

The Compassionate Friends

Greater New Orleans Chapter Supporting Family After a Child Dies

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 12

December 2024

Chapter Leaders: William and Millie Hunton 504-265-0581 Email address: tcfnola@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE – December 8, 2024 Worldwide Candle Lighting

Our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony will be **Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024** at Lafreniere Park, in the Foundation Center Patio. This is a great way to meet and get to know the members of The Compassionate Friends. Getting involved will likely help you as well as the other members! Everyone is welcomed! Volunteers are needed for setup and tear down. There will be an outdoor picnic before the ceremony starting at **4:30 P.M**. Each family

brings their own food. We will have tea and lemonade.

Please bring a Framed picture of your Child, Grandchild, or Sibling to be placed on our Memorial Table. (9x12 max)

We start at 4:30 pm to avoid the public lines viewing the park Christmas Lights. If you would like to help with the Candle Lighting set up, please call the TCF at 504-265-0581.

Avoid the Line - WorldWide Candle Lighting

Our picnic before our Worldwide Candle Lighting is designed to help you avoid the long line of cars coming to Lafreniere Park to see the Christmas Lights. Please arrive by 4:30pm so we will not be caught in the long line. Bring your folding chairs and your picnic to enjoy. Weather permitting we will have the event outside in the Patio area. If you run late and get caught in the traffic line, please take this alternate route. Park near the intersection of Judith St and York St. Follow path through the rear park gate. This gate is directly across from the Foundation Center.

DECEMBER MEETING WILL BE VIA ZOOM

Please join us from the comfort of home while sharing memories. Time: Dec 9, 2024 07:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

https://uso5web.zoom.us/j/85716279185?pwd=zXxuNjmjru9ooTcyApWTuboYHf9YLF.1 Meeting ID: 857 1627 9185 Passcode: bvDt3L

BIRTHDAY RECOGNITION: Birthdays can be found on "Our Children Remembered" page. We do encourage both you and your family to come when it is your child's birthday month, to share your child with all of us with photos and memories. You will receive a special birthday gift in memory of your child. Bring that treasured picture of your child

that always makes you smile so we may smile with you. Refreshments in honor of your child, grandchild, or sibling are welcomed. The November Birthday Cake was co-sponsored by Carmen Snow in memory of her son Vinny Snow; and also co-sponsored by Cheryl and Roland Bourgeois in memory of their son Jeremy Bourgeois. The December Birthday Cake will be co-sponsored by Garrinett Southall in memory of her children, Khalil and Keishawn; and will also be co-sponsored by Barbette and Mike Richard in memory of their son Cody Shaw Fahm.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING: December 9, 2024

> <u>Via</u> ZOOM

7:00 – 9:00 pm

2nd Monday of every month

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

8 Jan 24	19 Feb 24	11 Mar 24
8 Apr 24	13 May 24	10 Jun24
8 Jul 24	12 Aug 24	9 Sep 24
14 Oct 24	11 Nov 24	9 Dec 24
		ZOOM

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Denise St. Pierre 504-460-2970 denisestp12@gmail.com

NATIONAL OFFICE

The Compassionate Friends 48660 Pontiac Trail # 930808 Wixom, MI 48393

nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org www.compassionatefriends.org 877-969-0010

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Butterfly Release

April 27, 2025 – held in the Children's Memorial Garden in Lafreniere Park Memorial Walk and Auction September 13, 2025 – held in the Children's Memorial Garden in Lafreniere Park WorldWide Candle Lighting December 8, 2024 – Held in the Foundation Center Patio in Lafreniere Park

Our Monthly Meetings

To all those newly bereaved, who are receiving this newsletter for the first time and to all our Compassionate Friends, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that you and your family have many friends. We, who received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow, now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help. **You are not alone in your grief.**

Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each month at the Foundation Center Conference Room in Lafreniere Park at 7:00 P.M. We are a self-sustaining organization with no funds except what we receive through donations from members and newsletter recipients. Please join with us at a meeting.

