembrance Service is an annual event to honor and remember our children and siblings who have gone too soon.

Please bring a candle for each member of your party. After the service, we will have a potluck and a memorial picture presentation of our children and siblings in the basement.

We also want to invite our members to bring their favorite holiday dish or desert to share at our fellowship after the service. We look forward to seeing everyone and sharing this special evening with you, your family and your child.

May their Lights Continue to Shine...

HOLIDAYS

Ten Tips to Surviving the Holidays

With Thanksgiving and the normally festive holidays around the corner, millions of families throughout the United States that have lost a child are struggling with how they can simply survive to see the new year.

“The stress that bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents face during the hustle and bustle of the holidays can feel overwhelming,” says Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends. “It is difficult for those who have not gone through the death of a child to understand the depth of despair which such a loss brings.”

Mrs. Loder, whose two young children died in a car crash in 1991, says there are many tips that can help a grieving family prepare for the holidays.

- 1) Plan ahead. Realize you will not be able to do everything with everyone. Decide what is truly important to you and your family.
- 2) Don't be afraid to ask friends for help. Tasks which may normally take little effort can feel overwhelming, whether it's fixing a meal, cleaning the house, or putting up decorations.
- 3) No one expects you to string rows and rows of lights just to prove you have the holiday spirit. If you don't feel up to past efforts, you may simply want to place an electric powered candle in your window in memory of your child.
- 4) Just because you've hosted holiday gatherings in the past doesn't mean you're obligated to this year. Others will understand.
- 5) After a child dies, old traditions are often left behind and new ones that incorporate the child who died can take their place. Honor the memory of your child in unique ways that have meaning to you.
- 6) Surviving children should be included in your plans. They, too, mourn their sibling, but need a normalcy the holidays can provide.
- 7) If you don't get everything done you plan, be easy on yourself. Grief is tough work and you should never feel guilty for not getting everything done.
- 8) If you must shop for others, find a time when the stores are not extremely busy like early morning, order through the Internet, or ask others to shop for you.
- 9) Participating in a memorial service, such as a Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting, can be very meaningful. This can be done in a formal service with others or through a short private candle lighting in the privacy of your home.
- 10) Remember that the fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself.

The Last Christmas

As bereaved parents, we are familiar with the phenomenon of “firsts.” The first birthday, the first vacation, the first Christmas since our child died. Sometimes, though, we are blind-sided by the “lasts.” These thoughts can hurt as much or more than the “firsts.” There is a blessing in this, however, if we can look hard enough to see it.

Our child died early in the year. His birthday was only a month after his death. We found ourselves thinking, “On his last birthday, we celebrated with the family.” Then came Easter, with similar thoughts. By the time Christmas arrived, these kinds of thoughts had become automatic. Each new holiday brought a look back at what we had done the previous year at that time. These thoughts seemed to be necessary for us, because each time, through the tears and the pain, we found we could remember a happy time as well.

So, when you think of “his or her last Christmas,” search for the happiness and sweetness hidden in the memory, and cherish it and hold onto it - even if only for the briefest of moments - to help you in the days ahead.

We need all the help we can get.

Healing the Grieving Heart

Featuring experts who discuss the many aspects of grief, with a main focus on the death of a child and its effects on the family, “Healing the Grieving Heart” can be heard on the Web live at www.health.voiceamerica.com. every Thursday at noon EST. Shows are also archived on the [TCF national website](#).

Hosts of “Healing the Grieving Heart” are: Dr. Gloria Horsley, bereaved parent with 22 years in family therapy; and Dr. Heidi Horsley, bereaved sibling and an adjunct professor teaching graduate courses at Columbia University’s School of Social Work, including Intervention for Grief, Loss, and Bereavement.

November 23—Thanksgiving Reflections

Joy Johnson has written or edited more than 150 grief related books. She is co-founder of Ted E. Bear Hollow, a center for grieving children, and Centering Corporation, North America’s oldest and largest bereavement resource center, and the recommended resource center of The Compassionate Friends. Joy will discuss traditions, memories, and challenges of Thanksgiving without that special person.

November 30—From Parent to Advocate: Long Days’ Journey

After the loss of two infants and the premature birth of her son Jeremy, Deborah Dokken became involved in programs enhancing family participation in health care. She is co-investigator for The Initiative for Pediatric Palliative Care, a national education and quality improvement project. She currently serves on the FDA’s Pediatric Advisory Committee and is a longtime member of the Ethics Forum at Children’s National Medical Center. She is the recipient of Pediatric Nursing’s 2003 Humanitarian Award.

December 7—Challenges of Being a Bereaved Stepparent

Babe Muro’s 19 year old stepdaughter, Lori Singer, was excited about being in the U.S. Navy as she prepared to leave for Guam. Her excitement turned into tragedy as an automobile accident ended her life March 30, 1998. Lori is survived by her brother Keith who continues to live with Babe and his mother Michelle. Michelle is the co-leader of the Staten Island Chapter of TCF and Babe is what he likes to call the “Shadow Leader” always willing to help behind the scenes. Babe has led stepparent sharing sessions at The Compassionate Friends National Conference.

