



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



September



October



November



WELCOME TO OUR FALL MEETINGS

Picnic: October 3, 5:00 PM
Madeline Park

Meetings: Wednesdays
September 29, 2009
October 27, 2009
November 24, 2009

Program:
To be Announced

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

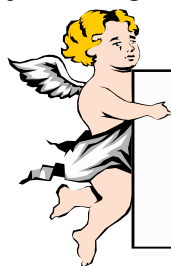
Place:
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1000 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas

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

Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

Dec 12 Around the Globe
Candlelight Ceremony
Jan 26 Monthly Meeting
Feb 23 Monthly 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



In October, we will be having our annual balloon picnic at Madeline Park. Everyone is invited, parents, children and other family members. We all **bring our favorite dish**, eat, socialize, then send off a balloon with a special message to our child(ren). Each person is asked to **bring one or more helium balloons** to send off to their child. We also suggest you **bring lawn chairs** to sit on. The picnic will be held at **Madeline Park on Sunday, October 3, at 5:00 PM, located off of Cincinnati Avenue, in Kern Place**. See you there.

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman
5337 Hunters Glenn
El Paso, TX 79932
ejwink@sbcbglobal.net

National Office: TCF National Office
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(630) 990-0010 or (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

If you would like to receive this monthly newsletter, please e-mail ejwink@sbcbglobal.net or www.elpasotcf.org

Life Can Be Good Again

By Don Hackett
Kingston, Mass.

For nearly 16 years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more. He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.
- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.

- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.

- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Reprinted with permission from "We Need Not Walk Alone," the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

**Worldwide
Candle
Lighting®**

... that their light
may always shine.

**Second Sunday in December
7 PM Around the Globe**

Fall Angel Dates

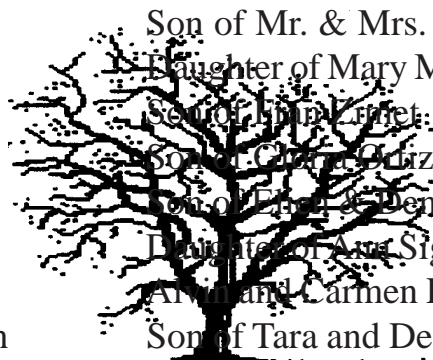
If your child's name has been left out of this section, or their is missing/incorrect information, please mail or e-mail me immediately so I can update our data base.

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN

HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

DEATH DATES:	AGE:	CHILD:	PARENT(S):
9/2/1983	3	Jonathon	Son of Mrs. Susan Crews
9/2/2009	20	Philip	Son of Martha and Felipe Jordan
9/4/1998	12	Adam	Son of Beverly Hurley
9/5/1997	41	Harlow III	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Harlow Paul
9/5/2006	8	Samual	Son of Gordon Mahon
9/18/1993	29	Steven	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Waite
9/20/2009	53	Mary	Daughter of Mary Martinez
10/6/2005	47	Fred	Son of Linda Loret
10/7/2007	2	Ethan	Son of Cherie Ortiz
10/14/2007	1	Ethan	Son of Linda & Denim Slade
10/16/2001	26 Days	Elsie	Daughter of Ann Sigholz
10/19/1991	8	Jeremy	Arnie and Carmen Dobard
10/24/2006	19	Mathew Jordan	Son of Tara and Dean Higginbrothan
10/29/2009	9	Brandon	Son of Sharon Gonzalez
10/30/2003	10	Ruben	Son of Cindy and Mark Flack
11/8/2009	23	Shawn	Son of Pamela
11/14/2007	24	Jessica M.	Daughter of Maria-Elena Pando
11/19/2007	27	Michael	Son of Terri & Robert Gallardo
11/23/2009	19	Enrique	Son of Susana Everrete
11/28/2003	19 Days	Gabrielle	Daughter of Edna and Andrew Sierra
11/30/1991	21	Mark Anthony	Son of Maria Molina



Nikki's Third Angel Date

By Selma Calaman

Sept. 2, 2009, was my Nikki's third angel date. My heart still aches as I am writing these words: three years and many tears later.

This is an excerpt from my letter to Anika Vai: my precious "very beautiful," loving daughter (composed October 2006).

Nikki, although my faith tells me that you are in the arms of the angels, I miss you so much every day. I deeply miss my office manager, my nutritionist, my business and community advocacy partner, my loving, compassionate, affectionate, joyful daughter. This poem was sent by your "Auntie Del" Blocker-Ray on Sept. 8, 2006 and composed by your "buddy" Debbie Blocker-Mulkerein:

Our Angel God sent angels on this earth to guide us safely through and I'm so glad that when your name was called, He chose to give Anika to you. She came into this world disguised as your little girl, But, all the time she knew your heart and mind.