Grief support after the death of a child

The Compassionate Friends is a national non-profit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

Big Thanks to Our Steering Committee

Contact: Phone: (504) 265-0581 Email: tcfnola@gmail.com www.tcfneworleans.com

1104 Colony Rd. Metairie, LA 70003

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Chapter Leader	William Hunton		
Chapter Co-Leader	Millie Hunton		
Treasurer	Isabel Vigne-Miranda		
Facilitator	Millie Hunton		
Newsletter Editor	William Hunton		
Webmaster	Jason Vicari		
Database Management	Jerrie Vicari		
Outreach Committee	Dena Peters		
Hospitality	Jan Dutilh		
Coffee Hostess	Patsy Ashton		
Memorial Park Director	Jacques Bitoun		
Memorial Brick Director	Peggy Boardman		

Steering Committee: William Hunton, Millie Hunton, Jan Dutilh, Dena Peters, Isabel Miranda-Vigne, Patsy Ashton, and Christi Vercher. Denise St. Pierre, Regional Coordinator

(504) 460-2970 TCF National (877) 969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

The Meeting Agenda

<u>7:00 p.m.</u> - The meeting will begin with a short introduction followed by lighting of candle and then reading of the Credo. Remembering our children's birthdays of the month. Then followed by smaller groups of sharing.

<u>8:45 p.m.</u> - Meeting will close by recognizing our children's names. Feel free to visit with each other and check out a book from our library.

<u>Newsletter Submissions</u>: TCF Greater New Orleans welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to: <u>TCF GNO, 1104 Colony Rd., Metairie, LA 70003</u>. You may also text photos and messages to 504-251-1938. As our chapter is <u>only</u> funded by your donations, we ask for a donation of **\$15** or more for a dedication for our newsletter. This is tax-deductible. We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is listed below. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify me if any of your information is incorrect. Thank you!

Newsletter Dedications to be put in our newsletter are due the 20th of each month.

<u>A Newsletter Dedication</u>: is a special page dedicated in memory of your child with a poem or writing that you submit. <u>A Love Gift</u>: is a short one or two sentence message in your child's memory.



<u>BIRTHDAY CAKE</u>: Our child's birthday is still such an important day to us bereaved parents. In TCF this is where we can celebrate our child's birthday and remember the love we still have for them no matter how long it has been since they died. Our members are welcomed to sponsor our cake to recognize their child's birthday. Please notify me if you wish to sponsor our Birthday Cake, **William Hunton (504) 265-0581**.

TCF Greater New Orleans Memorial Candles and 3" Photo Buttons

We are asking for donations of \$20 per candle. Candles will have 3 photos, name, dates, and an LED insert. We are asking for donations of \$5 for each button or \$12 for three buttons.

Email Your Child's Photo to tcfnola@gmail.com or call William Hunton (504) 265-0581 for info.

Candles and/or photo buttons will be delivered to the next meeting if info is received 72 hours before meeting. Please make checks payable to: TCF – GNO, 1104 Colony Road, Metairie, LA 70003

Traditions: What to Keep and What to Let Go

Traditions are very important to our families, and we may share large and small ones throughout the year. Some may be in conjunction with significant events like a graduation or a wedding, and others occur annually on birthdays and holidays. Traditions are passed down through generations, creating comforting experiences and memories that provide a sense of belonging. After our child, grandchild, brother, or sister dies, however, what once was comforting can be painful and intolerable.

This holiday time of the year is often particularly hard for managing different needs within our bereaved families. Whether a few months have passed, a few years, or decades, the empty chair that belonged to our child, sibling, or grandchild, requires us to re-evaluate how traditions feel. Trying to keep a tradition that fit our "before" family may not feel the same or good.

It is especially important to recognize the differing needs of siblings and parents when deciding what to keep and what to let go. For a parent, trying to continue a tradition as it was but with one less child can be very heartbreaking. For a bereaved sibling, losing a tradition that they came to depend on can feel like they're losing even more and have less to count on than ever. When one sibling remains, it can feel overly burdensome to be the sole daughter or son who carries those traditions.

What can we do to manage such deep and personal needs that differ in a family after substantial loss? Here are some steps that can help.

- Sit down together and discuss how everyone is feeling about the upcoming holidays.
- Allow everyone to share how continuing each tradition makes them feel and which may be prohibitively distressing this year.
- Listen compassionately to one another, understanding that needs can vary widely within any loving family unit.
- Work hard to compromise. Try to differentiate what might be difficult for a family member to continue from what would be unbearable.
- Eliminate the ones, for now, that would bring more harm than benefit to any family member.
- Reduce holiday expectations so that each family member has a chance to cherish a tradition that is meaningful and grieve what has been lost.
- Keep traditions that are too upsetting for anyone until another year. Individual and family needs change year to year, and there may be room for those another time.

