



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



December



**Welcome to our
Holiday Candlelighting Ceremony**

**Date: Sunday
December 13, 2009**

Time: 6:30-9:00 PM

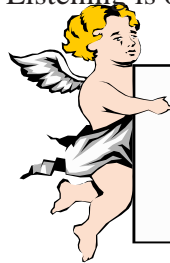
Place:
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1000 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas

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

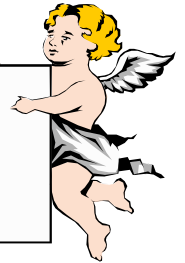
Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

January 27: Regular Meeting
February 24: Regular Meeting
March 24: Regular Meeting
April 28: 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



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting®, held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 13, unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memories of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift from TCF to the bereavement community, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candlelightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman
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ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net

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

Visit Our Website: www.elpasotcf.org

Worldwide Candle Lighting

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The Worldwide Candle Lighting started in the United States in 1997 as a small Internet observance but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance.

The 2009 Worldwide Candle Lighting saw information on services received from 21 countries outside the United States. Joining TCF last year were chapters of several bereavement organizations including MISS, Twinless Twins, MADD, Parents of Murdered Children, and BPUSA and services were held in all 50 states plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico.

A Remembrance Book is available during the event at TCF's USA national website. In that short one day span, thousands of messages are received and posted each year from every U.S. state and Washington D.C., every territory, as well as dozens of other countries. Some are in foreign languages.

Here in the United States, publicity about the event is widespread, being featured over the years in *Dear Abby*, *Parade Magazine*, Ann Landers column, *Guideposts* magazine, Annie's Mailbox, and literally hundreds of U.S. newspapers, dozens of television stations, and numerous websites and personal blogs.

Please help spread the word about this tremendous event and invite anyone who is unable to attend a service to light a candle at 7 p.m. for one hour wherever they may be.



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 13, 2009, 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...



A special gift to all of us in Remembrance of World Wide
Candlelighting and National Children's Memorial Day -
Dec. 13

For Breanna Marie.....Our Sweet Angel.....

Like a candle your light dances on the wall of my heart
Contained within yet reflected without
And like this wax, my heart melts
Sadly, into a shape unknown
Like a candle your flame burns, silent and true
Constant, throughout me
And like this heat, my heart warms
Tenderly, to thaw the chill within
Like a candle your scent fills the recesses of my mind
Sweetly, fondly lingering
And like this fragrance, my heart awakes
Gently, to sweeten those surrounding me
Like your life, this candle flickers bravely
In the harsh winds of an unfair life
Leaving me to ponder
The rising of your soft silent smoke
So I shall light this candle for you
And remember still your light that shines within
Where no wind or rain or earthly trial
May ever extinguish your bright, warm, sweet flame
Eternally Yours,
Mom & Dada Colin & Corinne Wensley
Regina, Canada

Lighting Up The Heavens

by Kaye Des'Ormeaux
Soon it's time for the Candlelighting Ceremony.
It's scheduled for the 13th of December.
A precious time of the year for loved ones to assemble;
Sharing memories as they sadly remember.
Families will gather around & in each state.
Because unfortunately no state is left out.
Children are taken from us all over the world.
Grieving parents know what this is about.
They may have lost their child just recently.
Or lived years through the nightmare.
Either way, the pain is still fresh this day.
And they share it with others who care.
Some parents can't seem to survive their loss.
While others can't seem to comprehend.
But they all can come together to light a candle;
To memorialize their child with a friend.
They share memories of their child with others.
Meanwhile holding a candle they light.
I like to imagine that the Angels & your children
smile at the flames so beautiful & bright.
This Candlelighting Ceremony began years ago.
One mother sitting alone in her grief.
Now, it has become a part of so many hearts.
Hearts who say it helps them find relief.
So, no matter where you are or go this year,
I pray it truly gives peace to you.
And I pray that each one may feel their child's touch ...
While Lighting Up The Heavens.
~Kaye Des'Ormeaux~

The Light

A flame shines in the darkness,
A single, flickering light;
A candle held in memory,
Dispelling the darkness of night.
A candle filled with memories,
It speaks a sweet child's name;
And shines a light for all to see,
In a single, flickering flame.
Soon other candles join the light,
Then thousands fill the sky;
Illuminating the darkness,
Proving love will never die.
Allison Chambers Coxsey