She was in, but not of, this world. Be grateful for the times you had, The love you shared And lessons learned along the way. Praise your Lord and bless His name Because He'll bring you together again someday.

Little did we know, before, Nikki, that you were God's gift to your family, an angel God sent to visit with us and teach us how to love, how to be compassionate and constantly concerned about others, how to reach out and touch hearts, how to be sure our caring includes doing, how to look past our own pain to "GIVE A CARE," to nurture someone who is suffering.

Nikki, as you grew up, we spent so many days and nights in the hospital because of your seizures. Your nurses would always visit our room to visit with you and enjoy your chuckles and chatter; your special gift of joy and laughter. They were always so charmed by your delightful, engaging personality and when you fell asleep, they would say, "She looks just like a sleeping angel, you would never know she is so sick."

Anika Vai, you anointed your name by the way you loved. You always knew your name was derived from West African words which translate into "very beautiful." Through Divine Intervention, you lived long enough to demonstrate a spirit and character which truly illustrated the meaning of those words. So many who knew you have told me: "to know Anika, was to love her."

Sweetheart, I remember with so much pride how proud you were of your volunteer projects with the United Way Community Investment program and the Partnership Against Domestic Violence. I remember how you beamed as you recalled how the United Way executives listened to your opinions on providing resources and support for disabled children.

Of course, sweetheart, you were the expert because you had lived through it and overcome so many of the physical and mental challenges associated with your disability. What they

didn't know as they listened to you speak, was that you had lived so far above and beyond the neurosurgeons' prognosis. Through God's grace, you beat the odds, to live a life which was so much more articulate and abundant than any of your neurosurgeons would have predicted.

I am so proud of all the plans you had made to attend the Atlanta School of Massage, become a massage aromatherapist and continue taking care of others. I remember how enthusiastically you spoke about your vision and future plans the evening of Sept. 1, 2006. I had no idea that evening would be our last together.

I am so grateful that God chose me to usher your precious spirit into the world. I am so blessed and honored to be your mother and so proud of who you became.

Nikki, you will always be in my heart. Through my heart aches everyday because you are gone from me in the physical realm, I am grateful that God has ended your suffering. Your laughter and joy, your living and compassionate spirit will always be with me, in my memories and in my heart. And though our time together feels so painfully short, I thank God for the time He gave to me, to treasure and cherish.

Nikki, you taught us how to look for the love in it and take time to "Give a Care." In loving memory of you, always.

Selma Calaman (Nikki's mommy)

Heaven's Very Special Child

A meeting was held quite far from Earth.

"It's time again for another birth."

Said the angels to the Lord above,

"This special child will need much love."

His progress may seem very slow

Accomplishments he may not show

And he'll require extra care

From the folks he meets way down there.

He may not run or laugh or play

His thoughts may seem quite far away

In many ways he won't adapt

And he'll be known as handicapped.

So let's be careful where he's sent

We want his life to be content

Please, Lord, find the parents who

Will do a special job for you.

They will not realize right away

The leading role they're asked to play

But with this child sent from above

Come stronger faith and richer love.

And soon they'll know the privilege given

In caring for this gift from heaven

This precious charge, so meek and mild,

Is heaven's very special child.

Author unknown

Reprinted at the request of Mary Ann Davis in memory of her son Kyle.

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

Atlanta Mother Continues Heartfelt Mission to Save Lives

Candace Walker's heart may be heavy but her spirit and determination to save lives presses on. Since 2008, after losing her only son Clinton to an undetected heart defect, Candace has been on a mission to raise community awareness about heart defects and create opportunities for young people to receive life saving heart screenings.

For over a year, the Walker family searched for answers to the violent seizures that their only old son Clinton, a previously healthy and athletic boy, suddenly began to suffer from. Clinton received CAT scans, MRIs, EEGs and Sleep Clinic tests only to be told in the end, that they could not find the cause of his seizures. On Feb. 7, 2008, Clinton passed away in his sleep from the complications of a seizure; he was 17 years old. It was not until after his death that an autopsy revealed he suffered from an abnormal heart defect that, if detected earlier, may have saved his life.

Since the tragic passing of her son, Candace has turned her grief into an all out war cry to raise awareness and help other families and communities practice early detection. Her story has appeared in Gospel Today Magazine, Our Voices Mississippi, The Indianapolis Recorder and, Candace has also appeared on Praise 102.5's The Coco Brother Radio show. Clinton's story has also appeared on Organizing for America's Web site, Parent Heart Watch Web site and in the Rockdale Citizen.

