



The Compassionate Friends

Greater New Orleans Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

January 2025

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

Greater New Orleans Chapter of the Compassionate Friends conducted its Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting.

Our Greater New Orleans Chapter is very proud that we have participated in the **TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting**. Nearly 80 people joined us at Lafreniere Park to light candles in remembrance for all children who have died too soon. As we lit our **Candles of Love**, we joined with hundreds of thousands of bereaved families who lit candles at 7 PM in every time zone around the world creating a “wave of light” that encircled the earth in memory of all children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters who died **“That their light may always shine.”** Thanks to our chapter members who participated in the setup, readings, and teardown. Members and their families brought picnics and shared in fellowship. The presentation of poems, songs, and our children’s pictures were projected on two large screens. If you have not attended a **TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting**, we hope you’ll consider joining us next year. We’d also like to encourage you to volunteer your time for this special event that can help so much with healing.

See Photos on Page 3

GRIEF TAKES TIME OR DOES IT

At first, there’s a flood of “I’m so sorry” variations as soon as you mention the loss of your child. It’s only been a few weeks since you said goodbye. These common condolences, while considered thoughtful, seem to fall quite short. Maybe it will get better with time.

Soon you hear, “I know how you feel; I lost my _____,” when asked why you may be a bit melancholy. You know they mean well, but how could they possibly know how you feel? Why do they think losing a _____ is the same as losing a child? Maybe this, too, will get better with time.

See Grief on Page 4

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 December Birthday/WWCL Cake was co-sponsored by Garrinett Southall in memory of her children, Khalil and Keishawn; and was also co-sponsored by Barbette and Mike Richard in memory of their son Cody Shaw Fahm. The January Birthday Cake will be sponsored by Deborah Reeder in memory of her son Chester “Tootie” Reeder.

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:

January 13, 2025

**Lafreniere Park Foundation
Center Conference Room**

7:00 – 9:00 pm

2nd Monday of every month

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

13 Jan 25	10 Feb 25	10 Mar 25
14 Apr 25	12 May 25	9 Jun 25
14 Jul 25	11 Aug 25	8 Sep 25
13 Oct 25	10 Nov 25	8 Dec 25

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 14, 2025 – Held in the Foundation Center 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

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

7:00 p.m. - 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.

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

Newsletter Submissions: TCF Greater New Orleans welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to: **TCF GNO, 1104 Colony Rd., Metairie, LA 70003**. You may also text photos and messages to 504-251-1938. As our chapter is only 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.

A Newsletter Dedication: is a special page dedicated in memory of your child with a poem or writing that you submit.

A Love Gift: is a short one or two sentence message in your child's memory.



BIRTHDAY CAKE: 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

The TCF-GNO Worldwide Candle Lighting



Thank you to our many Readers !!

We have our own Facebook Page. This page will allow us to post events, activities, and grief related material, which will be beneficial to all of our members. If you have not joined us yet on Facebook, please do. This is a PRIVATE group. Only the members invited and accepted can see this page. Please see the link below to join our page. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/246693646774570/?ref=share>

Also visit us at our Website – www.tcfneworleans.com.

OUR NEXT EVENT IS OUR ANNUAL BUTTERFLY RELEASE
Saturday, April 27, 2025 at 10:30 a.m.
SAVE THE DATE!

New Sibling Entity ZOOM Meeting
Our next GNO Siblings Zoom Meeting will be held 1/16/2025, 7:00pm - 8:30 Click on the following link: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/4763266796?pwd=2DLsESGSudSNzyGK18zITDRFwnkVE7.1&omn=79175929177> to start or join a scheduled Zoom meeting. Meeting ID # 4763266796; Passcode: K2EntH. For more information please contact Jaimie Kimball at jkimball88@hotmail.com or call (504) 559-2438.

GRIEF (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

After a while, either said, implied, or even in our own thoughts, we “should be over it” seems to echo. What exactly does that mean? We should no longer miss our child? No longer hurt because they are gone? Does being over it mean we’ve stopped crying? We shouldn’t talk about our child? We shouldn’t be grieving anymore? It seems to most often be the latter. It must be time now.

While for a lot of things the old saying “time heals all wounds” holds true, but it definitely does not when it comes to grief and a loss as significant as your child. It isn’t time that heals us. In fact, we don’t really “heal” at all because the grief never goes away. It just changes. Everything changes.

At some point in our lives, in school, or maybe after our grandparents pass, we learn there are 5 Stages of Grief. We are taught about each one: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. The way they are explained lends to the belief that we go through each stage and move on to the next. So why is it taking so long?