Allison's Heart...Poetry to touch the heart and soul

MILLENNIUM CANDLES

For National Children's Memorial Day and 4th Annual
Worldwide Candle Lighting
December 10, 2000
As December's second Sunday
Does approach its 19th hour...
Special sunset for this one day
Of exquisite Candle Power!
Starting in the Land Down Under
As the strokes of seven chime,
Waves so bright—rip night asunder
“...that their light may always shine!”
Lustrous gleams worldwide are glowing,
Circling this earthly sphere,
Love, remembrance we're showing
For beloved children, dear!
Dancing lights each tell a story,
Represent a precious one,
Send them shimmering up to Glory,
Let our beams eclipse the sun!
Down concentric paths we're roaming
Moving o'er the grassy park,
Singing softly in the gloaming,
Whisper names 'round velvet dark!
Now, 'tis thru 'til next December,
Tho' the candles flicker still,
Sparkling stars we do remember,
In our hearts, and always will!
Vicki Douglas-Otto TCF, Tucson, Arizona

ONE LITTLE CANDLE

I lit a candle tonight, in honor of you
Remembering your life, and all the times we'd been
through.
Such a small little light the candle made
until I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.
All the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain
what a garden they grew, watered with human rain
I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in hopeless
dispair
But then your memory sustains me, in heartaches repair.
I can wait for the tomorrow, when my sorrows ease
Until then, I'll light this candle, and let my memories run
free
~written by Sheila Simmons, Dallas, GA
In Memory of Steven Simmons 3-24-70 - 10-19-99

A Candle for Your Child

Today you will light a little white candle
and say aloud your child's name.
For one fateful day, your life was changed.
The holidays will never be the same.

Today you will light a little white candle
and hang an ornament on a special tree.
Who would have thought you would be in this place?
Sharing your child as a memory.

Today you will light a little white candle,
a small gesture to some others.
Here we share the pain of our loss,
with Mothers, Fathers, Sisters & Brothers.

Today you will light a little white candle,
and as you gaze into the flame,
may comforting memories flood your mind,
as you proudly say your child's name.

Today you will light a little white candle,
With us your compassionate friends...
For all of us know that though they're not here,
our Love for Them NEVER ends.

Tammy Tobac for TCF service 1996 in memory of my
brother Tommy Dolby



A Tree Full of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with gule 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 along side 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 Seehuetter
TCF/St. Paul, MN

Happy Holidays

Christmas time will soon be here,
With Santa on his way.
The joy, the fun, has faded, son
Since you went away.
The kids will all be here again,
Around the fire we'll sit.
Talking of what used to be,
As we reminisce a bit.
The memories of seasons past,
Haunt me this time of year.
I can still see you on Santa's knee,
Whispering in his ear.
It isn't like it used to be,
When you were here to share.
A sadness comes, a tear is shed,
When we see your empty chair.
And so our Christmas Angel,
A candle we light
And pray wherever you may be,
You'll think of us tonight.

-Gail Macdiarmid, TCF

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels
and stars and beloved carols...beyond
the presents, the shopping, the baking
and cooking...beyond all of these sights
and sounds of Christmas...beyond all of
these ..there is hope.
Hope, for the bereaved parent, even at
Christmas, one of the most, if not the
most, painful times of the year, there is
an essence of hope. Hope...it is hope
that sustains us through the days of grief
and anger and frustration and loneliness.
The hope is that someday the pain of the
deaths of our children will be eased.
The hope is that someday our smiles will
be real. The hope is that once again we
will laugh and love and cry without
completely without fear and hollowness.
It is the hope that someday we can
remember our children with a tenderness
merely tinged with sorrow and not
overwhelmed with it.
So it is that for each of you I wish
hope... peace, compassion, love,
sympathy, understanding, sharing and
listening. In the sharing with one
another and in the emotional support we
give to one another, we receive and
understand all of these gifts.

- By Terre Haute, In

CHRISTMAS EVE

Silent night, holy night...
"It's about time," he says quietly.
Deliberately, wordlessly,
They gather the materials
Carefully put away last year,
The matches, candle, candle jar
To fend off the harsh winter wind.
Tis the season to be jolly...
Slowly they drive toward the town's edge,
Past homes with bright, blinking bulbs.
Cars of faraway relatives
Fill their drives. Happy, laughing
Families, children home from school,
Pass by on the way to midnight Mass.
It's the most wonderful time of the year...
At last, town lights left far behind,
They sit mute, each wrapped in private
Cocoons of memories of Christmas past,
Excited whispers from their room,
Silly giggles, fervent good-night
Kisses, anticipation of morning.
On a cold winter's night that was so deep...
Through the gate, down the drive, engine killed.
Frozen grass crunching underfoot
Hand-in-hand they walk up the hill
To the familiar moonlit stone.
With practiced hands they brush it clean,
Then prepare their votive Noel.
The world in solemn stillness lay...
Lump in throat, arm-in-arm,
Candle lit, they stand and weep,
But not so bitter as in years past.
The pain's as deep but not so long,
As once again they dream of things
That should have been but never were.
The stars in the sky look down where he lay...
"Let's go," he says. She nods assent.
They leave, though turn back once to see
The lonely flame of their lost child
Gleaming peacefully through the dark.
He whispers softly, his visit done,
"Merry Christmas and good-night, my child."
-By Richard A . Dew, M.D. - from Rachel's Cry