In the fall of 2008, Candace launched the Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund and Youth4Healthy Hearts. The Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund Inc. was created to

honor and remember Clinton in a way that continues his legacy of service. The Youth4Healthy Hearts Benefit Concert is a yearly event that features Gospel performers and health vendors who come out and help to spread the word on the importance of knowledge and of early detection through heart health screenings.

"The Youth4Healthy Hearts events are aimed at educating our youth about heart defects and raising funds for The Clinton Ron Walker Scholarship Fund," says Candace. "Eight out of every one thousand children born in the U.S. have congenital heart problems that often go undiagnosed. We are committed to bringing awareness to this problem and educating parents and the community on the steps to take to have their children screened. This information is vital in saving the lives of our children."

TCF Online Support Community Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national Web site 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. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing.

There are general bereavement sessions, as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "Men Only Sharing Session," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

THE MYTH OF CLOSURE

"When will I begin to feel better?" "When will I return to normal?" "When will I achieve some closure?" grievers often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievers hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleaned out their loved one's room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual. Or, perhaps, after the first anniversary comes and goes...

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us...Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Closure is not for feelings or for people we love. Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past, as if it didn't exist, because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And, in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us-the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out. Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again. But let's not ever think that we'll close the door completely on what this loss means. For, if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

- By Ashley David Prend, Hospice of North Idaho



Autumn has arrived. While many people welcome this season with the cooler weather, colorful landscape, and family traditions, there are many of us who look to the upcoming months with dread. For the newly bereaved, we wonder how we will survive the upcoming holiday months without our child and we can't understand how the rest of the world can continue to experience joy in the holidays when we feel so devastated from our loss. We also wonder how those who have lost a child or sibling, maybe not as recently, can smile and laugh and even look forward to the holidays. At our meetings, you may see some smiling faces and even hear some laughter. These are the people who have walked in your shoes and have been where you are, wondering how they would ever smile again, how could other people in the group be happy, and how could they survive the next birthday, anniversary, Thanksgiving or Christmas. Yet somehow, little by little, they find hope, friendship, and even happiness again. There is no magic wand to make that happen, it takes time and support from people who care. Compassionate Friends is here for that reason, to give and receive support and encouragement, because others were there for them when they walked that dark and lonely road and because they still walk it every day, with each day the steps getting a little lighter with renewed hope. Please do not be offended by smiles and laughter, but be encouraged by them, that one day you will feel alive again and will take pleasure in honoring your child with joyful memories.

- TCF/Marietta, GA newsletter

Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment and children's pleasure. Gremlins and goblins and ghosties at the door of your house; and the "other children" come to the door of your mind. Faces out of the past, small ghosts with sweet, painted faces. They do not shout. Those children no longer march laughing on a cold Halloween night. They stand at the door of our mind; and you will let them in, so that you can give them the small gifts for Halloween; a smile and a tear.

- Sascha Wagner, from Wintersun

Grandparent's Day

September 12th

Dear Grandma and Grandpa.

My mom and dad are very sad, and I know you are too. I've heard your cries, and I just wish that I could comfort you. You're asking why I had to die. Wishing it were you? You say, "you've lived, I never did, why me instead of you?" Oh grandpa, how I'll miss your songs and rides upon your knee. Grandma, I look at you and I know how special my smile to you would be.

I have one small request I hope you'll do for me. It's a gift for mom and dad, given in love from you and me. Please, kiss my mom, hug my dad, let your tears mingle as one. Listen to them as they talk about the person I would have become. Circle them in your arms, and keep on holding tight. Having your support and love will help them make it through silent nights.

I'm smiling at you, sleepy in your arms of love. So I'll say goodnight to you, from my bed in heaven above.

Hugs and kisses,
Your Grandchild

- from "Daily Strength"

DREAMS

You were here the other night
So alive and well it seems.
But I awoke and then I knew
You were only in my dreams.
The tears then came so quickly
For the time with you was brief.
You were alive and talking
If only in my grief.
I heard your voice and touched you
As if you were with me.
But I awoke and realized
This was not reality.
I'll take my dreams when they come
And keep them close to my heart.
Because in my dreams you are alive,
And we are never really apart.
- Joy Cumutt/Savannah, GA

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

My heart aches for any parent whose child would have started school today. I look around at mothers and fathers too eager to drop their kids off, & I wonder if somewhere near a parent was crying because their child was not attending.