The reality is that we don’t go through each stage one by one. We bounce around, never “completing” any of them. Sure, almost all of us start in the Denial stage. What parent lives longer than their child? That can’t be right. Once you realize it is true, you’ve completed that stage. Except a few weeks, months, (or even years) later, you find yourself questioning that all over again.

We all certainly get into the Anger stage pretty quickly as well. We’re mad that we have to plan their services, pick out flowers, something for them to lie in, their clothes—the list goes on. Then angrier still that we cannot hug them again. Or hear their voice. Being angry all the time isn’t good for anyone, so eventually that calms down. We have now completed that stage. Then, after a while, something stirs it up again—usually a family event or a holiday. Here we are, angry that they are not here to celebrate with us.

Okay, but if we stop complaining about “x, y, and z”, we can have our child back, right? How about if we take their place? Too much? Fine, I’ll do “blah” if it just doesn’t have to hurt so bad! Obviously, none of that is going to work. I can’t speak for all, but I know for myself that after 18 years, I’m still trying to make a deal.

There’s no escaping the intense sadness and depression that come with losing a child. This stage, we have to watch a bit closer. Many of us tend to get “stuck” in this one. It’s okay to be stuck for a while in this stage. Just make sure you have something to hold on to. For me, TCF has been one of those things I hold on to. Family. Friends. While there are times I can let go a little, I can find myself needing to hold on again and again. Seeking professional assistance can be necessary as well. It’s not a bad idea to keep a list of assistance sources, as we may need more than one from time to time.

I’m not sure I like “Acceptance” much when it comes to grief. In my mind’s definition, I see acceptance as being okay or allowed, while acknowledgement is simply a statement of fact. In reality, they mean the same thing, but somehow it’s easier for me to acknowledge that my child is no longer here than to be okay with it or allow it. Neither is the equivalent of “being over” the loss or completing the Stages of Grief. Soon enough, I will be right back in Denial again.

Grief is fluid. There is no time limit. It simply changes. Everything changes. We change. We have to.

By Paige Engle

Paige is the mom of four adult living children, one angel son, and grandma to four beautiful grandchildren. She spent over 40 years in the healthcare field, leaving as an Alzheimer’s and Dementia LPN after an accident left her unable to continue her nursing role. Her nursing career assisted in caring for her second child, who passed away in 2005 at almost 18 years due to congenital heart disease complications following surgery at birth.

FACING A NEW YEAR

Happy New Year they all say
But would they if they felt this way?
Another year without you has gone by
And sometimes I find it hard to try
To act normal like everything is fine
Oh, I walk in such a wavy line
The ups and the downs, the highs and the lows
What lies ahead, no one really knows
I face another year that looms ahead
To face it without you I truly dread
I try to look forward and not look past
Yet the memories, I hope they can last
I gather to me all I hold dear
As I face the upcoming New Year
They say you're close by and never too far

I see you smiling, my Angel, my Star
I know you watch over your family and friends
Until we join you in Heaven and see you again
So the New Year is just a big gaping hole
As I face more unknowns. I'm cut to my soul
Your birthday, Mother's Day and so much more
We'll gather and celebrate just like before
We'll miss you and remember the years gone
by
As your mom, I'm allowed to have a good cry
Some good days and bad days, are surely
ahead
But I'll just say Happy New Year instead

By Cynthia Kocsis, Kyle's Mom

IF I GO

And if I go, while you're still here...
know that I live on,
vibrating to a different measure
behind a thin veil you cannot see through
you will not see me,
So you must have faith.

I wait for the time when we can soar
together again,
both aware of each other.
Until then, live your life to the fullest
and when you need me
just whisper my name in your heart.
I will be there.

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

GARDEN BRICKS: The chapter takes orders for engraved brick twice a year, for the Butterfly Release in April and then again for the Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony in December. The next deadline to order bricks will be on **March 1, 2025** for the Butterfly Release to be held on **April 27, 2025**. Brick Forms can be found on our Website www.tcfneworleans.com or request one via email at tcfnola@gmail.com.

Love Gift Dedication in Memory of

Eric Hansen

February 26, 1973 – November 25, 2007

Gone too soon, Forever in our Hearts

Dedication for Marilyn Hansen



Death leaves a heartache no one can heal... Love leaves a memory no one can steal.