Having these challenging discussions can be surprisingly valuable as they prompt deeper sharing that can bring us closer. Even long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings can find decision making about what to keep and what to let go of painful at different stages. Allow the flexibility to change when something doesn't feel right since we may be surprised by painful triggers. As we remain open and flexible through each year that passes, we help our families keep some traditions, modify others, and cherish what remains.

by Shari O'Loughlin, TCF CEO, Connor's mom

Orleans Parish Sherriff's Office & Partners Present Annual Christmas Dinner

In memory of our loved ones who lost their lives to violence

This dinner is open to parents, family members, friends, or anyone who desires to show support to those grieving families. Friday, December 13, 2024, 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Historic St James Ame Church Hall, 222 N. Roman Street, New Orleans, LA 70119

For more info please contact William Hunton at 504-251-1938.

New Sibling Entity ZOOM Meeting

Our next GNO Siblings Zoom Meeting will be held **12/19/24, 7:00pm - 8:30** Click <u>https://us04web.zoom.us/j/4763266796?pwd=2DLsESGSudSNzyGK18zITDRFwnkVE7.1&omn=79175929177</u> to start or join a scheduled Zoom meeting. Meeting ID # 4763266796; Passcode: K2EntH. For more information please contact Jaimie Kimball at <u>jkimball88@hotmail.com</u> or call (504) 559-2438.

Christy's Heart

Something weighed heavily on Christy's heart the day she made that fateful choice, something invisible but crushing in its intensity. It wasn't a reflection of how she felt about her family, her friends, or even her life—it was the overwhelming burden of her inner struggles. For so long, she had fought against the currents of her depression, finding strength in her love for those around her. But on that day, something inside shifted. The weight became too much to bear, and she made a choice that her loved ones know she wouldn't have made if she could have seen a way through the darkness.

She didn't want to leave. She loved life—her children, her friends, the simple beauty of the world. But in those final moments, she couldn't see how to stay. Her heart was so full of love, but depression has a way of clouding even the brightest of lights, making the future seem impossible to grasp. It was a moment that doesn't define who she was or the life she led. It was a reflection of the depth of her pain, not the depth of her character.

Christy's passing was not a failure on her part, nor did it diminish the extraordinary woman she had always been. It was a tragic consequence of the mental health struggles she had faced so courageously for so long. Those who loved her hold on to the truth that Christy's life was rich, beautiful, and meaningful. Though her journey ended in a way that left everyone aching for her, her legacy is one of love, resilience, and the indomitable spirit she showed throughout her life.

In the hearts of her family and friends, Christy's memory lives on, not for how she left, but for how she lived a life that was full of love, laughter, and an undeniable, beautiful spirit that will never fade.

by Debbie Glory Maxwell, TCF Greater New Orleans Chapter Member and Christy Schnell's mom.

Grief is Intimidating

Grief is intimidating, both for the grieving person and for others. Since it looks so different for all of us, it can make people afraid to approach: afraid they will say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing.

Before I truly understood grief, I remember thinking that I didn't want to bring up someone's loved one to them in case it upset them or took them back to a sad place.

But now that I've felt it myself, I know that the grieving always have their loved ones' memory close at hand.

And I can't speak for everyone, but I know for myself, I WANT to talk about my loved one. I want to say their name. And, it's such a gift when someone brings them up to me or shares a memory.

They were a big part of my life when they were here, and they are still a big part of my life now that they are gone.

As our grief allows, as our hearts are ready: We can say their names. We can soak in memories. We can remember. We can be reminded. ♥

-Liz Newman



Love Gift Dedication in Memory of

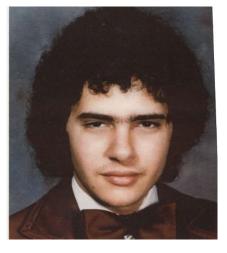
Andrew Banks December 12, 1983 – April 9, 2008 Loved and never forgotten

Dedication for Margaret Banks



In Loving Memory of our Children







MICHAEL ANTHONY BONURA

December 25, 1962 - February 26, 1985

- M is for Michael my son, my second born.
- I is for Imagination inquisitive, intriguing.
- C is for Christmas your birthday, what a surprise!
- H is for Happy your happy smile made us smile.
- A is for Ache the heartache and pain since you died.
- E is for Eyes sparkling black beneath thick lashes.
- L is for Love the love you gave to all of us lives on in our memories of you!

Dearest Michael, This Christmas Day you would be 62 years old. You were only 22 when you died. So it has been a long time since you have been gone. We love you very much our precious son. In 1999 the Catholic Newspaper the Clarion Herald published this story written by your mother – "*My son Michael gave us our greatest Christmas present when he was born on Christmas Day. He loved sharing his birthday with Christ. Michael's death has given us an even deeper meaning of how precious life is, and we*

know we will share this gift with him for all eternity."

MARY LEE BONURA



April 29, 1964 - May 1, 1964

Our dearest baby girl, you did not live very long so there is so much that we did not learn about you. However, we do know that we love you today as much as we did then.