Happy Thanksgiving

SHARED THOUGHTS ON CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain is with us every moment.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our whole family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Not being honest can give false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members frequently think they know what is always best for us. Their advice may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can. It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of upcoming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. Ask friends to accept your decision. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to our seasonal celebrations.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourselves to grieve and cry, it is very healing. There are no shortcuts to get through our grief. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel and hope you will also have this blessing one day. God Bless,

- Marie Hofmockel,
TCF/ Valley Forge, PA

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I'm thankful this Thanksgiving
That my grief is not so new.
Last year it was so painful to
Think of losing you.
Death can't claim my love for you
Tho we are far apart,
Sweet memories will always be
Engraved upon my heart.
Time can never bring you back
But it can help me be
Thankful for the years of joy
You brought our family.
To all the parents with grief so new
I share your loss and sorrow
I pray you find with faith and time
The blessings of each tomorrow.
-Charlotte Irick
TCF Idaho Falls, ID

THE NEW YEAR

The New Year comes
when all the world is ready for changes,
resolutions - great beginnings.
For us, to whom the stoke of midnight
means a missing child remembered,
For us, the New Year comes
more like another darkness.
But let us not forget
that this may be the year
when love and hope and courage
find each other somewhere
in the darkness.
To lift their voices and speak:
Let there be light...
- Sascha Wagner

A GIFT FOR SURVIVING CHILDREN

"The most important gift you can give your children at this time is the feeling that life continues despite pain. Death, "the loss of innocence", can either lead you the to edge of the abyss and threaten your existence with meaningless and futility, or you will start to build the bridge that spans the chasm with things of life that still count—memory, family, friendship, love."

By Earl Grollman from TALKING ABOUT DEATH; DIALOGUE BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD



THIS YEAR...

The silence of a starry night,
the brightness of the snow,
and the crispness in the air
remind me of you.
Memories of you
allow joy to sneak in.
Though time has not healed,
love has.
and love needs time to show itself
when smothered in fear.
This year...
The glitter of garland,
the tinkling of bells,
and the cheer of glad tidings
remind me of you.
And you...
remind me to love.
By Sandy Goodman,
Author of "Love Never Dies: A
Mother's Journey from Loss to Love

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

The Night Before Xmas for Bereaved Parents

'Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing-the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.

As others were making the holiday plans,
My heart was breaking-I couldn't understand.
I had lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holidays had in store.

When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was looking around.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.

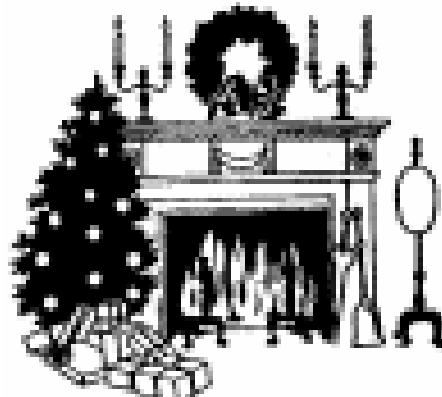
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment, this wasn't by chance.
The hope that they gave me was a sign from above.
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.

The message they brought was my holiday gift.
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.
As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it-as if it knew that
I needed the touch of its fragile wing,

To help me get through the holiday scene.
In the days that followed, I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart-
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us-they're not really dead.

Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears.
A message of hope-a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight.
"To all bereaved parents ~ We love you tonight."

Written by Faye McCord
Co-Chapter Leader, TCF / Jackson, MS
In loving memory of my son,
Lane McCord (1/26/65 - 9/13/98)
~ And dedicated in honor of all Bereaved Parents



"Hope isn't a place or a thing. Hope isn't the absence of pain or sadness or sorrow. Hope is possibility. Hope is the memory of love given and loved received."

- By Darci Sims

SPIRIT GIFTS

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We'll have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to my child, to our years together and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never goodbye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. My child lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young person missed by not getting to live out

his life, I try to remember to focus on the present child, the one who lives inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often, he reminds me to pay attention and not miss the beauty of nature that surrounds me. (He noticed the details in nature and loved the outdoors so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains with you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still very much alive.

So...may the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this day and through every moment of this journey and the reestablishing of your life without their physical presence.

- Kitty Reeves, San Francisco, CA



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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1000 MONTANA
EL PASO, TX 79902