To My Dearest Christy,

I loved you from the moment I knew you were growing inside me, and I have loved you every single day of your life. Your laughter was my favorite sound, and your presence filled our home with joy and light. You were my heart, my soul, my everything.

But I am also so angry, Christy. I am angry that you were in so much pain and that I couldn't take it away. I'm angry that you felt this was your only option and that you left us behind, leaving a hole in my heart that will never be filled. I'm angry at the world, at myself, and even at you, because I miss you so much, and I don't know how to live without you.

These feelings are so confusing. I feel this immense, endless love for you, and at the same time, I feel this deep anger. I don't want to be angry at you, but sometimes I am, and then I feel guilty for feeling that way. I wish I could go back and change everything, to hold you a little tighter, to make sure you knew just how much you meant to me.

But above all, I love you. I will always love you. Even though you are gone, that love will never fade. I am trying to understand, to forgive, and to find peace. I hope you have found the peace that you were searching for, my sweet Christy. I hope you know how much you are missed, how deeply you were loved, and how much you will always be loved, no matter what.

Forever your Mom

BY DEBBIE GLORY MAXWELL, CHRISTY'S MOM
TCF-GNO MEMBER

REFLECTIONS ON A NEW YEAR

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, "Wait, I'm not ready yet!"

The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We're living the same life—differently.

Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child's life has had upon the world continues through us.

So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond?

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect. Nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life "on hold." Rather they are a part of life itself! Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call "me"—a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child's presence in the life we choose to live.

BY PAULA STAIUNAS SCHULTZ, IN MEMORY OF MELISSA AND JEFF

*Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of
Chester "Tootie" Reeder, III*

Jan 5, 1984 - May 26, 2009

IN LOVING MEMORY ON YOUR BIRTHDAY



**We're sending doves to Heaven
With parcels on their wings
Be careful how you open them
They're full of lovely things**



**Inside are loads of kisses
Wrapped up in many hugs
To Wish You Happy Birthday
To send you all our love
We hold you close within our hearts
And there you shall remain
To walk with us each and every day
Until we meet again.**

**Missing Our Beloved Tootie
Forever in Our Hearts**

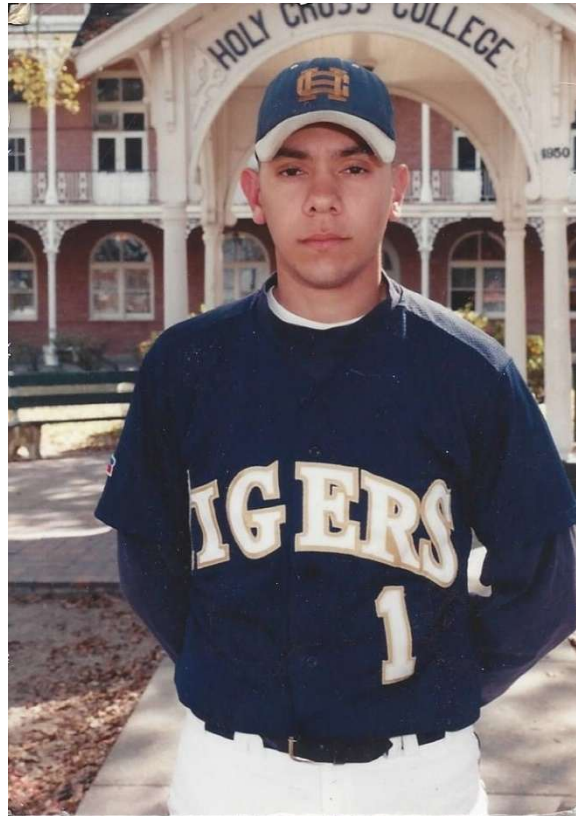
Mom, Drew, & Kayla



Newsletter Dedication in Loving Memory Of My Son

Jonathan Richard Wallace

January 7, 1981 – June 9, 2003



My Dearest Jonathan, Happy 44th Birthday!

I want to wish you a very happy birthday in Heaven!!

I surely do miss you!! I often wonder what you are doing and what your new life is like!!

I can only imagine!! I wish you could talk to me!!

I miss you so much Jonathan!! Jessica's little boys, your little nephews, Kasen and Korben would be so thrilled to hang out with you. You would have truly enjoyed them as well!!

They know of you and recognize your pictures. They know their Uncle Jonny!!

On this day I am wishing you a very Happy Happy Birthday!! Thank you for the good times we shared. Thank you for the wonderful memories!! Thank you for being my son!!

I love you so much!! One day we will see you again.!!