With all our love, Mother and Dad

Dedication sent in by Judy & Dominic Bonura



Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of Nícholas Joseph Gíarratano December 21, 1979 – January 7, 2001





We Walked Together

We walked together, you and I, A mother and her son, We had hopes and dreams for tomorrow, But tomorrow didn't come. We walked together, you and I, We talked, we laughed, we loved. We shared so many happy times, And for that, I thank God above. We walked together, you and I, But only for a short time. For all too soon it ended, Leaving broken hearts behind, And even though I miss you More than words can say, I thank God that I got to walk with you Every moment of each day... (Author Unknown)

My Sweet Nick,

How can you be 45 years old and I only got to spend 21 of those years with you on earth! You are always in my heart and I think of you every single day of my life, my dear son. I love you with all of my heart and soul and I pray that you can feel the warmth of my love where you are. I walk with the faith that I will see you again one day when the time is right. Until then...I send my love to you on angels' wings.

Love forever, Mom

Dedication sent in by Debi Giordano



Butterflies, the symbol of new life and rebirth are fluttering all around me. They circle my head, land on my arms and dance around my feet. I've never seen so many butterflies.... never seen so many kinds. Delicate wings...colors like sky and grass and the earth.

Their flight is a motion of freedom and calmness and is so beautiful to see.

Please let death be a butterfly with our loved ones soaring in an existence that is too wonderful for us to comprehend!



Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of Cameron Nicholas Calamarí December 25, 2002 – September 13, 2021



To our sweet, unforgettable son, Cam... this will be your 3rd birthday in heaven. Trying to comprehend you'd be 22 this year on Christmas Day is hard to imagine. I keep wondering what you'd want to do to celebrate being a 'grownup,' LOL. Of course, we will still celebrate in Cam style with your favorite cookie cake. I wish you could know the impact you've made on so many lives - 70 to be exact. Your selfless gifts of organ, eye, and tissue donation have touched so many. We've been able to meet a few of the recipients and they are forever grateful for the life you have given them. My mission has been to continue encouraging others to Love Like Cam and sign up for organ donation. I hope I'm making you proud. I know it's with the strength you give me that I'm able to do this. This time of year, is so hard without you physically here. I never knew a heart could break and never seem to heal, but we're trying. Cheerleaders keep your memory alive and feel your presence out there on the mat as they push towards Nationals. We do everything we can to support them. They have helped us heal so much. Dawson is playing baseball and still wearing your number 25 for your birthday. Jaxon is playing too, he's so fun, you'd love watching him. And of course, your beautiful Godchild Londyn. She is almost 3 and taking dancing. She loves to play cheerleader - no wondering where she got that from. Your sister makes sure your memory lives on any way she can. She is just amazing and loves you. And Mom & Dad think of you 24/7 and just wish you were here. I know we'll see you one day. Happy Heavenly 22nd Birthday Cam... miss you to the end of the universe.

#lovelikecam #LovingSelflessEncouraging #forever #classof2022

Love you forever and always,

Mom, Dad, Megan, Dawson, Jaxon, Londyn







Dedication sent in by Angie & Kevin Calamari

I heard your voice in the wind today And I turned to see your face; The warmth of the wind caressed me As I stood silently in place. I felt your touch in the sun today As its warmth filled the sky; I closed my eyes for your embrace And my spirit soared high.

CHRISTMAS FROM THE HEART

I saw your eyes in the window pane As I watched the falling rain; It seemed as each raindrop fell It quietly said your name. I held you close in my heart today It made me feel complete; You may have died... but you are not gone You will always be a part of me. As long as the sun shines... The wind blows... The rain falls... You will live on inside of me forever For that is all my heart knows.

By Judy Burnette, TCF

Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of Adam & Luke Orgeron



The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time that they spent alive on Earth and now only those who love them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the car's...the house...the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile...remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's action to rehash... would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

by Linda Ellis

9 know you both are with your mom again. You both are forever in my heart until we meet again. Love Dad



Adam Paul Orgeron December 6, 1983 - September 26, 2020



Luke Joseph Orgeron December 29, 1986 - May 17, 2021



Dedication sent in by James Orgeron, Jr.

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Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of Chad Michael Ardoin December 2, 1974 – June 17, 2022



You're with me today, And no matter how I choose Or do not choose to celebrate Your love will always remain. Our love will always remain Even if holidays will never Look the same The love will always remain.

- Liz Newman

As we move through the grief and loss of you, we know we also experience the joy and love you brought to us all. We love you!