December 14—My Brother, My Best Friend

In 1984 when Alison Smith was only 15 years old, her adored older brother Roy died in a car accident. The two were so close that they shared the nickname Alroy. Alison went on to write the memoir Name All the Animals, which was a New York Times Notable Book and was named one of the top ten books of 2004 by People Magazine.

December 21—Dealing with the Holidays

Following the death of her 19 year-old son, Marc, in 1992, Susan Van Vleck was looking for meaning. Marc’s death motivated Susan to enter and graduate with honors from Kennesaw State University, receiving a degree in Sociology and Human Services. She has attended several American Academy of Bereavement seminars. Susan has been a facilitator for Good Grief, a six-week program based on Granger Westberg’s book Good Grief, and was a Promina Northwest Hospice Volunteer in Marietta, GA for two years. She is a National Board Member of The Compassionate Friends. Susan knows it isn’t the life you planned, but it is the life you have, and the holidays are part of that life.

December 28—Hello From Heaven and ADCs

Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim spent seven years conducting research for their popular book Hello From Heaven. During this time, they interviewed 2,000 people and collected more than 3,300 firsthand accounts of after-death communications (ADC) which do not include the use of a medium or any mechanical device.

Handling the Holidays

With the holiday season approaching, we asked TCF friends to share with us some of the ways they have coped with the difficult holiday season.

Marilyn Heavilin (*Jimmy, Ethan, and Nathan's Mom*):

Our twins Nathan and Ethan were born on Christmas morning of 1965, but just 10 days later Ethan died of pneumonia. Each year the Christmas birthdays were difficult, but we rationalized that “at least we have Nathan.” But then, when Christmas of 1983 came, we were left to face it without either of the boys since Nathan had been killed by a drunk driver earlier that year. Since I couldn't cancel Christmas, even though that would have been my first choice, I decided I wanted to have lots of people around all day. I found comfort in having my friends close by. The gifts were limited and we used a small artificial tree, but we muddled through the day with many tears, hugs, and ‘I love you's.’

The second year, our son Matt was married December 22 and the following year, we were just a few days away from moving into a 90 year-old Victorian home, so our Christmas activities were limited. By the fourth Christmas, I felt I was ready to acknowledge Christmas again, but I knew it had to be totally different than what we had done before Nate's death. Glen and I went to a Christmas tree farm and chose a nine foot tree. We watched the men cut it down and then we sat in the car and cried. The last time we had bought a fresh tree, Nate helped us choose it.

I made sure the tree had lots of paper roses on it and we started many new traditions. Each year as I travel, I collect rose tree decorations and I collect ceramic houses from the Snow Village collection. We now have about 25 pieces for the village and Glen “builds” a city on top of our grand piano. On top of a hill at the back of the village sits an illuminated castle looking out over the village, which we call heaven. In front of the village sits a small plastic musical train on a circular track which we gave to Nate on his first birthday.

A few Christmases ago, I was having a particularly hard time, and while shopping, saw a battery operated train set with a steam engine that gave off real smoke. I brought it home, set it up, and was amazed at the tears that poured out of me as I watched that toy train go around and around. I now own three trains and have found them to be a wonderful catharsis for me and great entertainment for the “adult” children.

A few years ago, I began to realize my pattern: I worked very hard all of the month of December to control my emotions. Then on Christmas day, it seemed the dam would finally burst and I would often cry much of the day. I realized it would be much wiser to deal with the emotions one day at a time so that the tears wouldn't build up quite so much. Now each December 1, I write myself a note and put it in a prominent place to give myself advice that I would pass on to each of you: CRY EARLIER.

Dana Gensler (*Lindsay's Mom*):

Last year we had the family celebration at our home for the first time since our daughter died. In addition to our large family tree, we had a smaller tree that we called our “Lindsay Tree.” We asked everyone to bring two ornaments: one in memory of Lindsay, and the others we numbered and then drew names to give each child present a remembrance of that year. It was very special to see the many unique ornaments, most of which were some type of angel, on our special tree. And, at the same time, all the children felt they were treated fairly. In future years we plan to continue this tradition and add to our collection of angels. Our family finds it important to always do something in Lindsay's memory—it can be as “simple” as lighting a candle, displaying the photograph album or attending a memorial service. The first Christmas we bought a rocking chair for the NICU where Lindsay died. The next year we had her photograph painted on porcelain and attached to her headstone. Another year we hung a picture in her memory at church.

Over the years, we have found it meaningful to give grandparents or family members gifts in Lindsay's memory. We have given specially engraved ornaments, angel figurines, candles, and even table centerpieces.

Tom Wyatt (*Johnny's Dad*):

There are various ways that we include Johnny in our Chanukah celebrations. Some are subtle and others more overt. When we light the Menorah, we use a blue taper as the extra candle. The color blue represents Johnny to us. Just as the extra candle gives of itself to light each of the eight other candles without giving up its own light, we give Johnny and each other our love without diminishing ourselves.