It has taken me many years to overcome the sadness of the 1st day of school. I never thought the overwhelming pain would ease. The „what-ifs“ still linger in my mind but I can fade them out with happy thoughts of the day. I am still aware that today Nadine would be skipping off to her Grade 1 classroom and I can't help wondering what teacher she would have had. But my heart does not ache as it did. Today I ache for the parent who has just begun their journey, the parent experiencing the first day of school without their child.
- Shannon Stevens; TCF/ Powell River, BC

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

School opens for another year. There is a flurry of activity to end the summer: clothes to buy; notebooks, pencils and pens to gather; decisions to make on rulers and odd-shaped erasers. The family plans and almost plunges into the final weekend, the Labor Day splurge that ends summer and starts the fall. For many, there will be no flurry. Clothing, notebooks, erasers, and all those other things become simply notes of hollowness in a fragmented life. For these, the last summer weekend may pass unnoticed. It is a time to consume silence in the land of bereavement.

When the school doors open, when the buses roll once more, communities across this nation visibly proclaim the hope we all invest in our children. Bereaved parents, having no immunity to these desires and aspirations for our kids, find themselves even more highly sensitized to that never-again kiss of parting, that vigorous waving as the school bus pulls away. Perhaps for

some, an empty desk, an unoccupied chair, will form the elements of a new vision that proclaims again emptiness forever a part of life.

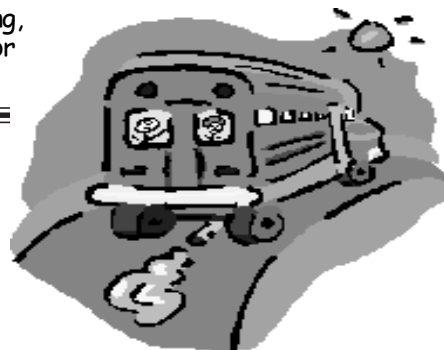
I teach. I know that school's reopening will remind me, even six years into bereavement, of the bittersweet capability of this time. And, I admit with some sorrow, I am never totally free of it, for often do I consciously hope that death will not again shadow a door that is mine, even the door to a classroom! School is opening. For some among us this is a period of deep, unuttered hurt. Only the pain of the holidays may be deeper. As these doors open once again, and as the opening weeks pass, let us remember and reach out to those for whom the school bell is an endless tolling. Let us all offer the assuring hope that today's dreadful tolling will instead, someday, become an evoker of memories - remembered images that will dance upon the heart, forming an anchor of love one which dealing may pose itself to soar, to bring darkness of pain to light.

- By Don Hackett, MA, In memory of his son, Olin
TCF Newsletter, KC Region, September 2002

Pretty Balloon

I am sending you this pretty balloon
And hoping you receive it soon
From my hands to yours, let the breeze help it soar
Watch it rush through the skies
Finding joy in your eyes.
I am sending you kisses and hugs,
New blankets and shoes and a heart full of love
A crayon so you can draw your own star
And I'll follow you wherever you are.
And I know that you're with me
Just a thought away
A rainbow out of nowhere
The words someone may say.
A butterfly that hovers
A flock of birds on wing
The tingle in my skin
A song somebody sings....
Let it go, let it fly
As colors touch the sky
Soaring free, soaring high
with family and angels nearby
There is time to heal,
to be with all I feel
As I reach beyond the veil
You are there.

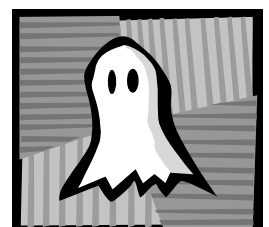
- Words by Paul Alexander. 1995 all rights reserved



day?
y?
just right

ion

when the time came, I released the string
With the note that said "I love you so"
I chose a purple balloon for you
For I knew that's what you'd like
As tears fell softly on my face
I cried as the balloons took flight...
I pray you got my message today
Attached to the purple balloon
I love you always, forever...
And hope to see you soon.
Joyce P. TCF, Fredricksburg Chapter, VT





**The Annual El Paso
TCF Picnic**

will be on Sunday,
October 3, 2010
from **5:00 – 7:00** at
Madeline Park in Kern
Place. The main dish
will be provided by El
Paso TCF. We would
like for you to bring a
favorite salad, side dish,
appetizer, snacks (chips,
pretzels, etc.), sodas
and water, or dessert.
We will have our

Memorial Balloon Release between 6:00 and 6:30. Please bring your own balloons, lawn chairs or a blanket to spread out. As always, you are welcome to bring friends and/or family members. Check our local website: www.elpasotcf.org for pictures of previous year's picnics.



Self Help Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parent

Address Correction Requested



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
1000 MONTANA
EL PASO, TX 79902