Love, Mom, Your Sisters and Their Families







Dedication sent in by Judy Johnson





Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of Cody Shaw Fahm December 4, 1992 – October 23, 2022 Loved and never forgotten





Happy Birthday, my sweet Cody. God blessed me with you 32 years ago! My birthday prayer for you today and every day after is that you are happy, at peace, and that you know you will always be loved!

Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure, you are loved beyond words, and missed beyond measure.

Mama loves you with all my heart!



Our Children Remembered



Angel Birthdays

Nicole Ann Judd	Dec 1	Daughter of Sandy Judd
Corey Dominique	Dec 2	Son of Ann Dominique
Chad Michael Ardoin	Dec 2	Son of Judy Johnson
Amelia Clare Phares	Dec 3	Daughter of Kimberly Phares
Cody Shaw Fahm	Dec 4	Son of Barbette and Mike Richard
Jonathan Fenasci	Dec 4	Son of Nicole Fenasci
Isabel Robertson	Dec 5	Daughter of Eda and Tony Robertson
Adam Paul Orgeron	Dec 6	Son of James Orgeron Jr.
Thaddeous Mascaro, Jr.	Dec 11	Brother of Melanie Bouddreaux
Andrew Banks	Dec 12	Son of Andrew and Margaret Banks; Father of Baileigh
Frank "Frankie" Castagna	Dec 12	Son of Margaret and Frank Castagna
Jason Butler	Dec 12	Son of Marilyn Strecker
Susan Lacava	Dec 14	Sister of Debbie Schexnayder
Jonathan C. Piazza	Dec 15	Son of Mary Ann Piazza
Beth Ann Henson	Dec 16	Daughter of Jane Henson
Dionne Marie Estrade	Dec 16	Daughter of June DeJong
Chad Siervers	Dec 17	Son of Debbie Schexnayder
Nicholas J. Giarratano	Dec 21	Son of Debi Giordano; Brother of Jeff
Cameron Calamari	Dec 25	Son of Angie and Kevin Calamari; Brother of Megan Flettrich
Michael Anthony Bonura	Dec 25	Son of Judy and Dominick Bonura
Luke Joseph Orgeron	Dec 29	Son of James Orgeron Jr.
leffrey Miller	Dec 30	Son of Darwin and Dawn Miller
Lori Ann Rholden	Dec 30	Daughter of Linda Clement; Sister of Kristy
ngel Anniversaries		
Tabitha Hingle Duvernay	Dec 1	Daughter of Cindy Masters
Jules Henry Herbert	Dec 1	Brother of Susan Viener
Jeremy Bourgeois	Dec 2	Son of Cheryl and Roland Bourgeois; Sister of Annie Vaughn
Corey Dominique	Dec 5	Son of Ann Dominique
Isabel Robertson	Dec 5	Daughter of Eda and Tony Robertson
Ronald A. Johnston	Dec 5	Son of LaShanda Johnston
Alex Belsome	Dec 9	Son of Kelly and Perry Staub
Hiram John Joseph Greer	Dec 11	Son of Alice and Hiram Greer
Grace Mae Tompkins	Dec 11	Granddaughter of Gloria St. Pierre
Trey Dutilh	Dec 13	Son of Jan and Ted Dutilh; Brother of Andrea
Thernell Simon	Dec 14	Son of Dena and Errol Peters
Ann Roberts	Dec 18	Sister of Margaret Banks
Andres Pelaez	Dec 18	Son of Nancy and Armando Pelaez; Br of Alejandro, Daniel and Felipe
April Blossum Wills	Dec 20	Daughter of Mark and Martha Duran
Mario Anderson	Dec 22	Son of Trinetta and Herbert Anderson, Jr.
Nicole Ann Judd	Dec 23	Daughter of Sandy Judd
Craig Lemoine	Dec 26	Son of Liz and Dan Lemoine
Cara Davis	Dec 27	Daughter of Ray Davis
Eugene Vaughn	Dec 27	Son of Wanda Vicari
Paul Charles Fleming, III	Dec 29	Son of Courtney & Paul Fleming, Jr.; Br of Madeline, Caroline and
Stephen Gustin	Dec 30	Son of Annette Gustin; Nephew of Ann and Richard Folk
Jeffrey Miller	Dec 30	Son of Darwin and Dawn Miller
Kimberly "Kim" Adams	Dec 31	Daughter of Mary and Aubrey Adams



List

504-456-8248 – Patsy Ashton, son, 24, drug overdose 504-559-2438 – Jaimie Kimball, sibling, 12, vehicle accident

504-265-0581 - William and Millie Hunton, daughter, 30, accidental overdose