WITH ALL OUR LOVE,

Mom, Dad & Jessica

Dedication sent in by Niecy & Stanley Wallace

*Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of
Jennifer Marshall*

January 31, 1985 – November 23, 2018



Happy BIG 4-0 in Heaven Baby Girl!!!



Jennifer,

I never pictured celebrating your 40th birthday without you. Picturing how things should be is very different from how they actually are. We will celebrate you on your birthday as we always do, but the celebrations are missing one thing - YOU. You are missed more and more each passing year, month, and day. I know how blessed I was to have you here for 33 years, but it is still so unfair to go on without you. I know you are shining up in heaven as much as you did here on earth.

I love you baby girl, to the moon and back, to infinity and beyond forever, and more than Cookie Monster!

Happy 40th Birthday to our beautiful Jennifer, the brightest star in the sky!

Mom & Dad



Dedication sent in by Cindy and Brian Marshall



**Love Gift Dedication in Memory of
Kevin Minchew**

January 22, 1964 – March 9, 2023

Gone too soon, Forever in our Hearts



Dedication for Sharon & Joseph Meyers, and William & Millie Hunton

Our Children Remembered



Angel Birthdays

Grace Tompkins	Jan 4	Daughter of Amy Tompkins; Brother of Landon; Granddaughter of Gloria St. Pierre
Dustin Houston	Jan 4	Son of Miriam Ruiz
Chester Joseph Reeder, III	Jan 5	Son of Deborah and Chester Reeder
Keith J. Schexnayder, II	Jan 7	Son of Debbie and Keith Schexnayder
Jonathan Richard Wallace	Jan 7	Son of Claranecia and Stanley Wallace; Brother of Jessica
Rene Michael Ford	Jan 8	Grandson of Kelly and Jack Ford
Ronald A. Johnston	Jan 9	Son of LaShanda Johnston
Julie Elizabeth Durr	Jan 10	Daughter of Ginny and Hank Durr
Dustin St. Romain	Jan 13	Son of Dennis and Yvette St. Romain
Jackelyn Angilee Campbell	Jan 16	Daughter of Rebecca and Keith Campbell
Randall Miester	Jan 21	Son of Adrienne Miester
Thernell Simon	Jan 22	Son of Dena and Errol Peters
Kevin Lamar Minchew	Jan 22	Son of Joseph and Sharon Meyers
Brian Jones	Jan 26	Son of Laura Porter
Joshua P. Keller	Jan 29	Son of Jerry and Dana Keller
Michael Troy Rognes	Jan 30	Son of Alyson Carriere
Jennifer Marshall	Jan 31	Daughter of Cindy and Brian Marshall

Angel Anniversaries

Dennis Duhon	Jan 1	Son of Melva and L.J. Duhon; Brother of Bruce and David
Seth Michael Piazza	Jan 3	Grandson of Mary Ann Piazza
Nicholas Joseph Giarratano	Jan 7	Son of Debi Giordano; Brother of Jeff
David Joseph Sisolak, Jr.	Jan 7	Son of Janell and David Sisolak, Sr.
Jacey Makai Wrather	Jan 8	Daughter of Tanisha Wrather
Margo Kiefer	Jan 10	Daughter of Linda Kiefer
Jane O'Neal Dixey	Jan 11	Daughter of Rusty Dixey
Jason Lynn	Jan 14	Son of Nalani Lynn
Jayson Hardesty	Jan 15	Son of Shirley Hardesty
Dustin St. Romain	Jan 17	Son of Dennis and Yvette St. Romain
Jeffery Rodrigue	Jan 18	Son of Cary and Pati Rodrigue; Brother of Cari Serpas
Robert Joseph Coates, Jr.	Jan 20	Brother of Stacie Coates
Thomas C. Hand, Jr.	Jan 22	Son of Bev Hand
Timothy Moreau	Jan 23	Son of Penny and Mike Moreau
Susan Lacava	Jan 23	Sister of Debbie Schexnayder
Timothy Moreau	Jan 23	Son of Mike & Penny Moreau
Nathaniel Freedman	Jan 28	Son of Robin Freedman
Darlene Theresa Mayeux	Jan 29	Sister of Dana Keller
Jessica Talley	Jan 31	Daughter of Cindy M. Lacour
Lori Ann Rholdon	Jan 31	Daughter of Linda Clement
Brooke Anne Matlock	Jan 31	Daughter of Teresa Johnson



**Phone
Friend
List**

Our listeners are willing to listen, understand, and share.

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