After the meal and before we exchange gifts and play games, we say the Kaddish (mourners prayer). This prayer demonstrates our faith in God despite our loss. It insists that we focus on hope rather than despair and our determination to pass on loving memories of Johnny from generation to generation. Shalom.

Chanukah Is Here

Chanukah is here.
I see the candles glow,
red, pink and blue.
But you're not here to see their pretty shadows.
I shop for gifts,
And this year, again,
once more I won't be in a
quandary of what to buy.
I give you my love, my precious son,
for that is eternal.
And once again,
It will have to do.
-Ginette Kravel
Central Jersey TCF

Chanukah

Chanukah has always been a favorite holiday for my family and me.
Lighting the Menorah
The smell of Latkes frying in the pan
The smiles on my boys faces
The excitement of eight nights of my two little boys opening presents
(sometimes just small silly gifts, it didn't matter) Memories of a happy and
innocent time I hold fast to those special holiday times..... shared the past so
bittersweet. The future now not as we planned, yet still to be experienced
with hope and courage
Always remembering my two little boys sharing the fun and excitement with
my husband and I with the wonder of innocence on their faces and a gleam in
their eyes as the Chanukah Menorah was lit and the blessings
recited.....one child now a young man with a wife and son of his own,
his younger brother watching over us with love from a place we have yet to
discover.
I smile for the wonderful memories that this time of the year evokes, while my
eyes fill with tears.
In Memory of Craig Adam Blumsack by Judy Blumsack

Memorial Candles

These candles burning each December,
Symbols of those we remember,
Bring forth tears which freely flow
And mingle with the candles' glow.
But thoughts of each dear girl and boy,
Those who no more may bring us joy,
Now cause our hearts to fill with pain
As we assemble here again.
Though tears still come in times ahead,
To gratitude we must be led
That for a while we held our child
And sometimes cried, but often smiled.
May every candle lit tonight
Bring back into the memory's sight
The joys we knew, mixed with the tears,
From our dear children through the years.
-Robert F. Gloor



Light One Candle

Light one candle, take my hand.
Move closer to each other,
All who want to smile again.
In this blessed time of year,
with your sorrow and tears,
Come together to remember and to light one candle.
The light is for strength to face
The pain welled up inside.
The light reminds us of shattered dreams, not to be denied.
The light is for courage to beckon others to our side,
For every tear we've cried...

We light one candle.
We all know the reason that we value the flame.
It's a commitment to each other,
To remember every name.
And a promise made that in our hearts forever they'll
remain.
Out of love we came
to light one candle.
-In memory of David
by his father, James Nelson
Minneapolis, MN

Our Children Remembered

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN

HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Parents</u>
12/23/91	Carlos	30	Son of Frances Perez

Love Gifts

A **LOVE GIFT** is a gift of money or service to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died but it can also be a gift to help in the work of the El Paso Chapter of TCF. Your gifts are tax deductible and are our Chapter's only monetary support. Your donation will help us pay for postage and labels for sending our newsletter each month.

LOVE GIFT

Name of Person to be Remembered _____

Special Occasion of Person _____

Given By _____

Send To: Mary Lou Cain
5664 Beth View
El Paso, TX 79932

Love Gifts

Harlow and Ruth Paul; in loving memory of their son Harlow L. Paul III

Rosie Celaya Raulston; in loving memory of her son James Matthew Celaya; DOD February 13, 2005

Laurie and Eddie Knipp; in loving memory of their son Michael Knipp; DOD February 15, 1995

Maribel Perry; in loving memory of her son Nikolas Torres Perry; DOD August 15, 2004

Christmas/Chanukah

The temptation is to put off thinking about it, and hope it will go away. Unfortunately, it won't - so beat the panic and pain of the deadline. All stores seem to compete to get their decorations up first. It is now being done a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving. Try to make a shopping list and do it *now* to avoid all the decorations and music that stab at the heart. If there are any cards or notes that you feel must be sent, write, address and stamp them now, then mail them at the appropriate time.



For you who have young children, the *commercial* part of the holidays is

important to them. To be robbed of their brother or sister is bad enough, let's try not to rob them of those few short, joyful years of childhood. Again, perhaps you can ask the help of relatives or godparents. They can take the children to see the festivities. They are often more willing that you might think. But, they might not think about it on their own, or they may even hesitate to *interfere*.

When the day arrives, I would suggest handling it much the same as Thanksgiving. Discuss it as a family unit, including the children if there are any; don't shut them out. Once again, don't be influenced by what other relatives or other people suggest - unless it sounds *right* for you. Your own family needs must be met. This is not being selfish; it is doing what is necessary at this point in time. There is no way of avoiding the pain, so just face what must be faced *now* to soften it as much as possible later.

~as seen in TCF Newsletter of
Central Savannah River Area



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
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EL PASO, TX 79902